

**A Commentary On
Matthew's Gospel** (KJV)

Dr. John Gill D.D.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

The Gospel According to Matthew was the first written gospel and published sometime between (AD 31-38)¹. It was written before Mark's (AD 38-44) and Luke's Gospel (AD-61).

Matthew was a Jew and one of the 12 Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ and named Levi. He was a tax collector for the Romans². There are two strong traditions that Matthew made a personal copy of his gospel and gave it to Barnabas, a companion of the Apostle Paul.

Matthew tells of the birth and lineage of Jesus. The life death, resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and the final words of Jesus before his ascension into heaven.

This publication is presented knowing that Matthew penned his gospel that contains all those things the Lord Jesus wanted him to publish³.

Matthew records the Olivet prophesy of Jesus concerning those fearful things that were to come to pass within the period of that generation⁴ and after his ascension.

It is the intention of the publisher that this will assist in making the gospel known to all people and is published in two parts PART 1 chapter 1 to 16. and PART 2 chapter 17 to 28.

COMMENTARY OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW by John Gill

This commentary written by John Gill (1697 - 14 October 1771) is a verse by verse comment on each verse of the gospel of Matthew. It is part of his 3 volume set of the New Testament (1735-38). He was an English Baptist pastor, biblical scholar, and theologian who held to a firm Calvinistic soteriology. Born in Kettering, Northamptonshire, he attended Kettering Grammar School where he mastered the Latin classics and learned Greek by age 11. He continued self-study in everything from logic to Hebrew, his love for the latter remaining throughout his life.

¹ See The Last Decade, by E. Stevens, "When the New Testament Books Were written". ISBN 1-932844-17-1 – First Electronic Edition (PDF) Published by: International Preterist Association, Inc. Bradford, Pennsylvania USA <https://www.preterist.org/>

² Luke 5 verse 27.

³ Matt 28 verse 19. Go ye therefore, and teach all nation, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of The Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you;"

⁴ Matthew 24 verse 34. This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

John Gill was awarded in 1748, an honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity by the University of Aberdeen. He was a profound scholar and a prolific author.

His most important works are:

- The Doctrine of the Trinity Stated and Vindicated (London, 1731)
- The Cause of God and Truth (4 parts, 1735–38), a retort to Daniel Whitby's Five Points
- An Exposition of the New Testament (3 vols., 1746–48), which with his Exposition of the Old Testament (6 vols., 1748–63) forms his magnum opus
- A Collection of Sermons and Tracts[1]
- A Dissertation Concerning the Antiquity of the Hebrew Language, Letters, Vowel-Points, and Accents (1767)[1]
- A Body of Doctrinal Divinity (1767)
- A Body of Practical Divinity (1770).

He taught and maintained the Doctrines of Grace and contended against the Arminianism of John Wesley and has been classified by some as a Hyper Calvinist.

His views on Eschatology were Historic however his treatment of the Olivet Prophecy in Matthew shows he noted the significance of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD and it is believed by the publisher that had Dr. Gill known J.S. Russell the eschatology taught in his his book *The Parousia*⁵ he would have been enabled to further the cause of God and Truth and clearly teach a fulfilled view of prophecy know as Preterism. It is hoped this commentary will be of helped to those Preterist who have no knowledge of Calvinistic soteriology.

	Contents
Matthew Chapter 1	6
Matthew Chapter 2	16
Matthew Chapter 3	29
Matthew Chapter 4	42
Matthew Chapter 5	52
Matthew Chapter 6	77
Matthew Chapter 7	95
Matthew Chapter 8	107
Matthew Chapter 9	123
Matthew Chapter 10	140
Matthew Chapter 11	161
Matthew Chapter 12	174
Matthew Chapter 13	195
Matthew Chapter 14	216
Matthew Chapter 15	228
Matthew Chapter 16	243
Matthew Chapter 17	257
Matthew Chapter 18	270
Matthew Chapter 19	285
Matthew Chapter 20	298
Matthew Chapter 21	312
Matthew Chapter 22	338
Matthew Chapter 23	359
Matthew Chapter 24	383
Matthew Chapter 25	407
Matthew Chapter 26	429
Matthew Chapter 27	470
Matthew Chapter 28	500

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⁵ See Further Publications at the end of this book.

Matthew 1:1

INTRODUCTION TO MATTHEW

The subject of this book, and indeed of all the writings of the New Testament, is the Gospel. The Greek word *εὐαγγέλιον* signifies a joyful message, good news, glad tidings of good things; such as Christ was anointed to preach, the Angels brought to the shepherds, and the Evangelists, Apostles, and Ministers of Christ published to the world. Isa 61:1. And such is the account given by this inspired writer, of the incarnation, life, actions, ministry, miracles, sufferings, and death of Jesus Christ; whereby peace and reconciliation, pardon and righteousness, atonement and redemption, life and salvation, are obtained for lost, perishing sinners. The Jews, to whom the message of grace was first sent, and among whom the Gospel was first preached, having despised and rejected it; they and their posterity, in allusion to the word "Evangelion", most wickedly and blasphemously call the whole New Testament, אונ גליון "Aven Gilion"¹, a "revelation", or "volume of iniquity and vanity"; but "blessed are the people that know the joyful sound", see Ps 89:15.

The writer of this Gospel, Matthew, who also was called Levi in Luke 5:27 was by occupation a publican, or tax-gatherer, and was in his employ when Christ called him by his grace. He was one of the twelve Apostles sent forth by Christ to preach the Gospel of the kingdom, Mt 10:3 and was honoured to be the first of the writers of the New Testament, and to be the first publisher therein of the good news of the incarnate Saviour; and was a wonderful instance of the rich and sovereign grace of God. Though he was employed in collecting the Roman tax, yet he was of Jewish extract; as appears from his being called the son of Alphaeus, Mark 2:14 and from his name Matthew Levi; for as the latter, so the former is an Hebrew name. The Jews say² one of the disciples of Jesus was called מתתאי, Matthai or Matthew: his name signifies a "gift" or "given"; he was one of those the Father had given to Christ, and was kept by him, when the son of perdition was lost, Joh 17:6.

It may not be improper to inquire in what language this Gospel was written. The ancient Christian writers were generally of opinion, that Matthew wrote it in Hebrew; Papias and³ Pantaenus were of this mind, as also

Irenaeus⁴, Origen⁵ Eusebius⁶, Athanasius⁷, Epiphanius⁸, and Jerom⁹; and it is asserted in the titles of the Arabic and Persic versions, and at the end of the Syriac version of this Gospel, that it was written in that language; and this opinion is espoused by Grotius and Hammond, though justly exploded by others; for what has been published by Munster, Mercer, Hutter, and Robertson, are translations, made by themselves or others, and of no antiquity: and since Hebrew and Syriac words are interpreted in this Gospel, see Mt 1:23 which would not have been done, had it been written in either language; and since Matthew generally follows the Septuagint version in the passages cited by him out of the Old Testament; and since the Hebrew language was not generally known at that time to the common people, only to the learned; for the law and the prophets, when read in the synagogues in that language, required an interpreter; and since the Greek tongue was the language more commonly spoken, and the rest of the Evangelists wrote in Greek, and the Gospel was designed for the Gentiles as well as the Jews; it is most reasonable to conclude that this Gospel also was wrote in Greek; whereby that ancient prophecy was fulfilled, at least in part, "God shall enlarge" or "persuade Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem", Ge 9:27 the Gospel being published in the language of Japheth, the Greek language, which the Jews, the posterity of Shem, now understood; agreeably to which the Palmudic writers interpret the prophecy; says¹⁰ Bar Kaphra, mentioning the above words, "They shall speak בלשון של יפת in the language of Japheth, in the tents of Shem;" or, "the words of the law shall be spoken in the language of Japheth, in the midst of the tents of Shem"¹¹. R. Jochanan¹² explains them thus: "רבריו של יפת" "the words of Japheth" shall be in the tents of Shem; and says R. Chiya ben Aba, the sense of it is, The beauty of Japheth shall be in the tents of Shem." Which the gloss interprets thus: "The beauty of Japheth is the language of Javan, or the Greek language, which language is more beautiful than that of any other of the sons of Japheth."

4 Adv. Haeres. l. 3. c 1.

5 In Matt. Tom. l. p. 203. Ed. Huet.

6 Eccl. Hist. l. 3. cap. 24. p. 95.

7 Synops. sacr. Script. p. 134. Vol. 2.

8 Contra Haeres. l. 1. Haer. 29. & 30.

9 Catalog. Script. Eccles fol. 90. Tom. 1. ad Hedib. fol. 46. Tom. 3.

10 T. Hieros. Megilla, fol. 71. 2.

11 Bereshit. Rabba, sect. 36. fol. 32. 1.

12 T. Bab. Megilla, fol. 9. 2.

1 T. Bab. Sabbat. fol. 116. 1. Vet. Nizzachou. p. 15, 39, 87, 94, 137, 186. Ed. Wagenseil.

2 T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 43. 1.

3 Euseb. Hist. Eccl. l. 3. c. 39. p. 113. Vid. ib. l. 5. c. 8. p. 172. c 10. p. 175. & l. 6. c. 25. p. 226.

The time when this Gospel was written is said¹³ by some to be in the eighth or ninth, by others, in the fifteenth year after the ascension of Christ, when the Evangelist had received the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, among which was the gift of tongues; and when the promise of Christ had been made good to him, John 14:26.

Matthew Chapter 1

Matthew 1:1

Ver. 1. **The book of the generation of Jesus Christ,....**

This is the genuine title of the book, which was put to it by the Evangelist himself; for the former seems to be done by another hand. This book is an account, not of the divine, but human generation of Christ; and not merely of his birth, which lies in a very little compass; nor of his genealogy, which is contained in this chapter; but also of his whole life and actions, of what was said, done, and suffered by him. It is an Hebrew way of speaking, much like that in Ge 5:1 and which the Septuagint render by the same phrase as here; and as that was the book of the generation of the first Adam; this is the book of the generation of the second Adam. The Jews call their blasphemous history of the life of Jesus, פר תולדות ישו "The book of the generations of Jesus"¹⁴. This account of Christ begins with the name of the Messiah, well known to the Jews, the son of David; not only to the Scribes and Pharisees, the more learned part of the nation, but to the common people, even to persons of the meanest rank and figure among them. See Mt 9:27. Nothing is more common in the Jewish writings, than for בן דוד "the son of David" to stand alone for the Messiah; it would be endless to cite or refer to all the testimonies of this kind; only take the following¹⁵,

"R. Jochanan says, in the generation in which בן דוד "the son of David" comes, the disciples of the wise men shall be lessened, and the rest, their eyes shall fail with grief and sorrow, and many calamities and severe decrees shall be renewed; when the first visitation is gone, a second will hasten to come. It is a tradition of the Rabbins (about) the week (of years) in which בן דוד "the son of David" comes, that in the first year this scripture will be fulfilled, Am 4:7. "I will rain

13 Vid. Fabricii Biblioth. Graec. l. 4. c. 5. sect. 2. p. 197. & Vales. not. in Euseb. Eccl. Hist. p. 52.

14 {o} Apud Wagenseil. Tela Ignea.

15 {p} T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 97. 1. Shir Hashirim Rabba, fol. 11. 4.

upon one city", &c. in the second, arrows of famine will be sent forth; in the third there will be a great famine, and men, women and children, holy men and men of business will die, and the law will be forgotten by those who learn it; in the fourth there will be plenty and not plenty; in the fifth there will be great plenty, and they shall eat and drink and rejoice, and the law shall return to them that learn it; in the sixth there will be voices (or thunders;) in the seventh there will be wars; and in the going out of the seventh בן דוד "the son of David" comes. The tradition of R. Judah says, In the generation in which בן דוד "the son of David" comes, the house of the congregation (the school or synagogue) shall become a brothel house, Galilee shall be destroyed, and Gabalene shall become desolate; and the men of Gabul (or the border) shall go about from city to city, and shall find no mercy; and the wisdom of the scribes shall stink; and they that are afraid to sin shall be despised; and the face of that generation shall be as the face of a dog, and truth shall fail, as it is said, Isa 59:15 --The tradition of R. Nehorai says, In the generation in which בן דוד "the son of David" comes, young men shall make ashamed the faces of old men, and old men shall stand before young men, the daughter shall rise up against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; nor will a son reverence his father. The tradition of R. Nehemiah says, In the generation in which בן דוד "the son of David" comes, impudence will increase, and the honourable will deal wickedly, and the whole kingdom will return to the opinion of the Sadducees, and there will be no reproof. --It is a tradition of the Rabbins, that בן דוד "the son of David" will not come, until traitorous practices are increased, or the disciples are lessened or until the smallest piece of money fails from the purse, or until redemption is despaired of."

In which passage, besides the proof for which it is cited, may be observed, how exactly the description of the age of the Messiah, as given by the Jews themselves, agrees with the generation in which Jesus the true Messiah came; who as he was promised to David, and it was expected he should descend from him, so he did according to the flesh; God raised him up of his seed, Ro 1:3 it follows,

The son of Abraham.

Abraham was the first to whom a particular promise was made, that the Messiah should spring from, Ge 22:18. The first promise in Ge 3:15 only signified that he should be the seed of the woman; and it would have been sufficient for the fulfilment of it, if he had been born of any woman, in whatsoever nation, tribe, or family; but by the promise made to Abraham he was to descend from him, as Jesus did; who took upon him the seed of Abraham, Heb 2:16 or assumed an human nature which sprung from him, and is therefore truly the son of Abraham. The reason why Christ is first called the son of David, and then the son of Abraham, is partly because the former was a more known name of the Messiah; and partly that the transition to the genealogy of Christ might be more easy and natural, beginning with Abraham, whom the Jews call ראש הדין¹⁶ the “head of the genealogy”, and the root and foundation of it, as Matthew here makes him to be; wherefore a Jew cannot be displeased with the Evangelist for beginning the genealogy of our Lord at, Abraham.

Matthew 1:2

Ver. 2. **Abraham begat Isaac,....**

The descent of Christ from Abraham is in the line of Isaac; Abraham begat Ishmael before Isaac, and others after him, but they are not mentioned; because the Messiah was not to spring from any of them, but from Isaac, of whom it is said, “in Isaac shall thy seed be called”, Ge 21:12 and who, as he was a progenitor, so an eminent type of Christ; being Abraham’s only beloved son; and particularly in the binding, sacrifice and deliverance of him.

Isaac begat Jacob.

The genealogy of Christ proceeds from Isaac, in the line of Jacob. Isaac begat Esau, as well as Jacob, and they two were twins, but one was loved, and the other hated; wherefore no mention is made of Esau, he had no concern in the Messiah, nor was he to spring from him, but from Jacob, or Israel, by whose name he is sometimes called, Isa 49:3

Jacob begat Judas and his brethren. The lineage of Christ is carried on from Jacob in the line of Judah; the reason of which is, because it was particularly prophesied that the Messiah, Shiloh, the prince and chief ruler, should be of him, Ge 49:10 1Ch 5:2. And it is evident beyond all contradiction, that our Lord sprung from his

¹⁶ Juchasin, fol. 8. 1. Tzeror Hammor, fol. 29. 3. & 154. 4.

tribe, Heb 7:14. The reason why the brethren of Judah, who were eleven in number, are mentioned, when the brethren of Isaac and Jacob are not, is, because though the Messiah did not spring from them, yet the promise of him was made to the twelve tribes, who all expected him, and to whom he was sent, and came. These made but one body of men, and therefore, though the Messiah came from the tribe of Judah, yet he is said to be of them all, Ro 9:4.

Matthew 1:3

Ver. 3. **And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar,....** The genealogical account of Christ goes on from Judah in the line of Phares, with whom Zara is mentioned; not because they were twins, for so were Jacob and Esau, and yet the latter is taken no notice of; but it may be because of what happened at their birth, see Ge 38:28. But the line of the Messiah was in Phares, and very rightly is he put in the genealogy of Christ, the Jews themselves being witnesses; who expressly say, that “the Messiah comes from him.” These two are said to be begotten of Thamar, daughter-in-law to Judah; who, though she was a Canaanitish woman, has the honour to be named in the genealogy of Christ, who came to save Gentiles as well as Jews: nor can the Jews reproach our Evangelist for putting her into the account; since they themselves frequently acknowledge that the Messiah was to spring from her: they say,¹⁷

“there are two women from whom come David the king, and Solomon, and the king Messiah; and these two are Thamar and Ruth.”

Jonathan Ben Uzziel on Ge 38:6 says, that Thamar was the daughter of Shem the great.

And Phares begat Esrom;

called Hezron, Ru 4:18 where the same phrase is used as here. He had another son called Hamul, 1Ch 2:5 but the account proceeds from Phares, in the line of Esrom.

And Esrom begat Aram; called Ram in Ru 4:18 where the same way of speaking is used as here. Esrom also besides him begat Jerahmeel, Chelubai, or Caleb, and Segub, 1Ch 2:9 but these are not in the line. Elihu, who conversed with Job, is said to be of the kindred of Ram, Job 32:2 whether the same with Ram or Aram, may be inquired.

Matthew 1:4

Ver. 4. **And Aram begat Aminadab,....**

Which, with what follows in this verse, exactly agrees

¹⁷ Shemot Rabba, sect. 30. fol. 131. 4. Caphtor, fol. 122. 1.

with the genealogical account in Ru 4:19.

Matthew 1:5

Ver. 5. **And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab,**

That Salmon begat Boaz, is affirmed in Ru 4:21 but it is not there said, nor any where else in the Old Testament, as here, that he begat him of Rahab, that is, of Rahab the harlot. This the Evangelist had from tradition, or from the Jewish records. That the Messiah was to spring from Boaz is asserted by the Jewish writers¹⁸; and they also own that Rahab was married to a prince in Israel, which some say¹⁹ was Joshua: they pretend that she was ten years of age when the Israelites came out of Egypt; that she played the harlot all the forty years they were in the wilderness, and was married to Joshua upon the destruction of Jericho. To excuse this marriage with a Canaanitish woman, they tell us, she was not of the seven nations with whom marriage was forbid; and moreover, that she became a proselyte when the spies were received by her: they own that some very great persons of their nation sprung from her, as Jeremiah, Maaseiah, Hanameel, Shallum, Baruch, Ezekiel, Neriah, Seraiah, and Huldah the prophetess. The truth of the matter is, she became the wife of Salmon, or Salma, as he is called, 1Ch 2:11. And in the Targum on Ru 4:20 is said to be of Bethlehem; he was the son of Nahshon or Naasson, a famous prince in Judah, and the head and captain of the tribe, Nu 1:7 Nu 7:12. And from Rahab sprung the Messiah, another instance of a Gentile in the genealogy of Christ; and a third follows.

And Booz begat Obed of Ruth;

who was a Moabitess. It is a notion that generally obtains among the Jews²⁰, that she was the daughter of Eglon, grandson of Balak, king of Moab; and it is often taken notice of by them²¹, that the king Messiah should descend from her; and also other persons of note, as Da-

¹⁸ Zohar in Gen. fol. 105. 4. Gloss in T. Bab. Maccot. fol. 23. 2. Tzeror Hammor, fol. 49. 2. Zoher in Gen. fol. 63. 3.

¹⁹ T. Bab. Megilia, fol. 14. 2. Juchasin, fol. 10. 1. Shalshet Hakabala, fol. 7. 2. Abarb. Kimchi & Laniado in Josh. 6. 25. & Moses Kotsensis Mitzvot Torah, pr. neg. 112.

²⁰ Targ. in Ruth. i. 4. T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 105. 2. Horayot, fol. 10. 2. Nazir. fol. 23. 2. Sota, fol. 47. 1. Zohar in Deut. fol. 109. 2. Shalshet Hakabala fol. 8. 1.

²¹ Targ. in Ruth. iii. 15. T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 93. 7. Midrash Ruth, fol. 34. 4. Zohar in Gen, fol. 72. 1. Tzeror Hammor, fol. 20. 4. & 123. 4. & 132. 4.

vid, Hezekiah, Josiah, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah, and Daniel; wherefore the mentioning of her in this genealogy, cannot be said by them to be impertinent.

And Obed begat Jesse.

Jesse is thought to be, not the immediate son of Obed, but to be of the fourth generation from him; though no others are mentioned between them in Ruth, any more than here. A Jewish writer observes²², that

“the wise men of the Gentiles say, that there were other generations between them; perhaps, says he, they have taken this from the wise men of Israel, and so it is thought.”

Now notwithstanding this, Jesse may be said to be begotten by Obed, as Hezekiah’s posterity, who were carried captive into Babylon, are said to be begotten by him, Isa 39:7 though they were a remove of several generations from him. However, Jesse is rightly put among the progenitors of Christ, since the Messiah was to be a rod of his stem, and the branch of his roots, and is called the root of Jesse, Isa 11:1 which words are interpreted of the Messiah, by many of the Jewish writers²³; and to this day the Jews pray for him in their synagogues under the name of בני ישי²⁴, “the son of Jesse”.

Matthew 1:6

Ver. 6. **And Jesse begat David the king,**

The descent of the Messiah runs in the line of David, the youngest of Jesse’s sons, who was despised by his brethren, and overlooked and neglected by his father; but God chose him, and anointed him to be king, and set him on the throne of Israel; hence he is called “David the king”; as also because he was the first king that was of the tribe of Judah, and in the genealogy of Christ, and was an eminent type of the king Messiah, who is sometimes called by the same name, Eze 34:24 and who was to be his son, as Jesus is, and also right heir to his throne and kingdom.

And David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias;

which was Bathsheba, though not named; either because she was well known, or because of the sin she had been guilty of, which would easily be revived by mentioning her name: our translators have rightly supplied, “that had been”, and not as the Vulgate Latin, which sup-

²² Juchasin, fol. 10. 2.

²³ Targum, Aben Ezra & Kimchi in loc. & Zohar in Exod. fol. 71. 1

²⁴ Seder Tephillot, fol. 278. 1. & 285. 2. Ed. Basil, T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 29. 1.

plies it, “that was the wife of Urias”, for Solomon was begotten of her, not while she was the wife of Uriah, but when she was the wife of David.

Matthew 1:7

Ver. 7. **And Solomon begat Roboam,**

Called Rehoboam, 1Ki 11:43 of Naamah an Ammonitess, 1Ki 14:21.

And Roboam begat Abia,

sometimes called Abijam, as in 1Ki 14:31, sometimes Abijah, 2Ch 12:16 and sometimes, as here, Abia, 1Ch 3:10. Him Rehoboam begat of Maachah, the daughter of Abishalom, 1Ki 15:2 called Michaiiah, the daughter of Uriel, 2Ch 13:2. Maachah and Michaiiah being the same name; or else she went by two names, as her father did.

And Abia begat Asa,

who was a good king; his mother’s name is the same with the name of his father’s mother; and perhaps it is not his proper mother, but his grandmother who is meant in 1Ki 15:10. He is wrongly called Asaph in the Persic and Ethiopic versions, and in one copy.

Matthew 1:8

Ver. 8. **And Asa begat Josaphat,**

Called Jehoshaphat, 1Ki 15:24 whom Asa begat of Azubah, the daughter of Shilhi, 1Ki 22:42. He also was a very good prince.

And Josaphat begat Joram;

called Jehoram, 1Ki 22:50 to whom his father gave the kingdom, because he was the firstborn, 2Ch 21:3.

And Joram begat Ozias;

called Uzziah, 2Ch 26:1 and Azariah, 2Ki 15:1. He was not the immediate son of Joram; there were three kings between them, Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah, which are here omitted; either because of the curse denounced on Ahab’s family, into which Joram married, whose idolatry was punished to the third or fourth generation; or because these were princes of no good character; or because their names were not in the Jewish registers. Nor does this omission at all affect the design of the Evangelist, which is to show that Jesus, the true Messiah, is of the house of David; nor ought the Jews to complain of it, as they do²⁵ since such omissions are to be met with in the Old Testament, particularly in Ezr 7:2 where six generations are omitted at once; and which is taken notice of by one of their own genealogical writers, whose words are these²⁶;

“we see in the genealogy of Ezra that he hath

²⁵ R. Isaac Chizzuk Emunab, par. 2. p. 390.

²⁶ Juchasin, fol. 10. 2.

skipped over seven generations (perhaps it should be ṛ “six” and not ṛ “seven”, since six are only omitted) from Ahitub to Ahitub.”

Nor is it any objection that Joram is said to beget Ozias, which he may be said to do in the like sense, as has been before observed of Hezekiah, Isa 39:7.

Matthew 1:9

Ver. 9. **And Ozias begat Joatham,**

Called Jotham, 2Ki 15:7 him Ozias begat of Jerushah, the daughter of Zadok, 2Ki 15:33.

And Joatham begat Achaz,

or Ahaz, 2Ki 15:38 to him the sign was given, and the famous prophecy of the Messiah, Isa 7:14.

And Achaz begat Ezekias,

or Hezekiah, 2Ki 16:20 him Ahaz begat of Abi, the daughter of Zachariah, 2Ki 18:2. He was a very religious king, and had that singular favour from God to have fifteen years added to his days, Isa 38:5.

Matthew 1:10

Ver. 10. **And Ezekias begat Manasses,**

Or Manasseh, 2Ki 20:21. Him Hezekiah begat of Hephzibah, 2Ki 21:1. He was very remarkable both for his sins, and for his humiliation on account of them.

And Manasses begat Amon,

of Meshullemeth, the daughter of Haruz of Jotbah, 2Ki 21:19. He was a very wicked prince.

And Amon begat Josias,

or Josiah of Jedidah, the daughter of Adaiiah of Bos-cath, 2Ki 22:1. He was a very pious king, and was prophesied of by name some hundreds of years before he was born, 1Ki 13:2.

Matthew 1:11

Ver. 11. **And Josias begat Jechonias,**

This Jechonias is the same with Jehoiakim, the son of Josias, called so by Pharaohnecho, when he made him king, whose name before was Eliakim, 2Ki 23:34 begat of Zebudah, the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah, 2Ki 23:36.

and his brethren.

These were Johanan, Zedekiah, and Shallum. Two of them were kings, one reigned before him, viz. Shallum, who is called Jehoahaz, 2Ki 23:30 compared with Jer 22:11, the other, viz. Zedekiah, called before Mattaniah, reigned after his son Jehoiakim: these being both kings, is the reason why his brethren are mentioned; as well as to distinguish him from Jechonias in the next verse; who does not appear to have had any brethren: these were

about the time they were carried away to Babylon,

which is not to be connected with the word “begat”: for Josiah did not beget Jechonias and his brethren at that time, for he had been dead some years before; nor with Jechonias, for he never was carried away into Babylon, but died in Judea, and slept with his fathers, 2Ki 24:6 but with the phrase “his brethren”: and may be rendered thus, supposing τῶν understood, “which were at”, or “about the carrying away to Babylon”, or the Babylonish captivity.

Matthew 1:12

Ver. 12. **And after they were brought to Babylon,**

Not Jechonias, but the father of Jechonias, and the Jews.

Jechonias begat Salathiel.

Not Jechonias mentioned in the former verse, but his son, called Jehoiachin, 2Ki 24:6 and Coniah, Jer 22:24 both which are rendered Jechonias by the Septuagint in 2Ch 36:8 and he is so called, 1Ch 3:16. Abulpharagius²⁷ calls him Junachir, and says he is the same who in Matthew is called Juchonia; and he asserts him to be the father of Daniel the Prophet. But here a considerable difficulty arises, how he can be said to beget Salathiel, called Shealtiel, Hag 1:1 when he was pronounced “childless”, Jer 22:30. To remove which, it may be observed, that the sentence pronounced may be considered with this tacit condition or proviso, if he repented not. Now the Jews have a tradition²⁸ that he did repent in prison, upon which the sentence was revoked; but there is no need to suppose this, though it is not an unreasonable supposition; for the sentence does not imply that he should have no children, but rather that he should, as will appear upon reading the whole; “thus saith the Lord, write ye this man childless²⁹, a man that shall not prosper in his days; for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting on the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah”. Besides, the Hebrew word רִירִי, rendered “childless”, comes from רָה, which signifies “to make naked” or “bare” and so denotes not only such as have no children, or are bereft of them, but such as are by any providence stripped of the blessings of life, and are left bare, destitute, and unhappy, as Jechonias and his posterity were: however, the Jews have no reason to find fault with our Evangelist, since Salathiel is expressly called Jechonias’s son, 1Ch 3:17 either he was his proper natural son, or, to use their way

²⁷ Hist. Dynast. p. 45. Vid. Hieron. Comment. in Dan. i. fol. 264. B.

²⁸ Kimchi in 1 Chron. iii. 17. & in Jer. xxii. 30.

²⁹ Kimchi in 1 Chron. iii. 17. & in Jer. xxii. 30.

of speaking, בֶּן מַלְכוּת “the son of the kingdom”³⁰, that is, his heir and successor in the kingdom, as some have thought; since it looks as if he was the son of Neri, Luke 3:27 though the chronicle of Jedidaeus of Alexandria³¹, or Philo the Jew, says, that Jechonias was called Neri, because Ner, or the lamp of David, shined in him, which had been almost extinguished.

And Salathiel begat Zorobabel.

This account perfectly agrees with many passages in the Old Testament, where Zorobabel is called the son of Shealtiel or Salathiel, Ezr 3:2 Hag 1:1 which is sufficient to justify the Evangelist in this assertion. There is indeed a difficulty which as much presses the Jews as the Christians, and that is, that Zorobabel is reckoned as the son of Pedaiah, 1Ch 3:19 for the solution of which a noted Jewish commentator³² observes, that

“in Haggai, Zachariah and Ezra, Zorobabel is called the son of Shealtiel, because he was his son’s son; for Pedaiah was the son of Shealtiel, and Zorobabel the son of Pedaiah; and do not you observe (adds he) that in many places children’s children are mentioned as children?”

No doubt there are many instances of this; but to me it seems that Pedaiah was not the son of Shealtiel, but his brother, 1Ch 3:17. And I greatly suspect that Shealtiel had no children of his own, since none are mentioned; and that he adopted his brother Pedaiah’s son Zorobabel, and made him his heir and successor in the government of Judah. However, it is certain, as a genealogical writer³³ among the Jews observes, that he was of the son’s sons of Jechonias, king of Judah, from whom our Evangelist makes him to descend.

Matthew 1:13

Ver. 13. **And Zorobabel begat Abiud,**

The children of Zorobabel are said in 1Ch 3:19, to be Meshullam, and Hananiah, and Shelomith their sister, but no mention is made of Abiud: he seems to be the same with Meshullam the eldest son, who might have two names; nor is this unlikely, since it was usual, especially about the time of the Babylonish captivity, for men to have more names than one, as may be observed in Daniel and others, Da 1:7 where they went by one, and in Judea by another.

And Abiud begat Eliakim,

³⁰ Ib. in 1 Chron. iii. 15.

³¹ Apud Vorst. Observ. in Ganz. Chronolog. p. 310.

³² Kimchi in 1 Chron. iii. 19. & in Hagg. i. 1.

³³ Juchasin, fol. 13. i.

From hence to the 16th verse the genealogy is carried down to Joseph, the husband of Mary; which account must be taken from the genealogical tables of the Jews, to which recourse might be had, and with which it agrees; or otherwise the Jews would have cavilled at it; but I do not find any objections made by them to it. That there were genealogical books or tables kept by the Jews is certain, from the following instances ³⁴;

”Simeon ben Azzai says, I found in Jerusalem, מנלה יודין, “a volume of genealogies”, and there was written in it,

Again ³⁵, says R. Levi,

“they found a “volume of genealogies” in Jerusalem, and there was written in it that Hillel came from David; Ben Jarzaph from Asaph; Ben Tzitzith Hacceseth from Abner; Ben Cobesin from Ahab; Ben Calba Shebuah from Caleb; R. Jannai from Eli; R. Chayah Rabba from the children of Shephatiah, the son of Abital; R. Jose be Rabbi Chelphetha from the children of Jonadab, the son of Rechab; and R. Nehemiah from Nehemiah the Tirshathite.”

Once more ³⁶, says R. Chana bar Chanma, when the holy blessed God causes his

“Shechinah to dwell, he does not cause it to dwell but upon families, מיוחדות, “which are genealogized” in Israel.”

Now if Matthew’s account had not been true, it might easily have been refuted by these records. The author of the old ³⁷ Nizzachon takes notice of the close of this genealogy, but finds no fault with it; only that it is carried down to Joseph, and not to Mary; which may be accounted for by a rule of their own ³⁸, שפחה אמו אינה קרויה משפחה, “the mother’s family is not called a family”, whereas the father’s is. It is very remarkable that the Jewish Targum ³⁹ traces the descent of the Messiah from the family of David in the line of Zorobabel, as Matthew does; and reckons the same number of generations, wanting one, from Zorobabel to the Messiah, as the Evangelist does, from

Zorobabel to Jesus; according to Matthew, the genealogy stands thus, Zorobabel, Abiud, Eliakim, Azor, Sadoc, Achim, Eliud, Eleazar, Matthan, Jacob, Joseph, Jesus; and according to the Targum the order is this,

”Zorobabel, Hananiah, Jesaiah, Rephaiah, Arnon, Obadiah, Shecaniah, Shemnigh, Neariah, Elioenai, Anani; this is the king Messiah, who is to be revealed.”

The difference of names may be accounted for by their having two names, as before observed. This is a full proof, that, according to the Jews own account, and expectation, the Messiah must be come many years and ages ago.

Matthew 1:14

See Gill on “Mt 1:13”.

Matthew 1:15

See Gill on “Mt 1:13”.

Matthew 1:16

Ver. 16. **And Jacob begat Joseph,**

According to an old tradition mentioned by ⁴⁰ Epiphanius, this Jacob, the father of Joseph, was named Panther, and which name perhaps is originally Jewish; and it may be observed, that Joseph is sometimes called by the Jewish writers Pandera⁴¹, and Jesus בן פנדירא, the son of Pandira ⁴². It has created some difficulty with interpreters that Jacob should be here said to beget Joseph, when Joseph in Luke is said to be the son of Eli. Some have thought Joseph’s father had two names, one was Jacob, and the other Eli; others take them to be two different persons, and suppose that Joseph was the natural son of the one, and the legal son of the other, either by marriage, or by adoption, or by the law of the brother’s wife, De 25:5. But the truth of the matter is, that not Joseph, but Jesus, is by Luke called the son of Eli, as will be made to appear in its proper place. Joseph, who is here called the husband of Mary, because he not only espoused her, but, upon the advice and encouragement of the Angel, took her to be his wife, was, as is evident by this genealogy, of the house and lineage of David; though a mean and obscure person, and by trade a carpenter. Mary, which is the same name with Miriam in Hebrew, was a poor virgin that dwelt at Nazareth, a city of Galilee; yet also of the

⁴⁰ Contra Haeres. l. 3. Haeres. 78.

⁴¹ Toldos Jesu, p. 3.

⁴² T. Hieros. Avoda Zara, fol. 40. 4. T. Bab. Sabbath, fol. 14. 2. & Midrash Kohelet, fol. 81. 1.

³⁴ T. Bab. Yebamot, fol. 49. 2.

³⁵ T. Hieros. Taanith, fol. 68. 1. B. Rabba, sect. 98. fol. 85. 3.

³⁶ T. Bab. Kiddushin, fol. 70. 9.

³⁷ P. 186.

³⁸ T. Bab. Yebamot, fol. 54. 2. Bava Bathra, fol. 109. 2. & 110. 2. Bereshit Rabba, fol. 6. 1. Jucbasin, fol. 55. 2.

³⁹ In 1 Chron. iii. 24. Vid. Beckii Not. in ib. p. 56, 57.

family of David, and belonged to the city of Bethlehem;

of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ,

or Messiah; being that illustrious person, who was spoken of by the Prophets of the Old Testament under that name, and whom the Jews expected. We may learn from hence, what a low condition the family of David was in, when the true Messiah came; according to ancient prophecy, it was like a stump of a tree, or like to a tree cut down to the root, Isa 11:1 and Christ who sprung from it was like a root out of a dry ground, Isa 53:2. From the whole of this genealogy it appears, that Jesus was of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Judah, and of the family of David; whereby several ancient prophecies have their accomplishment, and therefore he ought to be acknowledged as the true Messiah: and also that he was of the blood royal, and had his descent from the kings of Judah, and was heir apparent to the throne and kingdom of his father David. The Talmudic Jews own that Jesus, or Jesu, as they call him, was put to death because he⁴³, היה קרוב למלכות “was nigh to the kingdom”, or nearly related to it. Yea, even in that malicious book ⁴⁴ they have written of his life, they represent him as akin to queen Helena, who they say, on that account, would have saved his life. And this was so clear a point, and their forefathers were so thoroughly convinced of this matter, that they would have took him by force and made him a king, Joh 6:15 but his kingdom was to be of another kind, a spiritual, and not a temporal one.

Matthew 1:17

Ver. 17. **So all the generations from Abraham,**

The Evangelist having traced the genealogy of Christ from Abraham, which he divides into “three” parts, because of the threefold state of the Jews, “first” under Patriarchs, Prophets, and Judges, “next” under Kings, and “then” under Princes and Priests, gives the sum of each part under its distinct head; “so all the generations”, that is, the degrees of generation, or the persons generated from Abraham to David, both being included, “are fourteen generations”; as there were, and no more, and are as follow, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, Phares, Esrom, Aram, Amminadab, Naasson, Salmon, Boaz, Obed, Jesse, David.

And from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations.

Here David who closed the first division must be excluded this, and it must be observed, that the Evangelist

⁴³ T. Bab. Sanhed. fol. 43. 1.

⁴⁴ Toldos Jesu, p. 10.

does not say as before, that “all” the generations from David to the captivity were fourteen, for there were seventeen, three kings being omitted by him at once; but, the generations he thought fit to mention, in order to reduce them to a like number as before, and which were sufficient for his purpose, were fourteen; and may be reckoned in this order, Solomon, Roboam, Abia, Asa, Josaphat, Joram, Ozias, Joatham, Achaz, Ezekias, Manasses, Amon, Josias, Jechonias, or Jehoiachin.

And from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.

This must be understood as before; for there might be more generations in this interval, but these were enough to answer the design of the Evangelist; and which he thought proper to mention, and may be numbered in this manner; Jechonias, or Jehoiachin, Salathiel, Zorobabel, Abiud, Ehakim, Azor, Sadoc, Achim, Eliud, Eleazar, Matthan, Jacob, Joseph, Christ. This way of reckoning by generations was used by other nations as well as the Jews ⁴⁵, particularly the Grecians; so ⁴⁶ Pausanias says, “From Tharypus to Pyrrhus the son of Achilles, pente and πεντε ανδρων και δεκα εισι γενεαι, were fifteen generations of men. “And Herodotus⁴⁷ speaking of those who had reigned in Babylon, says, among them were two women, one whose name was Semiramis, who reigned before the other γενεησι πεντε, five generations; many other instances of the like kind might be given.

Matthew 1:18

Ver. 18. **Now the birth of Jesus Christ,**

The Evangelist having finished the genealogy of Christ, proceeds to give an account of his birth, which includes both his conception and bringing forth; and which he says

was on this wise,

οὕτως so, “after this manner”, and which was very wonderful and astonishing;

when as, γαρ, for his mother Mary was found with child,

not of man, no, not of Joseph her husband; Christ had no real father as man, Joseph was only, as was supposed, his father;

but of the Holy Ghost,

according to Luke 1:35. “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee”, &c. and this was done that the human nature of Christ might be clear of original pollution; that **so being the immediate produce of the Holy Ghost and**

⁴⁵ Vid. Pirke Abot. c. 5. sect. 2.

⁴⁶ Attica sive l. 1. c. 10. p. 19.

⁴⁷ Clio. l. 1. c. 184. p. 74.

without sin, it might be fit for union with the Son of God, and for the office of Mediator he had undertaken. When Mary is said to be

found with child,

the meaning is, it appeared by evident signs, it was observed by Joseph particularly, who might know not only that she was with child, but with child of the Holy Ghost; by conversation with her, who might relate to him what passed between the Angel and her, Luke 1:28 though it looks as if as yet he did not know this, or at least was not fully satisfied about it; since he had a mind to have put her away, before he was assured of the truth of it, by the appearance of an angel to him. Now Mary's being with child, and its being known, were facts, at the time when she was

espoused to Joseph,

and thereby the outward credit both of Mary and Jesus were secured; for had this appeared before the espousals, the Jews would have fixed a brand of infamy on them both; and both the espousals and her being found with child, were

before they came together;

that is, before they cohabited together as man and wife, before he brought her home to his own house and bed. The espousals were before they thus came together. It was usual with the Jews first to espouse or betroth, and then to marry, or rather consummate the marriage, by bringing the woman home to her husband's house, between which there was some space of time. The account and manner of betrothing is given by Maimonides⁴⁸ in the following words.

”Before the giving of the law, if a man met a woman in the street, if he would, he might take her, and bring her into his house and marry her between him and herself, and she became his wife; but when the law was given, the Israelites were commanded, that if a man would take a woman he should obtain her before witnesses, and after that she should be his wife, according to De 22:13 and these takings are an affirmative command of the law, and are called קידושין או אירויני “espousals” or “betrothings” in every place; and a woman who is obtained in such a way is called מאורה “espoused” or “betrothed”; and when a woman is obtained, and becomes tvdwqm “espoused”, although she is not yet נבלה “married, nor has entered into her husband's house”, yet she

is a man's wife.”

And such a distinction between a married woman and a betrothed virgin, which was Mary's case, may be observed in De 22:22 moreover, her being found or appearing to be with child, was “before they came together”; which it is likely, as Dr. Lightfoot⁴⁹ observes, was about three months from her conception, when she was returned from her cousin Elizabeth. It is probable that as soon as she was espoused to Joseph, or quickly after, she went and paid her visit to Elizabeth, with whom she stayed about three months, and then returned home, Luke 1:56. Upon her return home, she appears to be with child, with which she had gone three months, a proper time for the discovery of such a matter, Ge 38:24 and which is assigned by the Jewish doctors for this purpose. In the Misna⁵⁰ {a} such a case as this is put,

”If two men should espouse two women, and at the time of their entrance into the bride chamber, the one should be taken for the other--they separate them for three months, because they may prove with child;”

that is, as Bartenora observes upon it,”

they separate them that they may not return to their husbands; and that if they should be with child, they may distinguish between a legitimate and an illegitimate offspring; and that the children which they may bring forth may not be ascribed to the wrong persons.” Now Mary being gone three months from the time of her espousals to Joseph, and he and she not being yet come together, it was a clear case, that the child she was gone three months with, was none of his; hence it follows,

Matthew 1:19

Ver. 19. **Then Joseph her husband,**

To whom she had been betrothed, and who was her husband, and she his wife according to the Jewish law, De 22:23 though not yet come together,

being a just man,

observant of the law of God, particularly that which respected adultery, being wholly good and chaste, like the Patriarch of the same name; a character just the reverse of that which the Jews give him, in their scandalous⁵¹ book of the life of Jesus; where, in the most mali-

49 In loc.

50 Yebamot, c. 3. sect. 10.

51 Teldos Jesu, p. 3.

48 Hilchot. Ishot. c. 1. sect. 1, 2, 3.

cious manner, they represent him as an unchaste and an unrighteous person:

and not willing to make her a public example,

or to deliver her, i.e. to the civil magistrate, according to Munster's Hebrew edition. The Greek word signifies to punish by way of example to others, to deter them from sinning; and with the ancients it⁵² denoted the greatest and severest punishment. Here it means either bringing her before the civil magistrate, in order to her being punished according to the law in De 22:23 which requires the person to be brought out to the gate of the city and stoned with stones, which was making a public example indeed; or divorcing her in a very public manner, and thereby expose her to open shame and disgrace. To prevent which, he being tender and compassionate, though strictly just and good,

was minded to put her away privily:

he deliberately consulted and determined within himself to dismiss her, or put her away by giving her a bill of divorce, in a very private manner; which was sometimes done by putting it into the woman's hand or bosom, see De 24:1. In Munster's Hebrew Gospel it is rendered, “it was in his heart to forsake her privately.”

Matthew 1:20

Ver. 20. **But while he thought on these things,** While he was revolving them in his mind, considering what was most fit and proper to be done, whether to dismiss her publicly or privately; while he was consulting within himself the glory of God, the peace of his own conscience, and the credit of Mary,

behold the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream;

probably the same Angel which appeared to Zacharias, and brought him tidings that his wife should have a son, and who also appeared to Mary, and acquainted her that she should conceive, and bring forth the Messiah, Whose name was Gabriel, Luke 1:11. If we will believe the Jews, this Angel must be Gabriel, since he is the Angel who they say דמונא ל' הלמא “is appointed over dreams”; for he appeared to

Joseph in a dream,

which is one of the ways and methods in which the Lord, or an Angel of his, has appeared to the saints formerly, and has answered them, see Ge 31:11 and is reckoned by the Jews⁵⁴ one of the degrees or kinds of proph-

52 A. Gellii Noct. Attic. l. 6. c. 14.

53 Zohar in Gen. fol. 103. 3.

54 Zohar in Gen. fol. 103. 3. & Maimon. Yesode Hatto-rah. c. 7. l. 13.

ecy: and so the Angel here not only encourages Joseph to take to him his wife,

saying Joseph, thou son of David;

which is said partly to attest his being of the house and lineage of David, and partly to raise his expectations and confirm his faith, that his wife should bring forth the promised son of David; and chiefly to engage his attention to what he was about to say,

fear not to take unto thee

Mary thy wife; do not be afraid either that thou shalt offend the Lord, or bring any reproach or scandal upon thyself as if thou didst connive at an adulteress; but as she is thine espoused wife, solemnly betrothed to thee, take her home to thyself, live with her as thy wife, and openly avow her as such. To which he is encouraged by the following reason or argument,

for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost;

she has not been guilty of any criminal conversation with men; this conception of her's is of the Holy Ghost, and entirely owing to his coming upon her, and overshadowing her in a wonderful and miraculous manner. I say, the Angel not only encourages Joseph after this manner, but delivers something to him by way of prophecy, in the following verse.

Matthew 1:21

Ver. 21. **And she shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Jesus.**

For though she was with child, it could not be known any otherwise than by prediction or divine revelation, that she should have a son, whose name should be called Jesus; a name of the same signification with Joshua and Hosea, and may be interpreted a “Saviour”, Ac 13:23 for the word ישו Jesus, comes from יש which signifies “to save.” And to this agrees the reason of the name given by the Angel,

for he shall save his people from their sins.

The salvation here ascribed to him, and for which he is every way fit, being God as well as man, and which he is the sole author of, is to be understood, not of a temporal, but of a spiritual and everlasting salvation; such as was prophesied of, Is 45:17 and which old Jacob had in his view, when he said, “I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord”, Ge 49:18 which by the Jewish⁵⁵ Targumist is paraphrased thus:

”Jacob said when he saw Gideon the son of Joash,

55 Targum Jon. Ben Uzziel in loc.

and Samson the son of Manoah, that they would rise up to be saviours, not for the salvation of Gideon do I wait, nor for the salvation of Samson do I look, for their salvation is פֹּרְקֵי דְשָׁמַא “a temporary salvation”; but for thy salvation, O Lord, do I wait and look, for thy salvation is פֹּרְקֵי לְמִינִי “an everlasting salvation”, or (according to another copy) but for the salvation of Messiah the son of David, who shall save the children of Israel, and bring them out of captivity, for thy salvation my soul waiteth.”

By “his people” whom he is said to save are meant, not all mankind, though they are his by creation and preservation, yet they are not, nor will they be all saved by him spiritually and eternally; nor also the people of the Jews, for though they were his nation, his kinsmen, and so his own people according to the flesh, yet they were not all saved by him; many of them died in their sins, and in the disbelief of him as the Messiah: but by them are meant all the elect of God, whether Jews or Gentiles, who were given to him by his Father, as a peculiar people, and who are made willing in the day of his power upon them, to be saved by him in his own way. And these he saves from “their sins”, from all their sins, original and actual; from secret and open sins; from sins of heart, lip and life; from sins of omission and commission; from all that is in sin, and omission upon it; from the guilt, punishment, and damning power of it, by his sufferings and death; and from the tyrannical government of it by his Spirit and grace; and will at last save them from the being of it, though not in this life, yet hereafter, in the other world, when they shall be without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.

Matthew 1:22

Ver. 22. **Now all this was done,**

These are not the words of the Angel, but of the Evangelist; observing that Mary’s being with child of the Holy Ghost, and her conception in such an extraordinary manner, whilst a pure virgin, before she and Joseph came together, who though espoused to him, was untouched by him, were all brought about in this way, and with such circumstances,

that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet;

that is, the Prophet Isaiah, and so some copies read. The passage referred to is in Is 7:14 what is there spoken was by divine inspiration; it was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet; the Spirit of the Lord spake by him. Proph-

ets and holy men formerly, spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; so that what they said is to be looked upon as the word of God. Now between the prophecy of Isaiah referred to, and the fact here recorded by the Evangelist, is an entire agreement: the prophecy shows the will, counsel, and determination of God about this matter; the accomplishment of it, the faithfulness and veracity of God in his word; the prediction declares that the thing would be, and the thing itself was done, that what was spoken might be fulfilled; not merely by way of accommodation, or in a typical and mystical, but in a strict, proper and literal sense.

Matthew 1:23

Ver. 23. **Behold, a virgin shall be with child,**

These words are rightly applied to the virgin Mary and her son Jesus, for of no other can they be understood; not of Ahaz’s wife and his son Hezekiah, who was already born, and must be eleven or twelve years of age when these words were spoken; nor of any other son of Ahaz by her or any other person since no other was Lord of Judea; nor of the wife of Isaiah, and any son of his, who never had any that was king of Judah. The prophecy is introduced here as in Isaiah with a “behold!” not only to raise and fix the attention, but to denote that it was something wonderful and extraordinary which was about to be related; and is therefore called אֵימָה a “sign”, wonder, or miracle; which lay not, as some Jewish writers⁵⁶ affirm, in this, that the person spoken of was unfit for conception at the time of the prophecy, since no such thing is intimated; or in this, that it should be a son and not a daughter⁵⁷, which is foretold; for the wonder lies not in the truth of the prediction, but in the extraordinariness of the thing predicted; much less in this⁵⁸, that the child should eat butter and honey as soon as born; since nothing is more natural and common with new born infants, than to take in any sort of liquids which are sweet and pleasant. But the sign or wonder lay in this, that a “virgin” should “conceive” or “be with child”; for the Evangelist is to be justified in rendering, לְמִיָּה by παρθενος “a virgin”; by the Septuagint having so rendered it some hundreds of years before him, by the sense of the word, which comes from לָמַח and which signifies to “hide” or “cover”; virgins being such who are unknown to, and not uncovered by men, and in the Eastern countries were kept recluse from the company and conver-

⁵⁶ Jarchi. in Isa. vii. 14.

⁵⁷ Gaon. in Aben Ezra, in ib.

⁵⁸ Kimchi & Aben Ezra in ib. R. Isaac Chizuk. Emun. p. 1. c. 21.

sation of men; and by the use of the word in all other places, Ge 24:43. The last of these texts the Jews triumph in, as making for them, and against us, but without any reason; since it does not appear that the “maid” and the “adulterous woman” are one and the same person; and if they were, the vitiated woman might be called a maid or virgin, according to her own account of herself, or in the esteem of others who knew her not, or as antecedent to her defilement; see De 22:28. Besides, could this be understood of any young woman married or unmarried, that had known a man, it would be no wonder, no surprising thing that she should “conceive” or “be with child”, and “bring forth a son”. It is added,

and they shall call his name Emmanuel.

The difference between Isaiah and Matthew is very inconsiderable, it being in the one “thou shalt call”, that is, thou virgin shalt call him by this name; and in the other “they shall call”, that is, Joseph, Mary, and others; for, besides that some copies read the text in Matthew calesiv “thou shalt call”, the words both in the one and the other may be rendered impersonally, “and shall be called”; and the meaning is, not that he should be commonly known and called by such a name, any more than by any, or all of those mentioned in Isa 9:6, but only that he should be so, which is a frequent use of the word; or he should be that, and so accounted by others, which answers to the signification of this name, which the Evangelist says,

being interpreted is God with us:

for it is a compound word of אֱלֹהִים “God” and יְמוּנֵי “with us”, and well agrees with Jesus, who is God in our nature, the word that was made flesh and dwelt among us. Joh 1:14, and is the one and only Mediator between God and us,⁵⁹ 1Ti 2:5⁶⁰

Matthew 1:24

Ver. 24. **Then Joseph being raised from sleep,**

That is, being awaked out of sleep, του υπνου “that sleep”, into which he either naturally fell, whilst he was meditating on the affair of Mary’s being with child; or rather into which he was cast by the Lord, on purpose that he might have a revelation of the will of God to him in a dream; and rising up from his bed or place where he was, immediately and without any delay,

did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him;

firmly believing that it was a messenger of God that

⁵⁹ See more of this in a book of mine, called “The Prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the Messiah, literally fulfilled in Jesus”, ch. 5. p. 92, 93

⁶⁰ So the Septuagint interpret the word in Isa 8:8.

was sent to him, and that this matter was of the Lord. Wherefore he

took unto him his wife,

that is, he publicly married her, whom he had before espoused, took her to his house, or continued her there, lived with her as his wife, and owned her to be such, and henceforwards had no more thoughts of putting her away.

Matthew 1:25

Ver. 25. **“And knew her not”,**

Or “but he knew her not”, και answering to the Hebrew וְ that is, had carnal knowledge of her, or copulation with her, though his wife. The words are an euphemism, or a modest way of expressing the conjugal act, and is a very ancient one, see Ge 4:1 and what has been used in nations and languages. And this conduct of his was necessary,

till she had brought forth her firstborn;

that it might be manifest not only that she conceived, being a virgin, but also that she brought forth, being a virgin: for both are signified in the prophecy before related, “a virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son”; which is all one as if it had been said, a virgin shall conceive, and “a virgin” shall bring forth a son. The “firstborn”⁶¹ is --- that which first opens the womb of its mother, whether any follows after or not, (Exodus 13:2 Exodus 13:13) (Numbers 3:12) . Christ is called Mary’s firstborn, because she had none before him, whether she had any after him or not; for her perpetual virginity seems to be no necessary article of faith: for when it is said,

Joseph knew her not till she had brought forth,

the meaning is certain that he knew her not before. But whether he afterwards did or not, is not so manifest, nor is it a matter of any great importance; the word “until” may be so understood as referring to the time preceding, that the contrary cannot be affirmed of the time following, (2 Samuel 6:23) (Matthew 23:39) and which may be the case here, and is indeed generally understood so; and it also may be considered as only expressive of the intermediate time, as in (Matthew 5:26) (Acts 27:33) as Beza observes. Christ was “her firstborn” as he was man, and the firstborn of God, or his first and only begotten, as the Son of God. It is further observed, that she “called his name Jesus”, as was foretold to her, or ordered her by the Angel, (Luke 1:31) and to Joseph, (Matthew 1:21) .

Matthew Chapter 2

Matthew 2:1

Ver. 1. **Now when Jesus was born,**

Several things are here related respecting the birth of Christ, as the place where he was born,

in Bethlehem of Judea;

so called to distinguish it from another Bethlehem in the tribe of Zabulon, Jos 19:15. Here Christ was to be born according to a prophecy hereafter mentioned, and accordingly the Jews expected he would be born here, Mt 2:4 and so Jesus was born here, Lk 2:4 and this the Jews themselves acknowledge;

“Such a year, says a noted⁶² chronologer of theirs, Jesus of Nazareth was born in Bethlehem Juda, which is a “parsa” and a half, i.e. six miles, from Jerusalem.”

Benjamin⁶³ Tudelensis says it is two parsas, i.e. eight miles, from it; and according to Justin Martyr⁶⁴ it was thirty five furlongs distant from it. Yea even they own this, that Jesus was born there, in that vile and blasphemous book⁶⁵ of theirs, written on purpose to defame him; nay, even the ancient Jews have owned that the Messiah is already born, and that he was born at Bethlehem; as appears from their Talmud⁶⁶, where we meet with such a passage.

“It happened to a certain Jew, that as he was ploughing, one of his oxen bellowed; a certain Arabian passed by and heard it, who said, O Jew, Jew, loose thy oxen, and loose thy ploughshare, for lo, the house of the sanctuary is destroyed: it bellowed a second time; he said unto him, O Jew, Jew, bind thy oxen, and bind thy ploughshare, for יליד מלכה משיחא “the king Messiah is born”. He said to him, what is his name? Menachem (the comforter); he asked again, what is his father’s name? Hezekiah; once more he says, from whence is he? He replies בירח מלכה ביחלחמ יהודה מנ “from the palace of the king of Bethlehem Judah”; he went and sold his oxen and his ploughshares, and became a seller of swaddling clothes for infants; and he went from city to city till he came to that city, (Bethlehem,) and all the women bought of him, but the mother of Menachem bought nothing.”

Afterwards they tell you, he was snatched away by winds and tempests. This story is told in much the same manner in another⁶⁷ of their writings. Bethlehem signifies “the house of bread”, and in it was born, as an ancient writer⁶⁸ observes, the bread which comes down from heaven: and it may also signify “the house of flesh”, and to it the allusion may be in 1Ti 3:16 “God manifest in the flesh”. The time of Christ’s birth is here expressed, in the days of Herod the king. This was Herod the great, the first of that name: the Jewish chronologer⁶⁹ gives an account of him in the following manner.

“Herod the first, called Herod the Ascalonite, was the son of Antipater, a friend of king Hyrcanus and his deputy; him the senate of Rome made king in the room of Hyrcanus his master. This Herod whilst he was a servant of king Hyrcanus (so in the⁷⁰ Talmud Herod is said to be חשמונאי בר דבאי a servant of the family of the Asmonaeans) king Hyrcanus saved from death, to which he was sentenced by the sanhedrim of Shammai; that they might not slay him for the murder of one Hezekiah, as is related by Josephus, l. 6. c. 44. and Herod took to him for wife Miriam, the daughter of Alexander the son of Aristobulus, who was the daughter’s daughter of king Hyrcanus.”

This writer tacitly owns afterwards⁷¹ that Jesus was born in the days of this king; for he says, that in the days of Hillel and Shammai (who lived in those times) there was one of their disciples, who was called R. Joshua ben Perachiah, and he was, adds he, רבו הנורי “the master of the Nazarene”, or of Jesus of Nazareth. Herod reigned, as this same author observes, thirty seven years; and according to Dr. Lightfoot’s calculation, Christ was born in the thirty fifth year of his reign, and in the thirty first of Augustus Caesar, and in the year of the world three thousand nine hundred and twenty eight, and the month Tisri, which answers to part of our September, about the feast of tabernacles; which indeed was typical of Christ’s incarnation, and then it may reasonably be thought that “the word was made flesh”, and eskhnwsen “tabernacled among us”, Joh 1:14. Another circumstance relating to the birth of Christ is, that

62 R. David Ganz. Zemach David, pars 2. fol. 14. 2.

63 Itinerarium, p. 48.

64 Apolog. 2. p. 75.

65 Toldos, p. 7.

66 Hieros. Beracot. fol. 5. 1.

67 Echa Rabbati, fol. 50. 1.

68 Hieron. Epitaph. Paulae. fol. 59. E. Tom. 1.

69 R. David Ganz. Zemach David, pars 1. fol. 24. 1.

70 R. David Ganz. Zemach David, pars 1. fol. 24. 1.

71 Ib. col. 2.

when Jesus was born--behold, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem;

these wise men in the Greek text are called magoi, “Magi”, a word which is always used in a bad sense in the sacred writings; hence they are thought by some to be magicians, sorcerers, wizards, such as Simon Magus, Ac 8:9 and Elymas, Ac 13:8 and so the Jewish writers⁷² interpret the word vwgm a wizard, an enchanter, a blasphemer of God, and one that entices others to idolatry; and in the Hebrew Gospel of Munster these men are called מוכשפין “wizards”. Some have thought this to be their national name. Epiphanius⁷³ supposes that these men were of the posterity of Abraham by Keturah, who inhabited a country in some part of Arabia, called Magodia: but could this be thought to be the name of their country, one might rather be induced to suppose that they were of the μαγοι, “Magi”, a nation of the Medes mentioned by Herodotus⁷⁴; since both the name and country better agree with these persons; but the word seems to be rather a name of character and office, and to design the wise men, and priests of the Persians. An Eastern⁷⁵ writer says the word is of Persic original, and is compounded of two words, “Mije Gush”, which signifies “a man with short ears”; for such was the first founder of the sect, and from whom they were so called. But in the Arabic Persic Nomenclator⁷⁶ {a} it is rendered “a worshipper of fire”, and such the Persian priests were; and to this agrees what Apuleius {b} says, that “Magus”, in the Persian language, is the same as “priest” with us: and Xenophon⁷⁷ says, that the Magi were first appointed by Cyrus, to sing hymns to the gods, as soon as it was day, and to sacrifice to them. The account given of them by Porphyry⁷⁸ is, that

“among the Persians they that were wise concerning God, and worshipped him, were called magoi, “Magi”, for so “Magus” signifies in their country dialect; and so august and venerable were this sort of men accounted with the Persians, that Darius, the son of Hystaspis, ordered this, among other things, to be inscribed on his monument, that he was the master of the Magi.”

72 T. Bab. Sabbat. fol. 75. 1. Gloss. in ib. & Sota, fol. 22. 1. & Sanhedrim, fol. 39. 1.

73 Contr. Haeres. l. 3. Haeres. 30.

74 Clio sive l. 1. c. 101.

75 Alfiranzabadius in Pocock. Specim. Hist. Arab. p.

146

76 In Ibid. {b} Apolog. p. 204.

77 Cyropaedia, l. 8. sect. 6.

78 De Abstinencia, l. 4. sect. 16.

From whence we may learn in some measure who these men were, and why the word is by our translators rendered “wise men”; since the Magi, as Cicero⁷⁹ says, were reckoned a sort of wise men, and doctors among the Persians: who further observes, that no man could be a king of the Persians before he understood the discipline and knowledge of the Magi: and the wisdom of the Persian Magi, as Aelianus⁸⁰ writes, among other things, lay in foretelling things to come. These came

from the east,

not from Chaldea, as some have thought, led hereunto by the multitude of astrologers, magicians, and soothsayers, which were among that people; see Da 2:2 for Chaldea was not east, but north of Judea, as appears from Jer 1:14 Jer 6:22. Others have thought they came from Arabia, and particularly Sheba, induced hereunto by Ps 72:10. But though some part of Arabia lay east, yet Sheba was south of the land of Israel, as is evident from the queen of that place being called the “queen of the south”, Mt 12:42. The more generally received opinion seems to be most right, that they came from Persia, which as it lies east of Judea, so was famous for this sort of men, and besides the name, as has been seen, is of Persic original. The place whither they came was Jerusalem, the “metropolis” of Judea, where they might suppose the king of the Jews was born, or where, at least, they might persuade themselves they should hear of him; since here Herod the king lived, to whom it seems they applied themselves in the first place. The time of their coming was, “when Jesus was born”; not as soon as he was born, or on the “thirteenth” day after his birth, the sixth of January, as it stands in our Calendar; or within the forty days before Mary’s Purification; since this space of time does not seem to be sufficient for so long a journey, and which must require a considerable preparation for it; nor is it probable if they came so soon as this, that after such a stir at Jerusalem, after Herod’s diligent search and inquiry concerning this matter, and his wrath and anger at being disappointed and deluded by the wise men, that Joseph and Mary should so soon bring the child into the temple, where, it was declared to be the Messiah by Simeon and Anna. Besides, immediately after the departure of the wise men, Joseph with his wife and child were ordered into Egypt, which could not be done before Mary’s Purification. But rather this their coming was near upon two years after the birth of Christ; since it is afterwards observed, that “Herod sent and slew all the children that

79 De Divinatione, l. i.

80 Hist. Var. l. 2. c. 17.

were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men”, Mt 2:16. This was the opinion of Epiphanius⁸¹ formerly, and is embraced by Dr. Lightfoot⁸², to whom I refer the reader for further proof of this matter.

Matthew 2:2

Ver. 2. **Saying, where is he that is born king of the Jews?**

These words were spoken to the Jews, or rather to Herod the king, or his ministers and courtiers, or to each of them, as the wise men had the opportunity of speaking to them; who make no scruple of his being born, of this they were fully assured; nor did they in the least hesitate about his being king of the Jews, who was born; but only inquire where he was, in what city, town, village, house, or family. The reason of their asking this question is,

for we have seen his star in the east.

By the star they saw, some understand an angel, which is not likely. The learned Lightfoot⁸³ is of opinion that it was the light or glory of the Lord, which shone about the shepherds, when the angel brought them the news of Christ’s birth, and which at so great a distance appeared as a star to these wise men; others, that it was a comet, such as has been thought to portend the birth or death of some illustrious person: but it seems to be properly a star, a new and an unusual one, such as had never been seen, nor observed before; and is called his star, the star of the king born, because it appeared on his account, and was the sign of his birth, who is “the root and offspring of David, and the bright and morning star”, Re 22:16. This they saw “in the east”; not in the eastern part of the heavens, but they saw it when they were in the east, that is, in their own country; and according to the best observations they were able to make, it was in that part of the heavens right over the land of Judea; from whence they concluded that the king of the Jews was born; but the question is how they should hereby know and be assured that such a person was born? To this it maybe replied, that there is a prophecy of Balaam’s which is thus expressed, “there shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel”, Nu 24:17 which is owned by some Jewish writers⁸⁴ to be a prophecy of the

Messiah; though the star there mentioned is considered by them as one of the Messiah’s titles; hence one who set up himself, and for a while was by some received as the Messiah, was called by them בר כוכבא “the son of a star”; but when he was discovered to be an impostor, they called him בר כוזבא “the son of a lie”: but I rather take it to be a sign of the Messiah’s coming, and the meaning is, when a star shall דרכ “walk” or steer its course from Jacob, or above, or over the land of Israel, then a sceptre, or sceptre bearer, that is, a king, shall rise out of Israel. Now this prophecy of Balaam, who lived in the east, might be traditionally handed down to this time, and be well known by these men; and who, observing such a star appear over the land of Judea, might conclude that now the sceptre bearer or king was born⁸⁵. Besides, Zerdusht or Zoroastres, the author of the sect of the Magi or wise men, and who appears to be a Jew by birth, and to be acquainted with the writings of the Old Testament, and with this prophecy, spoke of the birth of Christ to his followers; and told them when he should be born, a star would appear, and shine in the day, and ordered them to go where that directed, and offer gifts, and worship him. An Eastern writer, who affirms {m} what I have now mentioned, relates⁸⁶ the following speech as spoke by the wise men to Herod, when in conversation with him, about this matter:

“A certain person, say they, of great note with us, in a book which he composed, warned us in it, mentioning these things; a child that shall descend from heaven, will be born in Palestine, whom the greatest part of the world shall serve, and the sign of his appearance shall be this; ye shall see a strange star, which shall direct you where he is; when ye shall see this, take gold, myrrh and frankincense, and go and offer them to him, and worship him, and then return, lest a great calamity befall you. Now the star has appeared unto us, and we are come to perform what was commanded us.”

If this be true, we are not at a loss how they come by their knowledge, nor for a reason of their conduct. That the Jews have expected that a star should appear at the time of the Messiah’s coming, is certain, from some passages in a book of theirs of great value and esteem among

fol. 126. 3.

⁸⁵ See my book of the “Prophecies of the Messiah”, c. 7. p. 119, &c. {m} Abulpharag. Hist. Dynast. p. 54.

⁸⁶ lb. p. 70.

them, in which are the following things: in one place it is said⁸⁷,

“The king Messiah shall be revealed in the land of Galilee, and lo a star in the east shall swallow up seven stars in the north, and a flame of red fire shall be in the firmament six days;”

and in another place,⁸⁸

“When the Messiah shall be revealed, there shall rise up in the east a certain Star, flaming with all sorts of colours--and all men shall see it:”

once more it is affirmed as a tradition⁸⁹ that

“The holy blessed God hath determined to build Jerusalem, and to make a certain (fixed) star appear sparkling with seven blazing tails shining from it in the midst of the firmament--and then shall the king Messiah be revealed in all the world.”

Now this expectation of the appearing of such a star at the coming of the Messiah takes its rise from and is founded upon the above mentioned prophecy. It is said⁹⁰ that Seth the son of Adam gave out a prophecy, that a star should appear at the birth of the Messiah; and that a star did appear at the birth of Christ is certain from the testimony of the Evangelist, and seems to have some confirmation from the writings of the Heathens themselves. Some have thought that the star which Virgil speaks of, and calls⁹¹ “Caesaris Astrum”, “Caesar’s star”, is this very star, which he in complaisance to that monarch ascribes to him. Pliny⁹² makes mention

“of a bright comet with a silver beard, which was so refulgent that it could scarce be looked upon, showing in itself the effigies of God in human form.”

If the testimony of Chalcidius, a Platonic philosopher, taken notice of by many learned men, is genuine, and he not a Christian,⁹³ it is much to the purpose, and is as follows:

“There is also a more venerable and sacred history, which speaks of the rising of a certain un-

⁸⁷ Zohar. in Gen. fol. 74. 3.

⁸⁸ Zohar. in Exod. fol. 3. 3, 4.

⁸⁹ lb. in Numb. fol 85. 4. and 86. 1. {r} Vid. Wolf. Bibl. Heb. p. 1156.

⁹⁰ Vid. Wolf. Bibl. Heb. p. 1156.

⁹¹ Eclog. 9. v. 47. {t} Nat. Hist. l. 2. c. 25.

⁹² Nat. Hist. l. 2. c. 25.

⁹³ Vid. Fabricii Bibliothec. Latin. p. 142-146.

usual star; not foretelling diseases and deaths, but the descent of a venerable God, born for the sake of human conversation, and the affairs of mortals; which star truly, when the wise men of the Chaldeans saw in their journey by night, and being very expert in the consideration of celestial things, are said to inquire after the birth of the new Deity, and having found the infant majesty, to worship him, and pay their vows worthy of such a God.”

The end proposed by them in taking such a journey is expressed,

and are come to worship him;

that is, either to pay adoration to him as God, of which they might be convinced by the extraordinary appearance of the star, or be assured of by divine revelation or rather to give him civil homage and respect, as an illustrious person, as being king of the Jews.

Matthew 2:3

Ver. 3. **When Herod the king had heard these things,** That is, the report made by the wise men of the appearance of an unusual star, and of the birth of the king of the Jews, which they affirmed with all certainty, without any hesitation,

he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

Herod was troubled, his mind was disturbed and made uneasy, fearing he should be deposed, and lose his kingdom, to which he knew he had no just right and claim, being a foreigner; and “all Jerusalem”, i.e. all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who heard of this, were also troubled, and showed a concern at it with him; either feignedly, as knowing his jealousy, suspicion and cruelty; or in reality, because of tumults, commotions and wars, they might fear would arise upon this, having lost the true notion of the Messiah, as a spiritual king, saviour and redeemer. And hereby was fulfilled, in part, the famous prophecy in Ge 49:10 according to the sense of one⁹⁴ of the Targumists on it, who paraphrases it after this manner;

“Kings and governors shall not cease from the house of Judah, nor scribes, who teach the law, from his seed, until the time that the king Messiah, the least of his sons, comes, “and because of him”, יתיבון ממיא, “the people shall melt.”

that is, they shall be distressed and troubled, their hearts shall melt like wax within them; which was their present case, though perhaps the paraphrast may design

⁹⁴ Jonathan ben Uzziel in loc.

⁸¹ Contr. Haeres. l. 1. Haeres. 30. and l. 2. Haeres. 51.

⁸² Harmony, Vol. I. p. 205, 432, &c.

⁸³ Harmony, p. 205, 437, 438, Vol. I. Hor. Heb. p. 109. Vol. II.

⁸⁴ Targum Onk. Jon. & Aben Ezra in loc. Zohar. in Exod. fol. 4. 1. Abarbinel Mashmia Jeshua, fol. 4. 3. Tzeror Hamor,

the Gentiles.

Matthew 2:4

Ver. 4. **And when he had gathered all the chief priests,**

Here we have an account of Herod's conduct at this juncture; he calls a council, assembles the sanhedrim, gathers together the more learned persons in the city to consult with them upon this matter,

the chief priests,

all of which he gathered together, and which seem to be many; and were not only the then present high priest and his substitutes, but all the principal persons of the priesthood, who were chosen from the rest, into the great sanhedrim, or council: and by

the scribes of the people

are meant a sort of letter learned men, whose business it was to keep and write out copies of the law, and other things, for "the people"; they were the fathers of the traditions, and interpreters of the law to them; and therefore are called "the scribes of the people": as well also, because they were chosen from among the people, from any other tribe, and not from the tribe of Levi, from whom the priests were; so that one seems to design the "clergy", and the other the laity, in this assembly. The Septuagint render שוטריים "the officers of the people", by this same word the scribes, and scribes of the people, in Nu 11:16 Jos 1:10. The learned Dr. Lightfoot⁹⁵ conjectures, that the persons of note, who were present at this time, were Hillel the president of the council, Shammai the vice president, the sons of Betira, Judah and Joshua, Bava ben Buta, Jonathan ben Uzziel, the Chaldee paraphrast, and Simeon the son of Hillel.

He demanded of them,

or asked them with authority, as the chief captain did, Ac 21:33 "where Christ"; שְׂחֵרֵץ the Christ, the Messiah **should be born?**

that is, where was the place of his birth as fixed in their prophecies, where, accordingly, they believed and expected he would be born. Herod's pretence, no doubt, in putting this question was, that he might be able to satisfy the wise men of the East about this matter; though the true reason within himself was, that he might know where this new born king was, in order to destroy him.

Matthew 2:5

Ver. 5. **And they said unto him,** They answer without any hesitation, it being a generally received notion, and a thing well known among them, in Bethlehem of

Judea; and give their reason for it; for thus it is written by the prophet, that is, the prophet Micah, in whose prophecy, Mic 5:2 it stands, and is as follows:

Matthew 2:6

Ver. 6. **And thou Bethlehem in the land of Juda,** This prophecy, which the chief priests and scribes produced, as pointing at the place of Christ's birth, is owned by both ancient and later Jews⁹⁶ to be a prophecy of the Messiah. The difference between Micah and Matthew is easily reconciled. Bethlehem is called by Micah, Bethlehem Ephratah, and by Matthew, Bethlehem in the land of Judah, and both were one and the same place. Bethlehem Ephratah was in the land of Juda, as appears from the prophecy of Micah itself, from Ru 1:2 and the Septuagint version of Jos 15:60 and is described in this manner by Matthew, partly to distinguish it from another Bethlehem in the land of Zebulun, Jos 19:15 and partly because its other name Ephratah was now disused, and so unknown to Herod, who was unacquainted with the books and prophecies of the Old Testament. Micah says this place was

little among the thousands of Judah.

Matthew says, "not the least". But in this is no apparent contradiction, it might be "little" and yet "not the least"; besides, it might be "little" and "not little", or "not the least" in different respects, and at different times; it might be little, mean, and contemptible as to worldly splendour, riches, number of inhabitants, pompous buildings, &c. and yet not be little or mean, when considered as the place of the birth of many great persons, such as Booz, Jesse, David, &c. and especially Christ. It might be little in Micah's time, and yet not in Matthew's; especially since it had received a considerable additional honour by Christ's being born there. Moreover, the words in Micah may be rendered, by way of interrogation, "art thou little, or the least?" To which the answer in Matthew is, "no, thou art not the least", &c. or else the word rbd may be understood, and the text be translated thus; "it is a small thing that thou art among the thousands of Judah, for out of thee", &c. a great honour shall be conferred on thee, the Messiah shall spring from thee. Again, what Micah calls "thousands", are in Matthew called "princes"; the reason of this is, because the tribes of Israel were divided into thousands, and every thousand had its prince; so that though here is a difference in words, yet none in sense. What Micah styles "a ruler in

⁹⁶ Targum Jon. Jarchi, Aben Ezra, Kimchi & Abendana in loc. Abarbinel Mashmia Jeshua, fol. 62. 2. R. Isaac Chizuk Emuna, p. 279.

Israel", Matthew expresses by "a governor that shall rule or feed my people Israel"; but in this there is no contradiction. Add to all this, that it should be observed, that the Evangelist is not giving a version of his own, but of the chief priests and scribes; and therefore was it ever so faulty, they, and not he, must be chargeable with it; for he has acted the part of a faithful historian in giving it in the words in which they cited it⁹⁷.

Matthew 2:7

Ver. 7. **Then Herod, when he had privately called the wise men,**

As soon as he had got the intelligence of the place of the Messiah's birth, he called, or ordered the wise men to be brought into his presence, and that in a very private manner; lest the Jews, who knew his hypocrisy and deceit, should perceive his views, and enter into his designs, and so give the wise men some instructions, which would be prejudicial to the scheme he was forming in his own mind to destroy the young king; and having called them to him, he

inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

He took a good deal of pains in examining them, he sifted them, and inquired of them with much accuracy, and exactness, the precise time of the star's appearing to them, how long ago it was when it was first observed by them; that hereby he might exactly know the age of Christ, and the better execute the bloody design he had formed, should the wise men disappoint him; and the better detect an impostor, should another afterwards arise, and set up himself for the king of the Jews.

Matthew 2:8

Ver. 8. **And he sent them to Bethlehem,**

Having got out of them all that he could, and was for his purpose, he informs them of the place where they might find the person they came to inquire after, according to the account of it which the chief priests and scribes had given him; and then sends them away to Bethlehem, where Christ, according to prophecy, was to be born, and now was born. It may seem strange that neither any of the Jews, nor Herod, or any of his ministers and courtiers, should go along with these men to Bethlehem; since it was but a little way off, not above five or six miles from Jerusalem; and since the birth of such a person was no trivial thing, but an affair of great concern and importance. The Jews might not care to go, lest Herod should

⁹⁷ See my book of the "Prophecies of the Messiah", &c. ch. 6. p. 104-116.

suspect that they were going to revolt from him, and set up this new born king against him; and it might be a piece of policy in Herod and his courtiers not to accompany them, for they might imagine that the parents of the child would be jealous and afraid of them, and would therefore conceal it, when they would be in no fear of strangers: and no doubt but the wise providence of God overruled and directed this matter, that so the young child Jesus might be preserved from the bloody designs of this tyrant; who often takes the wise in their own craftiness, and carries the counsel of the froward headlong. When he dismissed them he gave them this charge and these orders,

go and search diligently for the young child;

go to Bethlehem, the place of his birth I have told you of, and there inquire and search in every house and family, omit none till you have found him;

and when you have found him bring me word again;

give me a particular account of him, who are his parents, and where he dwells,

that I may come and worship him also:

for they had declared, that the reason of their coming was to worship him; this he said hypocritically, in order to hide and cover his bloody intentions.

Matthew 2:9

Ver. 9. **When they had heard the king,**

With great care and attention, what he had told them of the birth place of the young child; the strict charge he had given them to search diligently for him, and then return to him with an account of the whole affair; and his expressions of respect to the new born prince, which they took to be said in great sincerity,

they departed;

took their leave of Herod and his court, and set forward on their journey from Jerusalem to Bethlehem:

and lo,

to their great surprise and joy,

the star, which they saw in the east,

then appeared; for, it seems, it had for some time disappeared: it looks as if it had been only seen at the time of Christ's birth, and when they were in their own country; for both here, and in Mt 2:2 they are only said to have seen it "in the east", that is, when they were in the east country; so that it seems from that time they had had no sight of it, not while they were on their journey, nor at Jerusalem; nor was it necessary they should. When they saw it in their own country, according to their best ob-

servation, it was over the land of Judea, and they were persuaded of it, that it was a certain sign that the king of the Jews was born: they therefore determine upon and prepare for a journey to Jerusalem, the metropolis of the nation, and where the king kept his court, to inquire for him; nor needed they the guidance of the star to direct them to a place so well known; but being in quest of him in an obscure place, and without any guide, this star appears to them; and, which is something very extraordinary,

went before them, till it came, and stood over, where the young child was.

This star had a motion, kept pace with them, and was a guide unto them, till it and they came to the place where Christ was; and then it stood directly over the house, so that they had no need to inquire of any person for him. It is certain from hence, that this star was indeed a very unusual one; its being seen in the daytime, its motion and standing still, its situation, which must be very low, and its use to point out the very house where Christ was, show it to be so; but though it was an unusual appearance, it should not be thought incredible.⁹⁸ Varro relates, that

“from the time Aeneas went from Troy, he saw the star Venus in the daytime, day after day, till he came to the field of Laurentum, where he saw it no more, by which he knew that those lands were fatal.”

The appearing of this star, and then its disappearing for a time, agree, in some measure, with the account the Jews give of the star which they expect will be seen at the coming of the Messiah; for they⁹⁹ say,

“after seven days that star shall be hid, and the Messiah shall be hid for twelve months--when he shall descend, the pillar of fire shall be seen as before, in sight, and afterwards the Messiah shall be revealed, and many people shall be gathered to him.”

Matthew 2:10

Ver. 10. **When they saw the star,**

Which by its appearance, size, brightness, &c. they knew to be the same with that which they had seen, when in their own country; they rejoiced with exceeding great joy; a “pleonasm” or a redundancy of expres-

⁹⁸ Apud Servium in Virgil Aeneid. l. 1. p. 471. Ed. Basil. 1586.

⁹⁹ Zohar in Exod. fol. 3, 4. & 71. 1.

sion frequently used by the Hebrews, see Joh 4:6 and the Septuagint there; setting forth the rapture, the excess of joy they were in upon the sight of the star. Very probably before this, their hearts were sad, their countenances dejected, and they greatly discouraged, having taken so great a journey, and as yet to so little purpose. They had been at Jerusalem, where they expected to have found him that was born king of the Jews; they had been at court, and conversed with men of the greatest figure and intelligence, and could get no tidings of him; people of all ranks and degrees seemed to be troubled at the account they brought; no body cared to go along with them to Bethlehem: all these circumstances no doubt were discouraging to them; but as soon as they saw the star their spirits revived, joy filled their hearts, cheerfulness appeared in their countenances; and they pursued their journey with inexpressible delight, till they came to the place where the illustrious person was they were seeking after.

Matthew 2:11

Ver. 11. **And when they were come into the house,** Which they entered without making any inquiry, being fully assured by the star’s standing right over it, that this was the house, and here was the king of the Jews, whom they were come to worship; and having entered in “they saw” some copies read euron,

they found the young child, with Mary his mother;

in her lap, or arms, or in the house with her, for by this time he might go alone. Joseph perhaps was not at home, but about his business; and which might be so ordered by the providence of God, that so these men might only see the mother of Christ, who had no real father as man; who had they seen Joseph, might have took him to be his proper father. Upon the sight of the young child,

they fell down

on their knees or faces to the ground, agreeably to the custom of their country,

and worshipped him

as a king; giving him the same civil honour and respect, as they were wont to do to their own kings and princes; which custom began with Cyrus: for so Xenophon¹⁰⁰ {c} says, that

”when the people saw him, pantev prosekunhsan, they all worshipped him; either because some were ordered to begin this custom; or else being amazed at the apparatus; or because he seemed to appear so great and beautiful; for before that time

¹⁰⁰ Cyropaedia, l. 8. sect. 23.

none of the Persians worshipped Cyrus.”

And when they had opened their treasures,

that is, their purses, bags or boxes, in which they put those things they brought with them necessary for their journey;

they presented,

or offered to him

gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh:

such things as they had; it being usual, not only with the Persians, but other eastern nations, to make presents to kings and great persons, when they made any addresses to them; which generally, among other things, consisted of gold, spices, myrrh, and the like, see Ge 43:11. Which last passage referred to, being a prophecy of the Messiah, has been thought by some now to have had its accomplishment, together with Isa 60:6 where frankincense as well as gold is mentioned, “they shall bring gold and incense” or frankincense; upon which a noted Jewish writer¹⁰¹ observes, that gold and frankincense shall be brought privately as a present to the king Messiah. According to the Ethiopians, these wise men were three, whose names they give us; the name of him that offered the gold, was Annoson; he that offered the frankincense, was Allytar; and he that offered the myrrh, Kyssad {e}. The Papists call them the three kings of Colen, and say they lie buried in that place.

Matthew 2:12

Ver. 12. **Being warned of God in a dream,**

It is likely they made a short stay at Bethlehem, might lodge there a night; at least laid themselves down a while to take some refreshment in sleep, after they had paid their respects to him that was born king of the Jews, and performed the whole business they came about; when in a dream they received a divine oracle, were admonished and counselled by God,

that they should not return to Herod:

which would have been going back again, and out of their way; there being a nearer one from Bethlehem to their own country, than to go by Jerusalem, though Herod had charged them to return to him. Whether they had promised him they would, is not certain; it is probable they might; however, they thought it most advisable to hearken to the divine oracle; wherefore,

they departed into their own country another way.

What became of these persons afterwards, and whether they were spiritually and savingly enlightened

¹⁰¹ R. David Kimchi. {e} Ludolph. Lex. Ethiop. p. 539, 542, 543.

into the knowledge of Christ; what a report they made of him when they came into their own country, and the success thereof, we have no account of, either in sacred or profane history.

Matthew 2:13

Ver. 13. **And when they were departed,**

That is immediately, or as soon as they were gone, or in a very little time after, probably the same night,

behold, the Angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream;

it is very likely the same angel who appeared to him in such sort, Mt 1:20 “saying arise”, awake out of sleep, and rise from thy bed directly,

and take the young child and his mother.

The angel does not say take thy wife and son; for though Mary was properly his wife, yet Christ was not properly his son. The child is also mentioned before the mother, not only because of his divine nature and office, in respect to which he was her God and Saviour; but because it was the preservation of the child that was chiefly regarded, and for which the providence of God was particularly concerned; wherefore Joseph is ordered to take them in proper carriages, and

flee into Egypt,

which was near to Judea, and so a fit place to flee to; for a long and tedious journey would not have been suitable to the mother and her young child. Moreover, Egypt was out of Herod’s jurisdiction; here he could not come at them, or have any power over them; besides, hereby a prophecy after mentioned was to have its accomplishment. Hence it appears to be lawful to flee from danger, from tyrants and persecutors, when the providence of God opens a way for escape. The angel goes on with his charge, and be thou there until I bring thee word: continue there, do not remove elsewhere, or return back, till I speak with thee, or order and command thee otherwise; and gives the reason for his appearing to him in such a manner, and giving such a charge;

for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him:

no less a person than Herod the king, a bloody minded man, revengeful, desperate, and resolute in whatsoever he undertakes, “will seek”, diligently search and inquire for, not his parents, Joseph and Mary, who might have been safe, but “the young child”, who was born king of the Jews, and which gave him a great deal of uneasiness; and that not to worship him, as he told the wise men, but

to destroy him,

to take away his life; to prevent which the angel was sent with this charge to Joseph: for though he was born to die for the sins of his people, his time was not yet come; he was to grow up to years of maturity, he was to be a preacher of the Gospel, to do many miracles and at last to lay down his life of himself, voluntarily, and not to be taken away from him without his knowledge and will.

Matthew 2:14

Ver. 14. **When he arose, he took the young child and his mother,**

That is, as soon as he awoke out of sleep, and rose from his bed, he did as he was commanded, he prepared for his journey; and very opportunely had the wise men presented their gifts; the gold they brought served to defray the expense of this journey, and which no doubt was so ordered by divine providence for this purpose. Joseph was very punctual and expeditious in obeying the command of God; he took the young child and his mother, **by night,**

the very selfsame night in which he had this notice; and which season was the most fitting to depart in for secrecy, and most commodious and agreeable to travel in, in those hot countries: hence it appears very manifest, that the coming of the wise men, and the departure of Joseph with Mary and Jesus into Egypt, could not be within a fortnight after the birth of Christ, nor any time before Mary's Purification; since such a journey must have been very improper and unsuitable, at any time within that period; but rather Jesus must be about two years of age, whether something under, or over, it matters not, when Joseph with him

departed into Egypt:

what part of Egypt he went into is not certain. The Jews say that Jesus went to Alexandria in Egypt, and which is probable enough; since this was a place greatly resorted to at this time by Jews, and where provision was made for their sustenance; though they greatly mistake the person with whom he went; for they say¹⁰² that R. Joshua ben Perachiah, whom they pretend was his master, went to Alexandria in Egypt, and Jesus with him. However, this is an acknowledgment of the truth of this part of Christ's history, that he was in Egypt; as also when they blasphemously and maliciously say¹⁰³ {g}, did not Ben Stada, by whom they mean Jesus, bring enchantments or magic, Myrumm Mypvk, "out of Egypt", in a cutting in the flesh? To which wicked accusation Arno-

102 T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 107. 2. Cabala R. Abraham.

Juchasin, fol. 16. 2.

103 T. Hieros. Sabbat. fol. 13. 1. Bab. Sabbat. fol. 104. 2.

bius seems to refer¹⁰⁴, when he says,

"perhaps we may meet with many other of these reproachful and childish sayings; as that he was a magician, that he performed all these things by secret arts, and that he stole strange sciences, and the names of mighty angels, out of the temples of the Egyptians."

Matthew 2:15

Ver. 15. **And was there until the death of Herod,**

Which was in a very short time; for Eusebius¹⁰⁵ says, that immediately, in a very little time after the slaughter of the children at Bethlehem, the divine vengeance inflicted diseases on him, which quickly brought him to his end; so that, according to the learned Dr. Lightfoot¹⁰⁶ {k}, Jesus was not above three or four months in Egypt. Now all this was brought about,

that it might be fulfilled;

not by way of accommodation of phrases to a like event; or by way of type, which has a fresh completion in the antitype; or as a proverbial sentence which might be adapted to any remarkable deliverance out of hardship, misery and destruction; but literally, properly, and in the obvious sense thereof;

which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet,

not Balaam, in Nu 23:22 or Nu 24:8 but in Ho 11:1 "when Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt": the meaning of which passage is, either in connection with the last clause of the foregoing chapter thus; "in a morning shall the king of Israel be cut off", כִּינֵר, "because Israel is a child", a rebellious and disobedient one, acting a very weak and wicked part; "yet I have loved him, or do love him", and "have called", or "will call", (the past tense for the future, frequent in the Hebrew language, especially in the prophetic writings,) "my son out of Egypt"; who will be obliged to retire there for some time; I will make him king, set him upon the throne, who shall execute justice, and reign for ever and ever; or thus, "because Israel is a child", helpless and imprudent, and "I love him", though he is so, "therefore I will call", or I have determined to call

my son out of Egypt:

who through a tyrant's rage and malice will be obliged to abide there a while; yet I will bring him from thence into the land of Judea, where he shall live and "help" my

104 Adv. Gentes, l. 1. p. 36.

105 Hist. Eccl. l. 1. c. 8. p. 25, 26.

106 Harmony of the New Testament, p. 6.

"servant", paidov¹⁰⁷, "child Israel"; shall instruct him in his duty, teach him the doctrines of the Gospel, and at last, by his sufferings and death, procure for him the pardon of all his transgressions; of which there is a particular enumeration in Mt 2:3. This is the natural and unconstrained sense of these words, which justifies the Evangelist in his citation and application of them to Christ's going to Egypt, and his return from thence, as I have elsewhere¹⁰⁸ shown.

Matthew 2:16

Ver. 16. **Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked,**

Herod, having waited a proper time for the return of the wise men, and they not coming, concluded he was tricked by them; though, no doubt, when they promised to return, and bring him word how things were, they seriously meant and designed a performance; but having met with a divine oracle, which ordered them another way, they thought it most advisable to obey God rather than man. Upon this,

Herod was exceeding wrath;

partly at the usage he met with from the wise men, who according to his apprehension had put a trick upon him; and chiefly because his scheme was broke, which was by them to come at the knowledge and sight of the young child, and privately dispatch him: and now he might fear, which increased his wrath, that the child would escape his hands, and in time be set up for king, to the prejudice of him and his family; wherefore, to prevent this, if possible, he

sent forth

his officers and soldiers, of his own will, without any show of law or justice, acting herein as an absolute and tyrannical prince,

and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under.

A most cruel and barbarous action, and agrees with the character given of him, that he was in the beginning of his reign, and it seems too in the latter end of it, כִּזְבוֹן אִישׁ דְּמִיּוֹ וּמַר "a bloody and deceitful man"¹⁰⁹: he slew, or ordered to be slain, "children", infants who had done him no injury, nor were capable of doing any, and whose parents also had not disobliged him; he slew the infants at Bethlehem, because this was the place of the Messiah's

107 Luke i. 54. {m} Prophecies of the Messiah, &c. p. 123, &c.

108 Prophecies of the Messiah p. 123, &c.

109 Ganz. Tzemach David, par. 1. fol. 25. 1.

birth, the knowledge of which he had got from the chief priests and scribes; he slew all of them, that there might be no possibility of the young child's escaping: and lest it should by any means escape to a neighbouring town or village, he slew all the children

in all the coasts thereof,

in all the territories of Bethlehem, in all the towns and villages around it, as many as were **from two years old and under:**

for of such an age he supposed the newborn king to be; he knew he must be near that age, but could not exceed it,

according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men;

of the appearing of the star to them, and when they concluded this great and famous prince was born. This cruel murder of the infants seems to be hinted at by Josephus¹¹⁰, where he says, that "many slaughters followed the prediction of a new king"; and is more manifestly referred to by Macrobins, a Heathen author, though the story is mixed and confounded with other things; who reports¹¹¹, that

"when Augustus heard, that among the children under two years of age, whom Herod king of the Jews ordered to be slain in Syria, that his son was also killed, said, it was better to be Herod's hog than his son."

Killing of infants as soon as born, or while in their cradles, is by the Jews ascribed to one Lilith, which, R. Elias¹¹² says, is the name of a devil, which kills children; and indeed such an action is truly a diabolical one.

Matthew 2:17

Ver. 17, 18. **Then was fulfilled that which was spoken,**

By the slaughter of the infants at Bethlehem was literally accomplished what had been predicted by

Jeremy the prophet,

in Jer 31:15.

in Rama was there a voice heard,

That this prophecy belongs not to the Babylonish captivity, but the times of the Messiah, appears from the whole context; which manifestly speaks of the miraculous conception of Christ, of the blessings of his kingdom to be enjoyed by his people, and of the new covenant to

110 Antiq. l. 17. c. 3.

111 Saturnal. l. 2. c. 4.

112 Methurgemau in voce tylyl. Vid. Buxtorf. Lexicon Rab. in cadem voce & Synagog. Jud. c. 4. p. 80.

be made with them, as I have shown in another place ¹¹³. Rama was not in Arabia, as Justin Martyr says ¹¹⁴, but a town in the tribe of Benjamin, Jos 18:25 and very near to Bethlehem in the tribe of Juda: between these two places, and near to both of them, was the grave of Rachel, Ge 35:19 for which reason, and also because Rama belonged to Benjamin, a son of hers, and where, no doubt, many children were destroyed in this massacre, as well as at Bethlehem, Rachel is introduced in the prophecy representing the sorrowful mothers of those parts,

weeping for their children;

whose distress and grief are signified by several words, “lamentation, weeping and great mourning”, to express the excessiveness thereof, for they

would not be comforted;

they refused to hear anything that might be suggested to them for their relief, because their children

were not,

i.e. were dead, were not in the land of the living, and no more to be enjoyed by them in this world. I cannot forbear transcribing a remark made by a noted Jew ¹¹⁵ upon that passage in Ge 35:20. “And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave”; to show, says he, that Jacob saw that this thing was of the Lord, and that it would be an help to her children, as it is written, “a voice was heard in Rama”, &c. wherefore he set a pillar upon her; and to show that the affair of her grave, that this *לחיה* “belonged to the time to come”, he says, “that is the pillar of Rachel’s grave unto this day”: he means, *יום הגאולה* “the day of redemption”. And Rachel, in the passage of Jeremy, the Jews ¹¹⁶ themselves own, means the congregation of Israel.

Matthew 2:18

See Gill on “Mt 2:17”

Matthew 2:19

Ver. 19. **But when Herod was dead,**

Who died, as before observed, a few months after this tragedy was acted; and, according to the ¹¹⁷ Jewish writers, on the seventh day of the month Cisleu, and which answers to the twenty fifth of our November: and was afterwards observed as a day of rejoicing by the Jews. The account which Josephus ¹¹⁸, and from him Eusebius

¹¹³ Prophecies of the Messiah, &c. p. 126, &c.

¹¹⁴ Dialog. cum Tryph. p. 304.

¹¹⁵ R. Abraham Seba Tzeror Hammor, fol. 47. 1.

¹¹⁶ Zohar in Exod. fol. 13. 1. & in Lev. fol. 8. 4.

¹¹⁷ Megillah Taanith apud Van Till. de anno, &c. Christ. Nat. p. 122.

¹¹⁸ De Bello Judaic. l. 1. c. 33. sect. 5. 7. & Antiq. l. 17. c. 9.

¹¹⁹, gives of his miserable death, is as follows; a burning fever seized him, with an intolerable itching all over his body, and continual pains of the colic; his feet swelled with a dropsy; he had an inflammation in the lower part of his belly: a putrefaction in his privy parts, which bred worms; a frequency and difficulty of breathing, and convulsions in all his members; he had a voracious appetite, a stinking breath, and his intestines abounded with ulcers; when he found that all means made use of were ineffectual, and that he must die, he attempted to lay violent hands upon himself, but was prevented, and soon after expired in a very miserable manner. Now some time after his death,

behold an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt.

It may be the same angel who appeared in the same manner, and ordered him to go into Egypt, with the young child and his mother; and who now brings him news of the death of Herod, and bids him return to the land of Israel; which shows the watchful providence of God, and the useful ministry of angels, concerned in the preservation of the infant Jesus.

Matthew 2:20

Ver. 20. **Saying, arise, and take the young child and his mother,**

Joseph strictly observed and obeyed the divine command of the angel, who had ordered him to continue in Egypt, till he brought him word what he should do, and where he should go: here he was with Mary and Jesus, when the angel bid him arise, and take them with him,

and go into the land of Israel.

He does not bid him go to Bethlehem or Nazareth, or any particular place, but the land of Israel, where he might go even into any part of it, without fear; and gives this reason for it, for they are dead which sought the young child’s life; meaning either Herod only, the plural number being put for the singular; or including Antipater his son with him, who might be equally concerned in seeking the life of Christ; since he was next heir, and whom Herod ¹²⁰ ordered to be slain about five days before his death; or else designing with him many of the executioners of the infants at Bethlehem, and thereabout; who might have been, as well as he, miserable instances of divine vengeance, for their concern in that barbarous tragedy.

¹¹⁹ Eccl. Hist. l. 1. c. 8. p. 25, 26.

¹²⁰ Joseph. de Bello Judaico, l. 1. c. 33. sect. 8, 9.

Matthew 2:21

Ver. 21. **And he arose and took the young child and his mother**

He exactly conformed in every circumstance to the orders given him, with respect to the persons he took, the place he went to, and the expeditiousness of doing it; and is an example of ready and cheerful obedience to the commands of God, worthy of imitation. We may learn from hence, as well as from some other instances already met with, a reason among others, why, though Mary was a virgin, and even if she was to continue so, yet she must be espoused to Joseph as her husband; that she might have one to take care of her and her young child, and be a means, under God, of preserving, protecting, and providing for them.

Matthew 2:22

Ver. 22. **But when he heard that Archelaus,**

This Archelaus was a son of Herod the great by Malthace Samaritan, and was appointed by him for his successor a little before his death, and was upon it declared king by the populace, the soldiers, and those that were in power; all which is affirmed by Josephus¹²¹, and confirms the account given by the Evangelist; with whose account agrees what the Jewish chronologer says¹²², that

”Archelaus, the second king of the family of Herod, reigned after his father’s death: and a little after he says, Caesar Augustus caused Archelaus to reign *החית אביו הורדו* “in the room of Herod his father”

which is the very phrase used by Matthew. Now this man was like his father, a very cruel wicked man; and, as the above chronologer says¹²³, he ordered his troops, and slew at the feast of the passover, in the temple of the Lord, “nine thousand persons”: though perhaps Josephus’s account is truest, who says¹²⁴, that he sent in his whole army upon the people, who had raised a sedition, and slew, whilst they were sacrificing, about “three thousand”; and this happened at the beginning of his reign, and indeed before he had scarce mounted the throne. And now the news of this might have reached the ears of Joseph, and be the reason why he

was afraid to go thither,

into Judea, where Archelaus reigned.

Notwithstanding being warned of God in a dream,

¹²¹ Ib. c. 28. sect. 7. &c. 33. sect. 1. & l. 2. c. 1. sect. 1.

¹²² Ganz. Tzemach David, par. 1. fol 25. 1.

¹²³ Ib.

¹²⁴ De Bello Jud. l. 2. c. 1. sect. 5.

who never failed to advise him when in difficulty and distress, he did not go back again to Egypt, but

turned aside into the parts of Galilee;

where Herod Antipas, another of Herod’s sons, was tetrarch or governor; who was a milder person, and not so cruel and tyrannical as Archelaus: besides, Galilee was an obscure place, where, Joseph might reasonably think, he should live with Mary and Jesus unobserved, and free from danger.

Matthew 2:23

Ver. 23. **And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth,**

Which was a city of Galilee, and where Joseph and Mary had both dwelt before, Luke 1:26 here they came and fixed their habitation,

that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet.

This affair of going into Galilee, and settling at Nazareth, was brought about with this view, to accomplish what had been foretold by the prophets, or prophet, the plural number being used for the singular, as in Joh 6:45. And indeed it is so rendered here in the Syriac, Persic, and Ethiopic versions; and designs the prophet Isaiah, and respects that prophecy of his in Isa 11:1 “and there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and *נֹר* “a branch shall grow out of his roots”; a prophecy owned by the Jews¹²⁵ themselves to belong to the Messiah, and which was now fulfilled in Jesus; who as he was descended from Jesse’s family, so by dwelling at Nazareth, he would appear to be, and would be “called a Nazarene, or Netzer, the branch”; being an inhabitant of Natzareth, or Netzer, so called from the multitude of plants and trees that grew there.

A Nazarene, as David de Pomis says¹²⁶,

”is one that is born in the city Netzer, which is said to be in the land of Galilee, three days journey distant from Jerusalem.”

Now though Christ was not born, yet because he dwelt at Nazareth, and was educated there; hence the Jews frequently call him *ישו הנזרי*, “Jesus, the Nazarene¹²⁷”; and sometimes only *הנזרי*, “the Nazarene” ¹²⁸. They also design him by *בן נזר* “Ben Netzer” ¹²⁹, of whom they say

¹²⁵ Targum, Jarchi, Aben Ezra & Kimchi in loc.

¹²⁶ Lexic Heb. fol. 141. 2.

¹²⁷ T. Bab. Avoda Zara, fol. 17. 1. Ganz. par. 2. fol. 14. 2. Abarbinel in Dan. fol. 44. 1.

¹²⁸ Ganz. par. 1. fol. 24. 2.

¹²⁹ T. Bab. Cetuboth, fol. 51. 2. & Gloss. in ib. Bereshith

a great many evil things: and that Christ is often called Jesus of Nazareth, or the Nazarene, and his followers Nazarenes, from the place of his habitation, is known to everyone. One of Christ's disciples is called Netzer in the Talmud¹³⁰, and made to plead for his life, because his name signified a branch, according to Isa 11:1. Surenhusius observes¹³¹, that the form לקיומ מה שנאמר "to fulfil what is said", used by the Talmudists, and which he takes to be the same with this here, is used by them, when they allege not the very words of Moses, or the prophets, but their sense, which is deduced as a certain axiom from them; and thinks it is applicable to the present case.

Matthew Chapter 3

Matthew 3:1

Ver. 1. **In those days came John the Baptist,**

The Evangelist having given an account of the genealogy and birth of Christ; of the coming of the wise men from the east to him; of his preservation from Herod's bloody design against him, when all the infants at Bethlehem were slain; of the flight of Joseph with Mary and Jesus into Egypt, and of their return from thence, and settlement in Nazareth, where Christ continued till near the time of his baptism, and entrance on his public ministry; proceeds to give a brief relation of John, the harbinger and forerunner of Christ, and the administrator of baptism to him: and he describes him by his name John, in Hebrew יוחנן, "Jochanan", which signifies "gracious", or "the grace of the Lord", or "the Lord has given grace"; which agrees with him, both as a good man, on whom the Lord had bestowed much grace, and as a preacher, whose business it was to publish the grace of God in Christ, Luke 16:16. This name was given him by an angel before his conception, and by his parents at his birth, contrary to the mind of their relations and neighbours, Luke 1:13. He is called by some of the Jewish writers¹³², John the "high priest"; his father Zacharias was a priest of the course of Abia, and he might succeed him therein, and be the head of that course, and for that reason be called a "high" or "chief priest"; as we find such were called, who were the principal among the priests, as were those who were chosen into the sanhedrim, or were the heads of these courses; and therefore we read of many chief priests, Mt 2:4. From his being the first ad-

ministrator of the ordinance of baptism, he is called John the Baptist; and this was a well known title and character of him. Josephus¹³³ calls him "John", who is surnamed ο βαπτιστης, "the Baptist"; and Ben Gorion having spoken of him, says¹³⁴, this is that John who שיה טבילה, "made", instituted, or practised "baptism"; and which, by the way, shows that this was not in use among the Jews before, but that John was the first practiser this way. He is described by his work and office as a preacher, he "came" or "was preaching" the doctrines of repentance and baptism; he published and declared that the kingdom of the Messiah was at hand, that he would quickly be revealed; and exhorted the people to believe on him, which should come after him. The place where he preached is mentioned,

in the wilderness of Judea;

not that he preached to trees and to the wild beasts of the desert; for the wilderness of Judea was an habitable place, and had in it many cities, towns, and villages, in which we must suppose John came preaching, at least to persons which came out from thence. There were in Joshua's time six cities in this wilderness, namely Betharabah, Middin, and Secacah, and Nibshan, and the city of Salt, and Engedi, Jos 15:61. Mention is made in the Talmud¹³⁵ of this wilderness of Judea, as distinct from the land of Israel, when the doctors say, that

"they do not bring up small cattle in the land of Israel, but they bring them up במדבר שביהודה, "in the wilderness which is in Judea".

The Jews have an observation¹³⁶ of many things coming from the wilderness;

"the law, they say, came from the wilderness; the tabernacle from the wilderness; the sanhedrim from the wilderness; the priesthood from the wilderness; the office of the Levites from the wilderness; the kingdom from the wilderness; and all the good gifts which God gave to Israel were from the wilderness."

So John came preaching here, and Christ was tempted here. The time of his appearance and preaching was in those days: not when Christ was newly born; or when the wise men paid their adoration to him; or when Herod slew the infants; or when he was just dead, and Archelaus reigned in his room; or when Christ first went

133 Antiq. l. 18. c. 7.

134 L. 5. c. 45.

135 T. Bab. Bava Kama, fol, 79. 9. 2.

136 Shirhashirim Rabba, fol. 13. 3.

R abba, fol. 67. 2. Abarbinel in Dau. fol. 44. 1.

130 T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 43. 1.

131 Biblos Katallages, p, 2, 3, 4, 197, &c.

132 Ganz. Tzemach David, par. 1. fol. 25. 2. Chronicon

Regum, fol. 54. 4.

to Nazareth; though it was whilst he dwelt there as a private person; but when John was about thirty years of age, and Christ was near unto it, Luke 3:23 an age in which ecclesiastical persons entered into service, Nu 4:3. It was indeed, as Luke says, Luke 3:1 in the "fifteenth" year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar; Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea; and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee; and his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea; and of the region of Trachonitis; and Lysanias, the tetrarch of Abilene; Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests.

Matthew 3:2

Ver. 2. **And saying, repent ye,**

The doctrine which John preached was the doctrine of repentance; which may be understood either of amendment of life and manners; for the state of the Jews was then very corrupt, all sorts of men were grown very wicked; and though there was a generation among them, who were righteous in their own eyes, and needed no repentance; yet John calls upon them all, without any distinction, to repent; and hereby tacitly strikes at the doctrine of justification by works, which they had embraced, to which the doctrine of repentance is directly opposite: or rather, this is meant, as the word here used signifies, of a change of mind, and principles. The Jews had imbibed many bad notions. The Pharisees held the traditions of the elders, and the doctrine of justification by the works of the law; and the Sadducees denied the resurrection of the dead; and it was a prevailing opinion among them all, and seems to be what is particularly struck at by John, that the Messiah would be a temporal king, and set up an earthly kingdom in this world. Wherefore he exhorts them to change their minds, to relinquish this notion; assuring them, that though he would be a king, and would have a kingdom, which was near at hand, yet it would be a heavenly, and not an earthly one. Hence the manner in which John enforces his doctrine, or the reason and argument he uses to prevail upon them to regard it, is by saying,

for the kingdom of heaven is at hand:

by which is meant not the kingdom of glory to be expected in another world; or the kingdom of grace, that is internal grace, which only believers are partakers of in this; but the kingdom of the Messiah, which was "at hand", just ready to appear, when he would be made manifest in Israel and enter upon his work and office: it is the Gospel dispensation which was about to take place, and is so called; because of the wise and orderly management of it under Christ, the king and head of his church

by the ministration of the word, and administration of ordinances; whereby, as means, spiritual and internal grace would be communicated to many, in whose hearts it would reign and make them meet for the kingdom of glory; and because the whole economy of the Gospel, the doctrines and ordinances of it are from heaven. This phrase, "the kingdom of heaven" is often to be met with in Jewish writings; and sometimes it stands opposed to the "kingdom of the earth"¹³⁷; by it is often meant the worship, service, fear, and love of God, and faith in him: thus in one of their books¹³⁸ having mentioned those words, "serve the Lord with fear": it is asked, what means this phrase, "with fear?" It is answered, the same as it is written, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom"; and this is מלכות שמים "the kingdom of heaven". And elsewhere they¹³⁹ ask, "what is the kingdom of heaven?" To which is answered, "the Lord our God is one Lord". Yea, the Lord God himself is so called¹⁴⁰, and sometimes the sanctuary; and sometimes they intend by it the times of the Messiah, as the Baptist here does; for so they paraphrase¹⁴¹ those words,

"the time of the singing of birds, or of pruning, is come; the time for Israel to be redeemed is come; the time for the uncircumcision to be cut off is come; the time that the kingdom of the Cuthites (Samaritans or Heathens) shall be consumed is come; and the time שמימ שנגלה של מלכות that "the kingdom of heaven shall be revealed" is come, as it is written, "and the Lord shall be king over all, the earth."

Very pertinently does John make use of this argument to engage to repentance; since there cannot be a greater motive to it, whether it regard sorrow for sin, and confession of it, or a change of principles and practice, than the grace of God through Christ, which is exhibited in the Gospel dispensation: and very appropriately does he urge repentance previous to the kingdom of heaven; because without that there can be no true and cordial embracing or entering into the Gospel dispensation, or kingdom of heaven; that is, no real and hearty receiving the doctrines, and submitting to the ordinances of it. Nor ought the Jews above all people to object to John's method of preaching; since they make repentance absolutely

137 Bereshit Rabba, fol. 7. 4.

138 Zohar in Exod. fol 39. 2.

139 Debarim Rabba, fol. 237. 2.

140 Zohar in Gen. fol. 112. 3.

141 Shirhashirim Rabba, fol. 11. 4.

necessary to the revelation of the Messiah and his kingdom, and redemption by him; for they say¹⁴² in so many words, that

“if Israel do not repent, they will never be redeemed; but as soon as they repent, they will be redeemed; yea, if they repent but one day, immediately the son of David will come.”

Matthew 3:3

Ver. 3. **For this is he that was spoken of,**

These are not the words of the Baptist himself, as in Joh 1:23 but of the Evangelist, who cites and applies to John a passage in the Prophet Isaiah, Isa 40:3 and that very pertinently, since that “chapter” is a prophecy of the Messiah. The consolations spoken of in Isa 40:3, were to be in the days of the king Messiah, as a writer of note¹⁴³ among the Jews observes. The Messiah is more expressly prophesied of in Isa 40:9 as one that should appear to the joy of his people, and “come with a strong hand”, vigorously prosecute his designs, faithfully perform his work, and then receive his reward; he is spoken of under the “character” of a “shepherd”, who would tenderly discharge the several parts of his office as such, which character is frequently given to the Messiah in the Old Testament: now the person spoken of in Isa 40:3 was to be his harbinger to go before him, proclaim and make ready for his coming; and what is said of him agrees entirely with John the Baptist, as the character given of him,

the voice of one crying,

Βωωντος, lowing like an ox; which expresses the austerity of the man, the roughness of his voice, the severity of his language; that he called aloud and spoke out, openly, publicly, and freely; and that he delivered himself in preaching with a great deal of zeal and fervency. The place where he preached was “in the wilderness”, that is, of Judea, where he is said before, in Mt 3:1 to come preaching. The doctrine he preached was,

prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,

which is best explained by what is said before, in Mt 3:2

repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

The Lord whom ye have sought, the Messiah whom you have expected, is just coming, he will quickly appear; prepare to meet him by repentance, and receive him by faith, relinquish your former notions and principles, cor-

142 T. Hieros. Taanith, fol. 63. 4. & 64. 1. & Bab. Sanhed. fol. 97. 2.

143 R. David Kimchi in Isa. xl. 1.

rect your errors, and amend your lives, remove all out of the way which may be offensive to him. The allusion is to a great personage being about to make his public appearance or entrance; when a harbinger goes before him, orders the way to be cleared, all impediments to be removed, and everything got ready for the reception of him.

Matthew 3:4

Ver. 4. **The same John had his raiment,**

The Evangelist goes on to describe this excellent person, the forerunner of our Lord, by his raiment;

the same

John of whom Isaiah prophesied, and who came preaching the doctrine in the place and manner before expressed,

had his raiment of camel's hair;

not of camel's hair softened and dressed, which the Talmudists¹⁴⁴ call גַּמְלִיָּם “camel's wool”; of which wool of camels and of hares, the Jews say¹⁴⁵ the coats were made, with which God clothed Adam and Eve; and which being spun to a thread, and wove, and made a garment of, they call¹⁴⁶ חֲמִילָה, and we “camlet”; for this would have been too fine and soft for John to wear, which is denied of him, Mt 11:8 but either of a camel's skin with the hair on it, such was the “rough garment”, or “garment of hair”, the prophets used to wear, Zec 13:4 or of camels hair not softened but undressed; and so was very coarse and rough, and which was suitable to the austerity of his life, and the roughness of his ministry. And it is to be observed he appeared in the same dress as Elijah or Elias did, 2Ki 1:8 in whose spirit and power he came, and whose name he bore, Luke 1:17.

And a leathern girdle about his loins;

and such an one also Elijah was girt with, 2Ki 1:8 and which added to the roughness of his garment, though it shows he was prepared and in a readiness to do the work he was sent about.

And his meat was locusts and wild honey;

by the “locusts” some have thought are meant a sort of fish called “crabs”, which John found upon the banks of Jordan, and lived upon; others, that a sort of wild fruit, or the tops of trees and plants he found in the wilderness and fed on, are designed; but the truth is, these were a sort of creatures “called locusts”, and which by the ceremonial law were lawful to be eaten, see Le 11:22. The

144 Misn. Negaim. c. 11. sect. 2. & Kilaim, c. 9. sect. 1. Talmud, Bab. Menachot, fol. 39. 2.

145 Bereshit Rabba, fol. 18. 2.

146 T. Hieros. Nedarim, fol. 40. 3.

Misnic doctors¹⁴⁷ describe such as are fit to be eaten after this manner;

“all that have four feet and four wings, and whose thighs and wings cover the greatest part of their body, and whose name is חֲנֹכַח “a locust.”

For it seems they must not only have these marks and signs, but must be so called, or by a word in any other language which answers to it, as the commentators¹⁴⁸ on this passage observe; and very frequently do these writers speak¹⁴⁹ of locusts that are clean, and may be eaten. Maimonides¹⁵⁰ reckons up “eight” sorts of them, which might be eaten according to the law. Besides, these were eaten by people of other nations, particularly the Ethiopians¹⁵¹, Parthians¹⁵², and Lybians¹⁵³.

And wild honey:

this was honey of bees, which were not kept at home, but such as were in the woods and fields; of this sort was that which Jonathan found, and eat of, 1Sa 14:25 now the honey of bees might be eaten, according to the Jewish laws¹⁵⁴, though bees themselves might not.

Matthew 3:5

Ver. 5. **Then went out to him Jerusalem,**

The uncommon appearance of this person, the oddness of his dress, the austerity of his life, together with the awfulness and importance of his doctrine, and the novelty of the ordinance of baptism he administered, and the Jews having had no prophet for some hundreds of years, and imagining he might be the Messiah, quickly drew large numbers of people to him. Some copies read “all Jerusalem”: that is, the inhabitants of that city, a very large number of them; and “all Judea”, a great number of people from all parts of that country. “All” is here put for “many”. And

all the region round about Jordan;

multitudes from thence, which seems to be the same country with that which is called “beyond Jordan”, Mt 4:25 and is distinguished from Judea as here. The Septuagint in 2Ch 4:17 use the same phrase the Evangelist does

147 Misn. Cholin. c. 3. sect. 7.

148 Maimon. & Bartenora in ib.

149 Misn. Beracot, c. 6. sect. 3. Terumot. c. 10. sect. 9. & Ediot. c. 7. sect. 2. & 8. 4.

150 Maacolot Asurot, c. 1. sect. 21.

151 Plin. Nat. Hist. l. 6. c. 30. Alex. ab Alex. l. 3. c. 11. Ludolph. Hist. Ethiop. l. 1. c. 13.

152 Plin. Nat. Hist. l. 11. c. 29.

153 Hieron. adv. Jovinian. fol. 26. Tom. 2.

154 Moses Kotzensis Mitzvot Tora precept. neg. 132.

here, and likewise in Ge 13:10.

Matthew 3:6

Ver. 6. **And were baptized of him,**

The place where they were baptized of him was, “in Jordan”; some copies read, “in the river Jordan”, as in Mark 1:5. As to the name of this river, and the etymology of it, the Jews say¹⁵⁵ it was so called שִׁירֵד מִדָּן “because it descended” from Dan, i.e. Leshem Dan, or Pamias, which they say is a cave at the head of it. It was in John's time and long after a considerable river, a river to swim in; we¹⁵⁶ read that “Resh Lakish הוּוּהוּ חַי בִּירְדֵּנָא was swimming in Jordan.” And elsewhere¹⁵⁷, that one day “R. Jochanan was swimming in Jordan.” Also it was a river for boats and ships to pass in, so that it was a navigable river; hence we read¹⁵⁸ הַיְבֵת הַיְרֵדָנָא “the boat of Jordan”, and of ships in it, and of such and such things being forbidden to be carried over Jordan in a ship¹⁵⁹; particularly,

“a man might not take the water of the sin offering, and the ashes of the sin offering, and carry them over Jordan in a ship.”

Pliny¹⁶⁰, Pausanias¹⁶¹, Solinus¹⁶², and others, speak of it as a very considerable and delightful river; see Jos 3:15. The Christians of Christ's time are called by the Jews, in a way of contempt, apostates, that received the doctrine of baptism, and were בִּירְדָּנָא טְבוּלִים “dipped in Jordan”¹⁶³. The manner in which they were baptized by him was by immersion or plunging them in the water: this may be concluded from the signification of the word baptizw where used, which in the primary sense of it signifies to dip or plunge; from the place in which they were baptized, “the river Jordan”; and from John's constant manner of baptizing elsewhere, who chose places for this purpose, where and because there was there much water; see Joh 1:28. The character of the persons baptized by him is this, they were such as were

155 T. Bab. Becerot. fol. 55. 1. Kimchi in Josh. xix. 47.

156 T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 9. 2.

157 T. Bab. Bava Metzia, fol. 84. 1.

158 {o} T. Hieros. Sabbat. fol. 7. 1. Midrash Kohelet, fol. 64. 2. {p} T. Bab. Yebamot, fol. 116. 2. Chagiga, fol. 23. 1. Sabbat. fol. 60. 2. Maimon. Hilch. Parah Adumah, c. 10. sect. 2. & Bartenora in Misn. Parah, c. 9. sect. 6.

159 T. Bab. Yebamot, fol. 116. 2. Chagiga, fol. 23. 1. Sabbat. fol. 60. 2. Maimon. Hilch. Parah Adumah, c. 10. sect.

160 Nat. Hist. l. 5. c. 15.

161 L. 5. p. 29.

162 Polyhist. c. 48.

163 Cosri, p. 3. sect. 65. p. 241. Ed. Buxtorf.

confessing their sins.

They were called to repentance by John's ministry, and had the grace of it bestowed upon them; being thoroughly convinced of sin, and truly sorry for it, they were ready to acknowledge and confess it to God and men; and such an abiding sense they had of it upon their minds, that they continued doing it: they were not only confessing their sins before baptism, which engaged John to administer it to them; since we find afterwards he refused to admit others, because of their want of repentance and fruits meet for it; but also whilst they were going into the water, and when they came up out of it, so full were they of a sense of sin, and so ready to own it. Even in baptism itself there is a tacit confession and acknowledgment of sin, for it represents the sufferings and death of Christ which were for sin, into which persons are baptized, and profess to be dead to sin thereby; and also the resurrection of Christ for justification from sin, which obliges the baptized person to walk in newness of life, see Ro 6:3 besides, in this ordinance believers are led to the blood of Christ, both for the cleansing and remission of their sins, which suppose filth and guilt, Ac 22:16 and Ac 2:38. Now this is the character given of the very first persons that were baptized by John, and ought surely to be attended to, by us; and as much care as possible should be taken, that none but such as have a true sense of sin, and are brought to an humble and hearty acknowledgment of it, be admitted to this ordinance.

Matthew 3:7

Ver. 7. **But when he saw many of the Pharisees,** This being the first place in which mention is made of the Pharisees and Sadducees, it may not be amiss to give some account of them once for all, and to begin with the Pharisees, and first with their name. Some derive this word from פָּר pharatz to "divide", to "make a breach", from whence Phares had his name Ge 38:29 so Jerom¹⁶⁴, who observes, that

"the Pharisees, who separated themselves from the people as righteous persons, were called "divisi, the divided."

And in¹⁶⁵ another place,

"because the Pharisees were "divided" from the Jews on account of some superfluous observations, they also took their name from their disagreement."

164 Trad. Heb. in Gen. fol. 72. D. Tom. 3.

165 Adv. Luciferian. fol. 49. K. Tom. 2. so Tertullian. praescript. Haeret. c. 45.

Origen¹⁶⁶ seems to refer to this etymology of the word, when he says,

"the Pharisees, according to their name, were διηρημενοι τινες και στασιωδεις, certain divided and seditious persons."

And true it is, that this sect often meddled with the affairs of the government, and were very ambitious of being concerned therein. Josephus¹⁶⁷ observes of queen Alexandra, that she governed others, and the Pharisees governed her; hence, though they were in great esteem with the people, they were rather dreaded than loved by the government. Others derive this name from פָּרשׁ "Pharas" to "expand", or "stretch out"; either because they made broad their phylacteries, and enlarged the borders of their garments; or because they exposed themselves to public notice, did all they could to be seen of men, prayed in the corners of the streets, had a trumpet blown before them when they gave alms, chose the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, greetings in the markets, and to be called of men "Rabbi": all which to be sure are their just characters. Others derive it from the same word, as signifying to "explain" or "expound"; because it was one part of their work, and in which they excelled, to expound the law; but this cannot be the reason of their general name, because there were women Pharisees as well as men, who cannot be thought to be employed in that work. The more generally received opinion is, that this name is taken from the above word, as signifying to "separate"; because they separated themselves from the men and manners of the world, to the study of the law, and to a greater degree of holiness, at least in pretence, than other persons. They were strict observers of the traditions of the elders; are said, to hold both fate and free will; they owned the resurrection of the dead, and that there were angels and spirits, in which they differed from the Sadducees. Or rather they have their name from פָּר, which signifies "a reward"; they being stiff defenders of the doctrine of rewards and punishments in a future state, which the Sadducees denied. The Talmudic writers¹⁶⁸ say, there were "seven" sorts of them, and if it would not be too tedious to the reader, I would give the names of them; and the rather, because some of them seem to tally with the complexion and conduct

166 Comment. in Joan. p. 115. Ed. Huet.

167 De Bello Jud. l. 1. c. 5. sect. 2.

168 T. Hieros. Beracot, fol. 14. 2. & Sota fol. 20. 3. Bab. Sota, fol. 22. 2. eight sorts are reckoned in Abot R. Nathan, c. 37. fol. 8. 4.

of the Pharisees mentioned in the scriptures. There were then,

1. פְּרוֹשׁ שִׁיכְמוֹ the "Shechemite Pharisee", who does as Shechem did; is circumcised, not on God's account, or for his glory, or because circumcision is a command of his, but for his own profit and advantage, and that he may get honour from men.

2. פְּרוֹשׁ נִיקְפֵי "the dashing Pharisee"; who walks gently, the heel of one foot touching the great toe of the other; and scarce lifts up his feet from the earth, so that he dashes them against the stones, and would be thought hereby to be in deep meditation.

3. פְּרוֹשׁ קִיּוּאֵי the "Pharisee letting blood"; who makes as if he shut his eyes, that he may not look upon women, and so runs and dashes his head against the wall, till the blood gushes out, as though a vein was opened.

4. פְּרוֹשׁ מְדוּכִיא the "depressed Pharisee"; who went double, or bowed down, or as others render the phrase, "the mortar Pharisee"; either because he wore a garment like a mortar, with the mouth turned downwards; or a hat resembling such a vessel; so that he could not look upward, nor on either side, only downward, or right forward.

5. פְּרוֹשׁ מֵה חוֹבְתֵי וְאִשְׁנָה the Pharisee, that said, what is my duty and I will do it? the gloss upon it is, teach me what is my duty, and I will do it: Lo! this is his excellency, if he is not expert in the prohibitions and niceties of the commands, and comes to learn; or thus, what is more to be done and I have not done it? so that he shows himself, or would appear as if he had performed all.

6. פְּרוֹשׁ יִרְאָה "the Pharisee of fear"; who does what he does from fear of punishment.

7. פְּרוֹשׁ אֱהָבָה "the Pharisee of love"; who does what he does from love; which the gloss explains thus: for the love of the reward of the commandment, and not for the love of the commandment of his Creator; though they say of all these there is none to be beloved, but the Pharisee of love.

When this sect first began, and who was the first author of it, is not easy to say; it is certain there were great numbers of them in the times of John the Baptist, and of Christ, and for some time after. The Jews say¹⁶⁹, that when the temple was destroyed the second time, the Pharisees increased in Israel.

Next let us consider the Sadducees, who they were, and from whence they sprung. These have their name not from דִּיק "Saddik righteous"¹⁷⁰, or דִּק "Sedek righ-

169 T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 60. 2.

170 So Eiphanus contr. Haeres. l. 1. Haeres. 14. Hi-

teousness", being self justitaries; for though they were, yet this would not have distinguished them from the Pharisees, who were likewise such; but from qwdu Sadok or Saduk, a disciple of Antigonus, a man of Socho¹⁷¹. The occasion of this new sect was this; Antigonus, among the instructions he gave to his scholars, had this saying;

"be not as servants who serve their master for the sake of reward; but be ye as servants that serve their master not for the sake of reward, and let the fear of God be upon you."

Which, when Sadok and a fellow scholar, whose name was Baithos, or Baithus, heard, not rightly understanding him, concluded that there was no future state of rewards and punishments; which notion they broached and had their followers, who from the one were called Sadducees, and sometimes from the other Baithuseans: these men held the Scriptures only, rejecting the traditions of the elders; they denied fate, and ascribed all to free will; they affirmed that there is no resurrection of the dead; that the soul dies with the body; that there is no future state after this life, and that there are neither angels nor spirits. Now when "John saw" or observed "many" of both these sects "come to his baptism"; not merely to see it administered, led thither by the novelty of the thing; but to submit to it, to which they might be induced by that very great character of a very holy good man, which John had got among the people; and they were desirous of being thought so too, and therefore desired to be baptized by him; but he knowing the men and their manners,

said unto them;

addressed them in a very severe style, quite contrary to their expectation, and the opinion the people had of them,

O generation of vipers!

It seems their parents before them were vipers, and they their offspring were like them, in hypocrisy and malice. The viper appears very beautiful outwardly, but is full of poison; it looks harmless and innocent, as if it neither could nor would do any hurt, its teeth being hid, but is a most deadly and hurtful creature: so these men, though they made specious pretences to religion and holiness, yet were full of the deadly poison of hypocri-

eron. Comment. in Matt. c. 22. l. 3. fol. 30. M. Tom. 9.

171 Abot R. Nathan c. 5. fol. 3. 1. Sepher Cosri orat. 3. fol. 187. 2. & R. Juda Muscatus in ib. Maimon. in Pirk. Abot. c. 1. sect. 3. Juchasin. fol. 15. 2. Ganz. Tzemach David. par. 1. fol. 20. 2. & Bartenora in Misn. Judaim, c. 4. sect. 6.

sy, malice, and error. A very disagreeable salutation this must be to men, who were desirous of being reckoned very religious, and who boasted of, and trusted in, their being the seed of Abraham; when they were the children of the devil, the seed of the old serpent, and the offspring of the worst of men, and in whom was verified the proverb, like father like son. John proceeds and asks, saying, “who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” who has suggested this to you? from whom have ye received this hint? who has pointed out the way to you to escape divine vengeance, or the ruin which will quickly come upon you? for by

wrath to come

is not meant hell fire, everlasting destruction, from which baptism could not save them; but temporal calamity and destruction, the wrath which in a little time came upon that nation to the uttermost, for rejecting the Messiah, and the Gospel dispensation; from which they might have been saved, had they given credit to Jesus as the Messiah, though only with a bare assent; and had they entered into the kingdom of heaven, or Messiah, the Gospel dispensation, by receiving its doctrines, and submitting to its ordinances, though only externally.

Matthew 3:8

Ver. 8. Bring forth therefore fruits,

That is, if you are truly penitent, if you have a proper sense of sin, and true repentance for it, do such works as are suitable to it, and will show the genuineness of it; for

fruits meet for repentance

are the same as “works meet for repentance”, Ac 26:20 and as a tree is known by its fruit, so repentance is known by good works; these are the fruits and effects of repentance, and which are proofs with men of the sincerity of it. Those which follow upon evangelical repentance are such as are mentioned in 2Co 7:11. Now let it be observed, that John insisted upon repentance, and a good conversation, attesting the truth of it as necessary prerequisites to the ordinance of baptism; and so Peter first urged repentance; and then proposed baptism, Ac 2:38 from whence one should think it may be rationally and strongly concluded, that none but truly repenting sinners, and such who have given proofs that they are so, are to be admitted to this ordinance.

Matthew 3:9

Ver. 9. And think not to say within yourselves,

John knew the sentiments of their minds, and the prevailing opinion they had given into, against which he cautions them; as, that because they were Abraham’s

seed, they were in a state of salvation, in the favour of God, and had a right to all privileges and ordinances: this they trusted in, and boasted of, and would often think of it within themselves, pleasing themselves with the thoughts of it, and speak of it to others;

we have Abraham for our father.

The Baptist was aware how ready they would be to object this to him; and therefore prevents their plea from hence in favour of their admission to baptism, by assuring them, that this would have no weight with him, nor give them any right to the ordinance he administered: hence it appears that it is not a person’s being born of believing parents that can entitle him to water baptism; or be a reason why it ought to be administered to him: if nothing more than this can be said in his favour, it is a plain case from hence, he ought to be debarred from it. The reason John gives why such a plea as this would be insufficient is,

for I say unto you;

I assure you of it; you may depend on it as a certain truth,

that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

To “raise up children” is an Hebrew way of speaking, and the same with *שָׂמַךְ אֶת הַיָּלְדִים* or *לְהַקִּימַם* to “raise up seed”, or a “name” to another, Ge 38:8 and signifies to beget children for another, who are to be called by his name. Some by “the stones” understand the Gentiles, comparable to stones, both for the hardness of their hearts, and their idolatry in worshipping stocks and stones; of and among whom God was able to raise, and has raised up, a spiritual seed to Abraham; who are of the same faith with him, who walk in his steps, and whose father he is: but then it must be supposed, according to this sense, that there were some Gentiles present, since John calls them “these” stones, pointing to some persons or things, that were before him; wherefore I rather think that this phrase is to be taken literally, and that John pointed to some certain stones that were near him, within sight, and which lay upon the banks of Jordan, where he was baptizing; for what is it that the omnipotent God cannot do? He could as easily of stones make men, as make Adam out of the dust of the earth, and then make these men, in a spiritual sense, children of Abraham; that is, believers in Christ, and partakers of his “grace; for if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise”, Ga 3:29. So that God stood in no need of these persons, nor had they any reason to boast of their natural descent from Abraham; since this in spiritual matters,

and in things relating to the Gospel dispensation, would stand them in no stead, or be of any advantage to them.

Matthew 3:10

Ver. 10. And now also the axe is laid,.... These words may be rendered, “for now also”, and contain in them a reason why they might expect future wrath; why they should bring forth good fruit; and why they should not trust to nor plead their descent from Abraham, because “the axe is now laid”: by which is meant, not the Gospel which now began to be preached by John; though this was like an axe laid to the root of, and which cut down, their pride and vanity, their self-confidence and glorying in their righteousness, holiness, carnal wisdom, and fleshly privileges: but rather; the axe of God’s judgment and vengeance is here designed, which, because of the certainty and near approach of it, is said to be “now laid”; and that not to some of the branches only, to lop them off, to take away from the Jews some particular privileges, but “to the root” of all their privileges, civil and ecclesiastical; even the covenant which God had made with that people as a nation, who was now about to write “Lo Ammi” upon them; so that henceforward they would have nothing to expect from their being the seed of Abraham, Israelites, or circumcised persons. The time was just at hand, when the Lord would take his “staff Beauty and cut it asunder, that he might break the covenant he had made with all the people”, Zec 11:10 in a short time their civil polity and church state would be both at an end. The Romans, who were already among them and over them, would very quickly come upon them, and cut them off root and branch; and utterly destroy their temple, city, and nation: and this ruin and destruction was levelled not at a single tree, a single person, or family only, as Jesse’s, or any others, but at the root of the trees:

of all the trees

of the whole body of the people; for the covenant which was made with them all being broke, and which was their hedge and fence, they were all exposed to the wild boar of the forest.

Therefore every tree,

every individual person, though one of Abraham’s children, and made never such a fair show in the **flesh, which bringeth not forth good fruit;**

does not perform good works from a right principle, to a right end, such as are meet for repentance; particularly, does not believe in the Messiah now ready to be revealed, which is the main and principal work; and does not continue so doing, and thus believing,

is hewn down and cast into the fire.

Temporal ruin and destruction shall come upon him; he shall not escape divine vengeance here, and shall be cast into everlasting burnings hereafter; which is quite contrary to a notion of theirs, that *בְּכֹחַ דְּאֲבֵרָהֻם* “by the merits of Abraham”, the Israelites shall be delivered from the fire of hell¹⁷².

Matthew 3:11

Ver. 11. I indeed baptize you with water, These words, at first view, look as if they were a continuation of John’s discourse with the Pharisees and Sadducees, and as though he had baptized them; whereas by comparing them with what the other Evangelists relate, see Mr 1:5 they are spoken to the people, who, confessing their sins, had been baptized by him; to whom he gives an account of the ordinance of water baptism, of which he was the administrator, in what manner, and on what account he performed it:

I indeed baptize you;

or, as Mark says, “I have baptized you”; I have authority from God so to do; my commission reaches thus far, and no farther; I can administer, and have administered the outward ordinance to you; but the inward grace and increase of it, together with the ordinary and extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, I cannot confer. I can, and do baptize, upon a profession of repentance, and I can threaten impenitent sinners with divine vengeance; but I cannot bestow the grace of repentance on any, nor punish for impenitence, either here or hereafter; these things are out of my power, and belong to another person hereafter named: all that I do, and pretend to do, is to baptize

with water,

or rather in water, as *בְּמַי* should be rendered. Our version seems to be calculated in favour of pouring, or sprinkling water upon, or application of it to the person baptized, in opposition to immersion in it; whereas the “preposition” is not instrumental, but local, and denotes the place, the river Jordan, and the element of water there, in which John was baptizing: and this he did

unto repentance,

or “at”, or upon “repentance”: for so *עַי* may be rendered, as it is in Mt 12:41 for the meaning is not that John baptized them, in order to bring them to repentance; since he required repentance and fruits meet for it, previous to baptism; but that he had baptized them upon the foot of their repentance; and so the learned Groti-

¹⁷² Zohar in Exod. fol. 34. 4.

us observes, that the phrase may be very aptly explained thus: "I baptize you upon the 'profession' of repentance which ye make." John gives a hint of the person whose forerunner he was, and of his superior excellency to him: he indeed first speaks of him as one behind him, not in nature or dignity, but in order of time as man;

but he that comes after me.

John was born before Jesus, and began his ministry before he did; he was his harbinger; Jesus was now coming after him to Jordan from Galilee, to be baptized by him, and then enter on his public ministry: but though he came after him in this sense, he was not beneath, but above him in character; which he freely declares, saying,

is mightier than I;

not only as he is the mighty God, and so infinitely mightier than he; but in his office and ministry, which was exercised with greater power and authority, and attended with mighty works and miracles, and was followed with the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit. Not to mention the mighty work of redemption performed by him; the resurrection of his own body from the dead; and his exaltation in human nature, above all power, might, and dominion. The Baptist was so sensible of the inequality between them, and of his unworthiness to be mentioned with him, that he seems at a loss almost to express his distance from him; and therefore signifies it by his being unfit to perform one of the most servile offices to him,

whose shoes I am not worthy to bear;

or as the other Evangelists relate it, "whose shoe latchet I am not worthy to unloose"; which amounts to the same sense, since shoes are unloosed in order to be taken from, or carried before, or after a person; which to do was the work of servants among the Jews. In the Talmud¹⁷³ it is asked,

"What is the manner of possessing of servants? or what is their service? He buckles his (master's) shoes; he "unlooses his shoes", and "carries them before him to the bath."

Or, as is elsewhere ¹⁷⁴ said,

he unlooses his shoes, or carries after him his vessels (whatever he wants) to the bath; he unclothes him, he washes him, he anoints him, he rubs him, he clothes him, he buckles his shoes, and lifts him up."

¹⁷³ T. Hieros. Kiddushin, fol. 59. 4. Maimon. & T. Bartenora in Misu. Kiddushin, c. 1. sect. 3.

¹⁷⁴ T. Bab. Kiddushin, fol. 22. 2. Maimon. Hilch. Mechirah, c. 2. sect. 2

This was such a servile work, that it was thought too mean for a scholar or a disciple to do; for it is¹⁷⁵ said, all services which a servant does for his master, a disciple does for his master, *הוּ מוֹחֲרֵת לִי מִנֶּגַל*, "except unloosing his shoes".

The gloss on it says,

"he that sees it, will say, he is a "Canaanitish servant":"

for only a Canaanitish, not an Hebrew servant¹⁷⁶, might be employed in, or obliged to such work; for it was reckoned not only, mean and servile, but even base and reproachful. It is one of their¹⁷⁷ canons;

"if thy brother is become poor, and is sold unto thee, thou shalt not make him do the work of a servant; that is, *בְּוֹרַת שֶׁל נְנָאִי*, any reproachful work; such as to buckle his shoes, or unloose them, or carry his instruments (or necessaries) after him to the bath.

Now John thought himself unworthy; it was too great an honour for him to do that for Christ, which was thought too mean for a disciple to do for a wise man, and too scandalous for an Hebrew servant to do for his master, to whom he was sold; which shows the great humility of John, and the high opinion he had of Christ. It has been controverted whether Christ wore shoes or not; Jerom affirmed that he did not: but it seems from hence that he did; nor were the Jews used to walk barefoot, but on certain occasions. The Baptist points at the peculiar work of this great person, in which he greatly exceeds anything done by him;

he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire;

referring, either to the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, to be bestowed on the disciples on the day of Pentecost, of which the cloven tongues, like as of fire, which appeared unto them, and sat upon them, were the symbols; which was an instance of the great power and grace of Christ, and of his exaltation at the Father's right hand. Or rather, this phrase is expressive of the awful judgments which should be inflicted by him on the Jewish nation; when he by his Spirit should "reprove" them for the sin of rejecting him; and when he should appear as a "refiner's fire", and as "fuller's soap"; when "the day of the Lord" should "burn as an oven"; when he should "purge

¹⁷⁵ T. Bab. Cetubot, fol. 96. 1. Maimon. Talmud Torn, c. 5. sect. 8.

¹⁷⁶ Maimon. Hilch. Abadim, c. 1. sect. 7.

¹⁷⁷ Moses Kotzensis Mitzvot Torah, precept. neg. 176

the blood of Jerusalem", his own blood, and the blood of the Apostles and Prophets shed in it, "from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning"; the same with "the Holy Ghost and fire" here, or the fire of the Holy Ghost, or the holy Spirit of fire; and is the same with "the wrath to come", and with what is threatened in the context: the unfruitful trees shall be cut down, and cast into the fire", and the "chaff" shall be burnt with unquenchable fire". And as this sense best agrees with the context, it may the rather be thought to be genuine; since John is speaking not to the disciples of Christ, who were not yet called, and who only on the day of Pentecost were baptized with the Holy Ghost and fire, in the other sense of this phrase; but to the people of the Jews, some of whom had been baptized by him; and others were asking him questions, others gazing upon him, and wondering what manner of person he was; and multitudes of them continued obdurate and impenitent under his ministry, whom he threatens severely in the context. Add to all this, that the phrase of dipping or baptizing in fire seems to be used in this sense by the Jewish writers. In the Talmud ¹⁷⁸ one puts the question, In what does he (God,) dip? You will say in water, as it is written, "who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand?" Another replies, *בְּוֹרַת שֶׁבִיל*, "he dips in fire"; as it is written, "for behold the Lord will come with fire". What is the meaning of *בְּוֹרַת בְּנִילֹחָא*, "baptism in fire?" He answers, according to the mind of Rabbah, the root of "dipping in the fire", is what is written; "all that abideth not the fire, ye shall make go" through the water. Dipping in the fire of the law, is a phrase used by the Jews ¹⁷⁹. The phrases of "dipping, and washing in fire", are also used by Greek ¹⁸⁰ authors.

Matthew 3:12

Ver. 12. **Whose fan is in his hand,**

The Jews had their hand fans, and which were like a man's hand; their names were *מִבְּר מוֹרֵה מִגּוֹב*; which, as Maimonides says¹⁸¹, were three sorts of instruments used in the floor, in form of a man's hand; with which they cleansed the wheat and barley from the straw; and their names differ according to their form: some have many teeth, and with them they cleanse the wheat at the end of the work; and there are others that have few teeth, no more than three, and with these they purge the wheat

¹⁷⁸ T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 39. 1.

¹⁷⁹ Tzeror Hammor. fol. 104. 4. & 142. 3. & 170. 1.

¹⁸⁰ Moschi Idyll. 1. Philostrat, Vit. Apollon, l. 3. c. 5.

¹⁸¹ In Misn. Celim. c. 13. sect. 7. Vid. Jarchi & Bartenora in ib. & in Misn. Tibbul. Yom. c. 4. sect. 6.

at first, from the thick straw. By the "fan", here is meant, either the Gospel which Christ was just ready to publish; by which he would effectually call his chosen people among the Jews, and so distinguish and separate them from others, as well as purify and cleanse them, or rather the awful judgment of God, which Christ was ready to execute, and in a short time would execute on the unbelieving and impenitent Jews: hence it is said to be "in his hand"; being put there by his Father, who "hath committed all judgment to the Son". That this is the meaning of the "Baptist", seems evident, since "fanning" is always, when figuratively taken, used for judgments, Isa 41:16. By "his floor", is meant the land of Israel, where he was born, brought up, and lived; of which the Lord says, "O my threshing, and the corn of my floor!" Isa 21:10. This, he says, "he will thoroughly purge" of all his refuse and chaff, that is, by fanning: so fanning and cleansing, or purging, are joined together, Jer 4:11 so *בַּרְר* is used for purging by fanning, in the Misnic writings¹⁸². By "his wheat", are meant his elect among the Jews, the chosen of God and precious; so called because of their excellency, purity, usefulness, solidity, and constancy: these he "will gather into his garner"; meaning either some place of protection, where he would direct his people to for safety from that wrath, ruin, and destruction; which should fall upon the Jewish nation; or else the kingdom of heaven, into which he would bring them, by taking them out of the world from the evil to come. By "the chaff", are meant wicked and ungodly persons, such as are destitute of the grace of God, whether professors, or profane; being empty, barren, and unfruitful; and so good for nothing but the fire, which therefore "he will burn with unquenchable fire", of divine wrath and vengeance: an allusion to a custom among the Jews, who, when they purified the increase of their unclean fields, gathered it together in an "area" or floor, in the midst of them, and then sifted it with sieves; one sort with two sieves, another with three, that they might thoroughly purge it, and burnt the chaff and stalks ¹⁸³; see Isa 5:24.

Matthew 3:13

Ver. 13. **Then cometh Jesus,**

That is, when John had been some time preaching the doctrine of repentance, and administering the ordinance of baptism; for which, time must be allowed, since he went into all the country about Jordan, and preached

¹⁸² Misn. Sabbat. c. 7. sect. 2. & Gittin, c. 5. sect. 9.

¹⁸³ Misn. Oholot. c. 18. sect. 2.

unto them, and baptized such large numbers: very probably it might be six months from his first entrance on his ministry; since there was this difference in their age, and so might be in their baptism and preaching. Now when John had given notice of the Messiah's coming, and so had prepared his way; had declared the excellency of his person, the nature of his work, and office, and had raised in the people an expectation of him,

then cometh Jesus from Galilee;

from Nazareth of Galilee, Mark 1:9 where he had lived for many years, as the Jews¹⁸⁴ themselves own; in great obscurity, in all obedience to God, in subjection to his parents, exercising a conscience void of offence towards God and man, and employing his time in devotion and business: from hence he came to Jordan to John, who was baptizing there; which shows the great humility of Christ, who comes to John, and does not send for him, though John was his servant, and he was his Lord and Master; and also his cheerful and voluntary subjection to the ordinance of baptism, since of himself, of his own accord, he took this long and fatiguing journey; for Nazareth, according to David de Pomis¹⁸⁵, was three days journey from Jerusalem, though somewhat nearer Jordan; the end and design of his coming was

to be baptized of him.

It may reasonably be inquired what should be Christ's view in desiring to be baptized; it could not be to take away original or actual sin, since he had neither; nor has baptism any such efficacy to do this, in those who have either or both: but, it was to show his approbation of John's baptism, and to bear a testimony of it, that it was from heaven; and also that he himself might receive a testimony both from heaven, and from John, that he was the Son of God and true Messiah, before he entered upon his public ministry, into which he was in some measure initiated and installed hereby; and moreover, to set an example to his followers, and thereby engage their attention and subjection to this ordinance; and, in a word, as he himself says, to fulfil all righteousness.

Matthew 3:14

Ver. 14. **But John forbade him, saying,**

It appears from hence, that John knew Christ before he baptized him, and before he saw the Spirit descending and abiding on him, Joh 1:33 wherefore that was not a signal, whereby he should first know him but whereby his knowledge of him should be confirmed; which

knowledge of him he had, not through his kindred to him, or by any conversation he had with him before, but by immediate, divine revelation: upon which account he "forbade him"; refused to administer the ordinance to him; earnestly entreated that he would not insist upon it; desired to be excused being concerned herein: and this he did, partly lest the people should think Christ was not so great a person as he had represented him to be; yea, that he was one of the penitent sinners John had admitted to his baptism; and chiefly because of the majesty and dignity of Christ's person, who he knew stood in no need of such an outward ordinance; and because of his own unworthiness to administer it to him, as is evident from what follows,

I have need to be baptized of thee;

not with water baptism, which Christ never administered, but with the baptism of the Spirit, which was his peculiar office. Hence we learn, that though John was so holy a man, was filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb, had such large measures of grace, and lived such an exemplary life and conversation; yet was far from thinking, that he was perfect and righteous in himself, but stood in need of Christ, and of more grace from him. He seems surprised that Christ should come to him, and make such a motion to him; when it was his duty and privilege to come to him daily for fresh supplies of grace, and always to trust in him for life and salvation;

and comest thou to me?

who am of the earth, earthly, when thou art the Lord from heaven; "to me", a poor sinful creature, when thou art the Holy One of God; "to me", who am thy servant, when thou art Lord of all; "to me", who always stand in need of thy grace, when thou art God all sufficient.

Matthew 3:15

Ver. 15. **And Jesus answering, said unto him,**

This is an Hebrew way of speaking, often used in the Old Testament, and answers תָּנִי וְאֶמְרָךְ; see Job 3:1. He replied to John, who had made use of very forbidding words, after this manner,

suffer it to be so now;

let me have my request; do not go on to object, but comply with my desire; let it be done now, immediately, directly, at this present time; do not put me off with any excuse; it is a proper season for it, even "now", since the time is not yet come that I am to baptize with the Holy Ghost; and besides, thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. It became John to administer the ordinance of baptism to Christ, as he was his forerunner, and the

only administrator of it, and that he might fulfil the ministry which he had received; and as it became Christ to fulfil all righteousness, moral and ceremonial, and baptism being a part of his Father's will, which he came to do, it became him to fulfil this also. And since it became Christ, it cannot be unbecoming us to submit to this ordinance; and since he looked upon it as a part of righteousness to be fulfilled by him, it ought to be attended to by all those who would be accounted followers of him. Christ having strongly urged the conveniency and equity of the administration of baptism to him, which showed his eager desire after it, and the lowliness of his mind; and John being convinced, and overcome by the force of his reasoning, agrees to his baptism;

then he suffered him,

i.e. to be baptized in water by him, as he had requested, and accordingly did administer it to him.

Matthew 3:16

Ver. 16. **And Jesus, when he was baptized,**

Christ, when he was baptized by John in the river Jordan, the place where he was baptizing,

went up straightway out of the water.

One would be at a loss at first sight for a reason why the Evangelist should relate this circumstance; for after the ordinance was administered, why should he stay in the water? what should he do there? Everyone would naturally and reasonably conclude, without the mention of such a circumstance, that as soon as his baptism was over, he would immediately come up out of the water. However, we learn this from it, that since it is said, that he came up out of the water, he must first have gone down into it; must have been in it, and was baptized in it; a circumstance strongly in favour of baptism by immersion: for that Christ should go down into the river, more or less deep, to the ankles, or up to the knees, in order that John should sprinkle water on his face, or pour it on his head, as is ridiculously represented in the prints, can hardly obtain any credit with persons of thought and sense. But the chief view of the Evangelist in relating this circumstance, is with respect to what follows; and to show, that as soon as Christ was baptized, and before he had well got out of the water,

lo the heavens were opened:

and some indeed read the word "straightway", in connection with this phrase, and not with the words "went up": but there is no need of supposing such a trajection, for the whole may be rendered thus;

and Jesus, when he was baptized, was scarcely come

up out of the water, but lo,

immediately, directly, as soon as he was out, or rather before,

the heavens were opened to him;

the airy heaven was materially and really opened, parted, rent, or cloven asunder, as in Mark 1:10 which made way for the visible descent of the Holy Ghost in a bodily shape. A difficulty arises here, whether the words, "to him", are to be referred to Christ, or to John; no doubt but the opening of the heavens was seen by them both: but to me it seems that John is particularly designed, since this vision was upon his account, and for his sake, and to him the following words belong; "and he", that is,

John, saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

for this is what was promised to John, as a sign, which should confirm his faith in Jesus, as the true Messiah, and which he himself says he saw, and upon which he based the record and testimony he bore to Christ, as the Son of God; see Joh 1:32 not but that the descent of the Holy Ghost in this manner might be seen by Christ, as well as John, according to Mark 1:10. The Spirit of God, here said to descend and light on Christ, is the same, which in the first creation moved upon the face of the waters; and now comes down on Christ, just as he was coming up out of the waters of Jordan, where he had been baptized; and which the Jews¹⁸⁶ so often call מְשִׁיחַ הַרוּחַ, "the Spirit of the king Messiah, and the spirit of the Messiah". The descent of him was in a "bodily shape", as Luke says in Luke 3:22 either in the shape of a dove, which is a very fit emblem of the Spirit of God who descended, and the fruits thereof, such as simplicity, meekness, love, &c. and also of the dove-like innocence, humility, and affection of Christ, on whom he lighted; or it was in some other visible form, not expressed, which pretty much resembled the hovering and lighting of a dove upon anything: for it does not necessarily follow from any of the accounts the Evangelists give of this matter, that the holy Spirit assumed, or appeared in, the form of a dove; only that his visible descent and lighting on Christ was wseiperistera, as a dove descends, hovers and lights; which does not necessarily design the form of the creature, but the manner of its motion. However, who can read this account without thinking of Noah's dove, which brought in its mouth the olive leaf, a token of peace and reconciliation, when the waters were abated from off the earth?

¹⁸⁶ Bereshit Rabba, fol. 2. 4. & 6. 3. Vajikra Rabba, fol. 156. 4. Zohar in Gen. fol. 107. 3. & 128. 3. Baal Hatturim in Gen. i. 2. Caphtor Uperah, fol. 113. 2.

¹⁸⁴ Toldos Jesu, p. 6.

¹⁸⁵ Tzemach David, fol. 141. 2.

Give me leave to transcribe a passage I have met with in the book of Zohar¹⁸⁷;

”a door shall be opened, and out of it shall come forth the dove which Noah sent out in the days of the flood, as it is written, “and he sent forth the dove”, that famous dove; but the ancients speak not of it, for they knew not what it was, only from whence it came, and did its message; as it is written, “it returned not again unto him any more”: no man knows whither it went, but it returned to its place, and was hid within this door; and it shall take a crown in its mouth, and put it upon the head of the king Messiah.”

And a little after, the dove is said to abide upon his head, and he to receive glory from it. Whether this is the remains of some ancient tradition, these men studiously conceal, concerning the opening of the heavens, and the descent of the Spirit of God, as a dove, upon the Messiah; or whether it is hammered out of the evangelic history, let the reader judge.

Matthew 3:17

Ver. 17. **And lo, a voice from heaven, saying,**

At the same time the heavens were opened, and the Spirit of God descended as a dove, and lighted on Christ, and whilst it abode upon him, an extraordinary voice was heard; hence the note of attention and admiration, “lo”, is prefixed unto it, as before, to the opening of the heavens; being what was unusual and surprising; and as denoting something to be expressed of great moment and importance. The Jews, in order to render this circumstance less considerable, and to have it believed, that these voices from heaven heard in the time of Jesus, and in relation to him were common things, have invented a great many stories concerning *בת קול משמיים*, “the voice”, or “the daughter of the voice from heaven”; which they pretend came in the room of prophecy: their¹⁸⁸ {t} words are,”

after the death of the latter prophets, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, the holy Spirit departed from Israel, and thenceforwards they used “Bath Kol”, the “voice”. One time they were sitting in the chamber of the house of Guria in Jericho, and there came to them *תב קיל משמיים*, “the voice from heaven”, (saying:) there is one here, who is fit to

¹⁸⁷ In Num. fol. 68. 3, 4.

¹⁸⁸ T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 11. 1. Sota, fol. 48. 2. Yoma. fol. 9. 2.

have the Shekinah (or divine majesty) abide on him, as Moses our master; but because his generation was not worthy, therefore the wise men set their eyes on Hillell, the elder; and when he died, they said concerning him, this was a holy man, a meek man, a disciple of Ezra. Again, another time they were sitting in a chamber in Jabneh, and there came to them “the voice from heaven”, (saying:) there is one here, who is fit to have the Shekinah dwell on him; but because his generation was not worthy, therefore the wise men set their eyes on Samuel the little.”

I have cited this passage at large, partly because, according to them, it fixes the date and use of “the voice”; and partly, because it affords instances of it, wherefore more need not be mentioned; for, it would be endless to repeat the several things spoken by it; such as encouraging Herod to rebel, and seize his master’s kingdom¹⁸⁹; forbidding Ben Uzziel to go on with his paraphrase on the Hagiographa, or holy books, when he had finished his Targum on the prophets¹⁹⁰; declaring the words of Hillell and Shammai to be the words of the living God¹⁹¹; signifying the conception, birth, and death of¹⁹² {y} persons, and the like; all which seem to be mere fiction and imagination, diabolical delusions, or satanical imitations of this voice, that was now heard, in order to lessen the credit of it. But, to proceed; this extraordinary voice from heaven, which was formed in articulate sounds for the sake of John; and, according to the other Evangelists, was directed to Christ, Mark 1:11 expressed the following words, “this is my beloved Son”. “This” person, who had been baptized in water, on whom the holy Spirit now rested, is no other than the Son of God in human nature; which he assumed, in order to be obedient to this, and the whole of his Father’s will: he is his own proper “son”, not by creation, as angels, and men; nor by adoption, as saints; nor by office, as magistrates; but in such a way of filiation as no other is: he is the natural, essential, and only begotten Son of God; his beloved Son, whom the Father loved from everlasting, as his own Son; the image of himself, of the same nature with him, and possessed of the same perfections; whom he loved, and continued to love in time, though clothed with human nature, and the infirmities of it; appearing in the likeness of sinful flesh;

¹⁸⁹ T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 3. 2.

¹⁹⁰ Megilla, fol. 3. 1.

¹⁹¹ T. Hieros. Beracot, fol. 3. 2.

¹⁹² T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 22. 1. T. Hieros. Sabbat. fol. 8. 3.

being in his state of humiliation, he loved him through it, and all sorrows and sufferings that attended it. Christ always was, and ever will be considered, both in his person as the Son of God, and in his office as mediator, the object of his love and delight; wherefore he adds,

in whom I am well pleased.

Jehovah the Father took infinite delight and pleasure in him as his own Son, who lay in his bosom before all worlds; and was well pleased with him in his office relation, and capacity: he was both well pleased in him as his Son, and delighted in him as his servant, Isa 42:1 he was pleased with his assumption of human nature; with his whole obedience to the law; and with his bearing the penalty and curse of it, in the room and stead of his people: he was well pleased with and for his righteousness, sacrifice and atonement; whereby his law was fulfilled, and his justice satisfied. God is not only well pleased in, and with his Son, but with all his people, as considered in him; in him he loves them, takes delight in them, is pacified towards them, and graciously accepts of them. It would be almost unpardonable, not to take notice of the testimony here given to the doctrine of the Trinity; since a voice was heard from the “father” in heaven, bearing witness to “the Son” in human nature on earth, on whom “the Spirit” had descended and now abode. The ancients looked upon this as so clear and full a proof of this truth, that they were wont to say; Go to Jordan, and there learn the doctrine of the Trinity. Add to all this, that since this declaration was immediately upon the baptism of Christ, it shows that his Father highly approved of, and was well pleased with his submission to that ordinance; and which should be an encouraging motive to all believers to follow him in it.

Matthew Chapter 4

Matthew 4:1

Ver. 1. **Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit,**

The Evangelist having finished his account of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ; of his ministry and baptism; and particularly of the baptism of Christ; when the Holy Ghost came down upon him in a visible and eminent manner; whereby he was anointed for his public work, according to Isa 61:1 proceeds to give a narration of his temptations by Satan, which immediately followed his baptism; and of those conflicts he had with the enemy of mankind before he entered on his public ministry. The occasion, nature, and success of these temptations are here related. The occasion of them, or the opportunity given to the tempter, is spoken of in this and the

following verse. In this may be observed the action of the Spirit in and upon Christ; he

was led of the Spirit:

by “the Spirit” is meant the same spirit of God, which had descended and lighted on him in a bodily shape, with the gifts and graces of which he was anointed, in an extraordinary manner, for public service; of which he was “full”, Luke 4:1 not but that he was endowed with the Holy Ghost before which he received without measure from his Father; but now this more eminently and manifestly appeared and by this Spirit was he led; both the Syriac and the Persic versions read, “by the holy Spirit”. Being “led” by him, denotes an internal impulse of the Spirit in him, stirring him up, and putting him upon going into the wilderness: and this impulse being very strong and vehement, another Evangelist thus expresses it; “the Spirit driveth him, *εβαλλει* thrusts him forth into the wilderness”, Mr 1:12 though not against his will; to which was added an external impulse, or outward rapture, somewhat like that action of the Spirit on Philip. Ac 8:39. When he is said to be led up, the meaning is, that he was led up from the low parts of the wilderness, where he was, to the higher and mountainous parts thereof, which were desolate and uninhabited. The place where he was led was “into the wilderness”, i.e. of Judea, into the more remote parts of it; for he was before in this wilderness, where John was preaching and baptizing; but in that part of it which was inhabited. There was another part which was uninhabited, but by “wild beasts” and here Christ was led, and with these he was, Mark 1:13 all alone, retired from the company of men; could have no assistance from any, and wholly destitute of any supply: so that Satan had a fair opportunity of trying his whole strength upon him; having all advantages on his side he could wish for. The end of his being led there, was

to be tempted of the devil:

by “the devil” is meant “Satan” the prince of devils, the enemy of mankind, the old serpent, who has his name here from accusing and calumniating; so the Syriac calls him *קרא אכל*, the accuser, or publisher of accusations. He was the accuser of God to men, and is the accuser of men to God; his principal business is to tempt, and Christ was brought here to be tempted by him, that he might be tried before he entered on his public work; that he might be in all things like unto his brethren; that he might have a heart as man, as well as power, as God, to succour them that are tempted; and that Satan, whose works he came to destroy, might have a specimen of his power, and expect, in a short time, the ruin of his king-

dom by him. The time when this was done was “then”; when Jesus had been baptized by John; when the Holy Ghost descended on him, and he was full of it; when he had such a testimony from his Father of his relation to him, affection for him, and delight in him; “then” was he led, “immediately”, as Mark says, Mark 1:12. As soon as all this was done, directly upon this, he was had into the wilderness to be tempted by and to combat with Satan; and so it often is, that after sweet communion with God in his ordinances, after large discoveries of his love and interest in him follow sore temptations, trials, and exercises. There is a very great resemblance and conformity between Christ and his people in these things.

Matthew 4:2

Ver. 2. **And when he had fasted forty days.**

As Moses did, when he was about to deliver the law to the Israelites, Ex 34:28 and as Elijah did, when he bore his testimony for the Lord of hosts, 1Ki 19:8 so did Christ, when he was about to publish the Gospel of his grace, and bear witness to the truth. “Forty nights” as well as days, are mentioned; partly to show that these were whole entire days, consisting of twenty four hours; and partly to distinguish this fast of Christ from the common fastings of the Jews, who used to eat in the night, though they fasted in the day: for according to their canons¹⁹³, they might eat and drink as soon as it was dark, and that till cock crowing; and others say, till break of day. Maimonides¹⁹⁴ says, they might eat and drink at night, in all fasts, except the ninth of Ab. What is very surprising in this fasting of our Lord, which was made and recorded, not for our imitation, is, that during the whole time he should not be attended with hunger; for it is added,

he was afterwards an hungered;

that is, as Luke says, “when” the “forty” days “were ended”, Luke 4:2 which seized upon him, and is related, both to express the reality of his human nature, which though miraculously supported for so long a time without food, and insensible of hunger, yet at length had appetite for food; and also that very advantageous opportunity Satan had to attack him in the manner he did, with his first temptation.

Matthew 4:3

Ver. 3. **And when the tempter came to him**

By “the tempter”, is meant the devil, see 1Th 3:5 so called, because it is his principal work and business, in

193 T. Bab. Taanith, fol. 12. 1, 2. Misn. Taanith, c. 1. sect. 5.

194 Hilch. Taanith, c. 5. sect. 5.

which he employs himself, to solicit men to sin; and tempt them either to deny, or call in question the being of God, arraign his perfections, murmur at his providences, and disbelieve his promises. When he is here said to come to Christ at the end of forty days and nights, we are not to suppose, that he now first began to tempt him; for the other Evangelists expressly say, that he was tempted of him forty days, Mark 1:13 but he now appeared openly, and in a visible shape: all the forty days and nights before, he had been tempting him secretly and inwardly; suggesting things suitable to, and taking the advantage of the solitary and desolate condition he was in. But finding these suggestions and temptations unsuccessful, and observing him to be an hungered, he puts on a visible form, and with an articulate, audible voice, he said,

if thou be the Son of God;

either doubting of his divine sonship, calling it in question, and putting him upon doing so too; wherefore it is no wonder that the children of God should be assaulted with the like temptation: or else arguing from it, “if”, or “seeing thou art the Son of God”; for he must know that he was, by the voice which came from heaven, and declared it: and certain it is, that the devils both knew, and were obliged to confess that Jesus was the Son of God, Luke 4:41 by which is meant, not a good, or righteous man, or one dear to God, and in an office; but a divine person, one possessed of almighty power; and therefore, as a proof and demonstration of it, he urges him to

command that these stones be made bread,

pointing to some which lay hard by; εἶπε, “say” but the word, and it will be done. He did not doubt but he was able to do it, by a word speaking; but he would have had him to have done it at his motion, which would have been enough for his purpose; who wanted to have him obedient to him: and he might hope the rather to succeed in this temptation, because Christ was now an hungry; and because he had carried his point with our first parents, by tempting them to eat of the forbidden fruit.

Matthew 4:4

Ver. 4. **But he answered and said, it is written,**

The passage referred to, and cited, is in De 8:3 the manner of citing it is what was common and usual with the Jews; and is often to be met with in the Talmudic writings; who, when they produce any passage of scripture, say רבכתיב, “as it is written”. The meaning of this scripture is; not that as the body lives by bread, so the soul lives by the word of God, and doctrines of the Gospel; though

this is a certain truth: or that man lives by obedience to the commands of God, as was promised to the Israelites in the wilderness, and in the land of Canaan; but that God, in satisfying man’s hunger, and in supporting and preserving his life, is not tied to bread only, but can make use of other means, and order whatever he pleases to answer these ends; as, by raining manna from heaven, which is mentioned in the passage cited; and therefore there was no occasion to change the nature of things, to turn stones into bread; since that was not so absolutely necessary to the sustenance of life, as that it could not be maintained without it. Our Lord hereby expresses his strong faith and confidence in God, that he was able to support him, and would do it, though in a wilderness, and destitute of supply; whereby he overcame this temptation of Satan. Christ, in this, and some following citations, bears a testimony to, and establishes the authority of the sacred writings; and though he was full of the Holy Ghost, makes them the rule of his conduct; which ought to be observed against those, who, under a pretence of the Spirit, deny the scriptures to be the only rule of faith and practice and at the same time points out to us the safest and best method of opposing Satan’s temptations; namely, by applying to, and making use of the word of God.

Matthew 4:5

Ver. 5. **Then the devil taketh him up,**

This was done, not in a visionary way, but really and truly: Satan, by divine permission, and with the consent of Christ, which shows his great humiliation and condescension, had power over his body, to move it from place to place; in some such like manner as the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, Ac 8:39 he took him up, raised him above ground, and carried him through the air, “into, the holy city”: this was Jerusalem; for Luke expressly says,

he brought him to Jerusalem,

Luke 4:9 called so, because of the presence, worship, and service of God, which had been in it, though then in a great measure gone; and according to the common notions of the Jews, who say¹⁹⁵ Jerusalem was more holy than any other cities in the land, and that because of the Shekinah. The inscription on one side of their shekels was ירושלם יר הקדש, “Jerusalem, the holy city”¹⁹⁶. Satan frequents all sorts of places; men are no where free from his temptations; Christ himself was not in the holy city,

195 Bemidbar Rabba, fol. 183. 4. & Maimon. Hilch.

Beth. Habechirah, c. 7. sect. 14. & 6. 16.

196 Waserus de Antiq. Numm. Heb. l. 2. c. 5.

no nor in the holy temple; hither also he had him,

and setteth him upon a pinnacle,

or “wing of the temple”. In this place¹⁹⁷ the Jews set James, the brother of Christ, and from it cast him down headlong: this was the נרמא “the summit”, or “top” of it; and intends either the roof encompassed with battlements, to keep persons from falling off; or the top of the porch before the temple, which was 120 cubits high; or the top of the royal gallery, built by Herod, which was of such an height, that if a man looked down from it, he soon became dizzy¹⁹⁸. The view Satan had in setting him here appears in the next verse.

Matthew 4:6

Ver. 6. **And saith unto him, if thou be the Son of God,** He addresses him after the same manner as before; if, or seeing,

thou art the Son of God,

show thyself to be so; give proof of thy sonship before all the priests which are in and about the temple, and before all the inhabitants of Jerusalem;

cast thyself down

that is, from the pinnacle of the temple: for since thou art the Son of God, no hurt will come to thee; thou wilt be in the utmost safety; and this will at once be a full demonstration to all the people, that thou art the Son of God: for hither Satan brought him, hoping to have got an advantage of him publicly; otherwise, had his view only been to have got him to cast himself down from any place of eminence, and so to have destroyed himself, he might have set him upon any other precipice; but he chose to have it done in the sight of the people, and in the holy city, and holy place. Let it be observed, that Satan did not offer to cast him down himself; for this was not in his power, nor within his permission, which reached only to tempt; and besides, would not have answered his end; for that would have been his own sin, and not Christ’s: accordingly, we may observe, that when he seeks the lives of men, he does not attempt to destroy them himself, but always puts them upon doing it. To proceed, Satan not only argues from his divine power, as the Son of God, that he would be safe in casting himself down; but observing the advantageous use Christ made of the scriptures, transforms himself into an angel of light, and cites scripture too, to encourage him to this action; assuring him of the protection of angels. The passage cited is Ps 91:11 which expresses God’s tender care and concern

197 Euseb. Eccl. Hist. l. 2. c. 23.

198 Joseph. Antiq. Jud. l. 15. c. 14.

for his people, in charging the angels with the guardianship and preservation of them, in all their ways, that they might be secured from sin and danger. It does not appear that Satan was wrong in the application of this passage to Christ; for since it respects all the righteous in general, why not Christ as man? the head, as well as the members? And certain it is, that angels had the charge of him, did watch over him, and were a guard about him; the angels of God ascended, and descended on him; they were employed in preserving him from Herod's malice in his infancy; they ministered to him here in the wilderness, and attended him in his agony in the garden: but what Satan failed in, and that wilfully, and wickedly, was, in omitting that part of it,

to keep thee in all thy ways;

which he saw was contrary to his purpose, and would have spoiled his design at once; and also in urging this passage, which only regards godly persons, in the way of their duty, to countenance actions which are out of the way of a man's calling, or which he is not called unto; and which are contrary to religion, and a tempting God. Satan before tempted Christ to distrust the providence of God, and now he tempts him to presume upon it: in like manner he deals with men, when he argues from the doctrines of predestination and providence to the disuse of means, for their good, either for this life, or that which is to come; and if he tempted the Son of God to destroy himself, it is no wonder that the saints should be sometimes harassed with this temptation.

Matthew 4:7

Ver. 7. **Jesus saith unto him, it is written again,**

Christ takes no notice of the false and wrong citation of scripture made by the devil, nor of any misapplication of it; but mildly replies, by opposing another passage of scripture to him, De 6:16

ye shall not tempt the Lord your God,

thereby tacitly showing, that he had produced scripture to a very wrong purpose, since that could never contradict itself; and also, that for a person to neglect the ordinary means of safety, and to expect, that as God can, so he will, preserve without the use of such means, is a tempting him. The Hebrew word *תִּטְּוּ* "tempt", as Manasseh ben¹⁹⁹ Israel observes, is always taken in an ill part, and is to be understood of such who would try the power, goodness, or will of God. And which, as it is not fitting it should be done by any man, so not by himself; and perhaps he hereby intimates too, that he himself was

God; and therefore as it was not right in him to tempt God the Father, by taking such a step as Satan solicited him to; nor would it be right in any other; so it was iniquitous in the devil to tempt him who was God over all, blessed for ever.

Matthew 4:8

Ver. 8. **Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain,**

That is, he took him off from the pinnacle of the temple, and carried him through the air, to one of the mountains which were round about Jerusalem; or to some very high mountain at a greater distance; but what mountain is not certain; nor can it be known; nor is it of any moment; it has been said²⁰⁰ to be Mount Lebanon: here he **sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and glory of them.**

By "all the kingdoms of the world" are meant, not only the Roman empire, as Dr. Lightfoot thinks, though that was, to be sure, the greatest in the world at that time; but all the kingdoms in the whole world, which subsisted in any form, whether within, or independent of the Roman empire; or whether greater or lesser: and by "the glory of them", is meant, the riches, pomp, power, and grandeur of them. Now the view which Satan gave Christ of all this, was not by a representation of them in a picture, or in a map, or in any geographical tables, as²⁰¹ some have thought; since to do this there was no need to take him up into a mountain, and that an exceeding high one; for this might have been done in a valley, as well as in a mountain: and yet it could not be a true and real sight of these things he gave him; for there is no mountain in the world, from whence can be beheld any one kingdom, much less all the kingdoms of the world; and still less the riches, glory, pomp, and power of them: but this was a fictitious, delusive representation, which Satan was permitted to make; to cover which, and that it might be thought to be real, he took Christ into an high mountain; where he proposed an object externally to his sight, and internally to his imagination, which represented, in appearance, the whole world, and all its glory. Xiphilinus²⁰² reports of Severus, that he dreamed, he was had by a certain person, to a place where he could look all around him, and from thence he beheld *πασαν μεν την γην, πασαν δε την θαλασσαν* "all the earth, and also all the sea"; which was all in imagination. Satan thought to have imposed on Christ this way, but failed in his at-

²⁰⁰ Vid. Fabricii Bibliograph. Antiq. c. 5. p. 137.

²⁰¹ Vid. Fabricium, ibid. & Grotium in loc.

²⁰² Apud Fabricium, ib.

¹⁹⁹ Conciliat. in Deut. Quaest. 3. p. 223.

tempt. Luke says, this was done

in a moment of time,

in the twinkling of an eye; as these two phrases are joined together, 1Co 15:52 or "in a point of time". The word *stigmh*, used by Luke 4:5 sometimes signifies a mathematical point, which Zeno says²⁰³ is the end of the line, and the least mark; to which the allusion may be here, and designs the smallest part of time that can be conceived of. Antoninus the emperor uses the word, as here, for a point of time; and says²⁰⁴ {}, that the time of human life, and the whole present time, is but *stigmh* a point. Would you know what a moment, or point of time is, according to the calculation of the Jewish doctors, take the account as follows; though in it they differ: a moment, say they²⁰⁵, is the fifty six thousandth, elsewhere²⁰⁶ {n}, the fifty eight thousandth, and in another place²⁰⁷ {o}, the fifty three thousandth and eight hundredth and forty eighth, or, according to another account ²⁰⁸{p}, eighty eighth part of an hour. If this could be thought to be a true and exact account of a moment, or point of time, it was a very short space of time indeed, in which the devil showed to Christ the kingdoms of this world, and their glory; but this is not more surprising than his vanity, pride, and impudence, in the following verse.

Matthew 4:9

Ver. 9. **And saith unto him, all these things will I give thee**

This is more fully and strongly expressed by the Evangelist Luke. Luke 4:6.

And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever

I will, I give it--all shall be thine. In which words he sets up himself to be the God of this world, and the sovereign disposer of it: he pretends it was delivered to him by the true God, who had left it to his arbitrary disposal; and that he could invest Christ with the power and government of it, and put him in possession of all its glory, and make good and support his title to it, and interest in it. Never was such monstrous arrogance expressed as this; when this poor, proud, wretched creature, has not the disposal, at his pleasure, of anyone single thing; no

²⁰³ Vid. Laertium in Vit. Zenou.

²⁰⁴ De seipso, l. 2. c. 17. & l. 6. c. 36.

²⁰⁵ T. Hieros. Beracot, fol. 2. 4.

²⁰⁶ T. Bab Beracot. fol. 7. 1.

²⁰⁷ Avoda Zara, fol. 4. 1.

²⁰⁸ T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 7. 1.

not the least in the whole universe. He could not touch, neither Job's person, nor any of his substance, without divine permission; nor enter into an herd of swine without Christ's leave; and yet had the front to make an offer of the whole world, as if he had a despotic power over it; and that upon this horrid and blasphemous condition,

if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

This was the highest degree of effrontery and impudence. The devil is not content to be worshipped by men, but seeks for adoration from the Son of God: this opens at once his proud, ambitious, and aspiring views, to be as God himself; for with nothing less can he be satisfied.

Matthew 4:10

Ver. 10. **Then saith Jesus to him, get thee hence, Satan**

In Luke 4:8 it is "get thee behind me": and so some copies read here, and is expressive of indignation and abhorrence; see Mt 16:23 rebuking his impudence, and detesting his impiety: he had borne his insults and temptations with great patience; he had answered him with mildness and gentleness; but now his behaviour to him was intolerable, which obliged him to show his resentment, exert his power and authority, and rid himself at once of so vile a creature; giving this reason for it;

for it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

The place referred to is in De 6:13

thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him:

to fear the Lord, and to worship him, is the same thing. Worship includes both an internal and external reverence of God: the word "only" is not in the original text, but is added by our Lord; and that very justly; partly to express the emphasis which is on the word "him"; and in perfect agreement with the context, which requires it; since it follows, ye shall not go after other Gods. Moreover, not to take notice of the Septuagint version, in which the word "only" is also added, Josephus²⁰⁹, the Jewish historian, referring to this law, says, because God is one, *אֵל אֶחָד* "therefore he only is to be worshipped". And Aben Ezra²¹⁰, a Jewish writer, explaining the last clause in the verse,

and thou shalt swear by his name, uses the word "only"; and which indeed, of right, belongs to every clause in it. The meaning of our Lord in citing it is; that since the Lord God is the alone object of worship, it was horrid blasphemy in Satan to desire it might be given to

²⁰⁹ Antiq. Jud. l. 3. c. 5. sect. 5.

²¹⁰ In Deut. vi. 13.

him, and which could not be done without the greatest impiety.

Matthew 4:11

Ver. 11. **Then the devil leaveth him,**

In Luke 4:13 it says,

when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season,

or until a season. That is, having tempted him with all sorts of temptations, and tried him every way to no purpose; having gone through, and finished the whole scheme and course of temptations he had devised, without success; and having orders from Christ to depart, which he was obliged to obey, leaves him for a while, till another opportunity of tempting him in some other way should offer; or till the time came, when he should be so far able to get the advantage of him, as to bruise his heel, or bring him to the dust of death; see Joh 14:30 and when he was gone, better company came in his room;

behold, angels came and ministered to him.

They came to him in a visible, human form, as they were used to do under the Old Testament dispensation, and that after the temptation was over; after Satan was foiled, and was gone; that it might appear that Christ alone had got the victory over him, without any help or assistance from them. When they were come, they “ministered to him”; that is, they brought him food of their own preparing and dressing, as they formerly did to Elijah, 1Ki 19:5 to satisfy his hunger, and refresh his animal spirits; which had undergone a very great fatigue during this length of time, in which he fasted, and was tempted by Satan. Thus, as the angels are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation, both in a temporal and in a spiritual sense, Heb 1:14 so they were to Christ. Nothing is more frequent with the Jews than to call the angels מלאכי השרת “ministering angels”: it would be needless and endless to refer to particular places.

Matthew 4:12

Ver. 12. **Now, when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison,**

John was cast into prison by Herod; the reason of it may be seen in Mt 14:3. The prison into which he was cast, according to Josephus²¹¹ {s}, was the castle of Machaeras: here he continued some time before he was put to death; for from hence he sent two disciples to Jesus, to know if he was the Messiah, Mt 11:2. Now when Jesus heard of this his imprisonment,

he departed into Galilee;

²¹¹ Antiq. l. 18. c. 7.

not so much on account of safety, or for fear of Herod, but to call his disciples, who lived in that country.

Matthew 4:13

Ver. 13. **And leaving Nazareth,**

Where he was educated, and had lived many years together; and where he preached first to the good liking of the people, who

wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth:

though afterwards they were so much displeased with him, that they thrust him out of their city; and intended to have destroyed him, by casting him down headlong from the brow of an hill; and which seems to be the reason of his leaving this city; see Luke 4:16

he came and dwelt in Capernaum

a city of Galilee. Luke 4:31

which is upon the sea-coast

by the sea of Tiberias, or Genesareth

in the borders of Zabulon and Nephtholim:

it bordered on both these tribes; it signifies “the village of consolation”²¹²; and so it was, whilst the consolation of Israel dwelt there. The Jews speak very evilly of it: no doubt because it was the dwelling place of Christ; and because there might be some in it who believed in him: they represent the inhabitants of it as very great sinners, heretics, and dealers in magic art. Chanina, the brother’s son of R. Joshua, they say²¹³, went to Capernaum, and the heretics did something to him; according to the gloss, they bewitched him: and elsewhere²¹⁴ explaining the words in Ec 7:26

Who so pleaseth God,

this, they say, is Chananiah, the brother’s son of R. Joshua; and “the sinner”; these are the “children”, or inhabitants of Capernaum. Thus they show their spite against the very place in which Christ dwelt.

Matthew 4:14

Ver. 14, 15. **That it might be fulfilled which was spoken,**

Christ’s dwelling in Capernaum accomplished a prophecy of the prophet Isa 9:1 and he went and dwelt there, that it might be fulfilled which he had spoken: the meaning of which prophecy is²¹⁵, that as those parts of

²¹² Vid. Benjamin Tudelens. Itinerar. p. 37. & L’Empereur, not. in ib. & Hieron. in Mar. i. 21. & Origen. Comment. in Matt. p. 317. vol. 1. Ed. Huet.

²¹³ Midrash Koheleth. fol. 63. 1.

²¹⁴ Ib. fol. 77. 1.

²¹⁵ See my treatise upon the “Prophecies of the Messiah”, &c. p. 147, &c

the land of Israel, there mentioned, had suffered much by Tiglathpileser, who had carried them captive, 2Ki 15:29 and is “the vexation” referred to; so they should be honoured, and made very glorious, by the presence and conversation of the Messiah among them, and which now had its literal fulfilment: for Christ now came and dwelt in Capernaum, which lay between the lands and upon the borders both of Zabulon and Nephtholim; was situated by the sea of Tiberias, beyond Jordan, and in, “Galilee of the nations”; the upper Galilee, which had in it people of other nations besides Jews. The ancient Jews expected the Messiah to make his first appearance in Galilee; which expectation must be grounded on this prophecy; for so they say²¹⁶ expressly,

“the king Messiah shall be revealed לילגד אעראב , “in the land of Galilee.”

And in another place²¹⁷ explaining Isa 2:19 they paraphrase it thus,

“for fear of the Lord”; this is the indignation of the whole world: and for the “glory of his majesty”; this is the Messiah; when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth, when he shall arise and be revealed בארץ גליל “in the land of Galilee”: because that this is the first place to be destroyed in the holy land; therefore he shall be revealed there the first of all places.

“Here Jesus, the true Messiah, made his first appearance publicly; here he called his disciples, and began his ministry.

Matthew 4:15

See Gill on “Mt 4:14”

Matthew 4:16

Ver. 16. **The people which sat in darkness,**

The inhabitants of Galilee, who sat or “walked”, as in Isaiah; that is, continued in spiritual darkness, in ignorance, blindness, error, and infidelity, “saw great light”; Christ himself, who came a light into the world; he conversed with them, preached unto them, and opened the eyes of their understandings to behold his glory, and to know him, and salvation by him.

And to them which sat in the region and shadow of death:

the same persons who sit in darkness, sit also in the region of death; for such are dead in trespasses and sins: where there is no spiritual light, there is no spiritual life, and such are in danger of the second death; but the hap-

²¹⁶ Zohar in Gen. fol. 74. 3.

²¹⁷ Ib. in Exod. fol. 3. 3. & 88. 3.

iness of these people was, that to them “light is sprung up”, like the rising sun, and this without their asking or seeking for: Christ, the sun of righteousness, arose upon them, without any desert, desire, or expectation of theirs, with healing in his wings; and cured them of their darkness and deadness, turned them from darkness to light, and caused them to pass from death to life. “Light” is not only a character under which Christ frequently goes in the New Testament, see Joh 1:4 but is one of the names by which the Messiah was known under the Old Testament; see Da 2:22 and which the Jews give unto him: says R. Aba²¹⁸ Serungia, “and the light dwelleth with him”; this is the king Messiah. The note of R. Sol. Jarchi on these words, “send forth thy light”, is, the king Messiah; who is compared to light, according to Ps 132:17 the days of the Messiah are by them said to ימי אור “days of light”; and so these Galilaeans found them to be; as all do, to whom the Gospel of Christ comes with power and demonstration of the Spirit. And these days of light first begun in the land of Zabulon which, according to Philo the Jew²²⁰, was”sumbolon fwtoy, “a symbol of light”; since (adds he) its name signifies the nature of night; but, the night removing, and departing, light necessarily arises.”As did, in a spiritual sense, here, when Christ the light arose.

Matthew 4:17

Ver. 17. From that time Jesus began to preach and to say,

Not from the time he dwelt in Capernaum; for he had preached in Nazareth before he came there, Luke 4:16 nor from the time of John’s being cast into prison; for he had preached, and made disciples, who were baptized by his orders, before John’s imprisonment, Joh 3:22 Joh 4:1 but from the time that Satan left tempting him; as soon as that combat was over, immediately he went into Galilee, began to preach, and called his disciples. The words with which he began his ministry are the same with which John begun his; which shows the entire agreement between them, in that they not only preached the same doctrine, but in the same words; See Gill on “Mt 3:2”

Matthew 4:18

Ver. 18. And Jesus walking by the sea of Galilee,

Not for his recreation and diversion, or by accident: but on purpose to look out for, and call some, whom he had chosen to be his disciples. And as he was walking

²¹⁸ Bereshith Rabba, fol. 1. 3. & Echa Rabbati, fol. 50. 2.

²¹⁹ Baal Hatturim in Gen. fol. 2. 2.

²²⁰ De Somniis, p. 1113.

about, to and fro, he “saw two” persons; and as soon as he saw them, he knew them to be those he had determined to make his apostles: and these are described by their relation to each other, “brethren”; not merely because they were of the same nation, or of the same religion, or of the same employ and business of life, but because they were of the same blood; and by their names, “Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother”. Simon is the same name with שִׁמְעוֹן, “Simeon”; and so he is called, Ac 15:14 and which, in the Jerusalem dialect, is read שִׁימון, “Simon”. His surname “Peter”, which was afterwards given him by Christ, Mt 16:18 is Greek, and answers to “Cephas”, signifying a “rock”: though this name is to be met with in the Talmudic²²¹ writings, where we read of פֶּטְרוֹס, “bar Petros”. This his surname is added here, to distinguish him from Simon, the Canaanite. The name of his brother Andrew is generally thought to be Greek; though some have derived it from אַנְדְּרֵי, “to vow”, and is also to be observed in the writings of the Jews²²²; where mention is made of R. Chanina, בַּר אַנְדְּרֵי, bar Andrei. They are further described by the work they were at, or business they were employed in,

casting a net into the sea;

either in order to catch fish in it, or to wash it, Luke 5:2 and the reason of their so doing is added; “for they were fishers”. Of this mean employment were the very first persons Christ was pleased to call to the work of the ministry; men of no education, who made no figure in life, but were despicable and contemptible: this he did, to make it appear, that they were not qualified for such service of themselves; that all their gifts and qualifications were from him; to show his own power; to confound the wisdom of the wise; and to let men see, that none ought to glory in themselves, but in him. The Jews have a notion of the word of God and prophecy being received and embraced only by such sort of persons: says R. Isaac Arama²²³

”his word came to heal all, but some particular persons only receive it; and who of all men are of a dull understanding, דַּיְיָנוּ בְּרֵי הַיָּם, “fishermen, who do business in the sea”: this is what is written; “they that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters, these see the works of the Lord”: these seem not indeed fit to receive

221 T. Hieros. Moed Katon, fol 82. 4. Avoda Zara, fol 42. 3.

222 T. Hieros. Megilla, fol. 75. 2. & Geracot, fol. 2. 3.

223 Apud Galatin. de Arcan. Cathol. ver. l. 3. c. 5. p. 119. & Crocium de Messia Thes. 213. p. 62, 63.

anything that belongs to the understanding, because of their dulness; and yet these receive the truth of prophecy and vision, because they believe his word.”

I cannot but think, that some respect is had to these fishers, in Eze 47:10 “it shall come to pass that fishers shall stand upon it”: that is, upon, or by the river of waters, said in Eze 47:8 to “issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert”: which both R. Jarchi and Kimchi understand of the sea of Tiberias; the same with the sea of Galilee, by which Christ walked; and where he found these fishers at work, and called them. See also Jer 16:16

Matthew 4:19

Ver. 19. **And he saith unto them, follow me,**

These two brethren had been the disciples of John, as Theophylact thinks, and which seems agreeable to Joh 1:35 and though through John’s pointing out Christ unto them, they had some knowledge of him, and conversation with him, yet they abode with him but for that day, Joh 1:37 and afterwards returned to their master; and upon his imprisonment, betook themselves to their former employment: from whence Christ now calls them to be his disciples, saying “follow me”, or “come after me”: that is, be a disciple of mine; see Luke 14:27. And to encourage them to it, makes use of this argument; “and”, or “for”, I “will make you fishers of men”: you shall be fishers still, but in a higher sense; and in a far more noble employment, and to much better purpose. The net they were to spread and cast was the Gospel, see Mt 13:47 for Christ made them not דַּיְיָנוּ תוֹרָה, “fishers of the law”, to use the words of Maimonides²²⁴, but fishers of the Gospel. The sea into which they were to cast the net was first Judea, and then the whole world; the fish they were to catch were the souls of men, both among Jews and Gentiles; of whose conversion and faith they were to be the happy instruments: now none could make them fishers in this sense, or fit them for such service, and succeed them in it, but Christ; and who here promises it unto them.

Matthew 4:20

Ver. 20. **And they straightway left their nets,**

That is, as soon as he had called them, they left their worldly employment, and followed him; they gave up themselves to his service, and became his disciples; they

224 Hilcot. Talmud. Torah, c. 1. sect. 12. so Dr. Lightfoot cites the phrase, but in Ed. Amsterd. it is hrwt ynyd, “the judgments of the law”.

not only left their “nets”, but their fishing boats, and fishing trade, and all that belonged to it, even all their substance; and also their relations, friends, and acquaintance, see Mt 19:27 which shows what a mighty power went along with the words and call of Christ; and what a ready, cheerful, and voluntary subjection this produces, wherever it takes place.

Matthew 4:21

Ver. 21. **And going on from thence, he saw other two,**

When he had gone but a little way further, Mark 1:19 he spied two other persons he was looking for, and had designed to call to the office of apostleship; and these are also described as “brethren”, and by name,

James, the son of Zebedee, and John his brother.

The Jews make mention in their writings²²⁵, of one יַעֲקֹב בֶּן זְבֵדִי, “R. James, the son of Zebedee”: which Capellus²²⁶’s conjecture is the very same person here mentioned: but the James they speak of as a disciple of Jesus, they call יַעֲקֹב מִיְנֵאָה, “James the heretic”²²⁷; who, they say, was of the village of Secaniah, and sometimes of the village of Sama. His brother’s name was John, who was the Evangelist, as well as Apostle: these were

in a ship with Zebedee their father.

Men of this name, and sons of men of this name, were very common among the Jewish Rabbins; but neither this man, nor his sons, were masters or doctors in Israel; for such Christ chose not for his apostles. It seems to be the same name with Zebadiah, 1Ch 27:7 these, with him, were “mending their nets”, which were broken, and needed repairing; and perhaps being poor, could not afford to buy new ones: this shows their industry and diligence, and may be a pattern and example to persons, closely to attend the business of their calling, whilst the providence of God continues them in it.

And he called them:

from their employment, to follow him, and become his disciples; and no doubt gave them the same promise and encouragement he had given the two former.

Matthew 4:22

Ver. 22. **And they immediately left the ship,**

225 T. Hieros. Yebamot, fol. 9. 4. & Maaser Sheni, fol. 55. 2. Trumot. fol. 45. 2. Sheviith. fol. 35. 1. Bereshith Rab. fol. 31. 4. & 36. 2.

226 Spicilegium in loc.

227 T. Bab. Megilla, 23. 1. Avoda Zara, fol 17. 1. & 27. 2. & 28. 1. Cholin. fol. 84. 1. T. Hieros. Sabbat. fol. 14. 4. & Avoda Zara, fol. 40. 4. Midrash Kohelet, fol. 62. 4. & 77. 1. Juchasin, fol. 41. 1.

More is expressed here than before, for they not only left their nets, but their ship too; which was of much more value; nay, even “their father” also, “with the hired servants”, Mark 1:20 and so complied with the call of Christ to his people, Ps 45:10 and thereby proved, that they were sincerely his followers, Luke 14:26 and might expect the gracious promise of Christ to be made good unto them, Mt 19:28.

Matthew 4:23

Ver. 23. **And Jesus went about all Galilee,**

Having called four of his disciples, he took a tour throughout Galilee; a country mean and despicable, inhabited by persons poor, illiterate, vile, and wicked: such had the first fruits of Christ’s ministry, and messages of his grace; which shows the freeness, sovereignty, and riches, of his abounding goodness. He went about “all” this country, both upper and nether Galilee, which was very populous: Josephus says²²⁸, there were two hundred and four cities and towns in it; he means, which were places of note, besides villages. He went about, not like Satan, seeking the destruction of men; but as one that went along with him says, “doing good”, Ac 10:38, both to the bodies and souls of men; for he was

teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom.

The places where he taught were “their synagogues”: he did not creep into private houses, as the Pharisees then, and false apostles afterwards did; but he appeared openly, and declared his doctrine in places of public worship; where the Jews met together for divine service, to pray, read the Scriptures, and give a word of exhortation to the people; for though they had but one temple, which was at Jerusalem, they had many synagogues, or meeting places, all over the land: here Christ not only prayed and read, but “preached”; and the subject matter of his ministry was, “the Gospel of the kingdom”: that is, the good news of the kingdom of the Messiah being come, and which now took place; wherefore he exhorted them to repent of, and relinquish their former principles; to receive the doctrines, and submit to the ordinances of the Gospel dispensation: he also preached to them the things concerning the kingdom of heaven; as that except a man be born again, he cannot see it; and unless he has a better righteousness than his own, he cannot enter into it: he was also

healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of

228 In vita ejus.

disease among the people.

It is in the Greek text, “every sickness and every disease”; that is, all sorts of maladies, disorders and distempers, which attend the bodies of men; and is another instance, besides Mt 3:5 in which the word “all”, or “every”, is to be taken in a limited and restrained sense, for “some”, or “some of all sorts”; which teaches us how to understand those phrases, when used in the doctrine of redemption by Christ.

Matthew 4:24

Ver. 24. **And his fame went throughout all Syria,**

For his ministry and miracles, especially the latter; wherefore

they brought to him,

that is, out of Syria, the sick. Syria was in some respects reckoned as the land of Israel, though in others not.”

The ²²⁹ Rabbins teach, that in three respects Syria was like to the land of Israel, and in three to the countries with out the land: the dust defiled, as without the land; he that sold his servant to (one in) Syria, was as if he sold him to one without the land; and he that brought a bill of divorce from Syria, as if he brought it from without the land: and in three things it was like to the land of Israel; it was bound to tithes, and to the observance of the seventh year; and he that would go into it, might go into it with purity and he that purchased a field in Syria, was as if he had purchased one in the suburbs of Jerusalem.

All sick people, that were taken with divers diseases and torments.

This expresses in general, the grievous and tormenting diseases with which the persons were afflicted, who were brought to Christ for healing: some particular ones follow;

and those which were possessed with devils;

in body as well as in mind; of which there were many instances, permitted by God on purpose, that Christ might have an opportunity of showing his power over those evil spirits.

And those which were lunatic;

either melancholy persons, or mad and distracted men; that retired from the conversation of men, into fields or desert places: or such, whose disorders were influenced by the change of the moon; such as those who

²²⁹ T. Bab. Gittin, fol. 8. 1. 2. vid. Maimon. Hileb. Tu-math Meth. c. 11. sect. 6.

are troubled with the falling sickness; so the Greeks²³⁰ call such persons selhniazo-menouv the word here used by the Evangelist. And those that had the palsy. These were each of them such disorders, as were incurable by the art of medicine; or for which rarely, and with great difficulty, any manner of relief could be obtained; and

he healed them;

without any means, by a word speaking; which showed him more than a man, and truly and properly God.

Matthew 4:25

Ver. 25. **And there followed him great multitudes of people,**

Some on one account, and some on another; some out of good will, others out of ill will; some for the healing of their bodies, others for the good of their souls; some to see his miracles, others to hear his doctrine; and what with one and another, the concourse of people that followed him was greater than that which followed John. The Greek word for “multitude” is adopted into the Talmudic language, and is often used by the doctors; who have a tradition to this purpose, that אברהם בן ששית וארבעים אלף, “there is no multitude less than sixty myriads” ²³¹; but we are not to imagine, that when here, and elsewhere, a multitude is said to follow, or attend on Christ, that he had such a number of people after him as this; only that the number was very large. The places from whence they came are particularly mentioned, as “from Galilee”; where he had called his disciples, had been preaching the Gospel, and healing all manner of diseases; and therefore it is not to be wondered at that he should have a large number of followers from hence. This country was divided into²³² three parts:

”There was upper Galilee, and nether Galilee, and the valley from Capharhananiah and upwards: all that part which did not bring forth sycamine trees was upper Galilee, and from Capharhananiah downwards: all that part which did bring forth sycamine trees was nether Galilee; and the coast of Tiberias was the valley.”

Frequent mention is made in the Talmudic²³³ writings of upper Galilee, as distinct from the other.

²³⁰ Vid. Fabricii Bibl. Graec. vol. 2. l. 3. c. 26. p. 656-658.

²³¹ T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 58. 1.

²³² Misn. Sheviith. c. 9. sect. 2.

²³³ T. Bab. Bava Kama, fol. 80. 1. Cetubot, fol. 67. 2. & Succa, fol. 27. 2. & 28. 1. Zohar in Gen. fol. 129. 3.

And from Decapolis;

a tract of land so called, from the “ten cities” that were in it; and which, according to Pliny²³⁴ {r} were these following; Damascus, Opaton, Philadelphia, Raphana, Scythopolis, Gadara, Hippondion, Pella, Galasa, and Canatha; see Mark 5:20 “And from Jerusalem”; the metropolis of the whole land; for his fame had reached that great city, and there were some there, curious and desirous to see him, and hear him; though he was got into those distant and obscure parts.

And from Judea;

from the other parts of it:

and from beyond Jordan;

which was a distinct country of itself, known by the name of Peraea; so called, perhaps, from peran, the word here translated, “from beyond”. It is to be observed, that here are three countries distinctly mentioned, Galilee, Judea, and “beyond Jordan”; which was the division of the land of Israel; of these three lands the Talmudists often speak.”It is a tradition of the Rabbins {s}, that in three countries they intercalate the year; Judea, and beyond Jordan, and Galilee.

”Again²³⁵ ,”

There are three lands, that are obliged to the removing of fruits; Judea, and beyond Jordan, and Galilee.”

The account which Maimonides gives of these three countries is this;

“The land of Judea, all of it, the mountain, the plain, and the valley, are one country beyond Jordan, all of it, the plain of Lydda, and the mountain of the plain of Lydda, and the upper and nether, and the coast of Tiberias, are one country.”

The country beyond Jordan was not so much esteemed as what was properly the land of Canaan, or Israel; for the Jews ²³⁶ say, “the land of Israel is holier than all lands; because they bring out of it the sheaf, the first fruits, and the showbread, which they do not bring from other lands: the land of Canaan is holier than beyond Jordan; the land of Canaan is fit to be the habitation of the Shekinah; beyond Jordan is not.”This, they say²³⁷, was not the land flowing with milk and honey.

²³⁴ Nat. Hist. l. 5. c. 18. {s} T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 11

²³⁵ Misn. Sheviith. c. 9. sect. 2.

²³⁶ Bemidbar Rabba, sect. 7. fol. 188. 3. Maimon. Beth Habechira, c. 7. sect. 12.

²³⁷ Misn. Bicurim, c. 1. sect. 10.

Matthew Chapter 5**Matthew 5:1**

Ver. 1. **And seeing the multitudes,**

The great concourse of people that followed him from the places before mentioned,

he went up into a mountain;

either to pray alone, which was sometimes his custom to do, or to shun the multitude; or rather, because it was a commodious place for teaching the people:

and when he was set:

not for rest, but in order to teach; for sitting was the posture of masters, or teachers, see Mt 13:2 Luke 4:20. The form in which the master and his disciples sat is thus described by Maimonides²³⁸ .

“The master sits at the head, or in the chief place, and the disciples before him in a circuit, like a crown; so that they all see the master, and hear his words; and the master may not sit upon a seat, and the scholars upon the ground; but either all upon the earth, or upon seats: indeed from the beginning, or formerly, בשי ברה היה “the master used to sit”, and the disciples stand; but before the destruction of the second temple, all used to teach their disciples as they were sitting.”

With respect to this latter custom, the Talmudists say²³⁹ , that

“from the days of Moses, to Rabban Gamaliel (the master of the Apostle Paul), they did not learn the law, unless standing; after Rabban Gamaliel died, sickness came into the world, and they learnt the law sitting: hence it is a tradition, that after Rabban Gamaliel died, the glory of the law ceased.”

His disciples came unto him;

not only the twelve, but the company, or multitude, of his disciples, Luke 6:17 which he made in the several places, where he had been preaching; for the number of his disciples was larger than John’s.

Matthew 5:2

Ver. 2. **And he opened his mouth,**

He spoke with a clear and strong voice, that all the people might hear him; and with great freedom, utterance, and cheerfulness, and things of the greatest moment and importance;

and taught them;

²³⁸ Hilch. Talmud Torah, c. 4. sect. 2.

²³⁹ T. Bab. Megilla, fol. 21. 1. Vid. Misn. Sota, c. 9. sect. 15. & Jarchi, Maimon, & Bartenora in ib.

not his disciples only, but the whole multitude, who heard him with astonishment; see Mt 7:28. Some things in the following discourse are directed to the disciples in particular, and others regard the multitude in general.

Matthew 5:3

Ver. 3. **Blessed are the poor in spirit,**

Not the poor in purse, or who are so with respect to things temporal: for though God has chosen and called many, who are in such a condition of life, yet not all; the kingdom of heaven cannot be said to belong to them all, or only; but such as are poor in a spiritual sense. All mankind are spiritually poor; they have nothing to eat that is fit and proper; nor any clothes to wear, but rags; nor are they able to purchase either; they have no money to buy with; they are in debt, owe ten thousand talents, and have nothing to pay; and in such a condition, that they are not able to help themselves. The greater part of mankind are insensible of this their condition; but think themselves rich, and increased with goods: there are some who are sensible of it, who see their poverty and want, freely acknowledge it, bewail it, and mourn over it; are humbled for it, and are broken under a sense of it; entertain low and mean thoughts of themselves; seek after the true riches, both of grace and glory; and frankly acknowledge, that all they have, or hope to have, is owing to the free grace of God. Now these are the persons intended in this place; who are not only “poor”, but are poor “in spirit”; in their own spirits, in their own sense, apprehension, and judgment: and may even be called “beggars”, as the word may be rendered; for being sensible of their poverty, they place themselves at the door of mercy, and knock there; their language is, “God be merciful”; their posture is standing, watching, and waiting, at wisdom’s gates, and at the posts of her door; they are importunate, will have no denial, yet receive the least favour with thankfulness. Now these are pronounced “blessed”, for this reason,

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven;

not only the Gospel, and the ministration of it, which belongs to them. “The poor have the Gospel preached”: it not only reaches their ears, but their hearts; it enters into them, is applied unto them, they receive and embrace it with the utmost joy and gladness; but eternal glory, this is prepared for them, and given to them; they are born heirs of it, have a right unto it, are making meet for it, and shall enjoy it.

Matthew 5:4

Ver. 4. **Blessed are they that mourn,**

For sin, for their own sins; the sin of their nature,

indwelling sin, which is always working in them, and is a continual grief of mind to them; the unbelief of their hearts, notwithstanding the many instances, declarations, promises, and discoveries of grace made unto them; their daily infirmities, and many sins of life, because they are committed against a God of love, grace, and mercy, grieve the Spirit, and dishonour the Gospel of Christ: who mourn also for the sins of others, for the sins of the world, the profaneness and wickedness that abound in it; and more especially for the sins of professors, by reason of which, the name of God, and ways of Christ, are evil spoken of: who likewise mourn under afflictions, spiritual ones, temptations, desertions, and declensions; temporal ones, their own, which they receive, either more immediately from the hand of God, or from men; such as they endure for the sake of Christ, and the profession of his Gospel; and who sympathize with others in their afflictions. These, how sorrowful and distressed soever they may appear, are blessed

for they shall be comforted:

here in this life, by the God of all comfort, by Christ the comforter; by the Spirit of God, whose work and office it is to comfort; by the Scriptures of truth, which are written for their consolation; by the promises of the Gospel, through which the heirs of promise have strong consolation; by the ordinances of it, which are breasts of consolation; and by the ministers of the word, who have a commission from the Lord to speak comfortably to them; and then are they comforted, when they have the discoveries of the love of God, manifestations of pardoning grace, through the blood of Christ, and enjoy the divine presence: and they shall be comforted hereafter; when freed from all the troubles of this life, they shall be blessed with uninterrupted communion with Father, Son, and Spirit, and with the happy society of angels and glorified saints. Isa 61:1 seems to be referred to, both in this, and in the preceding verse.

Matthew 5:5

Ver. 5. **Blessed are the meek,**

Who are not easily provoked to anger; who patiently bear, and put up with injuries and affronts; carry themselves courteously, and affably to all; have the meanest thoughts of themselves, and the best of others; do not envy the gifts and graces of other men; are willing to be instructed and admonished, by the meanest of the saints; quietly submit to the will of God, in adverse dispensations of providence; and ascribe all they have, and are, to the grace of God. Meekness, or humility, is very valuable

and commendable. The Jews, though a proud, haughty, and wrathful people, cannot but speak in its praise:

“Wisdom, fear, and meekness, say²⁴⁰ they, are of high esteem; but **הַנּוֹךְ**, “meekness”, is greater than them all.”

They had two very considerable doctors in the time of Christ, Hillell and Shammai; the one was of a meek, the other of an angry disposition: hence, say they²⁴¹,

“Let a man be always meek as Hillell, and let him not be angry as Shammai.”

Here meekness is to be considered, not as a moral virtue, but as a Christian grace, a fruit of the Spirit of God; which was eminently in Christ, and is very ornamental to believers; and of great advantage and use to them, in hearing and receiving the word; in giving an account of the reason of the hope that is in them; in instructing and restoring such, who have backslidden, either in principle or practice; and in the whole of their lives and conversations; and serves greatly to recommend religion to others: such who are possessed of it, and exercise it, are well pleasing to God; when disconsolate, he comforts them; when hungry, he satisfies them; when they want direction, he gives it to them; when wronged, he will do them right; he gives them more grace here, and glory hereafter. The blessing instanced, in which they shall partake of, is,

they shall inherit the earth;

not the land of Canaan, though that may be alluded to; nor this world, at least in its present situation; for this is not the saints’ rest and inheritance: but rather, the “new earth”, which will be after this is burnt up; in which only such persons as are here described shall dwell; and who shall inherit it, by virtue of their being heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; whose is the earth, and the fulness thereof. Though some think heaven is here designed, and is so called, partly for the sake of variety of expression, from Mt 5:3 and partly in allusion to the land of Canaan, a type of it; and may be called an earth, or country, that is an heavenly one, in opposition to this earthly one; as the heavenly Jerusalem is opposed to the earthly one, and which will be a glorious inheritance. The passage, referred to is Ps 37:11.

Matthew 5:6

Ver. 6. **Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst,**

Not after the riches, honours, and pleasures of this world, but

after righteousness;

by which is meant, not justice and equity, as persons oppressed and injured; nor a moral, legal righteousness, which the generality of the Jewish nation were eagerly pursuing; but the justifying righteousness of Christ, which is imputed by God the Father, and received by faith. To “hunger and thirst” after this, supposes a want of righteousness, which is the case of all men; a sense of want of it, which is only perceived by persons spiritually enlightened; a discovery of the righteousness of Christ to them, which is made in the Gospel, and by the Spirit of God; a value for it, and a preference of it to all other righteousness; and an earnest desire after it, to be possessed of it, and found in it; and that nothing can be more grateful than that, because of its perfection, purity, suitableness, and use: happy souls are these,

for they shall be filled:

with that righteousness, and with all other good things, in consequence of it; and particularly with joy and peace, which are the certain effects of it: or, “they shall be satisfied”, that they have an interest in it; and so satisfied with it, that they shall never seek for any other righteousness, as a justifying one, in the sight of God; this being full, perfect, sufficient, and entirely complete.

Matthew 5:7

Ver. 7. **Blessed are the merciful,**

Who show mercy to the bodies of men, to those that are poor, indigent, and miserable, in their outward circumstances; by both sympathizing with them, and distributing unto them; not only making use of expressions of pity and concern; but communicating with readiness and cheerfulness, with affection and tenderness, and with a view to the glory of God: who also show mercy to the souls of men, by instructing such as are ignorant, giving them good counsel and advice: reproving them for sin, praying for them, forgiving injuries done by them, and by comforting those that are cast down. To show mercy is very delightful to, and desirable by God; it is what he requires, and is one of the weightier matters of the law; it is very ornamental to a child of God, and what makes him more like to his heavenly Father. The happiness of such persons is this, that

they shall obtain mercy;

from man, whenever they are attended with any uncomfortable circumstances of life; **כָּל מֵרַחֵם מֵרַחֵמֵי לֵוִי** “whoever is merciful”, men show mercy to him²⁴² {d}:

²⁴⁰ Piske Tosaphot Yebamot, art. 196.

²⁴¹ T. Bab. Sabbat. fol. 30. 2.

²⁴² Maimon. Hilch. Mattanot Anayim. c. 10. sect. 2.

and from God, through Christ; which is free, sovereign, abundant, and eternal. Men are said to obtain this, when they are regenerated, and called by grace; and when they have a discovery, and an application, of the forgiveness of their sins: but here, it seems to design those supplies of grace and mercy, which merciful persons may expect to find and obtain, at the throne of grace, to help them in time of need; and who shall not only obtain mercy of God in this life, but in the world to come, in the great day of the Lord; for which the Apostle prayed for Onesiphorus, 2Ti 1:18.

Matthew 5:8

Ver. 8. **Blessed are the pure in heart,**

Not in the head; for men may have pure notions and impure hearts; not in the hand, or action, or in outward conversation only; so the Pharisees were outwardly righteous before men, but inwardly full of impurity; but “in heart”. The heart of man is naturally unclean; nor is it in the power of man to make it clean, or to be pure from his sin; nor is any man in this life, in such sense, so pure in heart, as to be entirely free from sin. This is only true of Christ, angels, and glorified saints: but such may be said to be so, who, though they have sin dwelling in them, are justified from all sin, by the righteousness of Christ, and are “clean through the word”, or sentence of justification pronounced upon them, on the account of that righteousness; whose iniquities are all of them forgiven, and whose hearts are sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, which cleanses from all sin; and who have the grace of God wrought in their hearts, which, though as yet imperfect, it is entirely pure; there is not the least spot or stain of sin in it: and such souls as they are in love with, so they most earnestly desire after more purity of heart, lip, life, and conversation. And happy they are,

for they shall see God;

in this life, enjoying communion with him, both in private and public, in the several duties of religion, in the house and ordinances of God; where they often behold his beauty, see his power and his glory, and taste, and know, that he is good and gracious: and in the other world, where they shall see God in Christ, with the eyes of their understanding; and God incarnate, with the eyes of their bodies, after the resurrection; which sight of Christ, and God in Christ, will be unspeakably glorious, desirable, delightful, and satisfying; it will be free from all darkness and error, and from all interruption; it will be an appropriating and transforming one, and will last for ever.

Matthew 5:9

Ver. 9. **Blessed are the peace makers,**

Not between God and man, for no man can make his own peace with God; nor can any mere creature, angels, or men, make it for him; Christ, in this sense, is the only peace maker: but between men and men; and such are they, who are of peaceable dispositions themselves; live peaceably with all men, and with one another, as their relation obliges to, and their mutual comfort requires; and with the men of the world; and who are ready, willing, and very serviceable, in composing differences, and making peace between their fellow creatures and fellow Christians. The Jews speak very highly, and much, in the commendation of peace making; they reckon this among the things which shall be of use to a man, both in this, and the other world.

“These are the things, (say they²⁴³ ,) the fruit of which a man enjoys in this world, and his lot or portion remains for him in the world to come; honouring father and mother, liberality, להבירו והבאה שלום בין אדם לאדם, “and making peace between a man and his neighbour.”

This, they say²⁴⁴ , Aaron was much disposed to.

“Moses used to say, let justice break through the mountain; but Aaron loved peace, and pursued it, and made peace between a man and his neighbour, as is said, Mal 2:6”

Hence that saying of Hillel²⁴⁵ ,

“be thou one of the disciples of Aaron, who loved peace, and followed after it; he loved men, and brought them to the law.”

Now of such persons it is said, that

they shall be called the children of God;

that is, they are the children of God by adopting grace, which is made manifest in their regeneration; and that is evidenced by the fruits of it, of which this is one; they not only shall be, and more manifestly appear to be, the sons of God hereafter; but they are, and are known to be so now, by their peaceable disposition, which is wrought in them by the Spirit of God; whereby they become like to the God of peace, and to Christ, the great and only peacemaker, and so are truly sons of peace.

²⁴³ Misn. Peah. c. 1. sect. 1. T. Bab. Sabbat. fol. 127. 1. & Kiddushin. fol. 40. 1.

²⁴⁴ T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 6. 2. Vid. Abot. R. Nathan, c. 12. fol. 4. 2.

²⁴⁵ Pirke Abot. c. 1. sect. 12.

from place to place, by ill usage of all sorts; **and shall say all manner of evil against you:**

the worst things they could think of and invent, and all of them; such as that they were seditious persons, enemies to the commonwealth, and the public good, guilty of sacrilege, incest, and murder but what would serve to relieve them under these heavy charges is, that they were “falsely” laid; there was not a word of truth in them; wherefore their own hearts would not reproach them; but all were the malicious lies of men, invented on purpose to bring them and Christianity into disgrace: and that they were brought against “them for Christ’s sake”, for his name’s sake, for the sake of his Gospel and interest: the treatment they meet with is on his account, and the same that he himself met with; the like reproaches fell on him, which will be all wiped off from him and them another day; when they will appear to be the blessed persons, and their revilers and persecutors the unhappy ones. The Jews have some sayings not unlike these, and which may serve to illustrate them:

“תהא לזמא ולא תהא לאמא”, “be thou cursed”, or bearing curses, but do not curse²⁴⁶ . The gloss upon it is, it is better to be one of them that are cursed, than to be of them that curse; for, at the end, the curse causeless returns to him that curseth.”

Again²⁴⁷ ,

“for ever let a man be of them that are persecuted, and not of them that persecute; of them that suffer injury, and not of them that do it.”

Once more²⁴⁸ ,

“they that suffer injury, and do it not; who hear reproach, and do not return it; who act from love, and rejoice in chastisements, of them the Scripture says, “let them that love him”, &c. Jud 5:31.”

Matthew 5:12

Ver. 12. **Rejoice and be exceeding glad,**

Because of the honour put upon them, the glory they bring to Christ and his cause, by cheerfully suffering for it; and because of the glory and happiness that shall follow upon their sufferings:

for great is your reward in heaven;

not of debt, but of grace; for there is no proportion

²⁴⁶ T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 49. 1.

²⁴⁷ T. Bab. Bava Kama, fol. 93. 1. Maimon. Hilch. Deyot. c. 5. sect. 13.

²⁴⁸ T. Bab. Sabbat. fol. 88. 2. Yoma, fol. 23. 1. & Gittin, fol. 36. 2.

Matthew 5:10

Ver. 10. **Blessed are they which are persecuted,**

Not for any crimes they have done, for unrighteousness and iniquity, as murderers, thieves, and evildoers, but

for righteousness sake:

on account of their righteous and godly conversation, which brings upon them the hatred and enmity of the men of the world: for saints, by living righteously, separate themselves from them, and profess themselves not to belong to them; their religious life sets a brand upon, and distinguishes other persons; yea, it reproves and condemns their wicked lives and practices; and this fills them with wrath against them, and puts them on persecuting them: or by “righteousness” may be meant, a righteous cause, the cause of Christ and his Gospel; for by making a profession of Christ, showing a concern for his interest, and by engaging in a vindication of his person and truths, saints expose themselves to the rage and persecution of men: and particularly, they are persecuted for preaching, maintaining, or embracing, the doctrine of justification by the righteousness of Christ; because it is not of man, nor agreeable to the carnal reason of man; it is opposite to the way of justification, which men naturally receive; it excludes boasting, and is contrary to their carnal and selfish principles: persecution is either verbal with the tongue, by cruel mockings and reproachful language; or real, by deeds, such as confiscation of goods, banishment, imprisonment of body, and innumerable sorts of death: the latter seems here more especially designed, and both are expressed in the following verse; and yet the saints, though thus used, or rather abused, are happy;

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven:

the same blessedness is predicated of these as of the poor in spirit, ver. 3.

Matthew 5:11

Ver. 11. **Blessed are ye when men shall revile you,**

These words are particularly directed to the disciples of Christ, and are designed to inform them, that they should not be exempted from reproach and persecution, and to animate and fortify them against it; and are prophetic of what they, and the first Christians particularly, were to endure for Christ’s sake. Men should “revile” them, speak very reproachfully of them, brand them with infamy, and load them with disgrace; and

persecute you

or comparison between what the saints suffer for Christ, and the glory that shall be revealed in them by him; not in earth, but in heaven. Saints must not expect their reward here, but hereafter, when God himself will be their reward; he will be all in all; Christ and all his glory, glory and all the riches of it will be the reward of the inheritance, and which must needs be a “great” one. And the more to animate them to suffer with joyfulness, and to support them under all their reproaches and persecutions, it is added;

for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you;

as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zechariah, and others; which shows, that what should befall them was no new and strange thing, but what had been the lot of the most eminent servants of God in former ages.

Matthew 5:13

Ver. 13. **Ye are the salt of the earth,**

This is to be understood of the disciples and apostles of Christ; who might be compared to “salt”, because of the savoury doctrines they preached; as all such are, which are agreeable to the Scriptures, and are of the evangelic kind, which are full of Christ, serve to exalt him, and to magnify the grace of God; and are suitable to the experiences of the saints, and are according to godliness, and tend to promote it: also because of their savoury lives and conversations; whereby they recommended, and gave sanction to the doctrines they preached, were examples to the saints, and checks upon wicked men. These were the salt “of the earth”; that is, of the inhabitants of the earth, not of the land of Judea only, where they first lived and preached, but of the whole world, into which they were afterwards sent to preach the Gospel.

But if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?

The “savour” here supposed that it may be lost, cannot mean the savour of grace, or true grace itself, which cannot be lost, being an incorruptible seed; but either gifts qualifying men for the ministry, which may cease; or the savoury doctrines of the Gospel, which may be departed from; or a seeming savoury conversation, which may be neglected; or that seeming savour, zeal, and affection, with which the Gospel is preached, which may be dropped: and particular respect seems to be had to Judas, whom Christ had chosen to the apostleship, and was a devil; and who he knew would lose his usefulness and place, and become an unprofitable wretch, and at last be rejected of God and men; and this case is proposed to

them all, in order to engage them to take heed to themselves, their doctrine and ministry. Moreover, this is but a supposition;

if the salt,

and proves no matter of fact; and the Jews have a saying²⁴⁹, that all that season lose their savour *אֵינָהּ מִפִּינָהּ טַמְאָה* but salt does not lose its savour”. Should it do so,

it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot.

Salt is good for nothing, but to make things savoury, and preserve from putrefaction; and when it has lost its savour, it is of no use, neither to men nor beasts, as some things are when corrupted; nor is it of any use to the land, or dunghill, for it makes barren, and not fruitful: so ministers of the word, when they have dropped the savoury doctrines of the Gospel, or have quitted their former seeming savoury and exemplary conversations; as their usefulness is gone, so, generally speaking, it is never retrieved; they are cast out of the churches of Christ, and are treated with contempt by everyone.

Matthew 5:14

Ver. 14. **Ye are the light of the world,**

What the luminaries, the sun and moon, are in the heavens, with respect to corporal light, that the apostles were in the world with regard to spiritual light; carrying and spreading the light of the Gospel not only in Judea, but all over the world, which was in great darkness of ignorance and error; and through a divine blessing attending their ministry, many were turned from the darkness of Judaism and Gentilism, of sin and infidelity, to the marvellous light of divine grace. The Jews were wont to say, that of the Israelites in general, and particularly of their sanhedrim, and of their learned doctors, what Christ more truly applies here to his apostles; they observe²⁵⁰, that

“on the fourth day it was said, “let there be light”: which was done with respect to the Israelites, because they are they *מְאִירֵי לְלֵמָּה* “which give light to the world”, as it is written, Da 12:3’

And in another place²⁵¹, say they,

“how beautiful are the great ones of the congregation, and the wise men, who sit in the sanhedrim! for they are they *לְלֵמָּה*, “that enlighten the world”, the people of the house of Israel.”

249 T. Bab. Betzah, fol. 14. 1.

250 Tzeror Hammor, fol. 1. 3.

251 Targum in Cant. iv. 1.

So. R. Meir, R. Akiba his disciple, and R. Judah the prince, are each of them called²⁵² *אֹרֵי הָעוֹלָם*, “the light of the world”; as R. Jochanan ben Zaccai is by his disciples, *נֵר הָעוֹלָם*, “the lamp of the world”²⁵³; and it was usual for the head of a school, or of an university to be styled²⁵⁴ *דְּלֵמָּה*, “the light of the world”; but this title much better agrees and suits with the persons Christ gives it to, who, no question, had a view to those exalted characters the Jews gave to their celebrated Rabbins. A city that

is set on an hill cannot be hid;

alluding either to Nazareth, where he was educated, and had lately preached, which was built on an hill, from the brow of which the inhabitants sought to have cast him headlong, Luke 4:29 or to Capernaum, which, on account of its height, is said to be

exalted unto heaven,

Mt 11:23 or to the city of Jerusalem, which was situated on a very considerable eminence. The land of Israel, the Jews say²⁵⁵, was higher than all other lands; and the temple at Jerusalem was higher than any other part of the land of Israel. And as a city cannot be hid which is built on a high place, so neither could, nor ought the doctrines which the apostles were commissioned to preach, be hid, or concealed from men: they were not to shun to declare the whole counsel of God, nor study to avoid the reproaches and persecutions of men; for they were to be “made a spectacle”; to be set as in a public theatre, to be seen by “the world, angels, and men”.

Matthew 5:15

Ver. 15. **Neither do men light a candle,**

Which may be read impersonally, “a candle is not lighted”: and by it may be meant the Gospel, and gifts qualifying men to preach it; which, like a candle, was lighted in the evening of the Jewish dispensation, though not confined to the land of Judea; but has shone throughout the world, being as a candle to be removed, and has been removed from place to place: wherever it is set, it gives light, more or less, and dispels darkness; it is useful both to work by and walk with; it does not always burn alike clearly, it needs looking after; it has its thieves, as candles sometimes have; and will give the greatest light towards the close of the world, as they usually do, when ready to go out. Now when a candle is lighted by men, they do not put it under a bushel, or anything which may

252 Juchasin, fol. 63. 2.

253 Abot R. Nathan, c. 25. fol. 6. 3.

254 Juchasin. fol. 121. 1.

255 T. Bab. Kiddushin, fol. 69. 1. Sanhedrim, fol. 87. 1. Zebachim, fol. 54. 2.

hide and cover it, and so hinder its light and usefulness. The Greek word *μοδοισσ*, rendered a “bushel”, answers to the Hebrew *אָה*, “seah”, which is the very word used in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel; and this was a dry measure that held about a gallon and a half; and accordingly is rendered here by the Syriac *אָהָא*. The design of the expression is, that Christ has lighted the candle of the everlasting Gospel, and given gifts to men for the ministration of it, not to be concealed and neglected, or to be used as the servant did his lord’s money, wrap it up in a napkin, and hide it in the earth. Ministers are not, through slothfulness, to neglect the gift that is in them; nor, through fear, to hide their talents, or keep back any part of the Gospel, or cover anything out of sight, which may be profitable to souls: “but” men, when they light a candle, put it

on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are in the house;

as on the candlestick in the temple, a type of the church; where Christ has set the light of the Gospel, where it is held forth particularly by the ministers of the word, to illuminate the whole house and family of God; by the light of which poor sinners, the lost pieces of silver, are looked up; straggling souls are brought home; hypocrites and formalists are detected; and saints are enlightened, directed, and comforted. Much such a proverbial saying is used by the Jews²⁵⁶:

“do not leave a vessel of balsam in a dunghill, but move it from its place, that its smell may spread, and men may receive profit from it.”

Matthew 5:16

Ver. 16. **Let your light so shine before men,**

Here Christ applies the foregoing simile to his disciples, and more fully opens the meaning and design of it. His sense is this; that the light of the Gospel, which he had communicated to them, the spiritual knowledge of the mysteries of grace, which he had favoured them with, were to be openly declared, and made manifest before men. Light was not given merely for their own private use, but for the public good of mankind; and therefore, as they were placed as lights in the world, they were to hold forth, in the most open and conspicuous manner, the word of light and life:

that they may see your good works:

meaning their zeal and fervency; their plainness and openness; their sincerity, faithfulness, and integri-

256 Vid. Joh. Isaac. Praefat. ad Eliae Levit. Methurgeman.

ty; their courage and intrepidity; their diligence, industry, and indefatigableness in preaching the Gospel; their strict regard to truth, the honour of Christ, and the good of souls; as also their very great care and concern to recommend the doctrines of grace, by their example in their lives and conversations:

and glorify your Father which is in heaven;

that is, that when the ministration of the Gospel has been blessed, for the illumination of the minds of men, to a thorough conviction of their state; and for their regeneration, conversion, sanctification, and comfort; they may give praise to God, and bless his name for qualifying and sending such Gospel ministers to show unto them the way of salvation; and that the word has been made useful to them for communicating spiritual light, life, joy, and comfort, אבינו שבשמיים, “Our and your Father which is in heaven”, is a name, appellation, or periphrasis of God, frequently used by Jewish writers²⁵⁷; and is often expressed by Christ in these his sermons on the mount.

Matthew 5:17

Ver. 17. **Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets,**

From verse 3 to the 10th inclusive, our Lord seems chiefly to respect the whole body of his true disciples and followers; from thence, to the 16th inclusive, he addresses the disciples, whom he had called to be ministers of the word; and in this “verse”, to the end of his discourse, he applies himself to the whole multitude in general; many of whom might be ready to imagine, that by the light of the Gospel, he was giving his disciples instructions to spread in the world, he was going to set aside, as useless, the law of Moses, or the prophets, the interpreters of it, and commentators upon it. Christ knew the thoughts of their hearts, that they had taken up such prejudices in their minds against him; wherefore he says, “think not”; he was sensible what objections they were forming, and what an improvement they would make of them against his being the Messiah, and therefore prevents them, saying,

I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

By “the law” is meant the moral law, as appears from the whole discourse following: this he came not to “destroy”, or loose men’s obligations to, as a rule of walk and conversation, but “to fulfil” it; which he did doctrinally, by setting it forth fully, and giving the true sense and meaning of it; and practically, by yielding perfect obedi-

ence to all its commands, whereby he became “the end”, the fulfilling end of it. By “the prophets” are meant the writings of the prophets, in which they illustrated and explained the law of Moses; urged the duties of it; encouraged men thereunto by promises; and directed the people to the Messiah, and to an expectation of the blessings of grace by him: all which explanations, promises, and prophecies, were so far from being made void by Christ, that they receive their full accomplishment in him. The Jews²⁵⁸ pretend that these words of Christ are contrary to the religion and faith of his followers, who assert, that the law of Moses is abolished; which is easily refuted, by observing the exact agreement between Christ and the Apostle Paul, Ro 3:31 and whenever he, or any other of the apostles, speaks of the abrogation of the law, it is to be understood of the ceremonial law, which in course ceased by being fulfilled; or if of the moral law, not of the matter, but of the ministry of it. This passage of Christ is cited in the Talmud²⁵⁹, after this manner:”

it is written in it, i.e. in the Gospel, “I Aven”, neither to diminish from the law of Moses am I come, “but”, or “nor” (for in the Amsterdam edition they have inserted אלו between two hooks), to add to the law of Moses am I come.

”Which, with their last correction, though not a just citation, yet tolerably well expresses the sense; but a most blasphemous character is affixed to Christ, when they call him “Aven”; which signifies “iniquity” itself, and seems to be a wilful corruption of the word “Amen”, which begins the next “verse”.

Matthew 5:18

Ver. 18. **For verily I say unto you**

Or “I Amen say unto you”, which is one of the names of Christ; see Re 3:14 or the word “Amen” is only used by Christ as an asseveration of what he was about to say; and which, for greater confirmation, is usually doubled in the Evangelist John, “Amen, Amen”, or “verily, verily”. The word is used by the Jews²⁶⁰ for an oath; they swore by it; and it is a rule with them, that whoever answers “Amen” after an oath, it is all one as if he had pronounced the oath itself. The thing so strongly affirmed in this solemn manner is,

till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall

258 R. Isaac Chizuk Emuna, par. 2. c. 10. p. 401.

259 T. Bab. Sabbat. fol. 116. 2.

260 T. Hieros. Kiddushin, fol. 60. 4. Misn. Bava Kama, c. 9. sect. 7, 8. T. Bab. Shebuot, fol. 36. 1. Debarim Rabba, fol. 242. 2. Maimon Hilch. Shebuot, c. 2. sect. 1.

257 Vid. Misn. Sota, c. 9. sect. 15. & Yoma, c. 8. sect. 9.

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

The וטא “or jot”, in the Greek language, answers to “jod” in the Hebrew, the least of all the letters in the alphabet; hence a little city is called by this name, and this reason is given for it,²⁶¹ שייר קטנה באותיות, “because that jod is the least among letters”. We read also of Rabbi Jod²⁶², perhaps so called because קטן היה, he was little, as the author of Juchasin observes²⁶³. This shows in what language the law was written; not in the Samaritan language, for the jod in that is a large letter, but in the Hebrew, in which it is very small; and particularly is written in a very diminutive character, in De 32:18 “by one tittle” some think is meant one of those ducts, dashes, or corners of letters, which distinguish one letter from another, that are much alike; others have thought that one of the pricks or vowel points is intended; others, one of those little strokes in the tops of letters, which the Jews call²⁶⁴ “crowns” and “spikes”, is here meant, in which they imagined great mysteries were contained; and there were some persons among them, who made it their business to search into the meaning of every letter, and of every-one of these little horns, or pricks, that were upon the top of them. So says R. Meir²⁶⁵,

”in the time of the prophets there were such who very diligently searched every letter in the law, and explained every letter by itself; and do not wonder at this that they should expound every letter by itself, for they commented כל אות ואות של ל כל קן וקן של, upon everyone of the tops of each letter.”

Such an expounder was Akiba ben Joseph²⁶⁶. To which custom Christ is here supposed to have respect: however, certain it is that he speaks very much in the language, and agreeably to the mind of the Jewish doctors; and some things in their writings will serve to illustrate this passage,

”If, (say they²⁶⁷.) all the nations of the world were gathered together, “to root one word out of the law”, they could not do it; which you may learn

261 T. Bab. Taanith, fol. 21. 2. & Gloss. in ib.

262 T. Bab. Taanith, fol. 22. 2.

263 Fol. 93. 2.

264 T. Bab. Menachot, fol. 29. 2.

265 In Semitis fidei, fol. 104. 4. & 105. 1. apud Capell. in loc.

266 T. Bab. Menachot, fol. 29. 2.

267 Vajikra Rabba, fol. 160. 3. Shirhashirim Rabba, fol. 20. 2.

from Solomon, who sought to root “one letter out of the law”, the letter “jod”, in De 17:16 but the holy blessed God said, Solomon shall cease, and an hundred such as he (in the Talmud²⁶⁸ it is a thousand such as he) ויודממפ אינה בטילה לולמ, “but, jod shall not cease from thee (the law) for ever”.

And elsewhere the same expression is used²⁶⁹, and it is added, וקיה מומפ איני מבטל, “but a tittle from thee shall not perish.””The design of Christ, in conformity to the language of the Jews, is to declare, that no part of the law, not one of the least commandments in it, as he explains himself in the next verse, should be unaccomplished; but all should be fulfilled before “heaven and earth pass” away, as they will, with a great noise and fervent heat, as to their present form and condition; or sooner shall they pass away, than the least part of the law shall: which expresses the perpetuity of the law, and the impossibility of its passing away, and the superior excellency of it to the heavens and the earth. It is a saying of one of the Jewish doctors²⁷⁰, that

”the whole world is not equal even to one word out of the law;”

in which it is said, there is not one letter deficient or superfluous.

Matthew 5:19

Ver. 19. **Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments,**

Which are to be understood not of the beatitudes in the preceding verses, for these were not delivered by Christ under the form of commandments; nor of any of the peculiar commands of Christ under the Gospel dispensation; but of the precepts of the law, of which some were comparatively lesser than others; and might be said to be broke, loosed, or dissolved, as the word here used signifies, when men acted contrary to them.

And shall teach men so;

not only teach them by their example to break the commandments, but by express orders: for however gross and absurd this may seem to be, that there should be any such teachers, and they should have any hearers, yet such there were among the Jews; and our Lord here manifestly strikes at them: for notwithstanding the great and excellent things they say of the law, yet they tell us, that the doctors of the sanhedrim had power to root

268 T. Hieros. Sanhedrim, fol. 20. 3.

269 Shemot Rabba, fol. 96. 1.

270 T. Hieros. Peah, fol. 15. 4.

anything out of the law; to loose or make void any of its commands, for a time, excepting in the case of idolatry; and so might any true prophet, or wise man; which they pretend is sometimes necessary for the glory of God, and the good of men; and they are to be heard and obeyed, when they say, transgress anyone of all the commands which are in the law²⁷¹. Maimonides says²⁷², that the sanhedrim had power, when it was convenient, for the time present, to make void an affirmative command, and to transgress a negative one, in order to return many to their religion; or to deliver many of the Israelites from stumbling at other things, they may do whatsoever the present time makes necessary: for so, adds he, the former wise men say, a man may profane one sabbath, in order to keep many sabbaths. And elsewhere²⁷³ he affirms,

”if a prophet, whom we know to be a prophet, should order us *מִן־הַתּוֹרָה מִכָּל אֶחָד לְבַזּוֹר לְאַחַד מִכָּל מִצְוָתָהּ*, “to transgress anyone of the commands”, which are mentioned in the law, or many commands, whether light or heavy, for a time, we are ordered to hearken to him; and so we learn from the former wise men, by tradition, that in everything a prophet shall say to thee *בִּזְוֵי דְבַרֵי תוֹרָה*, “transgress the words of the law”, as Elias on Mount Carmel, hear him, except in the case of idolatry.”

And another of their writers says²⁷⁴,

it is lawful sometimes to make void the law, and to do that which appears to be forbidden.’

“Nay, they even²⁷⁵ say, that if a Gentile should bid an Israelite transgress anyone of the commands mentioned in the law, excepting idolatry, adultery, and murder, he may transgress with impunity, provided it is done privately. You see what reason Christ had to express himself in the manner he does, and that with resentment, saying,

he shall be called,

or be

the least in the kingdom of heaven;

meaning either the church of God, where he shall have neither a name, nor place; he shall not be in the least esteemed, but shall be cast out as a worthless man; or the ultimate state of happiness and glory, in the other world, where he shall not enter, as is said in the next verse; but, on the other hand,

whosoever shall do and teach;

271 T. Bab. Yebamot, fol. 79. 1. & 89. 2. & 90. 2.

272 Hilch. Memarim, c. 2. sect. 4.

273 Hilch. Yesode Hattorah, c. 9. sect. 3.

274 Bartenora in, Misn. Beracot, c. 9. sect. 5.

275 T. Hicros. Sheviith, fol. 35. 1.

whose doctrine and conversation, principles and practices agree together; who both teach obedience to the law, and perform it themselves: where again he glances at the masters in Israel, and tacitly reproves them who said, but did not; taught the people what they themselves did not practise; and so were unworthy of the honour, which he that both teaches and does shall have: for

the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven;

he shall be highly esteemed of in the church here, and be honoured hereafter in the world to come. The Jews have a saying somewhat like this;

”he that lessens himself for the words of the law in this world, *נִשָּׂה גְדוֹל*, “he shall become great” in the world to come²⁷⁶;

or days of the Messiah.

Matthew 5:20

Ver. 20. **For I say unto you,**

These words are directed, not to the true disciples of Christ in general, or to his apostles in particular, but to the whole multitude of the people; who had in great esteem and admiration the Scribes and Pharisees, for their seeming righteousness and holiness; concerning which Christ says,

that except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.

He mentions the Scribes, because they were the more learned part of the people, who were employed in writing out, and expounding the law; and the Pharisees, because they were the strictest sect among the Jews for outward religion and righteousness; and yet, it seems, their righteousness was very defective; it lay only in an external observance of the law; did not arise from a purified heart, or the principles of grace; nor was it performed sincerely, and with a view to the glory of God; but for their own applause, and in order to obtain eternal life: besides, they neglected the weightier matters of the law, and contented themselves with the lesser ones; and as they were deficient in their practice, so they were very lax in their doctrines, as appears from the foregoing verse. Wherefore Christ informs his hearers, that they must have a better righteousness than these men had, if ever they expected to enter into the kingdom of heaven. There will be no admission into heaven without a righteousness: it was the loss of righteousness which removed Adam out of his earthly paradise; and it is not agreeable to the justice

276 T. Bab. Bava Metzia, fol. 85. 2.

of God, to admit man into his heavenly paradise without one; yea, it is contrary to his nature, and would be destructive to the comfort of saints, to receive an unrighteous person into his kingdom and glory. A “pharisaical” righteousness will never bring a person thither; nor will any righteousness of man’s, be it what it will, because the best is imperfect; it must be a righteousness exceeding that of the Scribes and Pharisees; and such is the righteousness of the saints: indeed their inherent righteousness, or the sanctification of the Spirit, is preferable to any righteousness of a natural man; it exceeds it in its author, nature, effects, and usefulness; yea, even works of righteousness done by believers are greatly preferable to any done by such men as are here mentioned: but, above all, the righteousness of Christ, which is imputed to them, and received by faith, is infinitely more excellent in its author, perfection, purity, and use; and which is their only right and title to eternal glory; and without which no man will be admitted into that glorious state.

Matthew 5:21

Ver. 21. **Ye have heard,**

That is, from the Scriptures being read to them, and the explanations of the ancients, which were called *אֲתַעֲמִשׁ*, “hearing”, being read in the schools, and heard by the scholars²⁷⁷; so that to “hear”, was along with the recital of the text, to receive by tradition, the sense the elders had given of it: of this kind is the instance produced by Christ. Thus Onkelos, and Jonathan ben Uzziel, render the phrase, “him shall ye hear”, in De 18:15 by *לֵינֵי תִקַּב*, “from him shall ye receive”; so those phrases²⁷⁸, *לִמְדוּ מִפִּי הַשְּׂמוּעָה*, “they learn from hearing”, or by report from others; and *הַעוֹמְשָׁה יִפְמ וְרַמָּא* “they speak from hearing”, or from what they have heard, are often used for receiving and reporting things as they have them by tradition. That “it was said”, or “it hath been said”; this is also a Talmudic form of expression; often is this phrase to be met with in the *אִיחָאמַר דְּמַלְאָא*, “it has been said”²⁷⁹; that is, by the ancient doctors, as here, “by them of old time”, or “to the ancients”, *לְקַדְמוֹנֵי*, so in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel; not to the Israelites in the time of Moses, but to the ancestors of the Jews, since the times of Ezra; by the elders, who were contemporary with them; and who by their false glosses corrupted the law, when they recited any part of it to the people; or “by the ancients”, the ancient doctors and commentators, which preceded

277 Vid. Buxtorf. Lex. Rabbin, fol. 2453.

278 Maimon. Hilch. Issure Mizbeach, c. 1. sect. 2, 4, 5, 7, 10. & passim, & T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 88. 1.

279 Vid. Edzardi Not. in Avoda Zara, c. 2. p. 284.

the times of Christ, whom the Jews often call *קַדְמוֹנֵי*, “our ancients”²⁸⁰. Now, upon that law, “thou shalt not kill”, they put this gloss, or added this by way of interpretation,

and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment;

which they understood only of actual murder, either committed in their own persons, or by the means of others. Their rules for the judgment of such persons were these;

”everyone that kills his neighbour with his hand; as if he strikes him with a sword, or with a stone that kills him; or strangles him till he die; or burns him in fire; seeing he kills him in any manner, in his own person, lo! such an one must be put to death *בְּיִסְמוּדְקָל*, “by the house of judgment”, or the sanhedrim²⁸¹.’

Not that which consisted of three persons only, but either that which consisted of twenty three, or the supreme one, which was made up of seventy one; which two last had only power of judging capital offences. Again,

”if a man hires a murderer to kill his neighbour, or sends his servants, and they kill him, or binds him, and leaves him before a lion, or the like, and the beast kills him, everyone of these is a shedder of blood; and the sin of slaughter is in his hand; and he is guilty of death by the hand of heaven, i.e. God; but he is not to be put to death by the house of judgment, or the sanhedrim²⁸².

”A little after, it is said, “their judgment” is delivered to heaven, i.e. to God; and this seems to be the sense of the word “judgment” here, namely, the judgment of God, or death by the hand of God; since it is manifestly distinguished from the council, or sanhedrim, in the next “verse”. The phrase, in danger of judgment, is the same with²⁸³ *דִּינֵי דִּינֵי* “guilty of judgment”, or deserves condemnation.

Matthew 5:22

Ver. 22. **But I say unto you,**

This is a Rabbinical way of speaking, used when a question is determined, and a false notion is refuted; it is a magisterial form of expression, and well suits with Christ, the great teacher and master in Israel; who spake as one having authority, opposing himself, not to the law

280 Vid. R. Aben Ezra in Exod. xxi. 17. & in Isa. lii. 13. & lxvi. 24.

281 Maimon. Hilch. Rotseach, c. 2. sect. 1.

282 Maimon. Hilch. Rotseach, c. 2. sect. 2.

283 In Targ. in 2 Chron. xix. 10.

of “Moses, thou shalt not kill”; but to the false gloss the ancient doctors had put upon it, with which their later ones agreed. You say, that if one man kills another himself, he is to be put to death by the sanhedrim; and if he does it by proxy, he is to be left to the judgment of God, so wholly restraining the law to actual murder; but I affirm, that

whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of judgment.

By “brother” is meant, not in a religious sense, one that is of the same faith, or in the same church state; nor, in a strict natural sense, one that is so in the bonds of consanguinity; but in a large sense, any man, of whatsoever country or nation: for we are to be angry with no man; that is, as is rightly added,

without a cause:

for otherwise there is an anger which is not sinful, is in God, in Christ, in the holy angels; and is commendable in the people of God, when it arises from a true zeal for religion, the glory of God, and the interest of Christ; and is kindled against sin, their own, or others, all manner of vice, false doctrine, and false worship: but it is causeless anger which is here condemned by Christ, as a breach of the law, “thou shalt not kill”; and such persons are

in danger of judgment;

not of any of the courts of judicature among the Jews, as the sanhedrim of three, or of twenty three, or of seventy one, which took no notice of anger, as a passion in the mind, only of facts committed; but of the judgment of God, as in the preceding “verse”, it being distinguished from the sanhedrim, or council, in the next clause. And whosoever shall say to his brother Raca, shall be in danger of the council, or “sanhedrim”. The word Raca is expressive of indignation and contempt; it was used as a term of reproach. Some derive it from ריקק to “spit upon”; as if the person that used it thought the man he spoke to deserved to be spit upon, and treated in the most contemptuous manner: but rather the word signifies “empty” and “vain”, and denotes a worthless, empty headed man; a man of no brains; a foolish, witless, fellow: so it is often used in Jewish writings. Take a few instances, as follow:

”a certain person said to R. Jochanan²⁸⁴, Rabbi, expound, for it becomes thee to expound; for as thou hast said, so have I seen: he replied to him, ריקא Reka, if thou hadst not seen, thou wouldst

284 T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 100. 1. T. Bava Bathra, fol. 75. 1.

not have believed.”

Again²⁸⁵, it happened to R. Simeon ben Eliezer of Migdal Edar, who went from the house of Rabbi; and he met with a certain man very much deformed; he says unto him, ריקא, how many are the deformed sons of “Abraham our father?” Many more instances might be given²⁸⁶. Now I do not find that the use of this reproachful word was cognizable by the Jewish sanhedrim, or great council; nor is it our Lord’s meaning that it was, only that it ought to have been taken notice of in a proper manner, as well as actual murder. He adds,

but whosoever shall say thou fool, shall be danger of hell fire.

The word “fool” does not signify a man of weak parts, one that is very ignorant in things natural; this the word Raca imports; but a wicked reprobate man; in which sense Solomon often uses the word. The Persic version renders it here “wicked”. There is a manifest gradation in the text from causeless anger in the breast, or reproachful words; and from thence to a censorious judging of a man’s spiritual and eternal estate, which is what is here condemned. “Thou fool”, is, thou wicked man, thou ungodly wretch, thou graceless creature, whose portion will be eternal damnation. Calling a man by such names was not allowed of by the Jews themselves, whose rules are:

”he that calls his neighbour a servant, let him be excommunicated; a bastard, let him be beaten with forty stripes; רשע, “a wicked man”, let him descend with him into his life or livelihood²⁸⁷.”

The gloss upon it is,

”as if he should say, to this the sanhedrim is not obliged, but it is lawful to hate him, yea to lessen his sustenance, and exercise his trade,

”which was done to bring him to poverty and distress. So, it seems, the sanhedrim were not obliged to take notice of him. Again, they say,

”it is forbidden a man to call his neighbour by a name of reproach²⁸⁸ everyone that calls his neighbour רשע, “a wicked man”, shall be brought down to hell;”

which is pretty much what Christ here says,

shall be in danger of hell fire;

285 Massechet Derach Eretz, c. 4. fol. 18. 1.

286 Vid. T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 32. 2. Zohar in Exod. fol. 50. 2.

287 T. Bab. Kiddushin, fol. 28. 1. Bava Metzia, fol. 71. 1.

288 Zohar in Exod. fol. 50. 3.

or deserving of hell fire; or liable to, and in danger of punishment, even “unto hell fire”. An expression much like this may be observed in Jarchi, on Isa 24:23 where he speaks of some persons גוהיבי גוהנו לנהנו, “who are guilty”, deserving, or in danger of “hell unto hell”. The wordgeenna, here used, and which is often used in the New Testament for “hell”, is but the Hebrew גיהנום, “Ge-Hinnom”, the valley of Hinnom, where the children were caused to pass through the fire to Moloch. This place, the Jewish writers²⁸⁹ say,

“Was a place well known, near to Jerusalem, a valley, whose fire was never quenched; and in which they burned the bones of anything that was unclean, and dead carcasses, and other pollutions.”

Hence the word came to be used among them, as might be shown in innumerable instances, to express the place and state of the damned; and very fitly describes it.

Matthew 5:23

Ver. 23. Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, The Jews obliged such who had done any damage to their neighbours, by stealing from them, to make satisfaction before they brought their offering; concerning which they say²⁹⁰,

he that brings what he has stolen, before he brings his trespass offering, is right; he that brings his trespass offering, before he brings that which he has stolen, is not right.”

Again²⁹¹,

”they do not bring the trespass offering before the sum of what is stolen is returned, either to the owners, or to the priests.”

Some have thought Christ refers to this; only what they restrained to pecuniary damages, he extends to all sorts of offences. But not a trespass offering, but a free-will offering, seems to be designed by “the gift”: which, when a man either intended to bring, or was going to bring, or had already brought, as a voluntary sacrifice to be offered unto God; and it came into his mind, that he had offended any man by showing any undue passion, or by any reproachful words, then he was to do what is advised in the following verse: “and there”, whilst going, or when at the altar,

289 Sepher Cosri, fol. 57. 2. Vid. Kimchi in Psal. xxvii. 13.

290 Misn. Bava Kama, c. 9. sect. 12.

291 Maimon. Hilch. Gezela, c. 8. sect. 13.

rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee:

hath anything to charge thee with; any just ground of complaint against thee; if thou hast done him any injury, or given him any offence: particularly, if he had at any time said Raca to him, or called him “fool” for those words have reference to what goes before, and are a corollary, or conclusion from them, as appears from the causal particle “therefore”.

Matthew 5:24

Ver. 24. **Leave there thy gift before the altar,**

This might easily be done, and the business soon dispatched, at some seasons; particularly, at their public feasts, as the passover, pentecost, and feast of tabernacles, when all the Israelites were together:and

go thy way;

make what haste thou canst,

first be reconciled to thy brother:

use all means to reconcile him; acknowledge the offence; ask his pardon; assure him that thou wishest well to him, and not ill;

and then come and offer thy gift,

by putting it on the altar, before which it was left. This shows, that acts of love and friendship are preferable to sacrifices; and that sacrifices offered up in wrath, and whilst unreconciled to others, are unacceptable to God, and of no avail: and so much the Jews themselves seem to acknowledge; when they say²⁹²:

”that transgressions, which are between a man and God, the day of atonement expiates; the transgressions which are between a man and his neighbour, the day of atonement does not expiate את חבירו ריקא, “until he hath reconciled his neighbour.””

Which is enlarged upon, and explained by Maimonides²⁹³, after this manner:

”the day of atonement does not expiate any transgressions, but those that are between a man and God, as when one eats anything that is forbidden, and lies with anything that is forbidden, or the like; but transgressions which are between a man and his neighbour, as he that hurts his neighbour, or curses his neighbour, or steals from him, and the like, are never forgiven, until he has given his neighbour what he owed him, and has “reconciled” him; yea, though he has returned to him

292 Misn. Yoma, c. 8. sect. 9.

293 Hilchot Teshuba, c. 2. sect. 9. Vid. T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 87. 1.

the money he owed him, he ought to “reconcile” him, and desire him to forgive him; yea, even though “he has only provoked him by words”, (which is the very case in the text before us,) יִיָּי לִפְנֵי הָיִב “he ought to reconcile him”, and to meet him until he forgives him: if his neighbour will not forgive, he must bring with him three of his friends, and meet him, and entreat him; and if he will not be reconciled by them, he must bring them a second, and a third time.”

So that he was to use all means to obtain a reconciliation.

Matthew 5:25

Ver. 25. **Agree with thine adversary quickly**

These words are not to be understood in an allegorical sense, as if “the adversary” was the justice of God, demanding payment of debts; “the way”, this present life; “the judge”, God himself; “the officer”, the devil; “the prison”, the pit of hell; and “the uttermost farthing”, the least sin, which will never be remitted without satisfaction: but the design of them is to prevent lawsuits about debts, which may be in dispute; it being much better for debtor and creditor, especially the former, to compose such differences among themselves, than to litigate the matter in a court of judicature. By “the adversary” is meant not an enemy, one that bears hatred and ill will, but a brother that has ought against a man; a creditor, who demands and insists upon payment of what is owing to him; and for this purpose has taken methods towards bringing the debtor before a proper magistrate, in order to oblige him to payment: wherefore it is better for him to make up and agree the matter directly, as soon as possible,

whilst thou art in the way with him;

that is, whilst the creditor and debtor are going together to some inferior magistrate, or lesser court, as the sanhedrim, which consisted of three persons only, before whom such causes might be tried: for הַדִּינֵי מִבְּרֵית לְבָבָא, pecuniary causes, or causes relating to money matters, were tried “by the bench of three”²⁹⁴: and the selfsame advice is given in the Talmud²⁹⁵, as here, where it seems to be a common proverb; for it is said,

”there are men that say, or men usually say, דַּבְּבַב אֶת אֲדֵרְבֵי אֲדֵרְבֵי, “whilst thou art in the way with thine adversary, be obedient”.

Lest at any time the adversary should deliver thee to the judge.

²⁹⁴ Misn. Sanhedrim, c. 1. sect. 1.

²⁹⁵ T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 95. 2.

a superior magistrate in a higher court; for if the creditor would, he could oblige the debtor to go with him to the supreme court of judicature, and try the cause there; for so say the Jewish²⁹⁶; canons:

”if the creditor says we will go to the great sanhedrim, they compel the debtor, and he goes up with them, as it is said, “the borrower is servant to the lender”,

where it might go harder with the poor debtor; and therefore it was advisable to prevent it by an agreement, lest

the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.

”It was an affirmative command in the law, says Maimonides, to appoint “judges” and “officers” in every country and province, as it is said, De 16:18. שׁוֹפְטֵימ “judges” they are the judges that are fixed in the sanhedrim, and such that engage in law suits come before them: מִירְטוּשׁ, “officers”; these are the masters of the rod and scourge, i.e. who beat and scourge delinquents; and these stand before the judges--and all they do, is by the order of the judges.”

Now it is one of these that is meant by “the officer”; in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel, he is called רְטוּשׁ; who, when he had authority from the judge, could cast into prison, and that for debt; of which we have no account in the law of Moses.

Matthew 5:26

Ver. 26. **Verily, I say unto thee,** This may be depended upon, you may assure yourself of it, that

thou shalt by no means come out thence,

from prison,

till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing,

or “last farthing”; or as the Ethiopic version reads it, “till thou hast exactly paid all”; which seems to express the inexorableness of the creditor, and the impossibility of the debtor’s release.

Matthew 5:27

Ver. 27. **Ye have heard that it was said,**

These forms of speech, as well as what follows,

by them of old time,

have been explained, in ver. 21. The law here mentioned,

thou shalt not commit adultery,

is recorded in Ex 20:14 and the meaning of our Lord

²⁹⁶ Maimof. Hilch. Sanhedrim, c. 6. sect. 7.

is, not that the then present Jews had heard that such a law had been delivered “to the ancients”, their fathers, at Mount Sinai; for that they could read in their Bibles: but they had received it by tradition, that the sense of it, which had been given to their ancestors, by the ancient doctors of the church, was, that this law is to be taken strictly, as it lies, and only regards the sin of uncleanness in married persons; or, what was strictly adultery, and that actual; so that it had no respect to fornication, or unchaste thoughts, words, or actions, but that single act only.

Matthew 5:28

Ver. 28. **But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman,**

Many and severe are the prohibitions of the Jews, concerning looking upon a woman, which they aggravate as a very great sin: they say²⁹⁷, it is not lawful to look upon a beautiful woman, though unmarried; nor upon another man’s wife, though deformed; nor upon a woman’s coloured garments: they forbid²⁹⁸ looking on a woman’s little finger, and say {m}, that he that tells money to a woman, out of his hand into her’s, that he may look upon her, though he is possessed of the law and good works, even as Moses, he shall not escape the damnation of hell: they affirm²⁹⁹, that he that looks upon a woman’s heel, his children shall not be virtuous; and that a man may not go after a woman in the way, no, not after his wife: should he meet her on a bridge, he must take her to the side of him; and whoever goes through a river after a woman, shall have no part in the world to³⁰⁰ come: nay, they forbid³⁰¹ a man looking on the beauty of his own wife. Now these things were said by them, chiefly to cover themselves, and because they would be thought to be very chaste; when they were, as Christ calls them, an “adulterous generation” in a literal sense: they usually did what our Lord observes, “strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel”. We read in the Talmud³⁰², of חֲדוּד שׁוֹמֵר, a “foolish saint” and it is asked, who is he? and it is answered, one that sees a woman drowning in a river, and says it is not lawful for me לֹא יִתְכַלֵּי בָהּ מֵה, “to look” upon her, and deliver her. It was not any looking upon a woman, that is forbid by Christ as criminal; but so to look, as “to

²⁹⁷ T. Bab. Avoda Zara, fol. 1. 2.

²⁹⁸ T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 24. 1. Sabbat. fol. 64. 2.

²⁹⁹ T. Bab. Nedarim, fol. 20. 1. T. Hieros. Challa, fol. 58.

³⁰⁰ Derech Eretz. c. 1. fol. 17. 3.

³⁰¹ T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 61. 1. Eruvin, fol. 18. 2.

³⁰² Zohar in Lev. fol. 34. 4.

³⁰² T. Bab. Sota, fol. 21. 2.

lust after her”; for such an one

hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

But these men, who forbad external looking upon a woman, generally speaking, had no notion of heart sins; and which was the prevailing opinion of the Pharisees, in Christ’s time.”

A good thought, they³⁰³ allow, is reckoned as if done; as it is said, Mal 3:16. Upon which it is asked, what is the meaning of that, and “that thought” upon “his name?” Says R. Ase, if a man thinks to do a good work, and is hindered, and does it not, the Scripture reckons it to him, as if he did it; but an evil thought, the holy blessed God does not account of it as if done, as is said, Ps 66:18.”

Upon which words, a noted commentator³⁰⁴ of their’s has this remark:

”Though I regard iniquity in my heart to do it, even in thought, yea, against God himself, as if I had expressed it with my lips, he does not hear it; that is לֹא חָשַׁב לִי וְגוֹ, “he does not reckon it to me for sin”; because the holy blessed God does not account an evil thought for an action, to them that are in the faith of God, or of the true religion.”

For it seems, this is only true of the Israelites; it is just the reverse with the Gentiles, in whom God does not reckon of a good thought, as if it was done, but does of an evil one, as if it was in act³⁰⁵. It must be owned, that this is not the sense of them all; for some of them have gone so far as to say³⁰⁶, that”

the thoughts of sin are greater, or harder, than sin itself:

”by which they mean, that it is more difficult to subdue sinful lusts, than to refrain from the act of sin itself; and particularly, some of them say things which agree with, and come very near to what our Lord here says; as when they affirm³⁰⁷, that

”everyone that looks upon a woman בְּכוֹנֵה, with in-

³⁰³ T. Bab. Kiddushin, fol. 40. 1.

³⁰⁴ R. David Kimchi, in Psal. lxvi. 18.

³⁰⁵ T. Hieros. Peah, fol. 16. 2.

³⁰⁶ T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 29. 1.

³⁰⁷ T. Hieros. Challa, fol. 58. 3. Massechet Calah, fol. 16.

⁴ Vid. Maimon. Issure Bia, c. 21. sect. 2. & Moses Kotsensis Mitzvot Tora precept. neg. 126.

tention, it is all one as if he lay with her.”

And that **נואם ביניו נקרא נואם**, “he that committeth adultery with his eyes, is called an adulterer”³⁰⁸. Yea, they also observe³⁰⁹, that a woman may commit adultery in her heart, as well as a man; but the Pharisees of Christ’s time were of another mind.

Matthew 5:29

Ver. 29. **And if thy right eye offend thee,**

Or “cause thee to offend”, to stumble, and fall into sin. Our Lord has no regard here to near and dear relations seeking to alienate us from God and Christ, and hinder us in the pursuit of divine things; whose solicitations are to be rejected with the utmost indignation, and they themselves to be parted with, and forsaken, rather than complied with; which is the sense some give of the words: for both in this, and the following verse, respect is had only to the law of adultery; and to such members of the body, which often are the means of leading persons on to the breach of it; particularly the eye and hand. The eye is often the instrument of ensnaring the heart this way: hence the Jews have a³¹⁰ saying,

”whoever looks upon women, at the end comes into the hands of transgression.”

Mention is only made of the right eye; not but that the left may be an occasion of sinning, as well as the right; but that being most dear and valuable, is instanced in, and ordered to be parted with:

pluck it out, and cast it from thee:

which is not to be understood literally; for no man is obliged to mutilate any part of his body, to prevent sin, or on account of the commission of it; this is no where required, and if done, would be sinful, as in the case of Origen: but figuratively; and the sense is, that persons should make a covenant with their eyes, as Job did; and turn them away from beholding such objects, which may tend to excite impure thoughts and desires; deny themselves the gratification of the sense of seeing, or feeding the eyes with such sights, as are graceful to the flesh; and with indignation and contempt, reject, and avoid all opportunities and occasions of sinning; which the eye may be the instrument of, and lead unto:

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

This is still a continuation of the figure here used;

308 Vajikra Rabba, sect. 23. fol. 265. 1.

309 Bemidbar Rabba, sect. 9. fol. 196. 1.

310 T. Bab. Nedarim, fol. 20. 1.

and the meaning is, that it will turn to better account, to lose all the carnal pleasures of the eye, or all those pleasing sights, which are grateful to a carnal heart, than, by enjoying them, to expose the whole man, body and soul, to everlasting destruction, in the fire of hell.

Matthew 5:30

Ver. 30. **And if thy right hand offend thee,**

Or “cause thee to offend”; that is, is the means of ensnaring thine heart; and of drawing thee into either mental, or actual adultery; for, as before, all unchaste looks, so here, all unchaste touches, embraces, &c. are condemned. As adultery may be committed in the heart, and by the eye, so with the hand:”

says R. Eliezer³¹¹ what is the meaning of that Scripture, “your hands are full of blood”, Isa 1:15? It is replied, **אלו המנאפינו ביד**, “these are they, that commit adultery with the hand”. It is a tradition of the house of R. Ishmael, that the sense of that command, “thou shalt not commit adultery”, is, there shall be none that commits adultery in thee, whether “with the hand”, or “with the foot”.

Like orders are given as before,

cut it off, and cast it from thee;

as a man would choose to do, or have it done for him, when such a part of the body is mortified, and endangers all the rest. The Jews enjoined cutting off of the hand, on several accounts; if in a morning, before a man had washed his hands, he put his hand to his eye, nose, mouth, **חיק רא**, it was to be “cut off”³¹²; particularly, the handling of the “membrum virile”, was punishable with cutting off of the hand.”

Says R.³¹³ Tarphon, if the hand is moved to the privy parts, **תק ידו**, “let his hand be cut off to his navel”.

That is, that it may reach no further; for below that part of the body the hand might not be put³¹⁴; lest unclean thoughts, and desires, should be excited. In the above³¹⁵ place it is added,

”what if a thorn should be in his belly, must he not take it away? It is replied, no: it is further

311 T. Bab. Nidda, fol. 13. 2. Vid. Maimon. Issure Bia, c. 21. sect. 18.

312 T. Bab. Sabbat. fol. 108. 2. Massechet Callah, fol. 17. 1.

313 T. Bab. Nidda, fol. 13. 2.

314 Maimon. Issure Bia, c. 21. sect. 23.

315 T. Bab. Nidda, fol. 13. 2.

asked, must not his belly be ripped up then? It is answered, it is better that his belly be ripped up, **ואל ירד לבאר שהת**, dry law, “than that he should go down to the pit of corruption.”

A way of speaking, much like what our Lord here uses; and to the above orders and canons, he may be very well thought to allude: but he is not to be understood literally, as enjoining the cutting off of the right hand, as they did; but of men’s refraining from all such impure practices, either with themselves, or women, which are of a defiling nature; and endanger the salvation of them, body and soul; the same reason is given as before.

Matthew 5:31

Ver. 31. **It hath been said,**

It is not added here, as in the former instances, “by them of old time”; nor prefaced with these words, “ye have heard”; because the case of divorce was not any law of Moses, or of God by him; but only a permission, because of the hardness of the hearts of the Jews: and as to the controversy, about the causes of divorce, this was not debated by them of old time, but was a new thing, just started in the time of Christ; and was a controversy then agitating, between the schools of Hillel and Shammai: the one allowing it upon any frivolous cause; the other, only on account of adultery.

Whosoever shall put away his wife,

dissolve the marriage bond, dismiss her from his bed, and send her from his house, see De 24:1 “let him give her a writing of divorcement”, **פר כריתת**, “a bill of divorcement”, or “a book of cutting off”. For though a wife was obtained by several ways, there was but one way of dismissing her, as the Jews observe³¹⁶, and that was, by giving her a bill. The form of a writing of divorcement, as given by Maimonides³¹⁷, is as follows:

”On such a day of the week, in such a month, of such a year, either from the creation, or the epocha of contracts, according to the usual way of computation, which we observe in such a place; I such an one, the son of such an one, of such a place; or if I have any other name, or surname, or my parents, or my place, or the place of my parents; by my own will, without any force, I put away, dismiss, and divorce thee. Thee, I say, who art such an one, the daughter of such an one, of such a place; or if thou hast any other name, or

316 Baal Hatturim in Deut. xxiv. 1. Maimon. Hilchot Ishot, c. 1. sect. 2, 3.

317 Hilchot Gerushin, c. 4. sect. 12.

surname, or thy parents, or thy place, or the place of thy parents; who wast my wife heretofore, but now I put thee away, dismiss and divorce thee; so that thou art in thine own hand, and hast power over thyself, to go, and marry any other man, whom thou pleasest; and let no man hinder thee in my name, from this day forward and for ever; and lo! thou art free to any man: and let this be unto thee, from me, a bill of divorce, an instrument of dismissal, and a letter of forsaking, according to the law of Moses and Israel.”

”Such an one, the son of such an one, witness. Such an one, the son of such an one, witness.” Would you choose to have one of these bills, filled up in proper form, take it in manner³¹⁸ following.

”On the fourth day of the week, on the eleventh day of the month Cisleu, in the year five thousand four hundred and fifty four, from the creation of the world; according to the computation which we follow here, in the city of Amsterdam, which is called Amstelredam; situated by the sea side, called Taya, and by the river Amstel; I Abraham, the son of Benjamin, surnamed Wolphius, the priest; and at this time dwelling in the city of Amsterdam, which is called Amstelredam, which is situated by the sea side, called Taya, and by the river Amstel; or if I have any other name, or surname, or my parents, or my place, or the place of my parents; by my own free will, without any compulsion, I put away, dismiss, and divorce thee, my wife Rebecca, the daughter of Jonas the Levite; who at this time abides in the city of Amsterdam, called Amstelredam, situated by the sea side, called Taya, and by the river Amstel; or if thou hast any other name, or surname, or thy parents, or thy place, or the place of thy parents, who wast heretofore my wife; but now I put thee away, dismiss, and divorce thee; so that thou art in thine own hands, and hast power over thyself, to go and marry any other man, whom thou pleasest: and let no man hinder thee in my name, from this day forward, and for ever; and lo! thou art free to any man. Let this be to thee, from me, a bill of divorce, an instrument of dismissal, and a letter of forsaking, according to the law of Moses and Israel.”

318 In Surenhusii Misna, Vol. III. p. 324. Vid. Moses Kotsensis Mitzvot Tora pr. affirm. 50.

“Sealtiel, the son of Paltiel, witness. Calonymus, the son of Gabriel, witness.” This bill being written in twelve lines, neither more nor less, and being sealed by the husband, and signed by the witnesses, was delivered, either by him, or by a messenger, or deputy of his or hers, into her hand, lap, or bosom, in the presence of two persons; after which, she might, if she would, enrol it in the public records, and marry whom she pleased.

Matthew 5:32

Ver. 32. **But I say unto you; that whosoever shall put away his wife,**

Christ does not infringe, or revoke the original grant, or permission of divorce; only frees it from the false interpretations, and ill use, the Pharisees made of it; and restores the ancient sense of it, in which only it was to be understood: for a divorce was allowable in no case,

saving for the cause of fornication;

which must not be taken strictly for what is called fornication, but as including adultery, incest, or any unlawful copulation; and is opposed to the sense and practices of the Pharisees, who were on the side of Hillel: who admitted of divorce, upon the most foolish and frivolous pretences whatever; when Shammai and his followers insisted on it, that a man ought only to put away his wife for uncleanness; in which they agreed with Christ. For so it is written³¹⁹,

“The house of Shammai say, a man may not put away his wife, unless he finds some uncleanness in her, according to De 24:1 The house of Hillel say, if she should spoil his food, (that is, as Jarchi and Bartenora explain it, burns it either at the fire, or with salt, i.e. over roasts or over salts it,) who appeal also to De 24:1. R. Akiba says, if he finds another more beautiful than her, as it is said, De 24:1 “and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes.”

The commentators³²⁰ on this passage say that the determination of the matter is, according to the school of Millel; so that, according to them, a woman might be put away for a very trivial thing: some difference is made by some of the Jewish doctors, between a first and second wife; the first wife, they say³²¹, might not be put away, but for adultery; but the second might be put away,

³¹⁹ Misn. Gittin, c. 9. sect. 10. Vid. T. Hieros. Gittin, fol. 49. 4. & Sota, fol. 16. 2. & Bemidbar Rabba, sect. 9. fol. 195. 2.

³²⁰ Maimon. & Bartenora in Gittin, c. 9. sect. 10.

³²¹ T. Bab. Gittin, fol. 90. 2. Maimon. Hilch. Gerushin, c. 10. sect. 21, 22.

if her husband hated her; or she was of ill behaviour, and impudent, and not modest, as the daughters of Israel. Now our Lord says, without any exception, that a man ought not to put away his wife, whether first or second, for any other reason than uncleanness; and that whoever does, upon any other account,

causeth her to commit adultery;

that is, as much as in him lies: should she commit it, he is the cause of it, by exposing her, through a rejection of her, to the sinful embraces of others; and, indeed, should she marry another man, whilst he is alive, which her divorce allows her to do, she must be guilty of adultery; since she is his proper wife, the bond of marriage not being dissolved by such a divorce: and

whosoever shall marry her that is divorced, committeth adultery;

because the divorced woman he marries, and takes to his bed; is legally the wife of another man; and it may be added, from Mt 19:9 that her husband, who has put her away, upon any other account than fornication, should he marry another woman, would be guilty of the same crime.

Matthew 5:33

Ver. 33. **Again, ye have heard that it hath been said,** Besides what has been observed, in ver. 21 and 27 you know it has also been said,

by, or to them of old time,

what is written in Le 19:12. “And ye shall not swear by my name falsely”; which seems to be referred to, when it is said, “thou shalt not forswear thyself”: and is the law forbidding perjury, or false swearing; and was what the Jews were chiefly, if not only concerned about; little regarding the vanity, only the truth of an oath: for they took swearing vainly, to be the same as swearing falsely; wherefore so long as what they swore was truth, they were not careful whether it was of any importance or not: moreover, these men sinned, in that they swore by the creatures, which they thought they might do, and not sin; and when they had so done, were not under obligation to perform; because they made no use of the name of God, to whom only vows and oaths were to be performed, “but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths”, Nu 30:2 which they understood of vows only made to the Lord, and not to others; and of oaths, when in his name, and not by others; which they did do, and yet thought themselves not obliged by them.

Matthew 5:34

Ver. 34. **But I say unto you, swear not at all,**

Which must not be understood in the strictest sense, as though it was not lawful to take an oath upon any occasion, in an affair of moment, in a solemn serious manner, and in the name of God; which may be safely done: but of rash swearing, about trivial matters, and by the creatures; as appears by what follows,

neither by heaven;

which is directly contrary to the Jewish canons {m}, which say,

”they that swear בַּשָּׁמַיִם, “by heaven”, and by earth, are free.

”Upon the words in So 2:7, “I adjure you”, &c. it is asked³²²,

“by what does she adjure them? R. Eliezer says, by the heavens, and by the earth; by the hosts, the host above, and the host below.”

So Philo the Jew says³²³ that the most high and ancient cause need not to be immediately mentioned in swearing; but the “earth”, the sun, the stars, οὐρανόν, “heaven”, and the whole world. So R. Aben Ezra, and R. David Kimchi, explain Am 4:2. “The Lord God hath sworn by his holiness”; that is, say they, בַּשָּׁמַיִם, “by heaven”: which may be thought to justify them, in this form of swearing; though they did not look upon it as a binding oath, and therefore if broken they were not criminal³²⁴.

”He that swears בַּשָּׁמַיִם by heaven, and by the earth, and by the sun, and the like; though his intention is nothing less than to him that created them, this is no oath.

”The reason why it is forbidden by Christ to swear by heaven, is,

for it is God’s throne;

referring to Isa 66:1 where he sits, the glory of his majesty shines forth, and is itself glorious and excellent, and not to be mentioned in a vain way; and especially, for the reason Christ elsewhere gives, Mt 23:22 that “he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon”; so that they doubly sinned, first, by openly swearing by that which is God’s creature; and then, by tacitly bringing God into their rash and vain oaths. {m} Misn. Shebuot, c. 4. sect. 13.

Matthew 5:35

Ver. 35. **Nor by the earth, for it is his footstool,** That the Jews were wont to swear by the earth, is clear

³²² Shirhashirim Rabba, fol. 10. 4.

³²³ De Special. leg. p 770.

³²⁴ Maimon. Hilch. Shebuot, c. 12. sect. 3.

from the above mentioned instances; and is condemned by Christ for this reason, because the earth is God’s “footstool”, referring, as before, to Isa 66:1 on which he treads; and where he also manifests forth his glory, and is a considerable part of the work of his hands.

Neither by Jerusalem,

which the Jews used to swear by: such forms of vows as these are to be met with in their writings³²⁵;

”as the altar, as the temple, כִּירוּשָׁלַיִם, “as Jerusalem”;

”that is, by Jerusalem, I vow I will do this, or the other thing.”

R. Judah says, he that says Jerusalem (i.e. as Bartenora observes³²⁶, without the note of comparison, as) says nothing.

”In the Gemara³²⁷ it is,

”he that says as Jerusalem, does not say anything, till he has made his vow concerning a thing, which is offered up in Jerusalem.” Dr. Lightfoot³²⁸ has produced forms of vowing and swearing, which have not occurred to me.” Jerusalem; לִירוּשָׁלַיִם “for”, or “unto Jerusalem”, which exactly answers to εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα, here; and “by Jerusalem”;

The reason given for prohibiting this kind of oath, is; **for it is the city of the great king;**

not of David, but of the King of kings, the Lord of hosts; who had his residence, and his worship, here; see Ps 48:2.

Matthew 5:36

Ver. 36. **Neither shalt thou swear by thy head,**

This also was a common form of swearing among the Jews: take a few instances.

”If anyone is bound to his friend by an oath, and says to him, vow unto me בְּחַיֵּי רֵאשִׁיב, “by the life of thy head”; R. Meir says³²⁹, he may retract it; but the wise men say, he cannot.”

Again³³⁰, a certain Rabbi said to Elijah,

”I heard “Bath Kol” (or the voice from heaven) mourning like a dove, and saying, woe to my children; for, because of their sins, I have destroyed my house, and have burnt my temple, and have carried them captive among the nations: and he (Elijah) said unto him רֵאשִׁיב וְחַיֵּי, “by thy life, and by the life of thy head”, not this time only it says so, but it says so three times every day.”

³²⁵ Misn. Nedarim, c. 1. sect. 3.

³²⁶ In. ib.

³²⁷ T. Bab. Nedarim, fol. 11. 1.

³²⁸ In loc. ex Tosapht. in Nedarim, c. 1.

³²⁹ Misn. Sanhedrim, c. 3. sect. 2.

³³⁰ T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 3. 1.

Once more³³¹, says R. Simeon ben Antipatras, to R. Joshua,”

“I have heard from the mouth of the wise men, that he that vows in the law, and transgresses, is to be beaten with forty stripes: he replies, blessed art thou of God, that thou hast so done **וְחַיִּי רֵאשִׁיב**, “by thy life, and by the life of thy head”, he that is used to do so is to be beaten.

”This form of swearing is condemned, for this reason, because thou canst not make one hair white or black: which shows, that a man’s head, nor, indeed, one hair of his head, is in his own power, and therefore he ought not to swear by it; as he ought not to swear by heaven, or earth, or Jerusalem, because these were in the possession of God. Some copies read, “canst not make one white hair black”.

Matthew 5:37

Ver. 37. **But let your communication be yea, yea.**

That is, let your speech, in your common conversation, and daily business of life, when ye answer to anything in the affirmative, be “yea”; and when ye answer to anything in the negative, “nay”: and for the stronger asseveration of the matter, when it is necessary, double these words; but let no oaths be joined unto them: this is enough; a righteous man’s yea, is yea, and his no, is no; his word is sufficient. Hence it appears, that our Lord is here speaking of rash swearing, and such as was used in common conversation, and is justly condemned by him. The Jews have no reason to reject this advice of Christ, who often use and recommend the same modes of expression. They endeavour to raise the esteem of their doctors and wise men, by saying, that their words, both in doctrines and dealings with men, are “yea, yea”³³². One of their³³³ commentators on the word “saying”, in, Ex 20:1 makes this observation;

”hence we learn, that they used to answer, **לאו לאו**, “concerning yea, yea, and concerning nay, nay”.

”This way of speaking, they looked upon equivalent to an oath; yea, they affirm it was one.

”Says R. Eliezer³³⁴, **לאו שבויה הוה שבויה**, “nay is an

oath; yea is an oath”, absolutely; “nay” is an oath, as it is written, Ge 9:11 and Isa 54:9. But that “yea” is an oath, how does it appear? It is concluded from hence, that “nay” is an oath; saith Rabba, there are that say “nay, nay”, twice; and there are that say “yea, yea”, twice; as it is written, Ge 9:11 and from hence, that “nay” is twice, “yea” is also twice said.

”The gloss upon it is,”he that says either “nay, nay”, twice, or “yea, yea”, twice; lo! it is **כשבויה מאחר** “as an after oath”, which confirms his words.”For whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil: that is, whatever exceeds this way of speaking and conversation, in the common affairs of life, is either from the devil, who is the evil one, by way of eminency; or from the evil heart of man, from the pride, malice, envy, &c. that are in it.

Matthew 5:38

Ver. 38. **Ye have heard that it hath been said,**

That is, to, or by them of old time, as is expressed in some of the foregoing instances,

an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, Ex 21:24.

This is “lex talionis”, the “law of retaliation”; which, whether it is to be understood literally, or not, is a matter of question. The Baithuseans, or Sadducees, among the Jews, took it in a literal sense, and so does Josephus, who says³³⁵, he that shall blind, i.e. put out a man’s eyes, shall suffer the like. But the Jewish doctors generally understood it of paying a price equivalent to the damage done, except in case of life. R. Sol. Jarchi³³⁶ explains the law thus:

”He that puts out his neighbour’s eye, must give him **דמי יני**, “the price of his eye”, according to the price of a servant sold in the market; and so the same of them all; for, not taking away of the member is strictly meant.

”And, says Maimonides³³⁷,

”if a man cuts off his neighbour’s hand, or foot, he is to be considered as if he was a servant sold in a market; what he was worth then, and what he is worth now; and he must pay the diminution which is made of his price; as it is said, “eye for eye”. From tradition it is learned, that this for, spoken of, is to be understood of paying money; this is what is said in the law, “as he hath caused

335 Antiq. Jud. l. 4. c. 8. sect. 35.

336 In Exod. xxi. 24.

337 Hilchot Chebel. c. 1. sect. 2, 3.

the civil magistrate only.

Matthew 5:39

Ver. 39. **But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil,**

This is not to be understood of any sort of evil, not of the evil of sin, of bad actions, and false doctrines, which are to be opposed; nor of the evil one, Satan, who is to be resisted; but of an evil man, an injurious one, who has done us an injury. We must not render evil for evil, or repay him in the same way; see Jas 5:6. Not but that a man may lawfully defend himself, and endeavour to secure himself from injuries; and may appear to the civil magistrate for redress of grievances; but he is not to make use of private revenge. As if a man should pluck out one of his eyes, he must not in revenge pluck out one of his; or should he strike out one of his teeth, he must not use him in the same manner; but patiently bear the affront, or seek for satisfaction in another way.

But whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also:

which is to be understood comparatively, rather than seek revenge, and is directly contrary to the Jewish canons, which require, in such a case, a pecuniary fine³³⁹.

”He that strikes his neighbour (which Maimonides explains, he that strikes his neighbour with his hand shut, about the neck) he shall give him a “sela”, or “shekel”: R. Judah says, in the name of R. Jose the Galilean, one pound: if he smite him (i.e. as Maimonides says, if he smite him with his double fist upon the face; or, as Bartenora, with the palm of his hand, **לחיי**, “on the cheek”, which is a greater reproach) he shall give him two hundred “zuzim”; and if he does it with the back of his hand, four hundred “zuzim”.

”R. Isaac Sangari³⁴⁰ manifestly refers to this passage of Christ’s, when he says to the king he is conversing with,

”I perceive that thou up braidest us with poverty and want; but in them the great men of other nations glory: for they do not glory but in him, who said, “Whosoever smiteth thee thy right cheek, turn to him the left; and whosoever taketh away thy coat, give him thy cloak.”

Matthew 5:40

339 Misn. Bava Kama, c. 8. sect. 6. Vid. Maimon. & Bartenora in ib.

340 Sepher Cosri, Orat. 1. Sign. 113. fol. 56. 1.

a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again”. Not that he is to be hurt, as he has hurt his neighbour; but inasmuch as he deserves to want a member, or to be hurt as he has done; therefore he ought to pay the damage.”

And Josephus himself {e} says, that he must be deprived of that, which he has deprived another of, except he that has his eye put out is willing to receive money; and which, he observes, the law allows of. The controversy about the sense of this law may be seen in a few words, as managed between R. Sandish Hagson, and Ben Zeta³³⁸.

”Says R. Sandish, we cannot explain this verse according to its literal sense; for if a man should smite the eye of his neighbour, and the third part of the light of his eye should depart, how will he order it, to strike such a stroke, as that, without adding or lessening? perhaps he will put out the whole light of his eye. And it is yet more difficult with respect to burning, wound, and stripe; for should they be in a dangerous place the man might die but that is intolerable. Ben Zeta answers him, is it not written, in another place, “as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again?” To which Hagson replies, **ב** “in”, is instead of **ל**, “upon”, or against; and lo! the sense is, so shall the punishment be upon him. Ben Zeta answers him again, as he does, so shall it be done to him. Hagson replies, behold Samson said, “as they have done to me, so will I do to them”; but Samson did not take their wives, and give them to others, he only rendered to them their reward: but Ben Zeta replies, if a poor man should smite, what must be his punishment? Hagson answers him, if a blind man should put out the eye of one that sees, what shall be done to him? as for the poor man, he may become rich, and pay, but the blind man can never pay.”

Now our Lord here, does not find fault with the law of retaliation, as delivered by Moses, but with the false gloss of the Scribes and Pharisees; who, as they interpreted it of pecuniary mulcts, as a compensation for the loss of a member, which sometimes exceeded all just and due bounds; so they applied it to private revenge, and in favour of it: whereas this law did not allow of a retaliation to be made, by private persons, at their pleasure, but by

338 In Aben Ezra in Exod. xxi. 24.

331 Derech. Eretz, c. 6. fol. 18. 2.

332 T. Bab. Moed Katon, fol. 20. 1. Maimon. Hilch. Dayot. c. 5. sect. 13.

333 R. Sol. Jarchi, in Exod. xx. 1.

334 T. Bab. Shebuot, fol. 36. 1. Vid. Maimon. Hilch. Shebuot, c. 2. sect. 1.

Ver. 40. **And if any man will sue thee at the law,**

Or “will contend with thee”, or as the Syriac renders it, Kme Nwdnd, “will strive”, or “litigate with thee”; not contest the matter, or try the cause in an open court of judicature, a sense our version inclines to; but will wrangle and quarrel in a private way, in order to

take away thy coat,

by force and violence,

let him have thy cloak also;

do not forbid, or hinder him from taking it; see Luke 6:29. The “coat”, is the same with טלייה, “the upper garment”: and what we render a “cloak”, answers to תלויק “the inward garment”; by which words Sangari expresses the passage in the place before cited: and the sense is, if a wrangling, quarrelsome man, insists upon having thy coat, or upper garment, let him take the next; and rather suffer thyself to be stripped naked than engage in a litigious broil with him. This also is contrary to the above canon of the Jews³⁴¹, which says;

”If a man should pull another by his ear, or pluck off his hair, or spit, and his spittle should come to him, הַבִּיר טַלְיָתוֹ מִמֶּנּוּ or “should take his coat from him”, or uncover a woman’s head in the street, he shall pay four hundred “zuzim”, and all this is according to his dignity; says R. Akiba; even the poor in Israel, they consider them as if they were noblemen, who are fallen from their estates, for they are the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

Matthew 5:41

Ver. 41. **And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile,**

The word ἀγγαρεύσει, rendered “compel”, is generally said to be of Persic original; the “Angari”, among the Persians, were the king’s messengers, or those who rode post, and were maintained at the king’s expenses; and had power to take horses, and other carriages, and even men, into their service, by force, when they had occasion for them: hence the word is used to force, or compel persons to do this or the other thing; the word אנגרייא is often to be met with in the Jewish writings, and is in them expounded to be³⁴², the taking of anything for the service of the king. David de Pomis renders it by יָלַ, “a yoke”³⁴³; meaning, any servile work, which such,

³⁴¹ Misn. Bava Kama, c. 8. sect. 6.

³⁴² Vid. Maimon. & Bartenora in Misn. Bava Metzia, c. 6. sect. 3.

³⁴³ {Tzemach David, fol. 8. 4.

who were pressed into the king’s service, were obliged unto. And³⁴⁴ אַנְגְרִיָּא hve is used to compel persons to go along with others, to do any service; in which sense it is here used: and Christ advises, rather than to contend and quarrel with such a person, that obliges to go with him a mile, to

go with him twain:

his meaning is, not to dispute such a matter, though it may be somewhat laborious and disagreeable, but comply, for the sake of peace. The Jews³⁴⁵, in their blasphemous book of the birth of Christ, own that he gave advice in such words as these, when they introduce Peter thus speaking of him.

”He, that is, Jesus, hath warned and commanded you to do no more evil to a Jew; but if a Jew should say to a Nazarene, go with me one mile, he shall go with him two miles; and if a Jew shall smite him on the left cheek, he shall turn to him also the right.”

Can a Jew find fault with this advice?

Matthew 5:42

Ver. 42. **Give to him that asketh thee,**

To every man, Luke 6:30 whether Jew or Gentile; friend or foe; believer or unbeliever; a good, or a bad man; worthy or unworthy; deserving or not, that asketh alms, whether food or money; give it freely, readily, cheerfully, according to your abilities, and as the necessity of the object requires: for such rules are always supposed, and to be observed; and though all are to be relieved, yet the circumstances of persons, and their relation to men, are to be considered, and special regard is to be had to the household of faith.

And from him that would borrow of thee, turn not away;

refuse him not, turn not away from him with a frown, or without speaking to him, or with a denial; look upon him with a pleasant countenance, cheerfully lend him what he wants, whether he be a Jew, from whom it was not lawful to take usury, or a stranger, from whom it, was lawful to take it, yet take it not; lend him freely, “hoping for nothing again”, Luke 6:35 which must not be understood of not hoping for the money lent, for then it would be giving, and not lending; but of not hoping for any reward for lending it: and indeed the money itself is not to be hoped for again, when the circumstances of the

³⁴⁴ Vid. Buxtorf. Lex. Rabb. p. 131, 132.

³⁴⁵ Toldos Jesu, p 22.

borrower are such, that he is not able to make a return.

Matthew 5:43

Ver. 43. **Ye have heard that it hath been said,**

By, or to them of old time. This law has been delivered to them,

thou shalt love thy neighbour,

with this appendage to it, or false gloss upon it,

and hate thine enemy;

for the first of these only is the law of Moses, Le 19:18 Moses, Leviticus 19:18, the other is the addition, or wrong interpretation of the Scribes and Pharisees: wherefore the Jew³⁴⁶ has no reason to charge Christ, or the Evangelist, with a false testimony, as he does, because the latter is no where written in the law, nor in the prophets: nor does Christ say it is; he only observes, that it had been traditionally handed down to them from the ancients, by the masters of the traditions of the elders, that the law of loving the neighbour was so to be understood as to allow, and even enjoin, hatred of enemies: in proof of which, take the following instances³⁴⁷.

“When one man sins against another, he may not hate him in his heart, and be silent, as is said of the wicked; Absalom spoke not with Amnon: but it is commanded to make it known to him, and to say to him, why hast thou done to me so and so? As it is said, “rebuking, thou shalt rebuke thy neighbour”; and if he returns, and desires him to pardon him, he shall not be implacable and cruel; but if he reproves him many times, and he does not receive his reproof, nor turn from his sin, then מוֹחֵר לְשֹׂנְאָו, “it is lawful to hate him”.

Again, they say³⁴⁸,

“Every disciple of a wise man, שְׂאִינוּ נֹקֵם וְנוֹטֵר כְּנֹחַשׁ, “who does not revenge, and keep as a serpent”; that is, as the gloss explains it, “enmity in his heart”, as a serpent, is no disciple of a wise man.”

And so Maimonides³⁴⁹, one of their better sort of writers, says;

“A disciple of a wise man, or a scholar, whom a man despises and reproaches publicly, it is for-

³⁴⁶ R. Isaac Chizuk Emunah, par. 2. c. 11. p. 402. {p} Moses Kotsensis Mitzvot Tora precept. neg. 5. Vid. Maimon. Hilchot Rotseach, c. 13. sect. 14.

³⁴⁷ Moses Kotsensis Mitzvot Tora precept. neg. 5. Vid. Maimon. Hilchot Rotseach, c. 13. sect. 14.

³⁴⁸ T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 22. 2. & 23. 1.

³⁴⁹ Maimon. Hilch. Talmud Tora, c. 7. sect. 13.

bidden him to forgive him, because of his honour; and if he forgives him, he is to be punished, for this is a contempt of the law; but “he must revenge, and keep the thing as a serpent”, until the other asks pardon of him, and then he may forgive him.”

Thus they bred their scholars in hatred and malice against their enemies. This arises from a mistaken sense of the word “neighbour”, which they understood only of a friend; and concluded, that if a friend was to be loved, an enemy was to be hated; not the Gentiles only, but any-one, among themselves, which could come under that name.

Matthew 5:44

But I say unto you, love your enemies,

That is, as the Apostle Paul may be thought to interpret the words of Christ, Romans 12:20. “If thine enemy hunger, feed him: if he thirst, give him drink”: unless our Lord should be supposed rather to regard the internal affection of the mind; since outward expressions of love, by words and works, are urged in the following exhortations: the actions of a man may be hated, and just indignation be expressed against them, and yet his person be loved, tenderness be used to him, and pity shown him: all men, even enemies, are to be loved with a natural love, as men; though they cannot be loved with a spiritual affection, as brethren in Christ: and in natural affection there are degrees, according to the relation and circumstances that persons stand in to one another.

Bless them that curse you:

when wicked men curse you, as Shimei cursed David, do not “render evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing”; give good words, use kind language, mild and soft expressions; such as may either win upon them, or put them to shame and silence: “bless, and curse not”; the latter belongs to them, the former to you; “let them curse, but bless thou”: curses better fit their mouths, and blessings thine. Blessing here, does not signify praising them, for that would be sinful, which is sometimes the sense of the word; nor wishing, or praying for a blessing on them, which is right and good; but this is mentioned afterwards, as distinct from blessing; wherefore, it is better to understand it of a sweet and engaging address unto, and behaviour and conduct towards such, whose mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.

Do good to them that hate you;

such as hate you in their hearts, and discover their hatred by their actions; do not make returns in the same

way, but on the contrary, do them all the good you can; perform all the kind offices that lie in your power; let them partake of your bounty and liberality; if poor, feed, clothe, and supply them, as you are able, with the necessaries of life; and give them wholesome advice for the good of their souls: by “so doing”, you will “heap coals of fire on their heads”; of enemies, make them friends; engage their affections to you, and you may be happy instruments in doing them good, both in soul and body:

and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you.

What Christ here commands and advises to, he himself did; for as he hung upon the cross, he prayed for his crucifiers, who were then using him in the most spiteful, as well as cruel manner; saying, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”: and in this he has left us an example, that we should tread in his steps; and here in he was quickly followed by his holy martyr Stephen; who, whilst he was being stoned, prayed for his persecutors and murderers, saying, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge”. This breathes out the true spirit of Christianity, and is peculiar to it. The whole of this is directly opposite to the tenets of the Jews, particularly the Scribes and Pharisees; who allowed of revenge, and keeping anger against any person that had done them an injury, as has been observed: and which were also the sentiments of the Karaites, or Scripturarians, another sect among them who kept to the letter of the Scriptures, and rejected the traditions of the elders, which the Pharisees held: but in this they agreed with them,

“that it was right to do good to their friends, and to forgive them that asked pardon of them; but to such men who rendered evil, and did not return to do well, that they might receive forgiveness, אֵינוֹ אֹרֵר לְנִקְוֹם וּלְנִשְׁוֹר מִדֵּבֵר “it is not forbidden to revenge, and to keep anger against them.”³⁵⁰

It is indeed said³⁵¹ of their former holy men, **מִיִּדְיָסִים**, “Hasideans”, which some have thought to be the same with the “Essenes”, and a sort of Christians; however, were a better sort of Jews; that these

“heard their reproach, but did not return it; and not only so, but they pardoned him that reproached them, and forgave him.”

And it is reported of these men, that they used to pray

350 R. Eliahu in Adderet, c. 3. apud Trigland. de Sect. Karaeorum, c. 10. p. 166, 167.

351 Maimon. Hilch. Talmud Tora. c. 7. sect. 13.

to God to pardon and forgive all that disturbed them. But the Pharisees, whom Christ had to do with, and against whom he inveighs, were men of another complexion.

Matthew 5:45

That ye may be the children of your father,

Not that any became the children of God, by doing things in imitation of him: for as in nature no man becomes the son of another by imitating him, or by doing the things he does but either by birth, or by adoption; so in grace no man becomes a child of God by the works he does, as a follower of God, but by adopting grace; and which is discovered in regeneration. Christ’s meaning is, that they might appear, and be known to be the children of God, by doing those things in which they resemble their heavenly Father; and which are agreeable to his nature and conduct; as the tree is known by its fruit, and the cause by its effect: for where adoption and regenerating grace take place, the fruit of good works is brought forth to the glory of God. Some copies, instead of וְטוֹט, “children”, read ομοιοι “like”: and accordingly, the Persic version renders it thus, “that ye may be like your Father, which is heaven”. Our Lord seems to have respect to the Jews, often having in their mouths this expression, מֵיִמֵּי בִשׁ אֲבִינוֹ בַּשָּׁמַיִם, “our Father which is in heaven”; and to their frequent boasting that they were the children of God; and therefore he would have them make this manifest by their being like him, or acting in imitation of him;

for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil, and on the good.

Christ instances in one of the greatest blessings in nature, the sun, so useful to the earth, and so beneficial to mankind for light and heat; which he calls “his sun”: his own, and not another’s; which he has made, and maintains, orders to run its race, and commands it to rise morning by morning, and that upon good and bad men; one, as well as another; all equally share in, and partake of its benign influences, and enjoy the comfortable effects and blessings of it:

and sendeth rain on the just and unjust;

that is, on the fields of persons of such different characters, even both the early and the latter rain; which makes the earth fruitful, crowns it with goodness, and causes it to bring forth bread to the eater, and seed to the sower. This is one of the most considerable blessings of life; the gift of it is God’s sole prerogative; it is peculiar to him; it is what none of the vanities of the Gentiles can give; and yet is bestowed by him on the most worthless and undeserving. This flows from that perfection of God,

which the Cabbalists³⁵² call

”chesed, mercy”, or benignity, to which it is essential to give largely to all, both “to the just and unjust”.

The Jews have a saying³⁵³, that

“greater is the day of rain, than the resurrection of the dead; for the resurrection of the dead is for the just; but rain is **יִב סִיקְדָּצַל יִב מִיעֵשְׂרֵל יִב**, “both for the just, and for the wicked”:

a way of speaking much like this here. They also used to praise God for rain, on this consideration, because it was given to unworthy persons.

³⁵⁴R. Jose Bar Jacob went to visit R. Joden of Magdala; whilst he was there, rain descended, and he heard his voice, saying, thousands of thousands, and millions of millions are bound to praise thy name, O our king, for every drop thou causest to descend upon us, שָׂאָה גּוֹמֵל טוֹבָה לְהַיְיבִים, “because thou renderest good to the wicked”.

Now our Lord instances in things which could not be denied, and they themselves allowed; and makes use of their own words, to engage them to imitate God, whom they call their Father, by doing good to their enemies, and them that hated them, as well as to their friends and neighbours: yet sometimes they could scarcely allow, that the Gentiles had the same share in this divine favour with themselves; for they say³⁵⁵, that

“God works by way of miracle, that rain should not be wanting in his land, although it is wanting in the countries of the Heathen; as he says, Job 5:10 “who giveth rain on the earth”, which is the land of Israel; for on that **רַב מַטֵּר**, “a great rain” descends, and “sendeth waters”, **מַטֵּיִם**, “a great rain” descends, and “sendeth waters”, **מַטֵּיִם** “few (which is added to the text) upon the fields”; which relates to what is without the land, whereupon it does not descend, but the substance of the land of Israel; therefore he saith, the Lord will open to thee his good treasure, and not to others.”

Matthew 5:46

For if ye love them which love you,

That is, if ye only love such that love you; for that such who love should be loved again, is both natural and

352 Sepher Shaar Hassamaim, Tract. 7. c. 12. p. 155

353 T. Bab. Taanith, fol. 7. 1.

354 Tzeror Hammor, fol. 152. 4.

355 Tzeror Hammor, fol. 152. 4.

just: our Lord’s meaning is not, that ye ought not to love them that love you, but that these should not be the only objects of your love; for should this be the case,

what reward have ye?

or “shall ye have?” Do you deserve any thanks for your love now? none at all, it is what you are obliged to by your friend’s love to you. Do you expect any hereafter with God? if you do, you will be mistaken; you have your reward with men, who have loved you as much as you have done them, and therefore none can be due to you, either from God or men: besides,

do not even the publicans the same?

men of the worst characters, and who were most hateful to the Jews, upon many accounts; partly because of their business, which was to collect the Roman tax, and carry it to the proper officers appointed to receive it, and of whom they sometimes farmed it. Now the Roman yoke was very grievous to the Jews, who boasted of their being a free people; nor did they willingly pay their tribute money; and some of them would refuse to do it, under a pretence of religion; wherefore those publicans, or tax gatherers, which were oftentimes men of their own nation, as appears from the instances of Levi and Zacchaeus, were very odious to them; because they looked upon them as joining with the Romans, in oppressing them, and abridging them in their liberty: and partly because of their character and conduct, being men of great improbity, rapine, and covetousness: hence, as in the New Testament, they are frequently joined with “sinners”, as being notorious ones themselves; so in the Talmudic writings, with thieves³⁵⁶, and are reckoned as thieves, with murderers, and robbers³⁵⁷; they were not allowed as witnesses³⁵⁸ in any of their courts of judicature; nor were they to be kept company³⁵⁹ with in private houses. Now our Lord instances in these men who were the most profligate part of the nation, and had in greatest contempt by the rest; and yet these, by the very dictates of nature, loved such as loved them: wherefore it must be shameful and scandalous in the Pharisees, and others, who pretended to great sanctity and religion, to do no more than these persons did.

Matthew 5:47

And if you salute your brethren only

This does not mean salutation by embraces or kisses, but by words, asking of each other’s welfare, and wishing

356 Maimon. Hilch. Gezela, c. 5. sect. 9. 11.

357 Misn. Nedarim, c. 3. sect.

358 T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 25. 2. Maimon. Hilch. Eduth,

359 Maimon. Hilch. Mishcab, c. 10. sect. 8.

prosperity and happiness to one another.

‘The manner of salutation among the wise men was this³⁶⁰; he that salutes says, a good day to my lord; and he replies, saying, a good, and long day to my lord: always he that replies doubles the salutation.’

The persons they usually gave their salutations to were those of their own nation, their countrymen, relations, and friends; and who are here designed by “brethren”; meaning, not brethren in the strict sense, but any kindred, acquaintance, or any of their own nation. Some copies read it “friends”, who, generally speaking, only partook of such favours.

‘A man, (says Maimonides³⁶¹), might not salute his master, nor return a salutation to him in the manner they gave a salutation לרֵימ, to “friends”: and they return it to one another.’

They were not very free in saluting any persons, as strangers and Gentiles: such advice as this is indeed given ארמ כל אדם³⁶², “prevent every man with a salutation”, or be first in saluting every man; upon which passage their commentators³⁶³ say, even a Gentile in the streets. Accordingly, it is elsewhere³⁶⁴ observed, that

R. Abai used to say, let a man be always cunning with fear, for “a soft answer turns away wrath”; and multiply salutation with his brethren, and with his relations, and with every man, even with a stranger in the streets.”

But this proceeded not from any cordial hearty respect, but out of policy, and from fear; and in order to maintain peace; and for selfish ends, and with sinister views: otherwise their salutations were confined to their brethren and kinsfolk after the flesh. Now, this being the case, says Christ,

what do ye more than others? do not even publicans so?

Or, as some copies read it, Gentiles or Heathens; and accordingly the Ethiopic version, and the Vulgate Latin so render it: the Arabic renders it “idolaters”. Now, what great matter was this to salute their brethren and their friends, when even the very Heathens, who had nothing

360 Sepher Chasidim, fol. 5. col. 2. apud Buxtorf. Florileg. Heb. p. 300, 301.

361 Hilch. Talmud Tora, c. 5. sect. 5

362 Pirke Abot, c. 4. sect. 15.

363 Jarchi & Bartenora in ib.

364 T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 17. 1.

but the light of nature to guide them, did the same?

Matthew 5:48

Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father,.... This perfection is to be restrained to the subject Christ is upon, love to men, and not to be referred to any, or every other thing; wherefore, in Luke 6:36 it is, “be ye merciful, as your Father also is merciful”; and regards not a perfection of degree in that, but objects and quality: that is to say, not that men may, or can, or ought to be as perfect in love, as to the degree of it, as God is; that is impossible: the “as” here, is not a note of equality, but of likeness: such, who profess God to be their Father, ought to imitate him, particularly in their love to men, which ought to be extended to the same objects, as the divine goodness is; that, as he shows regard in a providential way to all men, good and bad, just and unjust, and his tender mercies are over all his works; so ought they to love all men with a natural affection, and hate no man, no, not their enemies: for he that loves only his friends, and not his enemies, loves imperfectly; he does not take in the whole compass of objects his love is to extend unto; and as God loves sincerely, and without dissimulation, so should they. To be “perfect”, is to be sincere and upright: in this sense is the word often used, and answers to the Hebrew word **מימת**, which signifies the same: see Deuteronomy 18:13 which is the passage Christ seems to refer to here; and the sense is, be ye sincere and upright in your love to all men, as your heavenly Father is hearty and sincere in his affections to them.

Matthew Chapter 6

Matthew 6:1

Ver. 1. Take heed that ye do not your alms before men,.... Some copies read, “take heed that ye do not your righteousness”, &c. which is a very good reading: but then, by “righteousness”, is not meant righteousness, as comprehending all other righteous acts, as particularly alms, prayer, and fasting, hereafter mentioned; but alms only; nothing being more common with the Jews than to call alms **הקדצ**, “righteousness”: and whatever word Matthew made use of, there is no doubt to be made of it, but this was the word Christ used. Now alms was so called, because it is a righteous action, which ought to be performed; and to withhold from the poor what is meet, is to deal unrighteously: hence we read of the “mammon of unrighteousness”; by which is meant, not money unrighteously got, but that which is unrighteously kept from the poor: also it might be so called, because the Jews very much placed their justifying righteousness before God

in the performance of it: let us first see how, according to them, it was to be done, and then what confidence they placed in it, and how much they made use of it. The account Maimonides³⁶⁵ gives is as follows, who observes: that “we are bound to take heed to the commandment of alms more than all the affirmative commands; because alms is a sign of a “righteous” man, the seed of Abraham our father; as it is said, in Ge 18:19. Nor is the throne of Israel established, nor can the law of truth stand, but by alms; as it is said, Pr 16:19. Nor shall Israel be redeemed, but by alms, according to Isa 1:27. There are (says he) eight degrees in giving alms, the one above another; the highest, than which there is none higher, is this; when one relieves an Israelite, and gives him a gift, or lends to him, or takes him into partnership, or finds him work, so that he strengthens his hands before he stands in need of asking; and of this it is said, and “thou shalt relieve him, a stranger and a sojourner, that he may live with thee”: which is as much as to say, relieve him before he falls, and is brought to necessity. The next to this is, when a man gives alms to the poor, and he knows not to whom he gives; nor does the poor man know of whom he receives; for, behold, this is doing it for the sake of it; as the chamber of secrets, which was in the sanctuary, into which righteous men privately put, and the poor children of good men were privately supported: and the next to this is, when a man puts into the alms chest: and a man does not put into the alms chest except he knows that the governor is faithful and wise, and knows how to manage as should be; such an one as R. Chananiah ben Tradion. The next to this is, when the giver knows to whom he gives, but the poor man does not know from whom he receives; as the great ones of the wise men, who used to go secretly, and cast their money at the doors of the poor; and this is right to do, and a good method it is when the governors of alms do not dispose aright. The next to this is, when the poor man knows of whom he takes, but does not know the giver; as the great men among the wise men, who used to bind up their money in linen cloths, and put them behind them, and the poor came and took them, that they might not be ashamed. The next to this is, when a man puts it into his hands before he asks. The next to this is, when he gives to him after he has asked. The next to this is, when he gives to him less than is proper, with a pleasant countenance. The next to this is, when he gives with grief.” Now this work, or duty, they magnify at a very great rate: not content to

365 Hilch. Mattanot Anayim, c. 10. sect. 1. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14.

say³⁶⁶, that “he that does alms, does that which is more excellent than all offerings;” they further affirm³⁶⁷, that “giving of alms and beneficence **הלוכ הרוחה דגנכ**, “are equal to the whole law;” or, it is all one as if a man performed the whole law. Moreover, they give³⁶⁸ out, “that whoever takes of his goods, and does alms with them, he shall be delivered from the “damnation of hell””

Yea, they reckon that this gives a right and title to eternal life³⁶⁹. “He that says, let this “sela”, or “shekel”, be for alms, that his children may live, and that he may be worthy of the life of the world to come, lo! this is **קידצ רומג**, “a perfect righteous man.” Or, as elsewhere³⁷⁰ expressed, “let this sela be for alms, that my son may live, and that he may be a son of the world to come; lo! this is a perfect righteous man.”

Thus, you see, they looked upon it as their righteousness; and what made them heirs of heaven, and gave them a title to eternal glory. Now our Lord advises them to take heed, as what would be of bad consequence, and very detrimental to them, that they did not their alms before men, to be seen of them; not but alms may be lawfully done before, or in the sight of men, and a good end may be answered by it; namely, to stir up others to acts of liberality; but then this must not be done with this view, to be seen of men, in order to gain their applause, and a good name among them, otherwise, ye have no reward of your Father, which is in heaven. You expect a reward, and a very great one, for your alms; but if you do them only to raise your credit, and gain esteem among men, you have your reward already with men: nor must you expect any from God, since you seek not his glory, but your own. When a man’s self, and not the glory of God, is the chief end of any action, that cannot be called a good work, nor will it have any reward; whereas a good work, which springs from a principle of grace, and is directed to the glory of God, will have a reward, not of debt, but of grace, from whence it arises.

Matthew 6:2

Ver. 2. Wherefore, when thou dost thine alms,.... Christ proceeds to give some directions and cautions about giving of alms, that they might be done aright, and answer some valuable purposes for the glory of God, the good of others, and their own: do not sound a trumpet

366 T. Bab. Succa, fol. 49. 2.

367 T. Hieros. Peah, fol. 15. 2, 3.

368 T. Bab. Gittin, fol. 7. 1, 2.

369 T. Bab. Roshhashanah, fol. 4. 1. Bava Bathra, fol. 10.

370 T. Bab. Pesachim, fol. 8. 1, 2.

before thee, as the hypocrites do, in the synagogues, and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. The persons Christ has reference to were the Scribes and Pharisees, who did all they did to be seen of men; whom he calls “hypocrites”; as he often does, because they put on an appearance of religion and holiness, but inwardly, and otherwise, were very wicked men. It does not appear that any such practice was literally performed, as blowing a trumpet before them, when they gave their alms; though the collectors of alms did, by some means, publicly notify to the people when they were about that service: for one of their rules is³⁷¹, “the collectors of alms do not proclaim on a feast, as they proclaim on a common day; but they collected **העניצב**, “privately”, and put it into their bosom, and distributed it to everyone by himself.”

Wherefore this must be understood proverbially; and the sense is, that when they did their alms, they chose public places for it, such as the “synagogues”, where was a large concourse of people met together for religious worship; or the open “streets” of the city, where people were continually walking to and fro, so that nothing could be done in this way, but what must be seen and observed: and moreover, they took care, either by themselves, or others, to proclaim their good actions, that they might “have glory of men”; not only of the poor, or the collectors for them, but of the spectators. R. Aben Ezra³⁷² says, that “a man that gives alms to the poor, must not give it because of the glory of the collector, i.e. that he may have glory of him; nor that the children of men may praise him.”

But his ancestors were of another mind: but what did they get by it? verily I say unto you, they have their reward; and a poor one it is, the applause of men: however, it is what they seek after, and is all their empty performances deserve, and all they will have. “He that glories in anything done by himself, **ורכש תא לטון אה** “he takes”, or receives “his reward”³⁷³; for as for any reward from God, they will have none;” in this sense, as the Ethiopic version reads it, “they have lost their reward”: and, as a learned critic has thought, is the sense of the Greek word, “they forbid”, or “hinder their reward”. By seeking the glory of men, they lay impediments in the way of receiving honour from God.

Matthew 6:3

Ver. 3. But when thou dost alms,.... Do it so privately, and with so much secrecy, that, if it was possible, thou

371 T. Hieros. Demai, fol. 23. 2.

372 In Exod. xx. 3.

373 R. Jona apud Capell. Spicileg. in loc.

mightest not know it thyself, much less make it known to others: let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth; acquaint not thy nearest and dearest friend with it; let not one that sits at thy left hand know what thou art doing with thy right hand; it is a proverbial and hyperbolic phrase, expressing the secrecy of the action. It is a Jewish canon³⁷⁴, that “he that gives a gift to his friend out of love, may make it known, **הקדצב אל לבא**, “but not if it be by way of alms””

Matthew 6:4

Ver. 4. That thine alms may be in secret,.... May be done in secret, and be kept a secret. The allusion seems to be to the secret chamber, where money was brought privately for the relief of the poor.

“There were two chambers in the sanctuary, the one was **מיאשח תכשל**, “the chamber of secrets”, and the other the chamber of vessels: the chamber of secrets was that into which pious persons put **יאשחב**, “in secret”, and the poor children of good men were maintained out of it privately³⁷⁵.”

The Jews say many things in favour of doing alms privately.

“Greater, (say they³⁷⁶), is he that gives alms **רתסב** in secret, than Moses our master.”

They tell us³⁷⁷, that “R. Jannai seeing a certain man give Zuz (a piece of money) to a poor man publicly, said unto him, it would have been better, if thou hadst not have given him anything, than to have given him in this manner.”

This was the practice of the ancient religious Jews, to give their alms privately; but the Scribes and Pharisees had brought that practice into disuse, and which our Lord labours to restore; adding, for encouragement, and thy Father, which seeth in secret; beholds all secret actions, and knows the secret springs of actions, himself shall reward thee openly; in the great day of account, before angels and men, when all secret things shall be brought to light, and every good man have praise of God. This duty, of giving alms to the poor, is mentioned by Christ before prayer to God; it may be for this reason, because it was usual to give alms before prayer.

“The great, or famous men, among the wise men, used to give a Prutah (a small piece of money) to a poor man before every prayer, and after that they prayed; as it

374 Piske Tosephot in Sabbat. c. 1. art. 134.

375 Misn. Shekalim, c. 5. sect. 6. Mainnon. Hilch. Era-
cin, c. 2. sect. 12.

376 T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 9. 2.

377 T. Bab. Chagiga, fol. 5. 1.

is said, “I shall behold thy face in righteousness”³⁷⁸.”

Matthew 6:5

Ver. 5. **And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites,**

As the Scribes and Pharisees; whose posture in prayer, the places they chose to pray in, and the view they had therein, are particularly taken notice of:

for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men.

It was their usual custom to pray “standing”; nay, it is established by their canons.

“There are eight things, (says Maimonid³⁷⁹), that a man that prays ought to take heed to do; and the first he mentions is “standing”; for, says he, no man may pray **אלא במימד** “but standing”; if he is sitting in a ship, or in a cart, if he can stand, he must stand; if not, he may sit in his place and pray.”

Several hints of this custom there are in the Misna³⁸⁰.

“On their fast days they used to bring out the ark into the streets-- **הלפתב ודמע**, “and they stood in prayer”, or praying; and caused an old man to go down before the ark, who was used to recite prayers, and he said them.”

Again³⁸¹,

“whoever **ותמד בתפלה** “stood praying”, and remembered that any uncleanness attended him, he might not break off, but he might shorten.”

Yea, standing itself is interpreted of praying; for it is said³⁸²,

“and Abraham rose up early in the morning to the place, where he stood **ואיני תפלה אלא במידה** “and there is no prayer but standing”; though sometimes they prayed sitting, as David did, 2Sa 7:18 so it is said of R. Jose, and R. Eleazar, that **ותבו ולי**, “they sat and prayed”, and afterwards rose up and went on their way³⁸³. So it was likewise customary to go to the synagogues, and there pray; and indeed they were places built and appointed for this

378 Maimon. Hilch. Mattanot Anayin, c. 10. sect. 15.

379 Hilch. Tephilla. c. 5. sect. 1, 2.

380 Misn. Taanith, c. 2. sect. 1, 2.

381 Misn. Beracot, c. 3. sect. 5.

382 Zohar in Lev. fol. 47. 1. T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 26. 2.

383 {Zohar in Exod. fol. 4. 4.

purpose.

“Wherever there were ten Israelites, a house ought to be provided, in which they may go to prayer at every time of prayer; and this place is called a synagogue³⁸⁴.”

Hence some have thought, that not such places are here designed, but any assembly, or concourse of people gathered together upon any occasion; but such an interpretation will find no place, when the following things are observed.

“For ever let a man go, morning and evening, to the synagogue; for no prayer is heard at any time, but in the synagogue; and everyone that hath a synagogue in his city, and does not pray in it with the congregation, is called a bad neighbour³⁸⁵.”

Again³⁸⁶,

“he that prays in the house of the Lord, is as if he offered up a pure offering.”

Now, partly on account of the publicness of the place, and partly because they thought their prayers were only heard there, therefore they chose to pray in the synagogues; and also in

the corners of the streets,

where two streets met, and they might be the more easily seen. This was also a common thing to pray in the streets:

“says R. Jochanan, I saw R. Jannai stand and pray in the streets of Tzipore³⁸⁷.”

And a little after, it is said of another, that he stood and prayed **איטראב**, “in the streets”; though such places were not reckoned holy, as the synagogues were.

“The street of a city, (says Maimonides³⁸⁸), although the people pray in it at fasts and stations, because that there is a great collection of people, and the synagogues cannot hold them, has no holiness in it, because it is accidental, and not appointed for prayer.”

Wherefore streets were only used in case of necessity,

384 Maimon. Hilch. Tephilla, c. 11. 1.

385 Ib. c. 8. sect. 1. T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 8. 1. & Piske
Tosephot Beracot, c. 1. art. 7.

386 T. Hieros. Beracot, fol. 8. 4.

387 Ib. fol. 8. 3. & 9. 1.

388 Hilch. Tephilla, c. 11. sect. 21. Vid. Maimon. & Bar-
tenora in Misn. Megilla, c. 3. sect. 1.

or by such of the Pharisees, who chose to be seen of men. A reason is given for this practice in another place³⁸⁹, where it is asked,

“why do they go out to the streets, i.e. on their fast days? to show that we are reckoned as if we were carried captive before thee: says Joshua ben Levi, because they prayed in “secret”, and were not answered; therefore they went without, **ומסרפתי**, “that they might be made public.”

Now let it be observed, that neither the posture, nor places of prayer, are condemned by our Lord, but their view in all to

be seen of men;

and a considerable emphasis lies upon the word “love”; they loved “standing” in prayer, rather than any other posture, because they could be better seen; and they loved to be in the synagogues and streets, rather than in their closets; they liked public better than private prayer, because it gained them applause among men.

Verily I say unto you, they have their reward;

they gain their point; they have what they seek for; and this is all they will have.

Matthew 6:6

Ver. 6. **But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet,**

Or “chamber”, a secret place, fit for private retirement, meditation, and prayer.

And when thou hast shut thy door;

see some such like phrases in Isa 26:20 where they are used to express security, here secrecy. Our Lord does not mean to exclude and condemn public prayer, in joining with few, or more persons, in such service; for he himself directs to it, and approves of it, Mt 18:19 but his view is to instruct persons that they should not only pray in public, but in private also; and especially the latter, which is more suitable and fitting for their particular cases, and less liable to pride, hypocrisy, and vanity.

Pray to thy Father, which is in secret;

who is invisible; not to be seen with the eyes of the body, but to be approached with a true heart, in faith and fear, through his Son Jesus Christ, the only mediator between God and man; and who is the image of the invisible God, and in whom he is pleased to manifest himself to his people, so as he does not unto the world:

and thy Father, which seeth in secret,

observes and takes notice of the secret breathings, pantings, desires, and requests of thy heart and lips,

389 T. Hieros. Taaniot, fol. 65. 1.

shall reward thee openly,

both here and hereafter; by pouring into thy bosom all the good things thou hast been praying for, both for time and eternity. This is agreeable to what the Jews sometimes say,

“that a man ought not to cause his voice to be heard in prayer; but should pray **שחלב**, “silently”, with a voice that is not heard; and this is the prayer which is daily accepted³⁹⁰.”

Matthew 6:7

Ver. 7. **But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions,**

Saying the same things over and over again, **as the Heathens do,**

as the worshippers of Baal, from morning till noon, 1Ki 18:26. This our Lord observes, to dissuade from such practices, because the Gentiles, who were odious to the Jews, used them, and the Jews were guilty of the same; had they not, there would not have been any need of such advice:

for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking;

as did the Jews, who, under pretence of “long prayers”, devoured widows’ houses; and with whom it is an axiom, that “everyone **המורבה בתפילה נגה**, that multiplies prayer is heard³⁹¹; and whoever prolongs his prayer, his prayer does not return empty; and he that is long in prayer, his days are prolonged³⁹²: and, according to their canons, every day a man ought to pray eighteen prayers. Moreover, their prayer books abound in tautologies, and in expressing the same things in different words, and by a multiplicity of them.

Matthew 6:8

Ver. 8. **Be not ye therefore like unto them,**

Do not be imitators of them, and follow their ways, who have only the dim light of nature to guide them; it would be shameful in you to do as they do, when you have a divine revelation for your direction; and especially, because

your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him;

and therefore have no need to make use of many words, or much speaking, or long prayers. The omniscience of God is a considerable argument, and a great encouragement to prayer; he knows our persons and our wants before hand; and as he is able to help us, we have

390 Zohar in Gen. fol. 114. 4.

391 T. Hieros. Taaniot, fol. 67. 3.

392 Zohar in Exod. fol. 104. 4.

reason to believe he will; especially since he stands in the relation of a Father to us.

Matthew 6:9

Ver. 9. **After this manner therefore pray ye,**

That is, in such a concise and short way, without much speaking and vain repetitions; making use of such like words and expressions as the following: not that Christ meant to pin down his disciples to these express words, and no other; for this prayer is not a strict form, but a pattern of prayer, and a directory to it, both as to brevity, order, and matter; for we do not find the disciples ever making use of it in form; and when it is recited by another Evangelist, it is not in the selfsame words as here; which it would have been, had it been designed as an exact form. Besides, Christ does not bid them pray in these very words, but “after this manner”; somewhat like this: not but that it is very lawful to use the very express words of this prayer in any of the petitions here directed to; and which indeed were no other than what good people among the Jews did frequently make use of; and which were collected and singled out by Christ, as what he approved of, in distinction from, and opposition to, other impertinent expressions, and vain repetitions, which some used; as will appear by a particular consideration of them.

Our Father which art in heaven.

This may be looked upon as the preface and introduction to the prayer, and regards the object of it, and his character, which is an epithet of God, often to be met with in Jewish writings, and particularly in their prayers; for thus they³⁹³ say,

מרו בתפלה “our Father which art in heaven”, show mercy “to us, because thy great name is called upon us.”

Again³⁹⁴, let the prayers and the requests of all Israel be received by **מימשבש ויבאל**, “their Father, which is in heaven”. They seem to have a regard to this prayer, when they apply that passage in Pr 3:35 “shame shall be the promotion of fools”, to the nations of the earth, who, they say³⁹⁵,

“do not consider the glory of the law; and how, say they, “our Father which art in heaven”, hear our voice, have mercy on us, and receive our prayer?”

393 Seder Tephillot, fol. 4. 2. Ed. Basil.

394 Ib. fol. 33. 2.

395 Raya Mehimna in Zohar in Lev. fol. 34. 1.

So in confessions, thanksgivings, and sacrifices of praise, they required, and looked upon it, as the main thing, for a man to direct his heart **לאביו שבשמיים**, “to his Father which is in heaven³⁹⁶.” By “father”, our Lord means the first person in the Trinity, who is the Father of all men by creation, and of the saints by adoption; who are to address him in prayer under the character of “our Father”, partly to command a reverential fear of him, and partly to secure boldness and liberty of speech before him; and also to express fiducial confidence in him, faith of interest in him, and relation to him; which arises from some experience of his paternal love, and requires the witnessings of the Spirit of adoption; and inasmuch as the direction is not to say “my Father”, but “our Father”; it shows that we should pray for others as well as for ourselves, even for all the dear children of God. It is a rule³⁹⁷ with the Jews,

“that a man ought always to join himself in prayer with the church;”

upon which the gloss says,

אלה בלשון רבים “let him not pray the short prayer **אלה** “in the singular, but in the plural number”, that so his prayer may be heard.”

The object of prayer is further described by the place of his residence, “in heaven”; not that he is included in any place, but that the heaven of heavens is the place where he most eminently displays his glory: and this may teach us to look upwards in prayer, and seek those things which are above; and also, that this earth, on which we dwell, is not our native country, but heaven is, where our Father dwells. Next follows the first petition,

hallowed, or sanctified be thy name;

so the Jews³⁹⁸ in their prayers,

יהקדש שמך “let thy name be hallowed”, or “sanctified by us”, O Lord our God, before the eyes of all living.’

And very often³⁹⁹,

“let his great name be magnified and sanctified in the world, which he hath created according to his will.”

And again⁴⁰⁰,

“let us sanctify thy name in the world, as they

396 T. Bab. Shebuot, fol. 15. 1.

397 T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 30. 1.

398 Seder Tephillot, fol. 78. 1. Ed. Amstelod. Zohar in Exod. fol. 43. 4.

399 Seder Tephillot, fol. 17. 2, Ed. Basil. & passim.

400 Seder Tephillot, fol. 22. 1. & passim.

sanctify it in the highest heavens.”

By the “name” of God is meant he himself, the perfections of his nature, and the several names by which he is known, and which we are to think and speak of with holy reverence. By sanctifying his name, is not meant a making him holy, but acknowledging, and declaring him to be holy, and a glorifying him, and all his perfections. He is sanctified by himself, by declaring himself to be holy; by glorifying his perfections in his works; by implanting grace and holiness in the hearts of his people; by restoring the purity of his worship; by diffusing the knowledge of himself in the world; and by taking vengeance on the wicked: and he is sanctified by others, when they fear him, believe in him, call upon his name, use it reverently, submit to his will, acknowledge his mercies, regard his commands and ordinances, and live a holy life and conversation; all which is earnestly desired by truly gracious souls.

Matthew 6:10

Ver. 10. **Thy kingdom come,**

The form of expression used by the ancient Jews, relating to this article, before the coming of Christ, doubtless was, as it now stands in their prayers⁴⁰¹ קְשִׁיחַ יְבֹא, “the kingdom of thy Messiah come”. Christ alters the expression, leaves out the word “Messiah”, and puts it thus, “thy kingdom come”, to let them know that the Messiah was come; and that it was the kingdom of the Father, in the power of his grace, upon the souls of men, they must pray for and expect: however, he conformed to a rule of their’s in this, as well as in the former petition⁴⁰²; that

“every blessing, or prayer, in which there is הַשֵּׁם זְכוּרָה “mention made of the name”, i.e. of God, is no prayer; and that every prayer, in which there is not תּוֹכַלֵּם, “the kingdom”, is no prayer.”

In this petition the disciples were taught to pray for the success of the Gospel, both among Jews and Gentiles; for the conversion of God’s elect, in which the kingdom of God would greatly appear, to the destruction of the kingdom of Satan, and the abolition of the kingdom of the beast, in the latter day; which will usher in the kingdom, of the mediator, he will receive from his Father, and this will terminate in the kingdom of glory: in a word, not the kingdom of nature and providence is meant, which always was; but the kingdom of heaven, which was at hand, nay had taken place, though as yet was not

401 Seder Tephillot, fol. 128. 2. Ed. Basil.

402 T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 40. 2.

very visible, and which is spiritual in the hearts of God’s people, Jews and Gentiles; and which will appear exceeding glorious in the latter day, and at last be swallowed up in the ultimate glory; all which must be very desirable by the sincere lovers of Jesus Christ.

Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

There is some appearance of this petition still remaining, in what the⁴⁰³ Jews call the short prayer:

”what is the short prayer? R. Eliezer says, הַשֵּׁעַ, **וְיִמְשַׁב רְנוּצָר**, “do thy will in heaven”; and give quietness of spirit, or acquiescence of spirit in thy will, to them that fear thee below.

”Christ says “thy will”; not the will of wicked men, nor the will of Satan, nor a man’s own will, but the will of God: by which is meant either his secret will, which is the rule of all his proceedings both in providence and grace; is unknown to us, till facts make it appear; is always fulfilled in heaven and in earth; and sometimes is fulfilled by those who have no regard to his revealed will; and is what ought to be submitted to patiently, and without murmuring: or rather his revealed will, which consists partly in the declarations of his grace and mercy; as that salvation is by Christ, whoever believes in him shall be saved, that all the redeemed be sanctified, persevere to the end, and be glorified; and partly in the commands enjoined his people, which will of his is good, perfect, and acceptable. The will of God may be said to be done by us, when our wills are resigned to his; when we patiently submit to every adverse dispensation of providence; when our hearts and actions are, in some measure, conformed to his law; when what is done, is done in faith, with a view to his glory, and without dependence upon it; of which such only are capable who have a spiritual understanding of the will of God, believe in Christ, receive grace and strength from him, and are assisted by his Spirit. These desire to do the will of God, as it is done in heaven; meaning not so much by the inanimate creatures, the sun, and moon, and stars, as glorified saints and holy angels, who do it voluntarily and cheerfully; speedily, and without delay; constantly, and without any interruption; and perfectly and completely.

Matthew 6:11

Ver. 11. **Give us this day our daily bread.**

The Arabic version reads it, “our bread for tomorrow”; and Jerom says, that in the Hebrew used by the Nazarenes, he found the word מָחָר, which signifies “to-

403 Ib. fol. 29. 2.

morrow”: but this reading and sense seem to be contradicted by Christ, Mt 6:34 were it not that it may be observed, that this signifies the whole subsequent time of life, and so furnishes us with a very commodious sense of this petition; which is, that God would give us, “day by day”, as Luke expresses it, Luke 11:3 that is, every day of our lives, to the end thereof, a proper supply of food: or the meaning of it is, that God would give us, for the present time, such food as we stand in need of; is suitable to us, to our nature and constitution, state and condition, and is sufficient and convenient for us: to which agrees the petition of the⁴⁰⁴ Jews:

”The necessities of thy people are great, and their knowledge short; let it be thy good will and pleasure, O Lord, our God, that thou wouldst give to everyone פָּרְנֹתָיו, “what is sufficient for his sustenance”, and to every one’s body what it wants.”

Says R. Jose⁴⁰⁵, all the children of faith seek “every day” לִישְׂאֵל מִזִּמְנֵיהֶו “to ask their food” of the Lord, and to pray a prayer for it.”

By “bread” is meant all the necessaries of life, and for the support of it: it is called “our’s”; not that we have a right unto it, much less deserve it, but to distinguish it from that of beasts; and because it is what we need, and cannot do without; what is appointed for us by providence, is our’s by gift, and possessed by labour. It is said to be “daily” bread, and to be asked for “day by day”; which suggests the uncertainty of life; strikes at all anxious and immoderate cares for the morrow; is designed to restrain from covetousness, and to keep up the duty of prayer, and constant dependence on God; whom we must every day ask to “give” us our daily bread: for he is the sole author of all our mercies; which are all his free gifts; we deserve nothing at his hands: wherefore we ought to be thankful for what we have, without murmuring at his providences, or envying at what he bestows on others. All kind of food, everything that is eatable, is with the Jews called לֶחֶם, “bread”⁴⁰⁶.

Matthew 6:12

Ver. 12. And forgive us our debts,.... Nothing is more frequent in the Jewish writings than to call sins חֲבוּבֵי “debts”; and the phrase, of forgiving, is used both of God and men. Thus the prayer of Solomon is paraphrased⁴⁰⁷

404 T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 29. 2.

405 Zohar in Exod. fol. 26. 2.

406 Jarchi in Job, vi. 7.

407 Targum in 2 Chron. vi. 21.

by the Targumist: “and hear thou the petition of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, which they shall make before this place; and do thou receive it from the place of the house of thy Shekinah, from heaven; and do thou accept their prayer לחֲבוּבֵיהֶו “and forgive their debts”

So Joseph’s brethren signify to him, that it was their father’s orders to say unto him, “forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin”; which is rendered by the Chaldee paraphrasts⁴⁰⁸ שְׁבוּק לַחֲבוּבֵי “forgive the debts” of thy brethren, and their sins. Accordingly, by “debts” are meant sins here, as appears from Luke 11:4 where it is read, “and forgive us our sin”. These are called “debts”; not because they are so in themselves, for then it would be right to do them; debts should be paid; they are not debts we owe to God, but are so called, because on account of them we owe satisfaction to the law and justice of God: the proper debts we owe to God are love, obedience, and gratitude; and in default of these, we owe the debt of punishment. Now these debts are numerous, and we are incapable of paying, nor can any mere creature pay them for us; wherefore, we are directed to pray, that God would forgive them, or remit the obligation to punishment we lie under, on account of sin. This petition supposes a sense, acknowledgment, and confession of sin, and of inability to make satisfaction for it; and that God only can forgive it, who does, for Christ’s sake, and on account of his blood, sacrifice, and satisfaction: what is here requested is a manifestation and application of pardon to the conscience of a sensible sinner; which, as it is daily needed, is daily to be asked for. The argument, or reason used, is,

as we forgive our debtors;

which is to be understood not so much of pecuniary debtors, though they are to be forgiven, when poor and unable to pay; but of such who have offended, or done real injuries to others, either by word or deed: the injuries of enemies, the unkindness of friends, all sorts of offences, are to be forgiven by us; and not only so, but we are to pray to God to forgive them also. Now this is mentioned, not as if our forgiving others is the cause of God’s forgiving us, or the model of it, or as setting him an example, or as if his and our forgiving were to be compared together, since these will admit of no comparison; but this is an argument founded upon God’s own promise and grace, to forgive such who have compassion on their

408 Targum Onkelos & Jon. ben Uzziel in Gen. l. 17.

Vid. Targum in 1 Chron. iv. 18. & in Cant. i. 1. & in Gen. iv.

13. & passim.

fellow creatures.

Matthew 6:13

Ver. 13. And lead us not into temptation,.... Such a petition as this is often to be observed in the prayers of the Jews ⁴⁰⁹,

”אל תביאני, “do not lead me” neither into sin, nor into transgression and iniquity, ולא לידי ניין, “nor into temptation”, or “into the hands of temptation”;

that is, into the power of it, so as to be overcome by it, and sink under it; in which sense the phrase is to be understood here. We are not here taught to pray against temptations at all, or in any sense, for they are sometimes needful and useful; but that they may not have the power over us, and destroy us. There are various sorts of temptations. There are the temptations of God; who may be said to tempt, not by infusing anything that is sinful, or by soliciting to it; but by enjoining things hard and disagreeable to nature, as in the case of Abraham; by afflicting, either in body or estate, of which Job is an instance; by permitting and letting loose the reins to Satan, and a man’s own corruptions; by withdrawing his presence, and withholding the communications of his grace; and sometimes by suffering false prophets to arise among his people: his ends in them are on his own account, the display of his power; grace, wisdom, and faithfulness; on account of his Son, that his saints might be like him, and he might have an opportunity of exercising his power and pity: and on his people’s account, that they might be humbled; their faith and patience tried; might see their weakness, and need of Christ, and be excited to prayer and watchfulness. There are also the temptations of Satan; which lie in soliciting to evil, suggesting hard and blasphemous thoughts of God, and filling with doubts and fears; which are cunningly formed by him, and are very afflictive. There are moreover the temptations of the world, which arise from poverty and riches, from the men of the world, the lusts of it, and from both its frowns and flatteries: add to all this, that there are temptations arising from a man’s own heart. Now, in this petition, the children of God pray, that they may be kept from every occasion and object of sinning; from those sins they are most inclined to; that God would not leave them to Satan, and their own corrupt hearts; nor suffer them to sink under the weight of temptations of any sort; but that, in the issue, they might have a way to escape,

⁴⁰⁹ Seder Tephillot, fol. 3. 1. Ed. Basil. fol. 4. 2. Ed. Amstelod. Shaare Zion, fol. 73. 1. T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 60. 2.

and be victorious over all.

But deliver us from evil.

This petition, with the Jews, is in this ⁴¹⁰ form:”מפני ר. ותילני, “but deliver me from an evil accident”, and diseases; and do not trouble me with evil dreams, and evil imaginations.”R. Juda, after his prayer, or at the close of it, as is this petition, used⁴¹¹ to say;

”let it be thy good pleasure, O Lord our God, and the God of our fathers, שתילני, “that thou wouldst deliver us” from impudent men, and impudence; from an “evil” man, and from an “evil” accident; from the “evil” imagination, i.e. the corruption of nature; from an “evil” companion; from an “evil” neighbour; and from Satan the destroyer; and from hard judgment; and from an hard adversary, whether he is the son of the covenant, or is not the son of the covenant.”

And most, if not all of these things, may be very well thought to be comprised in the word “evil” here: particularly Satan may be meant, by “evil”, or “the evil one”, as the word may be rendered; who is eminently, originally, and immutably evil; his whole work and employment is nothing else but evil: and to be delivered from him, is to be rescued out of his hands, preserved from his snares, and delivered from his temptations. Evil men may also be intended: all men are naturally evil, and unalterably so, without the grace of God; and some are notoriously wicked; from whose company, sinful lusts, and pleasures, to which they are addicted, as well as from their rage and persecution, good men cannot but desire deliverance; as also from the evil of afflictions, and especially from the evil of sin; as that they may be kept from the commission of it; have the guilt of it removed; be preserved from its power and dominion; and, at last, be freed from the very being of it.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever, Amen.

This conclusion is left out in the Arabic and Vulgate Latin versions, as it is in Luke 11:4. It stands thus in the Jewish prayers⁴¹²,

”כי המלכות שלב היא”, “for the kingdom is thine”, and thou shalt reign in glory for ever and ever.”

The usual response at the close of prayers, and read-

⁴¹⁰ T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 60. 2.

⁴¹¹ Ib. fol. 16. 2. {d} Seder Tephillot, fol. 280. 1. Ed. Basil.

⁴¹² Seder Tephillot, fol. 280. 1. Ed. Basil.

ing the Shema, instead of “Amen”, was⁴¹³ this:

”Blessed be the name of the glory of his kingdom, for ever and ever.”

Which bears some resemblance to this concluding expression, which ascribes everlasting kingdom, power, and glory, to God: which may be considered either as a doxology, or an ascription of glory to God, which is his due; and ought to be given him in all our prayers to him; or as so many reasons strengthening our faith in prayer; or as many arguments with God, with respect to the petitions made; since the kingdom of nature, providence, grace, and glory, is his: he is omnipotent, he has power to give us our daily bread; to forgive our sins; to preserve from, support under, and deliver out of temptation; to keep from all evil, and preserve from a total and final falling away: whose glory is concerned in all, to whom the glory of all is, and to whom it must, and shall be given; and all this for ever: and the whole is concluded with the word “Amen”; which is a note of asseveration, of the truth herein contained; is added by way of assent to every petition made; is expressive of an hearty wish, and desire to have all fulfilled; and also of faith and confidence, that they will be answered. And this word being retained, and kept the same in all languages, signifies the unity of the spirit, and faith in prayer, in all the saints, in all ages. I leave this prayer with one observation, and that is, whereas it has been so long, and so often said, that this is the Lord’s prayer, it can never be proved that he ever made use of it; and it is certain that he did not make it, as appears from what has been cited out of the Jewish records: the several petitions in it were in being and use before he directed to them; and not only the petitions, but even the very preface and conclusion, are manifestly of Jewish original: what our Lord did was, he took the most proper and pertinent petitions, that had been used by good men among that people; which, with some alterations much for the better, he put together in this order, and gave his approbation of; and that with this view, to point out to his disciples some of the best and most suitable petitions to be made; and to give them a pattern of brevity and conciseness in prayer; and teach them to pray after such a manner, or in some such like words and expressions. This I observe, not to lessen the usefulness of this excellent pattern of sound words; the whole, and every part of it, being exceedingly instructive, and wor-

⁴¹³ Misn. Yoma, c. 4. sect. 1. & 6. 2. T. Bab. Pesachim, fol. 56. 1. & Taanith, fol. 16. 2. Seder Tephillot, fol. 70. 2. Ed. Basil.

thy of imitation; but to rectify a vulgar mistake, and to abate the formal and superstitious observance of it.

Matthew 6:14

Ver. 14. **For if ye forgive men their trespasses,**

Christ here refers to the petition in Mt 6:12 which is enforced with this reason and argument, “as”, or “for”, so Luke 11:4 “we forgive our debtors”; which he repeats and explains: and the reason why he singles out this particularly is, because he knew the Jews were a people very subject to revenge; and were very hardly brought to forgive any injuries done them: wherefore Christ presses it upon them closely to “forgive men their trespasses”; all sorts of injuries done them, or offences given them, whether by word or deed; and that fully, freely, from the heart; forgetting, as well as forgiving; not upbraiding them with former offences; and even without asking pardon, and though there might be no appearance of repentance. Now to this he encourages by saying,

your heavenly Father will also forgive you;

will hear your prayers, and manifest his forgiving love to you: not that the forgiveness of others is the procuring cause of forgiveness with God, which is the blood of Christ; or of the manifestation and application of it, that is, the advocacy of Christ; nor the moving cause of it, that is, the free grace of God: but this enters into the character, and is descriptive of the persons, to whom God is pleased to make a comfortable discovery, and give a delightful sense of his pardoning grace; such persons, so disposed and assisted by his grace, may expect it of him.

Matthew 6:15

Ver. 15. **But if you forgive not men their trespasses,**

On the other hand, where men are not of a forgiving temper to their fellow creatures and fellow Christians, how can they expect forgiveness at the hands of God? or what sense of pardoning grace can there be upon their minds? Had they any right apprehensions of the grace and goodness of God, in the forgiveness of their sins, this would influence their minds, and engage their hearts to forgive such who have offended them: wherefore, where this is wanting, it may be concluded of, and said to such persons, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. It is a plain case, that your Father has not given you a true sense of the pardon of your sins, nor can you be certain that he will; nor have you any reason to expect it, when you are so cruel and revengeful to others. There is a considerable emphasis lies upon the word “men”, to which “heavenly Father” is opposed, and the sense, according to it, is, that if men, who are upon an equal foot with each

other, should not forgive one another, how should it be expected that our Father which is in heaven, who is so much above, and no ways obliged to us, should forgive us?

Matthew 6:16

Ver. 16. **Moreover when ye fast,**

This is to be understood, not so much of their public stated fasts, and which were by divine appointment, as of their private fasts; which, with the Jews, were very frequent and numerous, and particularly every Monday and Thursday; see Luke 18:12 in which they affected great severity, and is here condemned by Christ:

be not as the hypocrites,
the Scribes and Pharisees,
of a sad countenance;

who put on very mournful airs, and dismal looks; made wry faces, and distorted countenances; banished all pleasantries and cheerfulness from them, so that they looked quite like other men than they really were;

for they disfigure their faces;

not by covering them out of sight, by putting a veil over them, as some have thought; but they neglected to wash their faces, and make them clean, as at other times; and not only so, but put ashes upon their heads, and other methods they used: they discoloured their faces, or “made” them “black”, as the Arabic version reads it; that they might look as if they became so through fasting: and such persons were in great esteem, and thought to be very religious. It is said⁴¹⁴, in commendation of R. Joshua ben Chanamah, that all his days פניו “his face was black”, through fastings; and this is said⁴¹⁵ to be the reason of Ashur’s name, in 1Ch 4:5 because “his face was black” with fasting: yea, they looked upon such a disfiguring of the face to be meritorious, and what would be rewarded hereafter.

”Whoever (say they⁴¹⁶) פניו “makes his face black”, on account of the law in this world, God will make his brightness to shine in the world to come.”

Now these practices they used, that they might appear unto men to fast: so that either they did not really fast, when they pretended to it; only put on these outward appearances, that men might think they did; or, not content with real fasting, which they must be conscious

⁴¹⁴ Juchasin, fol. 59. 1.

⁴¹⁵ T. Bab. Sota, fol. 12. 1. {h} T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 100. 1.

⁴¹⁶ Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 100. 1.

of themselves, and God knew, they took such methods, that it might appear to men that they fasted, and that they might be taken notice of, and applauded by them: for their view in fasting was not to satisfy their own consciences, or please God, but that they might have glory of men. Hence, says Christ,

verily I say unto you, they have their reward;

they obtain what they seek for, honour from men, and that is all they will have.

Matthew 6:17

Ver. 17. **But thou, when thou fastest,**

Christ allows of fasting, but what is of a quite different kind from that of the Jews; which lay not in an outward abstinence from food, and other conveniences of life, and refreshments of nature; but in an abstinence from sin, in acknowledgment and confession of it; and in the exercise of faith and hope in God, as a God pardoning iniquity, transgression and sin; wherefore cheerfulness, and a free use of the creatures, without an abuse of them, best became such persons.

Anoint thine head, and wash thy face;

directly contrary to the Jewish canons, which forbid these things, with others, on fast days:

”On the day of atonement, (say⁴¹⁷ they,) a man is forbidden eating and drinking, וברחהוויבוכה “and washing and anointing”, and putting on of shoes, and the use of the bed.

“And the same were forbidden on other fasts: in anointings, the head was anointed first, and this rule and reason are given for it:

”he that would anoint his whole body, תחילה “let him anoint his head first”, because it is king over all its members⁴¹⁸.

Anointing and washing were signs of cheerfulness and joy; see Ru 3:3.

Matthew 6:18

Ver. 18. **That thou appear not unto men to fast,** Which is just the reverse of the hypocrites, the Scribes and Pharisees; and quite contrary to the customs of the Jews, who when they fasted, particularly on their noted fasts⁴¹⁹,

⁴¹⁷ Misn. Yoma, c. 8. sect. 1. & Taanith, c. 1. sect. 4, 5, 6. T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 77. 2. Taanith, fol. 12. 2. Moses Kotsensis Mitzvot Tora, pr. affirm. 32

⁴¹⁸ T. Bab. Sabbath, fol. 61. 1.

⁴¹⁹ Misn. Taanith, c. 2. sect. 1.

“brought out the ark into the street of the city, and put burnt ashes upon it, and upon the head of the prince, and upon the head of the president of the sanhedrim, and every man upon his own head.

“All which was done, to be seen of men to fast; but Christ directs to such sorts of fasting, and which is to be done in such a manner, as only to be seen by God: but **unto thy Father which is in secret;**

who is invisible, and who sees what is done in secret, and takes notice of the internal exercise of grace; which he approves of, and prefers to outward fastings; and

thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly:

and to have honour from God, is infinitely more than to have the applause of men; for as God delights in, so he will reward his own grace with glory.

Matthew 6:19

Ver. 19. **Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth,**

Meaning either treasures that are of an earthly nature and kind, the more valuable and excellent things of the earth, worldly wealth and riches; or the things and places, in which these are laid up, as bags, chests, or coffers, barns and other treasuries, private or public. Christ here dissuades from covetousness, and worldly mindedness; an anxious care and concern, to hoard up plenty of worldly things for themselves, for time to come, making no use of them at present for the good of others: and this he does, from the nature of the things themselves; the places where they are laid up; the difficulty of keeping them; and their liableness to be corrupted or lost.

Where moth and rust doth corrupt, and thieves break through and steal.

Garments, formerly, were a considerable part of the treasures of great men, as well as gold and silver; see Job 27:16. So according to the⁴²⁰ Targumist, Haman is bid to go לְבֵית נְגִי דְמַלְכָא “to the king’s treasury”, and take from thence one of the purple garments, the best, and raiment of the best silk, &c. and these were liable to be eaten with the moth, Jas 5:2. The word translated rust, does not here signify the rust of metals, as gold and silver; by which there is not so much damage done, so as to destroy them, and make them useless; but whatever corrupts and consumes things eatable, as blasting and mildew in corn, or any sort of vermin in granaries: for gold and silver, or money, with jewels and precious stones, which make

⁴²⁰ Targum Sheni. in Esth. vi. 10.

a very great part of worldly treasure, seem to be more particularly designed, by what thieves break through into houses for, and carry away. So that here are three sorts of earthly treasures pointed at, which are liable to be corrupted, or taken away: garments, which may be destroyed, and rendered useless for wearing; provisions of things eatable, as all sorts of corn and grain, which may be so corrupted by smut and vermin, as not to be fit for use; and money and jewels, which may be stolen by thieves: so that no sort of worldly riches and treasure is safe, and to be depended on; and therefore it is a great folly and vanity to lay it up, and trust in it.

Matthew 6:20

Ver. 20. **But lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven,**

That is, either be concerned for, and seek after heavenly treasure, the riches of glory, the joys and glories of another world, which infinitely excel everything that is valuable on earth; and which can never be corrupted, or taken away: or rather, lay up your earthly treasures in heaven; that is, put them into the hands of God in heaven; and this is done, by liberally communicating to the poor; by which means men “provide themselves bags which wax not old, and a treasure in heaven that faileth not”, Luke 12:33. They shall never want any good thing here, and they “lay up in store for themselves, a good foundation against the time to come”, 1Ti 6:18. This is the way to have worldly treasure secured from moth, rust, and thieves; for to lay it up in heaven with God, to give it to him, to his poor, to make use of it for his glory, is to lay it up in a place,

where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.

Treasures are safer here than in our own hands, and will turn to better account, and more to our own advantage, both in this life, and that which is to come: see Mt 19:21. In this way, though not for it, men come to have treasure in heaven, even the treasure of eternal life, glory, and happiness. Heaven is often represented by the Jewish writers as a treasury; and the treasures which are in it are said⁴²¹ to be

נְגִי חַיִּים, “treasures of life”, and treasures of peace, and treasures of blessing; and the souls of the righteous, and the spirits and souls that shall be created, and the dew with which God will quicken the dead.”

Those words in De 31:16. “And the Lord said unto

⁴²¹ T. Bab. Chagiga, fol. 12. 2.

Moses, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers”, are thus⁴²² paraphrased.

”And the Lord said unto Moses, lo! thou shalt sleep in the dust with thy fathers, and thy soul shall be treasured **בגנוזי חיי למאפ**, “in the treasury of eternal life”, with thy fathers.

”They tell us ⁴²³ of a story of Monbaz the king, who was son to queen Helena; in which are many things agreeable to these words of Christ, and which may serve to illustrate them.

”Monbaz the king stood and gave all his goods to the poor: his relations sent to him, and said, thy fathers added to that which was their’s, and to that which was their fathers; but thou hast given away that which was thine, and that which was thy father’s: he replied to them all thus: my fathers **בנימי** he replied to them all thus: my fathers **בנימי** laid up treasure on earth, but I have laid up treasure in heaven”, according to Ps 85:11. My fathers laid up treasures, which do not bring forth fruit; but I have laid up treasures, which bring forth fruit, according to Isa 3:10. My fathers gathered in a place, where the hand, i.e. of man rules, (where thieves break through and steal,) but I have gathered in a place where the hand of man does not rule, according to Ps 97:2. My fathers gathered mammon, money, but I have gathered souls, according to Pr 11:30. My fathers gathered for others, but I have gathered ymuel, for myself, according to De 24:13. My fathers gathered in this world, but I have gathered “for the world to come”.

One of their commentators ⁴²⁴ on the phrase, “my fathers laid up treasures below”, as it is in the Babylonish Talmud ⁴²⁵, has this remark:”for lo! all that they treasured up was for the necessities of this world; which is **רמה חולה** hence you often read {u} of “trading, dedicating”, and “giving with a good” or “an evil eye”; that is, either generously, liberally, or in a niggardly and grudging manner; which may help us to the sense of our Lord in these words; whose meaning is, that if a man is not covetous, but his mind is disposed to generosity and liberality; if this be the case, as if he should say,

Matthew 6:21

Ver. 21. **For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.**

This seems to be a proverbial expression, and contains in it another reason, dissuading from worldly mindedness; because of the danger the heart is in of being ensnared and ruined thereby: and the sense of it is, if your treasure is on earth, and lies in earthly things, your hearts will be set upon them, and be in them, in your bags, your coffers and storehouses; and so your souls will be in danger of being lost; which loss will be an irreparable one, though you should gain the whole world. But if your treasure is put into the hands of God, your hearts will be with him, and be settled on him; your desires will be after heavenly things; your affections will be set on things above; your conversation will be in heaven, whilst you are on earth; and that will be the place and seat of your happiness, to all eternity.

Matthew 6:22

Ver. 22. **The light of the body is the eye,**

Or, the “candle of the body is the eye”; for the eye is that in the body, as a candle is in the house; by the light of it, the several members of the body perform their office; and what is said of the eye of the body, is transferred to the eye of the mind:

if therefore thine eye be single:

that is, if thy mind be liberal, generous, and bountiful: for Christ is still upon the same subject of liberality, and against covetousness; and here speaks entirely in the language of the Jews, who could easily understand him; in whose writings we read of three sorts of eyes; a good eye, a middling one, and an evil one; so in the offerings of the first fruits⁴²⁶,

”**גן יפה**”, “a good eye” gave the fortieth, the house Shammai say, the thirtieth part; a middling one, the fiftieth; and an evil one, the sixtieth part.

”Upon which the commentators say⁴²⁷, a “good eye” means one that is liberal, and an “evil eye” the contrary: hence you often read {u} of “trading, dedicating”, and “giving with a good” or “an evil eye”; that is, either generously, liberally, or in a niggardly and grudging manner; which may help us to the sense of our Lord in these words; whose meaning is, that if a man is not covetous, but his mind is disposed to generosity and liberality; if this be the case, as if he should say,

thy whole body shall be full of light:

all thy actions will be influenced by this noble principle; thy whole life will be illuminated, guided and gov-

⁴²⁶ Misn. Trumot, c. 4. sect. 3.

⁴²⁷ Maimon. Bartenora & Ez. Chayim in ib. {u} T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 37. 2. & 71. 1. & 72. 1

⁴²² Targum Jon. ben Uzziel, in Deut. xxxi. 16.

⁴²³ T. Hieros. Peah, fol. 15. 2.

⁴²⁴ Caphtor, fol. 97. 1.

⁴²⁵ T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 11. 1.

erned by it; thy mind will be cheerful and pleasant, and thy estate and condition will be prosperous and successful.

Matthew 6:23

Ver. 23. **But if thine eye be evil,**

If thou art of a sordid disposition, of an avaricious temper, if the sin of covetousness prevails over thee, **thy whole body will be full of darkness:**

thy judgment will be so influenced by that sordid principle, that thou wilt not be able to discern what is agreeable to the law of God, or human reason; what is fitting to be done for thyself, for God, or for thy fellow creatures; all the powers and faculties of thy soul will be enslaved by it, and all be intent upon, and employed in the gratification of it: thy mind will be always sad and sorrowful, harassed and distressed; and thy estate, and condition, will be most miserable and uncomfortable:

if therefore the light that is in thee be darkness,

how great is that darkness! as it is in the body, so it is with the mind; as when the eye, the light of the body, is put out by any means, all the members of the body are in entire darkness; so when the light of reason in the mind is so far extinguished by any prevailing iniquity, particularly the sin of covetousness, so that it is wholly influenced and governed by it, what irregular actions is it led into! What deeds of darkness does it perform! and what will be the consequence of it, but utter and eternal darkness, if grace prevent not!

Matthew 6:24

Ver. 24. **No man can serve two masters,**

Whose orders are directly contrary to one another: otherwise, if they were the same, or agreed, both might be served; but this is rarely the case, and seldom done. This is a proverbial expression, and is elsewhere used by Christ, Luke 16:13. The Jews have sayings pretty much like it, and of the same sense as when they say⁴²⁸,

”**אדם זוכה לשתי שולחנות** כל, “any man is fit for two tables.”

’And again ⁴²⁹,

”that it is not proper for one man to have two governments:”

their meaning is, that two things cannot be done together:

for, either he will hate the one, and love the other;

⁴²⁸ Praefat. Celi Jaker, fol. 3. 1. {x} Piske Tosephot Cetubot, art. 359.

⁴²⁹ Piske Tosephot Cetubot, art. 359.

he will have less affection and regard to the one, than to the other; as the service or orders of the one, are less agreeable to him than the others;

or else he will hold to the one;

hearken to his commands, obey his orders, and abide in his service;and despise the other; show disrespect to his person, neglect his orders, and desert his service:

ye cannot serve God and mammon.

The word “mammon” is a Syriac word, and signifies money, wealth, riches, substance, and everything that comes under the name of worldly goods. Jerom says, that riches, in the Syriac language, are called “mammon”; and so the word is often used in the above senses, in the Chaldee paraphrases⁴³⁰, and in the Talmudic writings; where⁴³¹ **דיני ממוןיה**, “pecuniary judgments”, or causes relating to money affairs, in which were pecuniary mulcts, are opposed to **דיני נפשות**, “judgment of souls”, or causes relating to life and death. The account and interpretation Irenaeus⁴³² gives of the word, is very wide and foreign; who says, that

”Mammon, according to the Jewish way of speaking, which the Samaritans used, is one that is greedy, and would have more than he ought; but, according to the Hebrew language, it is called adjectively Mam, and signifies one that is gluttonous; that is, who cannot refrain himself from gluttony.”

Whereas it is not an Hebrew word, nor an adjective, but a substantive, and signifies riches; which are opposed to God, being by some men loved, admired, trusted in, and worshipped, as if they were God; and which is incompatible with the service of the true God: for such persons, whose hearts go after their covetousness, and are set upon earthly riches, who give up themselves to them, are eagerly and anxiously pursuing after them, and place their confidence in them; whatever pretensions they may make to the service of God, as did the Scribes and Pharisees, who are particularly struck at by this expression, both here and elsewhere, they cannot truly and heartily serve the Lord. “Mammon” is the god they serve; which word may well be thought to answer to Pluto, the god of riches, among the Heathens. The Jews, in Christ’s time, were notorious for the love of “mammon”; and they themselves own, that this was the cause of the de-

⁴³⁰ Vid. Targum Onkelos & Jon. in Gen. xiii. 13. & in Jud. v. 19. & in Prov. iii. 9. & in Isa. xlv. 13. & passim.

⁴³¹ Misn. Sanhed. c. 1. sect. 1. & c. 4. sect. 1.

⁴³² Adv. Haeres. l. 3. c. 8. p. 249.

struction of the second temple: the character they give of those, who lived under the second temple, is this:

”we know that they laboured in the law, and took care of the commandments, and of the tithes, and that their whole conversation was good; only that they אוהבין את הממוני, “loved the mammon”, and hated one another without a cause⁴³³.”

Matthew 6:25

Ver. 25. **Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life,**

Since ye cannot serve both God and “mammon”, obey one, and neglect the other. Christ does not forbid labour to maintain, support, and preserve, this animal life; nor does he forbid all thought and care about it, but all anxious, immoderate, perplexing, and distressing thoughts and cares; such as arise from diffidence and unbelief, and tend to despair; which are dishonourable to God, as the God of nature and providence, and uncomfortable to men:

what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on.

The several and the only things, which are necessary for the support and comfort of human life, are mentioned; as meat, drink, and clothing; Eating and drinking are necessary to preserve life; and raiment, to cover and defend the body, from the injuries of the heavens: and having these, men have everything necessary, and ought herewith to be content; nor should they be anxiously thoughtful about these: for

is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

And yet, God has given these without man’s thought: and since these are better, and much more excellent, than food and raiment, as all must and will acknowledge; and God has given these the greater gifts, it may be depended upon, that he will give the lesser; that he will give meat and drink; to uphold that valuable life, which he is the author of; and raiment to clothe that body, which he, with so much wisdom and power, has accurately and wonderfully made.

Matthew 6:26

Ver. 26. **Behold the fowls of the air,**

Not such as are brought up in houses, but which fly abroad in the air, wild; and are not supported by their own, or any human care, but by the care of God: Lu 12:24 particularly mentions the “ravens”, referring probably to

433 T. Hieros. Yoma, fol. 38. 3.

Ps 147:9, and because they are very voracious creatures: and there it is said, “consider the ravens”; look attentively upon them, and with observation,

for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns. This is not said, that men should not sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns: but to reprove their diffidence and unbelief: who, though they have the opportunity of sowing, reaping, and gathering in, year by year, yet distrust the providence of God; when the fowls of the air do none of these,

yet your heavenly Father feedeth them;

see Ps 145:15. The Jews acknowledge this, that the least and meanest of creatures are fed by God.”Mar says⁴³⁴, the holy blessed God יהוה סתם “and feeds”, i.e. all creatures, and takes care of them.”

Are ye not much better than they?

Do not you differ from them? are ye not much more excellent than they? And if God feeds and provides for inferior creatures, such as are very mean and contemptible, how much more will he not provide for you? There is a passage in the Talmud, which has great affinity to this of Christ’s, and appears to have in it pretty much of the like kind of reasoning. In the Misna⁴³⁵ it is said, that R. Simeon ben Eleazer should say,

”Did you ever see a beast, or a fowl, that had a trade? but they are fed without trouble.”

In the Gemara⁴³⁶ is added,

”Did you ever see a lion bearing burdens, an hart gathering summer fruits, a fox a money changer, or a wolf selling pots? And yet מתפרני בלא ר, “they are nourished without labour”, and wherefore are they created? To serve me, and I am created to serve my Maker: and lo! these things have in them an argument, “from the less to the greater”; for if these, which are created to serve me after this manner, are supported without trouble; I, who am created to serve my Maker, is it not fit that I should be supplied without trouble? And what is the reason that I am sustained with trouble? My sins.”

Matthew 6:27

Ver. 27. **Which of you by taking thought,**

As Christ argued before, from the unnecessariness of

434 T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 107. 2. Avoda Zara, fol. 3. 2.

435 Kiddushin, c. 4. sect. 14.

436 T. Hieros. Kiddushin, fol. 66. 2. Vid. T. Bab. Kiddushin, fol. 82. 1, 2

anxious thoughts and cares, about the provisions of life; so here, from the unprofitableness of them; it being impossible for a man, with all his care and thought, to

add one cubit unto his stature,

or “to his age”; so the word is rendered, Joh 9:21 to the days of his life, he is so solicitous about; for a cubit may as well be applied to a man’s age, as an “hand’s breadth” is to his days, Ps 39:5. Nor is it so reasonable to think, that Christ should be speaking of making such an addition to a man’s height; though that, to be sure, is an impossible thing: since the far greater part of Christ’s hearers must be come to their full growth, and could not hope to have any addition made to their height; though they might hope to add to their days; much less such a monstrous one as that of a cubit, and which is a strong reason against the other sense of the word, and for this: for our Lord is speaking of something very small, which men cannot do; as appears from what Luke says, Luke 12:26 “If ye then be not able to do that which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?” Whereas, to add a cubit to a man’s height, is a great deal:

”the stature of a middling man (says ⁴³⁷ Bartenera) is three cubits.

”And to add one more, makes a large addition to his stature; but to apply this to a man’s age, is a small matter, and yet is what men cannot do: the sense of the words is this, that no man, by all the care and thought he can make use of, is ever able to add one cubit, or the least measure to his days; he cannot lengthen out his life one year, one month, one day, one hour; no, not one moment.

Matthew 6:28

Ver. 28. **And why take ye thought for raiment,**

Having exposed the folly of an anxious and immoderate care and thought, for food to support and prolong life, our Lord proceeds to show the vanity of an over concern for raiment:

consider the lilies of the field

or “the flowers of the field”, as the Arabic version reads it, the lilies being put for all sorts of flowers. The Persic version mentions both rose and lily; the one being beautifully clothed in red, the other in white. Christ does not direct his hearers to the lilies, or flowers which grow in the garden which receive some advantage from the management and care of the gardener; but to those of the field, where the art and care of men were not so exercised: and besides, he was now preaching on the mount,

437 In Misn. Erubim, c. 4. sect. 5. & Negaim, c. 13. sect. 11.

in an open place; and as he could point to the fowls of the air, flying in their sight, so to the flowers, in the adjacent fields and valleys: which he would have them look upon, with their eyes, consider and contemplate in their minds,

how they grow;

in what variety of garbs they appear, of what different beautiful colours, and fragrant odours, they were; and yet **they toil not,**

or do not labour as husbandmen do, in tilling their land, ploughing their fields, and sowing them with flax, out of which linen garments are made:

neither do they spin;

the flax, when plucked and dressed, as women do, in order for clothing; nor do they weave it into cloth, or make it up into garments, as other artificers do.

Matthew 6:29

Ver. 29. **And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory,**

This is a certain truth, to be affirmed in the strongest manner, and to be believed, that not only men and kings too in general; but even particularly Solomon, the richest and most magnificent of all the kings of Israel, whose grandeur, and glory, exceeded all the princes of the earth; that even he, not in his common dress, but when “in his glory”, and in “all” his glory, when arrayed with his royal and richest robes, with his crown on his head, and when seated on his throne,

was not arrayed like one of these

lilies, or flowers of the field: for the glory and beauty of his garments were purely from art, but their’s by nature; which can never be equalled by art. This phrase, “Solomon in all his glory”, is the same which the Jewish doctors, in their writings, express by שלמה בשתו, “Solomon in his hour”⁴³⁸: that is as their commentators explain it⁴³⁹, wtwkml teb, “in the time of his reign”; for they say he was first a king, and then a private person. Now, not whilst he was a private person, but when a king, in the height of his grandeur and magnificence, and when dressed out in the most splendid manner, he was exceeded in array by a single lily: or the sense is, in his royal apparel. For as the same doctors say,

”what is a man’s “glory?” It is his clothing that is his outward glory; and again, garments are the glory of a man⁴⁴⁰.”

438 Misn. Bava Metzia, c. 7. sect. 1. T. Bab. ib. fol. 49. 1. & 83. 1. & 86. 2.

439 Jarchi & Bartenora in ib

440 Tzeror Hammor, fol. 95. 1. & 99. 4. & 110. 4.

Matthew 6:30

Ver. 30. **Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field.**

These words are a conclusion from the former, and contain an argument from the lesser to the greater; that if God, for this is solely his work, so clothes the lilies, the flowers of the field, and whatever grows up out of the earth, in such a beautiful and splendid manner, as even to outdo Solomon, in his richest apparel; there's no doubt to be made of it, or at least ought not, but that he will much more provide clothing for men. The argument is illustrated, by the short continuance of the grass of the field, which is so clothed; and the use it is put to, when cut down;

which today is

in being, but abides not long, as it were but for a day: it flourishes in the morning, continues for the day in its glory and verdure, is cut down at evening, and withers and dies,

and tomorrow is cast into the oven,

to heat it with, or as the Syriac version reads כַּתְּנוּרָא “in the furnace”. And so Munster's Hebrew edition of this Gospel. For furnaces used to be heated with straw and stubble, and such like things, as were gathered out of the fields; so, we read in the Misna⁴⁴¹, that pots and furnaces were heated;

”a pot which they heat “with straw and stubble”, they put into it that which is to be boiled--a furnace which they heat “with straw and stubble”, they put nothing into it, nor upon it (i.e. till they have removed the coals or ashes): a little furnace, which they heat וּבְנֹבֵהָ בִקְשׁ, “with straw and stubble”, is as the pots.”

The last word, גִּבְבָּא, Bartenora says, signifies wood, or sticks, small as stubble, which they gather out of the field; that is, the stalks of some sort of herbs and plants, that grow in the field: now if God clothes these plants, which are so short lived, and at last used for such mean purposes;

shall he not much more clothe you

men, his people, who are of a much longer life, and designed for greater ends and purposes; for the worship and service of God, for his honour and glory here, and for eternal life and happiness hereafter,

O ye of little faith?

As such persons are, who distrust the providence of God, with respect to food and raiment, The phrase, אֲנִיחָה

441 Sabbat, c. 3. sect. 1, 2.

קָטְנֵי, “men of little faith”, is often to be met with in the Rabbinical writings: so Noah is represented by them, as one of “little faith”, who believed, and did not believe the flood; and therefore did not go into the ark, till the waters drove him⁴⁴²: and though he is said to be perfect, this was not by his works, but by the grace of God⁴⁴³. So the Israelites at the Red Sea, who thought that when they came out on one side, the Egyptians would come out on the⁴⁴⁴ other. So the little children that mocked Elisha, are said to be so called, because they were men “of little⁴⁴⁵ faith”. So everyone that exalts his voice in prayer, is reckoned such an one⁴⁴⁶. But what comes nearest to the case before us, is the following⁴⁴⁷ passage;

”Says R. Eliezer the Great, whoever has a morsel in his basket, and says, what shall I eat tomorrow? is no other than hnma ynmqm, “one of those of little faith””

Matthew 6:31

Ver. 31. **Therefore take no thought,**

That is, for the morrow, as it is explained, Luke 6:34 for it is lawful to take proper care and thought for present food, drink, and raiment; but not to be anxiously concerned for futurity;

saying, what shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed?

These are a repetition of the several things instanced in, and are the very language and expressions of men of little faith; as in the above citation, מָה אֶכְלֶה לְמָחָר, “what shall I eat tomorrow?”

Matthew 6:32

Ver. 32. **For after all these things do the Gentiles seek,**

Or “the nations of the world”, as in Luke 12:30. The Syriac reads it so here: the phrase, אֲנִיחָה הַגֵּוֹי “the nations of the world”, is used of the Gentiles, in distinction from the Israelites, thousands of times in the Jewish writings; it would be endless to give instances. These knew not God, nor acknowledged his providence; the greater part of them thought, that the soul perished with the body; few of them thought, that anything remained after death; and they that did, spoke very doubtfully of it: wherefore

442 Jarchi in Gen. vii. 7.

443 Tzeror Hammor, fol. 10. 2.

444 T. Bab. Pesachim, fol. 118. 2. Erachin, fol. 15. 1.

445 T. Bab. Sota, fol. 46. 2. Zohar in Exod. fol. 90. 2.

446 T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 24. 2. Zohar in Num. fol. 93. 2.

447 T. Bab. Sota, fol. 48. 2.

it is no wonder, that such persons should greedily seek after, and be anxiously concerned for all these things, food, raiment, and riches, and a great plenty of them; since this is all the happiness they expect; and imagine, that this is to be acquired by their care, thought, diligence, and industry; having no regard to a superior being, and his all wise providence: but for the Jews, and so Christians, who have a divine revelation, the knowledge of God, and his providence, and of a future state after this life, to act the same part the Heathens do, is exceedingly unbecoming, absurd, and wicked: and besides, such greedy desires, immoderate care, and anxious solicitude, are altogether unnecessary;

for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

Every word almost, carries in it an argument, to strengthen the faith of God's children, to encourage them to believe, that he will bestow upon them, whatever is needful, for meat, drink, and clothing: he is a “father”, and will take care of his children; “their father”; they have interest in him, being related to him, and need not doubt of his paternal care, and affectionate regard to them: their “heavenly” Father, or their Father in heaven; who has all things at his command, who sits there, and does whatever he pleaseth on earth: “he knoweth that they have need”; he knows all things, all their straits, difficulties, wants and necessities; he knows they need every day, “all these things”, food and raiment, and cannot do without them: and therefore they may depend upon it, that as it is in his power to relieve them, and their persons and cases are not unknown to him; he who stands in the relation of a father to them, will supply them with whatever is proper and convenient for them.

Matthew 6:33

Ver. 33. **But seek first the kingdom of God,**

Meaning either the Gospel, and the ministration of it; in which sense this phrase is often used, see Mt 21:43 and which is diligently to be sought after, and into; to be constantly attended on, and to be preferred to our necessary food, to raiment, or riches, or any enjoyment of life: or else the kingdom of glory, which is prepared by God, and is his gift; for which he makes his people meet here, and will introduce them into it hereafter.

And his righteousness;

the righteousness of God, which is revealed in the Gospel, and is what gives a right and title to the kingdom of heaven. This is not the righteousness of man, but of God; and is no other than the righteousness of Christ; so

called, because he is God who has wrought it; it is what God approves of, accepts, and imputes, and which only can justify in his sight, and give an abundant entrance into his kingdom and glory. Heaven is to be sought for in the first place, as the perfection of the saints' happiness; and Christ's righteousness is to be sought for, and laid hold on by faith, as the way and means of enjoying that happiness; without which, there will be no entering into the kingdom of heaven.

And all these things shall be added unto you:

of the free bounty, goodness, and liberality of God, without your thought and care, and much less merit; even “all these things”, meat, drink, clothing, or whatsoever worldly sustenance else is necessary for you: which are not parts of the happiness of saints, only appendages thereunto; which they have over and above what they are, or should be chiefly seeking after. The Hebrews⁴⁴⁸

say,”that no good sign will be shown to Israel, until they return and “seek” three things: “afterwards the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord”; Mymv twklmwz, “this is the kingdom of heaven”; and “David their king”, according to its literal sense; “and shall fear the Lord and his goodness”; this is the house of the sanctuary, as it is said, “this goodly mountain”, and Lebanon.”

Matthew 6:34

Ver. 34. **Take therefore no thought for the morrow.**

Reference is had to Pr 27:1. “Boast not of thyself tomorrow”: a man cannot promise or assure himself, that he shall have a morrow, and therefore it is great weakness and folly to be anxiously thoughtful about it. This is expressed in the Talmud⁴⁴⁹, nearer the sense of Christ's words, after this manner:

”אֵל תִּרְתֵּן מָחָר, “do not distress thyself with tomorrow's affliction, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth”; perhaps tomorrow may not be, and thou wilt be found distressing thyself, for the time which is nothing to thee.”

And should it come, it is unnecessary to be thoughtful of it in a distressing manner before hand;

for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.

The morrow is here introduced by a “prosopopeia”, as if it was a person sufficiently thoughtful and careful for

448 Jarchi & Kimchi, in Hos. iii. 5.

449 T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 100. 2. {t} T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 9. 2.

the necessities of it: every day brings along with it fresh care and thought, being attended with fresh wants and troubles; and therefore, it is very unadvisable, to bring the cares and troubles of two days upon one; as he does, who is anxiously concerned today, for the things of tomorrow; sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. This proverb is thus expressed in the Talmud⁴⁵⁰, דיה לרה בשתה, “sufficient for distress”, or “vexation, is the present time”; which the gloss explains thus, “sufficient for the vexation it is, that men should grieve for it, at the time that it comes upon them.” It is very wrong to anticipate trouble, or meet it before hand; if it was for no other reason but this, that every day’s trouble is enough, and should not be needlessly added to, by an over concern what shall be done for tomorrow; or how shall the necessities of it be answered, or the trials of it be endured.

Matthew Chapter 7

Matthew 7:1

Ver. 1. **Judge not, that ye be not judged.**

This is not to be understood of any sort of judgment; not of judgment in the civil courts of judicature, by proper magistrates, which ought to be made and pass, according to the nature of the case; nor of judgment in the churches of Christ, where offenders are to be called to an account, examined, tried, and dealt with according to the rules of the Gospel; nor of every private judgment, which one man may make upon another, without any detriment to him; but of rash judgment, interpreting men’s words and deeds to the worst sense, and censuring them in a very severe manner; even passing sentence on them, with respect to their eternal state and condition. Good is the advice given by the famous Hillel⁴⁵¹, who lived a little before Christ’s time;

“Do not judge thy neighbour, (says he,) until thou comest into his place.”

It would be well, if persons subject to a censorious spirit, would put themselves in the case and circumstances the persons are in they judge; and then consider, what judgment they would choose others should pass on them. The argument Christ uses to dissuade from this evil, which the Jews were very prone to, is, “that ye be not judged”; meaning, either by men, for such censorious persons rarely have the good will of their fellow creatures, but are commonly repaid in the same way; or else by God, which will be the most awful and tremendous:

for such persons take upon them the place of God, usurp his prerogative, as if they knew the hearts and states of men; and therefore will have judgment without mercy at the hands of God.

Matthew 7:2

Ver. 2. **For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged,**

Both by God and men; to which agree those proverbial sentences used by the Jews;

“He that judgeth his neighbour according to the balance of righteousness, or innocence, they judge him according to righteousness.”⁴⁵²

And a little after,

“As ye have judged me according to the balance of righteousness, God will judge you according to the balance of righteousness.”

Hence that advice of Joshua ben Perachiah⁴⁵³, who, by the Jewish writers, is said to be the master of Christ;

“Judge every man according to the balance of righteousness.”

Which their commentators explain thus⁴⁵⁴; when you see a man as it were in “equilibrio”, inclining to neither part, it is not clear from what he does, that he is either good or evil, righteous or unrighteous; yet when you see him do a thing which may be interpreted either to a good or a bad sense, it ought always to be interpreted to the best.

And with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again.

This was an usual proverb among the Jews; it is sometimes delivered out thus, מדה כנגד מדה, “measure against measure”⁴⁵⁵; but oftener thus, and nearer the form of it here, במדה שאדם מודד בה מודדין לו, “with what measure a man measures, they measure to him”: one might fill up almost a page, in referring to places, where it is used in this form: besides those in the⁴⁵⁶ margin, take the following, and the rather, because it gives instances of this retaliation⁴⁵⁷:

452 T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 127. 2.

453 Pirke Abot, c. 1. sect. 6.

454 Maimon. & Bartenora in ib

455 Bereshit Rabba, sect. 9. fol. 7. 4.

456 T. Bab. Megilla, fol. 12. 2. Sota, fol. 8. 2. Sanhedrim, fol. 100. 1. Zohar in Gen. fol. 87. 4. & in Lev. fol. 36. 1. & 39. 3. & in Num. fol. 67. 3. Bemidbar Rabba, fol. 194. 1. Misn. Beracot, c. 9. sect. 5.

457 Misn. Sota, c. 1. sect. 7, 8, 9. Vid. Tzeror Hammor,

450 T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 9. 2.

451 Pirke Abot, c. 2. sect. 4.

”With what measure a man measures, they measure to him”; so the woman suspected of adultery, she adorned herself to commit sin, and God dishonoured her; she exposed herself to iniquity, God therefore stripped her naked; the same part of her body in which her sin begun, her punishment did. Samson walked after his eyes, and therefore the Philistines plucked out his eyes. Absalom was lifted up in his mind, with his hair, and therefore he was hanged by it; and because he lay with his father’s ten concubines, they therefore pierced him with ten lances; and because he stole away three hearts, the heart of his father, the heart of the sanhedrim, and the heart of Israel, therefore he was thrust with three darts: and so it is with respect to good things; Miriam waited for Moses one hour, therefore the Israelites waited for her seven days in the wilderness; Joseph, who was greater than his brethren, buried his father; and Moses, who was the greatest among the Israelites took care of the bones of Joseph, and God himself buried Moses.”

Matthew 7:3

Ver. 3. **And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye?**

By “mote” is meant, any little bit of straw, or small splinter of wood, that flies into the eye, and does it damage, hinders its sight, and gives it pain; and designs little sins, comparatively speaking, such as youthful follies, human frailties, and infirmities, inadvertencies and imprudencies; which may be said to be light faults, in comparison of others: and though not to be vindicated, nor continued in, yet not to be severely looked upon and chastised. To scrutinize diligently into, aggravate, dwell upon, and sharply reprove the lighter faults of others, is a conduct, which is here inveighed against, and condemned by Christ; and more especially, when it may be said with the greatest truth and justice to such,

but considerest not the beam

that is in thine own eye: by the “beam” is meant, greater sins, grosser abominations, and such as were more peculiar to the Pharisees; as pride, arrogance, a vain opinion of themselves, confidence in their own righteousness, hypocrisy, covetousness, and iniquity; things they did not advert to in themselves, when they loudly exclaimed against lesser evils in others. Such men must be of all persons inexcusable, who condemn that in fol. 99. 1, 2.

others, which either they themselves do, or what is abundantly worse.

Matthew 7:4

Ver. 4. **Or how wilt thou say to thy brother?**

This is not so much an interrogation, as an expression of admiration, at the front and impudence of such censorious remarkers, and rigid observers; who not content to point at the faults of others, take upon them to reprove them in a very magisterial way: and it is as if Christ had said, with what face canst thou say to thy friend or neighbour,

let me pull out the mote out of thine eye?

give me leave to rebuke thee sharply for thy sin, as it deserves,

and behold a beam is in thine own eye;

thou art guilty of a far greater iniquity: astonishing impudence! Art thou so blind, as not to see and observe thy viler wickedness? Or which, if conscious of, how canst thou prevail upon thyself to take upon thee to reprove and censure others? Dost thou think thy brother cannot see thy beam? And may he not justly retort thine iniquities upon thee, which exceed his? and then what success canst thou promise thyself? Such persons are very unfit to be reprovers of others.

Matthew 7:5

Ver. 5. **Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye**

Very rightly does our Lord call such a man an hypocrite, who is very free in remarking and reprovng other men’s sins, and covering his own; and indeed, one end of his critical observations, rigid censures, and rash judgments is, that he might be thought to be holier than he is. Christ very manifestly points at the Scribes and Pharisees, who were men of such a complexion; and whom he often, without any breach of charity, calls hypocrites. The meaning of this proverbial expression is, that a man should first begin with himself, take notice of his own sins, reprove himself for them, and reform; and then it will be soon enough to observe other men’s.

And then shalt thou see clearly, to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye: then will he, and not before, be a proper person to reprove others; all objections and impediments to such a work will then be removed. Our Lord here speaks in the language of the Jewish nation, with whom such like expressions were common, and of long standing⁴⁵⁸

“In the generation that judged the judges, one

458 T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 15. 2.

said to another, טוֹל קִימָ מִבֵּינֵי עֵינַי, “cast out the mote out of thine eye”; to whom it was replied, מִבֵּינֵי עֵינַי קוֹרֵה טוֹל “cast out the beam from thine eye”: one said to another, “thy silver is become dross”: the other replies, “thy wine is mixed with water”

Again ⁴⁵⁹,

“R. Taphon said, I wonder whether there is any in this generation, that will receive reproof; if one should say to him, “cast out the mote out of thine eye”, will he say to him, “cast out the beam out of thine eye?” Says R. Eleazer ben Azariah, I wonder whether there is any in this generation, that knows how to reprove.”

From whence it is clear, that these phrases were used in the same sense they are by Christ; and which is still more evident by the gloss upon them: for upon the word “mote”, it observes,

“That it is as if it had been said, הֵן קָטָנוּ “a little sin”, which is in thine hand (i.e. which thou hast committed): the other could say to him, cast thou away הֵן גְּדוֹל “the great sin”, which is in thine hand; so that they could not reprove, because they were all sinners.”

Agreeable to these, are some other proverbs used by the Jews, such as “a vice which is in thyself, do not speak of to thy neighbour,”⁴⁶⁰

or upbraid him with it: and⁴⁶¹ again,

“adorn thyself, and afterwards adorn others.”

Which is produced by a noted commentator⁴⁶² of their’s, to illustrate the text in Zep 2:1 on which he also makes this remark;

“inquire first into your own blemishes, and then inquire into the blemishes of others.”

The sense of each of them is, that a man should first reform himself, and then others; and that he that finds faults with others, ought to be without blame himself.

Matthew 7:6

Ver. 6. **Give not that which is holy to the dogs,**

Dogs were unclean creatures by the law; the price of one might not be brought into the house of the Lord, for a vow, De 23:18 yea, these creatures were not admitted

⁴⁵⁹ T. Bab. Erachin, fol. 16. 2.

⁴⁶⁰ T. Bab. Bava Metzia, fol. 59. 2.

⁴⁶¹ T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 19. 1.

⁴⁶² R. David Kimchi in Zeph. ii. 1. Vid. Tzeror Hammor, fol. 142. 4.

into several temples of the Heathens⁴⁶³. Things profane and unclean, as flesh torn by beasts, were ordered to be given to them, Ex 22:31 but nothing that was holy was to be given them, as holy flesh, or the holy oblations, or anything that was consecrated to holy uses; to which is the allusion here. It is a common maxim⁴⁶⁴ with the Jews,

“that they do not redeem holy things, to give to the dogs to eat”

Here the phrase is used in a metaphorical sense; and is generally understood of not delivering or communicating the holy word of God, and the truths of the Gospel, comparable to pearls, or the ordinances of it, to persons notoriously vile and sinful: to men, who being violent and furious persecutors, and impudent blasphemers, are compared to “dogs”; or to such, who are scandalously vile, impure in their lives and conversations, and are therefore compared to swine;

neither cast ye your pearls before swine.

But since the subject Christ is upon is reproof, it seems rather to be the design of these expressions, that men should be cautious, and prudent, in rebuking and admonishing such persons for their sins, in whom there is no appearance or hope of success; yea, where there is danger of sustaining loss;

lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you:

that is, despise the admonitions and reproofs given, and hurt the persons who give them, either by words or deeds; see Pr 9:7. The Jews have some sayings much like these, and will serve to illustrate them ⁴⁶⁵;

“do not cast pearls before swine”, nor deliver wisdom to him, who knows not the excellency of it; for wisdom is better than pearls, and he that does not seek after it, is worse than a swine.”

Matthew 7:7

Ver. 7. **Ask and it shall be given you,**

This is to be understood of asking of God in prayer, for such things as are wanting; whether of a temporal nature, as food and raiment, which Christ, in the former chapter, had warned against an immoderate and anxious

⁴⁶³ Vid. Alex. ab. Alex. Gaeial. Dier. l. 2. c. 14.

⁴⁶⁴ T. Bab. Temura, fol. 17. 1. & 31. 1. & 33. 2. Becorot, fol. 15. 1. Hieros. Pesachim, fol. 27. 4. & Maaser Sheni, fol. 53. 3.

⁴⁶⁵ Mischar Happeninim apud Buxtorf. Florileg. Heb. p. 306.

concern for; or of a spiritual nature, as grace, and wisdom to behave in a proper manner, both towards God and men: and such, who ask according to the will of God, in the name of Christ, and under the direction, guidance, and influence of the Spirit, who ask in faith and fear, and with submission to the divine will, shall have what they ask for; not as what they deserve, but as a free gift.

Seek, and ye shall find.

This is still meant of prayer, and of seeking God, his face and favour: which such shall find, who seek in a right way, by Christ, and with their whole hearts, diligently: knock and it shall be opened unto you as beggars do, who use much importunity for relief and assistance. So men should stand and knock at the door of mercy, which will not always be shut against them. Faith in prayer is a key that opens this door, when a poor soul finds grace and mercy to help it in time of need. Our Lord’s design is to express the nature, fervour, and constancy of prayer, and to encourage to it.

Matthew 7:8

Ver. 8. **For everyone that asketh receiveth,**

For God is no respecter of persons; whoever makes application, be he a Jew, or a Gentile, rich or poor, bond or free, a man of great gifts, or mean parts, provided he asks aright, from right principles, and with right views, shall not lose his labour; but shall receive all such good things at the hand of God, as are suitable and convenient for him.

And he that seeketh findeth;

he that seeks for God in Christ, the grace and mercy of God, the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; that seeks after the true riches, both of grace and glory, shall be sure to find them; see Pr 21:21.

And to him that knocketh it shall be opened:

that is, to him that is constant at the throne of grace, who continues knocking at the door of mercy, and will have no denial, it shall be opened to him; and he shall have entrance into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus.

Matthew 7:9

Ver. 9. **Or what man is there of you,**

“That is a father”, as in Luke 11:11 that is, is in the relation, and has the affections of a father; and indeed is a man, and has the nature and passions of a man; unless he is become a mere brute, and devoid of all humanity,

whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?

No, by no means; no man can act such a merciless, cruel part as this to a child: for though he might impose upon him by the likeness of some sort of stones with

bread; yet could not hope to satisfy his hunger, or stop his mouth this way; but must expect to hear from him again with bitter complaints.

Matthew 7:10

Ver. 10. **Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?**

Which is somewhat like a fish, especially an eel. Fish and bread are mentioned, because these were common food; see Mark 6:41, Joh 21:13 and particularly in Galilee, a fish country, where Christ now was, and from whence he had called his disciples, who were fishermen. In Luke 11:12 it is added, “or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?” which is used, as the rest, to show the absurdity and inhumanity of such conduct; and that indeed nothing of this kind is to be found among men, unless it be among monsters in nature.

Matthew 7:11

Ver. 11. **If ye then being evil,**

As all mankind in general are, both by nature and practice: they are conceived in sin, shapen in iniquity; are evil from their youth, and transgressors from the womb; are corrupt, and do abominable things; and such these Jews were Christ speaks unto; and who, very likely, has respect chiefly to the evil of covetousness they were addicted to. The argument is taken from the lesser to the greater, and runs thus; that if ye, who are but men, men on earth, yea evil men, not over liberal and beneficent, nay covetous and niggardly,

know how to give good gifts unto your children;

can find in your hearts, having it in the power of your hands, to give suitable provisions for the support and sustenance of your children;

how much more shall your Father, which is in heaven;

who is omniscient and omnipotent; who knows the persons and wants of his children, and what is proper for them, and is able to relieve them, being Lord of heaven and earth,

give good things to them that ask him?

Not only temporal good things, as meat, drink, and clothing; but all spiritual good things; every supply of grace; all things pertaining to life and godliness. In Luke 11:13 “the Holy Spirit” is mentioned, and so seems to design his gifts and graces, everything that is necessary for the spiritual and eternal good of his people: but for these things he must be inquired of, and sought after; and it is the least saints can do to ask for them; and they have encouragement enough to ask; for it is but ask and have.

Matthew 7:12

Ver. 12. **Therefore all things whatsoever,**

These words are the epilogue, or conclusion of our Lord's discourse; the sum of what he had delivered in the two preceding chapters, and in this hitherto, is contained in these words; for they not only respect the exhortation about judging and reproof; but every duty respecting our neighbour; it is a summary of the whole. It is a golden rule, here delivered, and ought to be observed by all mankind, Jews and Gentiles. So the Karaite Jews ⁴⁶⁶ say,

“all things that a man would not take to himself, אינו ראוי לשותמם לאהור, “it is not fit to do them to his brethren”

And Maimonides ⁴⁶⁷ has expressed it much in the same words our Lord here does;

“all things whatsoever ye would that others should do to you, (says he,) do you the same to your brethren, in the law, and in the commandments:”

only there seems to be a restriction in the word “brethren”; the Jews, perhaps, meaning no other than Israelites; whereas our Lord's rule reaches to all without exception, “all things whatsoever”

ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them:

let them be who they will, whether brethren, or kinsmen, according to the flesh, or what not; “for this is the law and the prophets”: the sum of the law and the prophets; not the whole sum of them, or the sum of the whole law: but of that part of it which respects our neighbours. Remarkable is the advice given by Hillel ⁴⁶⁸ to one who came to be made a proselyte by him;

“whatsoever is hateful to thee, that do not thou to thy neighbour; זו היא כל התורה כולה, “this is all the whole law”, and the rest is an explication of it, go and be perfect:”

yea, this rule is not only agreeable to the law of Moses, and the prophets, but even to the law and light of nature. Aristotle being asked, how we ought to carry ourselves to our friends, answered ⁴⁶⁹, as we would wish

they would carry it to us. Alexander Severus, a Heathen emperor, so greatly admired this rule of Christ's, that he ordered it to be written on the walls of his closet.

Matthew 7:13

Ver. 13. **Enter ye in at the strait gate,**

By the “strait gate” is meant Christ himself; who elsewhere calls himself “the door”;

Joh 10:7 as he is into the church below, and into all the ordinances and privileges of it; as also to the Father, by whom we have access unto him, and are let into communion with him, and a participation of all the blessings of grace; yea, he is the gate of heaven, through which we have boldness to enter into the holiest of all by faith and hope now; as there will be hereafter an abundant entrance into the kingdom and glory of God, through his blood and righteousness. This is called “strait”; because faith in Christ, a profession of it, and a life and conversation agreeable to it, are attended with many afflictions, temptations, reproaches, and persecutions. “Entering” in at it is by faith, and making a profession of it: hence it follows, that faith is not the gate itself, but the grace, by which men enter in at the right door, and walk on in Christ, as they begin with him.

For wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction;

so that the one may be easily known from the other. There is no difficulty in finding out, or entering in at, or walking in the way of sin, which leads to eternal ruin. The gate of carnal lusts, and worldly pleasures, stands wide open,

and many there be which go in thereat;

even all men in a state of nature; the way of the ungodly is “broad”, smooth, easy, and every way agreeable to the flesh; it takes in a large compass of vices, and has in it abundance of company; but its end is destruction. Our Lord seems to allude to the private and public roads, whose measures are fixed by the Jewish canons; which say ⁴⁷⁰, that “a private way was four cubits broad, a way from city to city eight cubits, a public way sixteen cubits, and the way to the cities of refuge thirty two cubits.”

Matthew 7:14

Ver. 14. **Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way,**

And so, difficult to enter in at; and when entered, the way is unpleasant to the flesh to walk in, being hedged up

⁴⁷⁰ T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 100. 1, 2. Vid. Maimon. & R. Sampson in Misn. Peah, c. 2. sect. 1. & Maimon in Sabbat. c. 1. sect. 1.

on each side with afflictions and tribulations; and moreover, is like the “narrow place”, or στενωποσ τοποσ, “the strait place”, as the Septuagint in Nu 22:26 render it; in which the angel that met Balaam stood; and in which there was no turning to the right hand or the left; and such is the way to eternal happiness. The great encouragement to walk on in it is, because it is that way

which leadeth unto life:

unto eternal life: it certainly leads thither; it never fails of bringing persons to it; believers in Christ, all that walk in Christ the way, though they are said to be “scarcely” saved, by reason of their afflictions and trials, they meet with in their way to the kingdom; yet they are, and shall be certainly saved: they shall be safely brought to glory; which will be an abundant recompense for all the troubles and sorrows that have attended them in their journey.

And few there be that find it;

the way, and so consequently the life it leads to. “The gate is strait”; small and little, and so unobserved: there is but one way to heaven, and the generality of men neglect it. “The way is narrow”, and so disagreeable; the company few, and not engaging. Men choose large gates, broad ways, and much company. The flesh loves to walk at liberty, unconfined, and uncontrolled, and with a multitude to do evil: hence, Zion's ways are thin of passengers; a small number, comparatively speaking, walk thereto, and will be saved; a remnant, a little flock, a little city, and few men in it. It is asked in the Talmud ⁴⁷¹,

“why is the world to come created with “jod?” (the least of the letters in the “Hebrew alphabet”) the answer is, because ריקניו שבו מושימו “the righteous which are in it are few”

Some read the words, as the Syriac, Arabic, and Vulgate Latin, with a note of admiration, “how strait is the gate!” &c. and so some copies.

Matthew 7:15

Ver. 15. **Beware of false prophets,**

Or false teachers; for not such who pretended to foretell things to come, but such who set up themselves to be teachers of others, are here meant; see 2Pe 2:1. It may be queried, whether our Lord has not respect to the Scribes and Pharisees, who sat in Moses's chair, and taught, for doctrines, the commandments of men? and of whose doctrines he elsewhere bids men beware: for whatever plausible pretences for holiness and righteousness might appear in them, they were repugnant to the word of God,

⁴⁷¹ T. Bab. Menachot, fol. 29. 2.

and destructive to the souls of men; such as their doctrines of free will, justification by the works of the law, the traditions of the elders, &c. since it follows,

which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves;

for these “loved to go in long clothing”, Mark 12:38 בטלית, in a garment which reached to the feet, and was made of the wool of sheep. The Babylonish garment Achan saw and stole, Rab says ⁴⁷², was איטלא דמילחא, a garment called “melotes”: which is the very Greek word the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews uses for sheep skins, persecuted saints wandered about in, Heb 11:37 and the gloss upon the place, in the Talmud referred to, says, that this was גר נקי של נקי, “a talith”, or “garment of pure wool”; and Jarchi ⁴⁷³ says, that

“it was the way of deceivers, and profane men, to cover themselves, בטליתחם, “with their talith”, or long garment, “as if they were righteous men”, that persons might receive their lies.”

All which agrees very well with the Pharisees, who would have been thought to have been holy and righteous, humble, modest, and self-denying men; when they were inwardly full of hypocrisy and iniquity, of rapine, oppression, and covetousness; and, under a pretence of religion, “devoured widows' houses”. Though, it seems, by what follows, that Christ has respect, at least also, to such, who bore his name, and came in his name, though not sent by him, and called him Lord, and prophesied, and cast out devils, and did many wonderful works in his name; who, that they might get the good will and affections of the people, clothed themselves, not in garments made of sheep's wool, but in the very skins of sheep, with the wool on them, in imitation of the true prophets, and good men of old; pretending great humility, and self-denial, and so “wore a rough garment to deceive”, Zec 13:4 when they were inwardly greedy dogs, grievous wolves, of insatiable covetousness; and, when opportunity offered, spared not the flock to satisfy their rapacious and devouring appetites. The Jews speak of a “wolfish humility”; like that of the wolf in the fable, which put on a sheep skin.”

There are some men, (says one of their {t} writers,) who appear to be humble, and fear God in a deceitful and hypocritical way, but inwardly lay wait: this humility our wise men call גיה זאבית

⁴⁷² T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 41. 1.

⁴⁷³ In Zech. xiii. 4. {t} Abarbinel Nachalath Abot, fol. 192. 1.

⁴⁶⁶ R. Eliahu Addaret, c. 3. apud Trigland de sect. Karaeorum, c. 10. p. 166. Vid. Tzeror Hammor, fol. 146. 4.

⁴⁶⁷ Hilch. Ebel. c. 14. sect. 1.

⁴⁶⁸ T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 31. 1. Maimon. in Misn. Peah, c. 1. sect. 1.

⁴⁶⁹ Diog. Laert. in Vit. Aristotel. l. 5.

“wolfish humility”

Such is this our Lord inveighs against, and bids his followers beware of.

Matthew 7:16

Ver. 16. **Ye shall know them by their fruits,**

By “fruits” are meant, not so much their external works in life and conversation; for a false prophet may so behave, as not to be discovered thereby. So the Pharisees were outwardly righteous before men; and false teachers among Christians may have the form of godliness, and keep it up, though they are strangers to, and even deny the power of it: but their doctrines are here meant, and the effects of them. When doctrines are contrary to the perfections of God, repugnant to the Scriptures of truth, tend to depreciate the person and offices, blood, righteousness, and sacrifice of Christ, to lessen the glory of God’s grace, to exalt the creature, and to fill men’s minds with notions of the purity, self-sufficiency, and ability of human nature; when they are calculated to feed the pride and vanity of men, to get money, and gain applause, to serve their own interests, and gratify men’s lusts and passions, they may be easily discerned who they are, and from whence they come. The Jews have a proverb pretty much like this⁴⁷⁴, בּוֹיָן מִקֶּטֶף יָדַי, “a gourd is known by its branches”. The gloss upon it is,

”it is, as if it was said, from the time it buds forth, and goes out of the branch, it is known whether it is good or not;”

i.e. the goodness of the gourd is known by the fruit its branches bear. So a good preacher is known by the good doctrine he brings, and a bad one, by his unsound doctrine. Christ is not speaking of these false prophets, as men, or as private professors of religion, but as prophets, or teachers. “Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?” Grapes and figs were common fruit; there was great plenty of them in Judea; we often read of the “gathering” of them. It is a matter in dispute with the doctors⁴⁷⁵,

”if a man intends ללקט תאנים ולוקט, “to gather figs, and he gathers grapes”, black ones, and he gathers white ones, white ones, and he gathers black ones, whether he is guilty of a sin offering or not.”

One says he is, another says he is not. These words of Christ put me in mind of another passage, which seems

to speak of grapes of thorns⁴⁷⁶;

“he that marries his daughter to a scholar, it is like to grapes of the vine, with grapes of the vine, a thing beautiful and acceptable; but he that marries his daughter to a plebeian, it is like to grapes of the vine, בְּנֵי־הַגֵּזַר, “with grapes of the thorn”, a thing ugly, and unacceptable.”

Though גְּבִי, in the last sentence, must be taken for berries which grow on some thorn bushes, and not what are properly grapes; for grapes do not grow upon, and are not to be gathered from thorns, and bramble bushes. The meaning of our Lord is, that from the false doctrines of men comes no good fruit of faith, holiness, joy, peace, and comfort. Their doctrines are like “thorns”, which prick and pierce, give pain and uneasiness; and, like “thistles”, choke, and are unprofitable, afford no solid food and nourishment; yea, their words eat as do a canker, are contrary to vital religion and powerful godliness. This sense I prefer; because, on the one hand, it is possible for a false teacher to do works, which may be externally good; though indeed no good works, properly speaking, can be performed by an unregenerate man, because he has neither good principles to act from, nor good ends in view: and, on the other hand, a man who is destitute of the grace of God, and lives ill, may yet have right notions of the Gospel, though he has no experimental knowledge and relish of it; but where false doctrines are imbibed, and propagated, no good fruit can follow upon it.

Matthew 7:17

Ver. 17 **Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit,**

As is the tree, so is its fruit; if the tree is good, it will bring forth good fruit. The tree that brings forth good fruit, is good antecedent to the fruit it produces; it is first good, and then puts forth good fruit: it is not the fruit that makes the tree good, but makes it appear to be so; but it is the goodness of the tree that makes the fruit good. As a good man does, and will do good works, but his works do not make him a good man; he is so before he performs good works, or he would never be able to do them; these make him appear to be a good man: so a good preacher, that has an experimental knowledge of the doctrines of the Gospel, will deliver out sound doctrine, who is first made so by the gifts and graces of the Spirit of God; and by searching the Scriptures, and examining his doctrines by them, he will be known and ap-

⁴⁷⁶ T. Bab. Pesachim, fol. 49. 1.

pear to be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine; and such a good minister of the Gospel, out of the good treasure of Gospel truths put into his earthen vessel, will bring forth, from time to time, good and excellent truths, to the edification and profit of those that hear: “but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit”; if the tree is corrupt, the fruit will be corrupt; and as is the preacher, so will be his doctrines: if he is a corrupt preacher, or a man of a corrupt mind, destitute of the truth, his preaching will be such as will tend to corrupt both the principles and practices of men; for such evil men and seducers, out of the evil treasure of false doctrines, which they have received into their judgments, will bring forth, either more secretly or openly, evil tenets in their ministry, which prove of bad consequence to the souls of men.

Matthew 7:18

Ver. 18. **A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit,**

A man that is unprincipled with the grace of God, has an experimental acquaintance with the Gospel of Christ, and is guided by the Spirit of God into all truth, as it is in Jesus, cannot knowingly deliver, maintain, and abide by any doctrine that is contrary to the glory of God’s grace, and the person of Christ, the work of the Spirit, the fundamental doctrines of the Bible; or what is repugnant to the experiences of God’s people, and prejudicial to their souls.

Neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

A corrupt preacher, one destitute of the truth of the Gospel, reprobate concerning the faith, who never had any experience of the doctrines of grace, and denies them in the theory of them, cannot, consistent with himself, and his own principles, deliver, or preach good doctrine; or that which tends to produce any good fruit, either in the experience or lives of men. It is true, a corrupt man, that is, an unregenerate man, may preach sound doctrine, it being what he believes, though he has no experience of it: but then this man is not a corrupt tree, that is, a corrupt preacher, though a corrupt man. As our Lord means by “a good tree”, not a good man, barely, or one that is made so by the grace of God; but a good minister, one that is furnished by the Spirit of God, and is well instructed in the kingdom of heaven: so by “a corrupt tree” he does not mean a corrupt man, a man that is in a state of nature, habitually and practically evil; but a corrupt preacher, a false prophet or teacher, that has sucked in corrupt principles, and has nothing else in him, and therefore can bring forth no other.

Matthew 7:19

Ver. 19. **Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit,**

Every preacher and teacher that does not bring the Gospel of Christ with him, and plainly and faithfully preach it to the people, sooner or later,

is hewn down:

however he may have appeared as a tall lofty cedar, and have carried it with a high hand against Christ and his Gospel, spoke “great swelling words of vanity”, and behaved with much “loftiness” and “haughtiness”; yet the time comes on, when all this is bowed and made low, “and the Lord alone is exalted”: such preachers are either cut off from the churches of Christ, or hewn down by death,

and cast into the fire;

into the fire of hell; into the lake of fire and brimstone, “where the beast and false prophet shall be”.

Matthew 7:20

Ver. 20. **Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.**

This is the conclusion of the whole, and a repetition of what is before said, the more to fix the rule of judgment upon their minds, and engage them to try men by their doctrines, and their doctrines by the standard of the Scriptures, and not believe every spirit; for with some care and diligence such persons may be detected, and the malignant influence of their ministry be prevented. The sum of the whole is, that ordinarily, and generally speaking, as men are, so are the doctrines they preach, and by them they may be known, and judged to be what they are. Christ here, and in the preceding verses, is speaking not of men of bad lives and conversations, who take upon them to teach others; for there is not so much reason to caution good men against these; they are easily detected, and generally discarded; but of men that put on sheep’s clothing, who pretended to much holiness of life and conversation, and strictness of religion; and under that disguise delivered out the most corrupt and unwholesome doctrines; which tended greatly to depreciate him and his grace, and to do damage to the souls of men.

Matthew 7:21

Ver. 21. **Not everyone that saith unto me Lord, Lord,**

Not every one that calls Christ his Lord and Master, professes subjection to him, or that calls upon his name, or is called by his name; or makes use of it in his public

⁴⁷⁴ T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 48. 1.

⁴⁷⁵ T. Bab. Ceritot, fol. 19. 1, 2. & 20. 1.

ministrations. There are many who desire to be called, and accounted Christians, and who make mention of the name of Christ in their sermons, only to take away their reproach, to cover themselves, and gain credit with, and get into the affections and goodwill of the people; but have no hearty love to Christ, nor true faith in him: nor is it their concern to preach his Gospel, advance his glory, and promote his kingdom and interest; their chief view is to please men, aggrandize themselves, and set up the power of human nature in opposition to the grace of God, and the righteousness of Christ. Now not everyone of these, no, not any of them,

shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.

This is to be understood not of the outward dispensation of the Gospel, or the Gospel church state, or the visible church of Christ on earth, in which sense this phrase is sometimes used; because such persons may, and often do, enter here; but of eternal glory, into which none shall enter, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. This, as it may regard private Christians, intends not merely outward obedience to the will of God, declared in his law, nor barely subjection to the ordinances of the Gospel; but more especially faith in Christ for life and salvation; which is the source of all true evangelical obedience, and without which nothing is acceptable to God. He that seeth the Son, looks unto him, ventures on him, commits himself to him, trusts in him, relies on him, and believes on him for righteousness, salvation, and eternal life, he it is that does the will of the Father, and he only; and such an one, as he is desirous of doing the will of God in all acts of cheerful obedience to it, without dependence thereon; so he shall certainly enter the kingdom of heaven, and have everlasting life; see Joh 6:40 but as these words chiefly respect preachers, the sense of them is this, that only such who are faithful dispensers of the word shall enter into the joy of their Lord. Such do the will of Christ's Father, and so his own, which are the same, who fully and faithfully preach the Gospel of the grace of God; who declare the whole counsel of God, and keep back nothing that is profitable to the souls of men; who are neither ashamed of the testimony of Christ, nor afraid of the faces of men; but as they are put in trust with the Gospel, so they speak it boldly, with all sincerity, not as pleasing men, but God, and commend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God: such as these shall have an abundant entrance into the kingdom and glory of God. The Vulgate Latin adds this clause, "he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven", and so does Munster's Hebrew edition of the Gospel accord-

ing to Matthew.

Matthew 7:22

Ver. 22. **Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord,**

That is, in the last day, the day of judgment, the great and famous day, fixed by God, unknown to angels and men, which will be terrible to some, and joyful to others; the day in which the faithful ministers of the Gospel shall be owned by Christ, and received into the kingdom of heaven: "many", not of the common people only, but of the preachers of the word, who have filled up the highest station in the church below; not one, or two, or a few of them only, but many of them "will say to me"; to Christ, who will appear then as the judge of quick and dead, to which he is ordained by his Father,

Lord, Lord;

not "my Lord, my Lord", as the Syriac version reads it; for they will not be able to claim any interest in him, though they will be obliged to own his dominion, power, and authority over them. The word is repeated to show their importunity, sense of danger, the confusion they will be in, the wretched disappointment they will have; and therefore speak as persons amazed and confounded, having expected they would have been the first persons that should be admitted into heaven. Their pleas follow;

have we not prophesied in thy name?

This may be understood either of foretelling things to come; which gift wicked men may have, who have never had any experience of the grace of God, as Balaam, and Caiaphas, and others; or rather of preaching the word, which is sometimes called prophesying, Ro 12:6 and which may be done in the name of Christ, pretending mission and authority from him, and to be preachers of him, and yet be no better than "sounding brass", or "a tinkling cymbal"; yea, nothing at all as to true grace, or spiritual experience.

And in thy name have cast out devils?

Diabolical possessions were very frequent in the times of Christ; no doubt but they were suffered, that Jesus might have an opportunity of showing his power over Satan, by dispossessing him from the bodies, as well as the souls of men; and of giving proof of his deity, divine sonship and Messiahship: and this power of casting out devils was given to others, not only to the twelve apostles, among whom Judas was, who had the same power with the rest, and to the seventy disciples; but even to some who did not follow him, and his disciples, Mark 9:38 and some did this in the name of Jesus, who do not appear to have any true faith in him, and knowledge of

him; as the vagabond Jews, exorcists, and the seven sons of Sceva, Ac 19:13. An awful consideration it is, that men should be able to cast out devils, and at last be cast to the devil.

And in thy name done many wonderful works?

that is, many miracles; not one, or a few only, but many; such as speaking with tongues, removing mountains, treading on serpents and scorpions, and drinking any deadly thing without hurt, and healing all manner of diseases and sicknesses. Judas, for one, was capable of pleading all these things; he had the gift of preaching, and a call from Christ to it, and yet a castaway; he had the power of casting out devils, and yet could not prevent the devil from entering into him; he could perform miracles, do wonders in Christ's name, and yet, at last, was the betrayer of him. These pleas and arguments will be of no use to him, nor of any avail to any at the great day. It may be observed, that these men lay the whole stress of their salvation upon what they have done in Christ's name; and not on Christ himself, in whom there is salvation, and in no other: they say not a syllable of what Christ has done and suffered, but only of what they have done. Indeed, the things they instance in, are the greatest done among men; the gifts they had were the most excellent, excepting the grace of God; the works they did were of an extraordinary nature; whence it follows, that there can be no salvation, nor is it to be expected from men's works: for if preaching the word, which is attended with so much study, care, and labour, will not be a prevailing argument to admit men into the kingdom of heaven; how can it be thought that ever reading, or hearing, or any other external performance of religion, should bring persons thither?

Matthew 7:23

Ver. 23. **Then will I profess unto them,**

Publicly before men and angels, at the day of judgment,

I never knew you;

which must be understood consistent with the omniscience of Christ; for as the omniscient God he knew their persons and their works, and that they were workers of iniquity; he knew what they had been doing all their days under the guise of religion; he knew the principles of all their actions, and the views they had in all they did; nothing is hid from him. But, as words of knowledge often carry in them the ideas of affection, and approbation, see Ps 1:6 the meaning of Christ here is, I never had any love, or affection for you; I never esteemed you;

I never made any account of you, as mine, as belonging to me; I never approved of you, nor your conduct; I never had any converse, communication, nor society with you, nor you with me. The Persic version reads it, "I have not known you of old", from ancient times, or from everlasting; I never knew you in my Father's choice, and my own, nor in my Father's gift to me, nor in the everlasting covenant of grace; I never knew you as my sheep, for whom, in time, I died, and called by name; I never knew you believe in me, nor love me, or mine; I have seen you in my house, preaching in my name, and at my table administering mine ordinance; but I never knew you exalt my person, blood, righteousness, and sacrifice; you talk of the works you have done, I never knew you do one good work in all your lives, with a single eye to my glory; wherefore, I will neither hear, nor see you; I have nothing to do with you. In this sense the phrase is used in the Talmud ⁴⁷⁷:

"Bar Kaphra went to visit R. Juda; he says to him, אֲנִי מְכִירְךָ מִלְּמַד אֶרְהַפֵּאכָּ רַב "I never knew thee".

The gloss upon it is,

"he intimates, that he would not see him."

So here, Christ declares, he knew them not; that is, he did not like them; he would not admit them into his presence and glory; but said,

depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.

The former of these expressions contains the awful sentence pronounced by Christ, the judge; which is, banishment from his presence, than which nothing is more terrible: for as it is his presence that makes heaven, it is his absence that makes hell; and this supposes a place and state, whither they are banished; which is elsewhere called their "own place, the lake" which burns with fire and brimstone; "everlasting fire", prepared for the devil and his angels. Departure from Christ's presence is the punishment of loss, and being sent to everlasting burnings, is the punishment of sense; and the whole, as it is an instance of strict justice, so a display of Christ's almighty power. The latter expression contains the character of these persons, and in it a reason of their punishment; they were "workers of iniquity": it may be, neither adulterers, nor murderers, nor drunkards, nor extortioners, nor thieves, or any other openly profane sinners; but inasmuch as they did the work of the Lord deceitfully, preached themselves, and not Christ; sought their own things, and not his; what they did, they did with a wick-

⁴⁷⁷ T. Bab. Moed Katon, fol. 16. 1.

ed mind, and not with a view to his glory; they wrought iniquity, whilst they were doing the very things they pleaded on their own behalf, for their admission into the kingdom of heaven. Some copies read, “all the workers of iniquity”, as in Ps 6:8 from whence the words are taken.

Matthew 7:24

Ver. 24. **Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine,**

The comparison in this, and the following verses, is the concluding part of our Lord’s discourses upon the mount, which are meant by these sayings, or doctrines, he here speaks of; and as he had in some foregoing verses chiefly respect to preachers, so here, to hearers, his disciples and followers in general. The subject of this comparison, in Luke 6:47 is, “whosoever cometh unto me”; as all that are given to Christ by the Father will do, sooner or later: such whom he encourages to come to him, are they that labour and are heavy laden; and they that come aright, come as poor perishing sinners; they believe in him, give up themselves to him, to be saved by him with an everlasting salvation; all which is owing to efficacious grace. These hear his sayings, as doctrines, not merely externally, but internally, having ears to hear given unto them, so as to understand them, love them, believe them, feel the power, taste the sweetness, and have a delightful relish of them; and such an one hears them,

and doth them:

he is not only an hearer, but a doer of the word of the Gospel; the doctrines of it he receives in the love of them, and exercises faith on them; upon Christ, his grace and righteousness held forth in them, which is the great work and business of a Christian, he is to do, and does do in this life: the ordinances of it he cheerfully obeys; and all the duties of religion he performs from love to Christ, without any view to obtain eternal life hereby, which he only expects from Christ, as his sayings and doctrines direct him. The comparison follows,

I will liken him to a wise man, which built his house upon a rock.

Luke says, “he is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation a rock”. Every believer is a builder; the house he builds, is his own soul, and the salvation of it; in order to which he digs deep, till he comes to a rock, to a good foundation; he searches diligently into the Scriptures of truth; he constantly attends the ministry of the word; he inquires of Gospel preachers, and other saints, the way of salvation; which having found, he lays the whole stress of his salvation on

the rock of ages, which rock is Christ: he makes him the foundation of all his hopes of eternal life and happiness; which is the foundation God has laid in Zion; and which has been laid ministerially by the prophets of the Old, and the apostles of the New Testament; and by believers themselves, when they build their faith and hope upon it. This foundation, the person, blood, and righteousness of Christ, is as a rock, firm and strong, will bear the whole weight that is laid upon it; it is sure and certain, it will never give way; it is immoveable and everlasting; the house built upon it stands safe and sure.

Matthew 7:25

Ver. 25. **And the rains descended, and the floods came,**

These several metaphors of “rain”, “floods”, “stream”, and “winds”, may design the temptations of Satan, the persecutions of the world, the corruptions of a man’s own heart, and the errors and false doctrines of men; from all which such a man is safe, who is built upon the rock Christ Jesus; see Isa 32:2 not but that the rain of temptation may descend upon him, with great violence and force, but shall not beat him down; he shall be made able to bear the whole force of it; the gates of hell cannot prevail against him; the floods of persecution may be cast after him, but shall not carry him away; the stream of corruption may run strong against him, yet shall not over set him; and the wind of divers and strange doctrines may blow hard upon him, but not cast him down: some damage he may receive by these several things, but shall not be destroyed; he may be shaken by them, but not so as to be removed off of the foundation, on which he is laid; yea, he may fail from some degree of the steadfastness of his faith, but not so as to fail totally and finally; the reason is, because he is founded on the rock Christ Jesus, which is sure and immoveable: whence it appears that such a man acts the wise and prudent part, and may be truly called “a wise man”.

Matthew 7:26

Ver. 26. **And everyone that heareth these sayings of mine,**

Who only externally hears them, but has no understanding of them; do not believe them, nor like and approve of them, but hates and despises them; or if not, depends upon his external hearing of them, and contents himself with a speculative knowledge, without the practice of them,

and doth them not;

does not yield the obedience of faith to the doctrines

of the Gospel, nor submits to the ordinances of it, but neglects them, and all other duties of religion: or if he does obey, it is only outwardly, not from the heart; nor from a principle of love; nor in faith; nor in the name and strength of Christ; nor for the glory of God, but in order to obtain life for himself: such

shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand;

or, as Luke has it, “without a foundation upon the earth”; upon the surface of the earth, without digging into it for a foundation: and such may be said to build

without a foundation,

who pretend to make their peace with God by their own works; who hope for pardon on the foot of the mercy of God, and their own repentance; seek for justification by their own, and not the righteousness of Christ; look for acceptance with God, for the sake of their own worthiness; and who expect salvation in any other way than by Christ: as in each of these articles, they leave out Christ, they may be said to build without a foundation indeed, and to build “upon” the surface of “the earth”; as they do, who build their hope of salvation upon anything that is merely external; as, their riches and grandeur, their wisdom and learning, their natural descent, and religious education, their civility, courteousness, and what is called good nature, their liberality and alms deeds, their morality, common justice and honesty, their legal righteousness, whether moral or ritual, and a round of religious duties; and such may be said to “build upon the sand”, on that which will bear no weight, but gives way, and sinks. The salvation of the soul is a weighty thing; and that which is like sand, as is everything of a man’s own, can never support it: God has therefore laid the salvation of his people on his own Son; and he must be a “foolish man” that builds on anything short of him.

Matthew 7:27

Ver. 27. **And the rain descended, and the floods came,**

Such builders, and such a building, cannot stand against the violent rain of Satan’s temptations, the floods of the world’s persecutions, the stream and rapid torrent of their own heart’s lusts, nor the blowing winds of heresy and false doctrine, and much less the storms of divine wrath and vengeance. They are in a most dangerous condition; they cannot support themselves; they must fall, and great will be their fall; their destruction is inevitable, their ruin is irrecoverable. The Jews make use of some similes, which are pretty much like these of Christ’s.

“R. Eliezer ben Azariah used to say⁴⁷⁸, he whose wisdom is greater than his works, to what is he like? to a tree, whose branches are many, and its roots few, “and the wind comes”, and roots it up, and overturns it; as it is said, Jer 17:6 but he whose works are greater than his wisdom, to what is he like? to a tree, whose branches are few, and its roots many, “against which, if all the winds in the world were to come and blow”, they could not move it out of its place: as it is said, Jer 17:8.”

Again⁴⁷⁹,

”Elisha ben Abuijah used to say, a man who hath good works, and learns the law much, to what is he like? to a man that “builds with stones below”, and afterwards with bricks; and though hbrh Mym Myab, “many waters come”, and stand at their side, they cannot remove them out of their place; but a man who hath no good works, and learns the law, to what is he like? to a man that “builds with bricks first”, and afterwards with stones; and though few waters come, they immediately overturn them.”

The same used to say,”

a man who hath good works, and learns the law much, to what is he like? to mortar spread upon bricks; and though ןודרני לוי נשמיו “the rains descend upon it”, they cannot remove it out of its place: a man that hath no good works, and learns the law much, to what is he like? to mortar thrown upon bricks; and though but a small rain descends upon it, it is immediately dissolved, and “falls.”

Matthew 7:28

Ver. 28. **And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings,**

Delivered in this, and the two foregoing chapters, concerning true happiness; the duty and usefulness of Gospel ministers; the true sense and meaning of several commandments in the law; concerning alms, prayer, and fasting; concerning the care of worldly things, rash judging, rigid censures, and reproofs; the straitness and narrowness of the way to eternal life, and the largeness and breadth of the way to destruction; concerning false prophets, and the right hearing of the word.

⁴⁷⁸ Pirke Abot, c. 3. sect. 17. & Abot R. Nathan, c. 22. fol. 6. 1, 2.

⁴⁷⁹ Abot R. Nathan, c. 24. fol. 6. 2.

The people were astonished at his doctrine;

it being something new, and unheard of, what they had not been used to; and coming in the demonstration of the Spirit, and of power, it carried its own evidence along with it, wrought conviction in their minds, and obliged them to acknowledge the truth of it.

Matthew 7:29

Ver. 29. **For he taught them, as one having authority,**

This does not so much respect the subject matter of his ministry, the gravity, weight, and solidity of his doctrine; which, to be sure, was greatly different from that of the Scribes, which chiefly lay in proposing and handling things trivial, and of no moment; such as the rituals of the law, the traditions of the elders, or washing of the hands and cups, &c. nor merely the manner of his delivery, which was with great affection, ardour, and fervency of spirit, with much liberty and utterance of speech, and with wonderful perspicuity and majesty; in which also he differed from the Scribes, who taught in a cold and lifeless manner, without any spirit and power; but this chiefly regards the method he used in preaching, which was by delivering truths of himself in his own name, and by his own authority; often using those words, “but I say unto you”: he spoke as a lawgiver, as one that had authority from heaven, and not from men;

and not as the Scribes,

who used to say, when they delivered any thing to the people, “our Rabbins”, or “our wise men say” so and so: such as were on the side of Hillell made use of his name; and those who were on the side of Shammai made use of his name; scarce ever would they venture to say anything of themselves, but said, the ancient doctors say thus and thus: almost innumerable instances might be given, out of the Talmud, in which one Rabbi speaks in the name of another; but our Lord spoke boldly, of himself, in his own name, and did not go about to support his doctrine by the testimony of the elders; but spake, as having received power and authority, as man, from his Father, “and not as the Scribes”. Some copies add, and Pharisees; these generally going together; and so read the Vulgate Latin, the Syriac, the Persic versions, and the Hebrew edition of Matthew by Munster.

Matthew Chapter 8**Matthew 8:1**

Ver. 1. **When he was come down from the mountain,**

Into which he went up, and preached the sermon re-

corded in the “three” preceding chapters:

great multitudes followed him:

which is mentioned, partly to shew, that the people which came from several parts, still continued with him, being affected with his discourses and miracles; and partly on account of the following miracle, of healing the leper, which was not done in a corner, but before great multitudes, who were witnesses of it: though some think this miracle was wrought more privately.

Matthew 8:2

Ver. 2. **And behold there came a leper,**

As soon as he came down from the mountain, and whilst he was in the way; though Luke says, Luke 5:12 “when he was in a certain city”; in one of the cities of Galilee; one of their large towns, or walled cities, into which a leper might come: he might not come into walled⁴⁸⁰ towns, at least they might turn him out, though without punishment: for the canon runs thus⁴⁸¹,

“a leper that enters into Jerusalem is to be beaten; but if he enters into any of the other walled towns, though he has no right, as it is said, “he sitteth alone”, he is not to be beaten.”

Besides, this leper, as Luke says, was “full of leprosy”, Luke 5:12 see the note there; and he might be pronounced clean by the priest, though not healed, and so might go into any city or synagogue: the law concerning such an one, in Le 13:1 is a very surprising one; that if only there were some risings and appearances of the leprosy here and there, the man was unclean; but if “the leprosy covered all his flesh”, then he was pronounced clean; and such was this man: he was a very lively emblem of a poor vile sinner, full of sin and iniquity, who is brought to see himself all over covered with sin, when he comes to Christ for pardon and cleansing; and is so considered by Christ the high priest, when he applies his justifying righteousness and sin purging blood to his conscience. A leper, by the Jews⁴⁸², is called evr, “a wicked” man; for they suppose leprosy comes upon him for evil speaking. This account is ushered in with a “behold”, as a note of admiration and attention, expressing the wonderfulness of the miracle wrought, and the seasonableness of it to confirm the doctrines Christ had been preaching to the multitude. This man came of his own accord, having

⁴⁸⁰ Misn. Celim. c. 1. sect. 7.

⁴⁸¹ Maimon. Biath Hamikdash, c. 3. sect. 8. & in Misn. Celim. c. 1. sect. 8.

⁴⁸² Maimon. in Misn. Negaim, c. 12. sect. 5. & Bartenera in ib. sect. 6.

heard of the fame of Christ;

and worshipped him

in a civil and respectful way, showing great reverence to him as a man; which he did by falling down on his knees, and on his face; prostrating himself before him, in a very humble and submissive manner, as the other evangelists relate: for that he worshipped him as God, is not so manifest; though it is certain he had an high opinion of him, and great faith in him; which he very modestly expresses,

saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean:

he was fully assured of his power, that he could make him clean, entirely rid him of his leprosy, which the priest could not do; who could only, according to the law, pronounce him clean, so that he might be admitted to company, but could not heal him of his disease: this the poor man was persuaded Christ could do for him, and humbly submits it to his will; of which, as yet, he had no intimation from him. And thus it is with poor sensible sinners under first awakenings; they can believe in the ability of Christ to justify them by his righteousness, cleanse them by his blood; and save them by his grace to the uttermost: but they stick at, and hesitate about his willingness, by reason of their own vileness and unworthiness.

Matthew 8:3

Ver. 3. **And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him,**

This is a wonderful instance both of the grace, and goodness of Christ, in touching this loathsome creature; and of his unspotted purity and holiness, which could not be defiled by it; and of his mighty power in healing by a touch, and with a word of his mouth,

saying, I will, be thou clean:

in which he expresses at once his willingness, “I will”, of which the leper before was not certain; and his power by a word of command, “be thou clean”; and in which also is shown the readiness of Christ to do it: he did not stand parleying with the man, or making any further trial of his faith, or objecting to him his uncleanness; but at once stretches out his hand, touches his filthy flesh, and commands off the disorder. A great encouragement this, for poor sensible sinners to betake themselves to Christ, under a sense of their guilt and filth; who readily receives such, in no wise casts them out, but gives immediate discoveries of his power and grace unto them:

And immediately his leprosy was cleansed,

or he was cleansed from it; he was not only pronounced clean, but was made so; he was thoroughly healed of the disease of leprosy. The Jews, themselves acknowledge this fact; for so they tell us in their wicked and blasphemous book⁴⁸³, that Jesus should say,

“bring me a leper, and I will heal him; and they brought him a leper, and he healed him also by Shemhamphorash,”

i.e. by the ineffable name Jehovah. Though they greatly misrepresent the matter; for this man was not brought by others, at the request of Christ, but came of his own accord; nor was he healed by the use of any name, as if it was done by a sort of magic, but by a touch of his hand, and the word of his mouth. Whether this was the same man with Simon the leper, Mt 26:6 as some have thought, is not certain.

Matthew 8:4

Ver. 4. **And Jesus saith unto him, see thou tell no man,**

Not that this fact could be concealed, if it was done publicly, before the multitude; nor was it Christ’s design that it should be; only it was his counsel to this man, that whilst he was on the road to Jerusalem, and when he was come there, that he would speak of it to no man, before he came to the priest, or priests: lest out of ill will to Christ, they should refuse to pronounce him clean:

but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

The man was now in one of the cities of Galilee; from hence Christ orders him to make the best of his way, directly to Jerusalem; and present himself to one of the priests, by him to be examined, whether he was free of his leprosy; and then offer what was ordered by the law of Moses in such cases: for as yet the ceremonial law was not abolished: and therefore, as Christ was subject to it himself, so he enjoins others the observance of it. There was a two fold offering, according to the law of Moses, on account of the cleansing of the leper;

Le 14:1 the one was on the first day of his cleansing, when he first showed himself to the priest, and consisted of two birds, alive and clean, cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop; the other, and which was properly the offering on the eighth day, was, if the man was able, two he lambs and one ewe lamb, with a meat offering; but if poor, one lamb, with a meat offering, and two turtle doves, or two young pigeons. The Jewish canons, concerning this mat-

⁴⁸³ Toldos Jesu, p. 8.

ter, are as follow⁴⁸⁴ :

“when a leper is healed of his leprosy, after they have cleansed him with cedarwood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and the two birds, and have shaved all his flesh, and bathed him; after all this he enters into Jerusalem, and numbers seven days; and on the seventh day he shaves a second time, as he shaved at first, and bathes--and on the morrow, or eighth day, he bathes a second time, and after that they offer his offerings--he bathes on the eighth day in the court of the women, in the chamber of the lepers, which is there--if it is delayed, and he shaves not on the seventh day, but he shaves on the eighth, or some days after, on the day that he shaves, he bathes, and his sun sets; and on the morrow he brings his offerings, after he hath bathed a second time, as we have declared: how do they do unto him? The leper stands without the court of Israel, over against the eastern gate, in the gate of Nicanor and his face to the west: and there stand all they that want atonement; and there they give the bitter waters to the suspected women: and the priest takes the leper's trespass offering, while it is alive, and waves it with the log of oil, towards the east, according to the way of all wave offerings; and if he waves this by itself, and this by itself, it is right: after that he brings the leper's trespass offering to the door, and he brings it in both his hands into the court, and layeth them upon it; they slay it immediately, and two priests receive its blood: the one receives it in a vessel, and sprinkles it upon the top of the altar; and the other, in his right hand, and pours it into his left hand, and sprinkles with his finger the right hand; and if he repeats it, and receives it in his left hand first, it is unlawful. The priest that receives some of the blood in a vessel, carries it, and sprinkles it upon the altar first; and after that comes the priest, who receives the blood in the palm of his hand, to the leper, the priest being within, and the leper without; and the leper puts in his head, and the priest puts of the blood that is in the palm of his hand, upon the tip of his right ear; after that he puts in his right hand, and he puts of it on the thumb of his hand; and after that he putteth in his right foot, and he puts of it

⁴⁸⁴ Maimon. Hilchot Mechosre Capporah, c. 14. per totum.

upon the toe of his foot, and if he puts of it upon the left, it is not right; and after that he offers his sin offering, and his burnt offering: and after that he hath put the blood upon his thumb and toe, the priest takes of the log of oil, and pours it into the left hand of his fellow priest; and if he pours it into his own hand, it will do: and he dips the finger of his right hand into the oil, which is in his hand, and sprinkles it seven times towards the most holy place: at every sprinkling there is a dipping of the finger in the oil; and if he sprinkles, and does not intend it, over against the holy place, it is right; and after that, he comes to the leper, and puts of the oil upon the place of the blood of the trespass offering, on the tip of the ear, and on the thumb of his hand, and toe of his foot; and that which is left of the oil, that is in his hand, he puts it on the head of him that is to be cleansed; and if he puts it not, atonement is not made; and the rest of the log is divided among the priests; and what remains of the log is not eaten, but in the Court, by the males of the priests, as the rest of the holy things; and it is forbidden to eat of the log of oil, until he has sprinkled it seven times, and has put of it upon the thumb and toe; and if he eats, he is to be beaten, as he that eats holy things before sprinkling.”

Now these were the things which, as the other evangelists say, this leper was ordered to offer for his cleansing, “for a testimony unto them”; meaning either to the priests; for the Syriac and Persic versions read the former clause, “show thyself to the priests”, in

Luke 17:14 that they being satisfied of the healing and cleansing of this man, and accordingly pronouncing him clean, and accepting his offerings, this might be either a convincing testimony to them, that Jesus was the Son of God, and true Messiah, and that he did not deny or oppose the law given by Moses; or might be a standing testimony against them, should they continue in unbelief; or else to the Jews, who saw the miracle, and heard the orders Christ gave to the man after he had healed him; or to the lepers that they were cleansed; or this law of Moses was for a testimony or statute to be always observed by them in such cases.

Matthew 8:5

Ver. 5. **And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum,**

Was returned from his journey through Galilee, to

the place where he before dwelt, and is called his own city, Mt 9:1

there came unto him a centurion,

a Roman officer, שָׂר בִּמְאֵה “a commander of an hundred men”, as the Hebrew Gospel by Munster reads it: though the number of men under a “centurion” was more, according to some accounts.

“A band (it is said ⁴⁸⁵) made two centuries, each of which consisted of an hundred and twenty eight soldiers; for a doubled century made a band, whose governor was called an ordinary “centurion.””

Such an one was Cornelius, a centurion of a band, Ac 10:1. The other person that was healed was a Jew. The next instance of Christ's power and goodness is the servant of a Gentile; he came to do good both to Jews and Gentiles;

beseeching him,

not in person, but by his messengers; see Luke 7:3 and the Jews ⁴⁸⁶ say, שְׁשֻׁלוּהוּ שֶׁל אִדְמָ כְּמוֹתוֹ, “that a man's messenger is as himself”.

Matthew 8:6

Ver. 6. **And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home,**

It would be a difficulty whether it was a son or a servant he was so concerned for; since אָבִיב the word here used, more commonly signifies a “son” or “child”; but that Luke, supposing it to be the same case he relates, expressly calls him δουλῶς, “a servant”, Luke 7:2. The concern of the “centurion” for him, shows him to have been a good servant, faithful and obedient to his master; since he was so much affected with his case, and took so much care of him; and Luke says, he “was dear unto him”; in great esteem, highly valued, and much beloved: and also, that the centurion was a good master; he does not put his sick servant from him, but takes care of him at home, and seeks out for relief for him, being greatly desirous of his life. And as his keeping him at home discovered a tender regard to him; so his not bringing him forth, or ordering him to be brought out to Christ, which was sometimes done in such cases, shows his great faith in Christ, that he was as able to cure him lying at home, as if brought before him; absent, as well as present. It is in the original text, “is cast”; or, as it is rendered, Mt 8:14 “laid in the house”, as if he was dead, speechless, and without motion; and Luke says, that he was “ready to die”, being as one laid out for dead. The phrase answers

⁴⁸⁵ Alex. ab Alex. Genial. Dier. l. 6. c. 13.

⁴⁸⁶ T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 34. 2.

מוֹטֵל, a word often used by the Rabbins; sometimes of sick persons, as when they say ⁴⁸⁷ of anyone, that he is חֲלוּלָהּ וּמוֹטֵל, “sick, and laid upon the bed”; and sometimes of a person really dead, and laid out: and often this phrase is to be met with, מִי שְׂמֵחוּ מוֹטֵל לְפָנָיו, “he that hath his dead cast”, or “laid out before him”⁴⁸⁸; concerning whom they dispute many things; as what he is free from, the reading of Shema, prayer, and the phylacteries; and where he ought to eat and drink till such time his dead is buried out of his sight. But this man's servant was not dead, but lay as one dead; sick of the palsy, his nerves all relaxed, and he stupid, senseless, motionless, grievously tormented, or “punished”, or rather “afflicted”; as the Ethiopic version, and Munster's Hebrew edition read it; for paralytic persons do not feel much pain and torment: but the meaning is, that he was in a miserable afflicted condition. The account of his disorder is given to move Christ's compassion, and recorded to show the greatness of the miracle.

Matthew 8:7

Ver. 7.

And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.

This answer of Christ's, which is short and full, not only shows the readiness of Christ to do good, how soon and easily he complied with the centurion's request, it being a prayer of faith, and so effectual, and was heard as soon as delivered; but also contains an absolute promise that he would heal him. He does not say that he would come and see him, and what his case was, and do what he could for him, as ordinary physicians do; but he would come and heal him at once: and indeed it is a proposal of more than what was asked of him; his presence was not asked, and yet he offered it; though Luke says, that he besought him by the messengers to “come and heal his servant”; and so this is an answer to both parts of the request; the whole is granted. Christ cannot deny anything to faith, his presence or assistance.

Matthew 8:8

Ver. 8. **The centurion answered, and said,**

This, according to Luke 7:6 was said by his friends in his name, when he understood that Christ had agreed to come to his house, with the elders of the Jews, he first sent to him; and after he was actually set out with them,

⁴⁸⁷ T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 146. 2. 147. l. Cetubot, fol. 103. 2.

⁴⁸⁸ Misn. Beracot, c. 3. sect. 1. T. Bab. Moed. Katon, fol. 23. 2. Maimon. Hilch. Ebel, c. 4. sect. 7.

and was in the way to his house; who, conscious of his own unworthiness, deputed some persons to him, to address him in this manner,

Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof.

This is not said as rejecting and despising the presence and company of Christ; but is expressive of his great modesty and humility, and of his consciousness of his own vileness, and unworthiness of having so great a person in his house: it was too great a favour for him to enjoy. And if such a man was unworthy, having been an idolater, and lived a profane course of life, that Christ should come into his house, and be, though but for a short time, under his roof; how much more unworthy are poor sinful creatures (and sensible sinners see themselves to be so unworthy), that Christ should come into their hearts, and dwell there by faith, as he does, in all true believers, however vile and sinful they have been?

But speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.

As the former expression declares his modesty and humility, and the mean apprehensions he had of himself; so this signifies his great faith in Christ, and the persuasion he had of his divine power: he does not say pray, and my servant shall be healed, as looking upon him barely as a man of God, a prophet, one that had great interest in God, and at the throne of grace; but speak, command, order it to be done, and it shall be done, which is ascribing omnipotence to him; such power as was put forth in creation, by the all commanding word of God; “he spake, and it was done, he commanded, and it stood fast”, Ps 33:9 yea, he signifies that if he would but speak a word, the least word whatever; or, as Luke has it, “say in a word”; let but a word come out of thy mouth, and it will be done.

Matthew 8:9

Ver. 9. **For I am a man under authority,**

Of Caesar the Roman emperor, and of superior officers under him, as a tribune,

having soldiers under me;

an hundred of them at least, for military service, and some of them were used by him as his domestics:

and I say unto this man go, and he goeth, and to another come, and he cometh:

for there is no disputing the commands of officers, by soldiers, in anything, in exercises, marches, battles,

and to my servant,

that was more properly his domestic servant, who

waited upon him, and did those things for him which every soldier under him was not employed in,

do this, and he doth it;

immediately, without any more ado; as indeed a servant ought. The Jews⁴⁸⁹ have a saying, that

“a servant over whom his master אֵינִי רִשׁוּת, “hath no power”, is not called a servant.”

Now, these words are not a reason excusing Christ's coming to his house, or showing how unworthy it was, and how unfit it would be for him to come thither, since he was a man that held soldiers under him, and his house was encumbered with them; for these were not with him, but quartered out elsewhere: but they are an argument, from the lesser to the greater, that seeing he was a man, and Christ was God, he was under the authority of others. Christ was subject to none; and yet he had such power over his soldiers and servants, that if he bid one go, and another come, or ordered them to stand in such a place, and in such a posture, or do this and the other servile work, his orders were immediately obeyed: how much more easily then could Christ, who had all power in heaven and in earth, command off this distemper his servant was afflicted with? He suggests, that as his soldiers were under him, and at his command; so all bodily diseases were under Christ, and to be controlled by him, at his pleasure; and that, if he would but say to that servant of his, the palsy, remove, it would remove at once.

Matthew 8:10

Ver. 10. When Jesus heard it, he marvelled,... Which must be understood of him as man; for as God, nothing could present itself unto him at unawares, unthought of, and not known before; and so could not raise admiration in him, and which cannot properly fall on a divine person: or he behaved, both by words and gesture, as persons do when they are astonished at anything; and this he might do, to raise the attention and wonder of those that were with him: and said to them that followed. This agrees perfectly with the account that Luke gives, that Christ was set out, with the messengers the centurion sent unto him, in order to come to his house, and heal his servant, and these that followed him were his disciples, and so some copies read, and others that were following him thither to see the miracle.

Verily, I say unto you;

a strong asseveration, and which Christ used, when he was about to deliver anything of considerable impor-

⁴⁸⁹ T. Bab. Kiddushin, fol. 72. 2.

tance, and required attention:

I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel:

that is, among the people of Israel: so the Arabic version reads it, “in any of Israel”; and the Persic, “among the children of Israel”; and is to be understood, not of the patriarchs and prophets, and other eminent believers, which were in Israel formerly; but of the men of the then present generation, his mother and his apostles being excepted: though it may be questioned, whether the apostles themselves as yet, had expressed such a strong faith in him, as this man: or it may have a particular respect to them in Israel, who had applied to him for healing, and had been healed by him; that he had not met with and observed any such expression of faith, in his divine power from them, as this centurion had delivered. And it was the more remarkable, that it came from a Gentile, and from a soldier too: but as great as it was, he did not exceed it; he did not ascribe more to Christ than was proper, and which, by the way, is a clear proof of our Lord's divinity: for had he not been truly God, he would have rebuked, and not have commended this man's faith in him: who ascribed that power to him, which is peculiar to God: he is so far from finding fault with him, for thinking or speaking so highly of him, that he praises him for it, and prefers his faith in him, to any instance of it he had met with among the Israelites; who yet had far greater advantages of knowing him, and believing in him. There is a phrase in the Talmud⁴⁹⁰ somewhat like this, only used of a person of a different character; where a certain Jew, observing another called by some of his neighbours Rabbi, thus expressed himself;

“If this be a Rabbi, אֵל יִרְבוּ כְמוֹתוֹ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל, “let there not be many such as he in Israel.”

And it is said⁴⁹¹ of Nadab and Abihu,

“that two such were not found בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל כְּזֵאתָם, “as they in Israel.”

Matthew 8:11

Ver. 11. **And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west,**

On occasion of the faith of the centurion, who was a Gentile, our Lord makes a short digression, concerning the call of the Gentiles; and suggests, that what was seen in that man now, would be fulfilled in great numbers of them in a little time: that many of them from the several

⁴⁹⁰ T. Bab. Taanith, fol. 20. 2. Derech Eretz. fol. 18. 1

⁴⁹¹ Zohar in Lev. fol. 24. 1. & 25. 4.

parts of the world, from the rising of the sun to the setting of it, from the four points of the heaven, east, west, north, and south, as in Luke 13:29 and from the four corners of the earth, should come and believe in him;

and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven:

signifying, that as the Gospel would be preached in a short time to all nations, many among them would believe in him, as Abraham, and the rest of the patriarchs did; and so would partake of the same blessings of grace with them; such as, adoption, justification, pardon of sin, and the like; for “they which be of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham”, Ga 3:9 now, under the Gospel dispensation, though Gentiles; and shall enjoy with him the same eternal glory and happiness he does, in the other world. Which shows, that the faith of Old and New Testament saints, Jews and Gentiles, is the same; their blessings the same, and so their eternal happiness; they have the same God and Father, the same Mediator and Redeemer, are actuated and influenced by the same Spirit, partake of the same grace, and shall share the same glory. The allusion is to sitting, or rather lying along, which was the posture of the ancients at meals, and is here expressed, at a table, at a meal, or feast: and under the metaphor of a feast or plentiful table to set down to, are represented the blessings of the Gospel, and the joys of heaven; which are not restrained to any particular nation, or set of people; not to the Jews, to the exclusion of the Gentiles. Our Lord here, goes directly contrary to the notions and practices of the Jews, who thought it a crime to sit down at table, and eat with the Gentiles; see Ac 11:3 and yet Gentiles shall sit at table and eat with the principal men, the heads of their nation, in the kingdom of heaven, and they themselves at the same time shut out.

Matthew 8:12

Ver. 12. **But the children of the kingdom,**

The Jews, who were subjects of the kingdom, and commonwealth of Israel, from which the Gentiles were aliens; and who were also in the church of God, which is his kingdom on earth; and besides, had the promise of the Gospel dispensation, sometimes called the kingdom of heaven, and by them, often the world to come; and were by their own profession, and in their apprehension and expectation, children, and heirs of the kingdom of glory. These phrases, בֶּן הַיְהוּדָה הַבָּא, “a son of the world to come”, and בְּנֵי לְמוֹת דָּאֵתִי, “children of the world to come”⁴⁹², are frequent in their writings: these, Christ says,

⁴⁹² T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 4. 2. Taanith, fol. 22. 1. Megilla,

shall be cast out;

out of the land of Israel, as they were in a few years after, and out of the church of God: these branches were broken off, and the Gentiles grafted in, in their room; and will be excluded from the kingdom of heaven, where they hoped to have a place,

and cast into outer darkness:

into the Gentile world, and into judicial blindness, and darkness of mind, and into the blackness of darkness in hell,

where shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth.

Phrases expressive of the miserable state and condition of persons out of the kingdom of heaven; who are weeping for what they have lost, and gnashing their teeth with the pain of what they endure. The Jews say ⁴⁹³,

“he that studies not in the law in this world, but is defiled with the pollutions of the world, he is taken *וישליכו אותו הברה*, “and cast without”: this is hell itself, to which such are condemned, who do not study the law.”

The allusion in the text is, to the customs of the ancients at their feasts and entertainments; which were commonly made in the evening, when the hall or dining room, in which they sat down, was very much illuminated with lamps and torches; but without in the streets, were entire darkness: and where were heard nothing but the cries of the poor, for something to be given them, and of the persons that were turned out as unworthy guests; and the gnashing of their teeth, either with cold in winter nights, or with indignation at their being kept out. Christ may also be thought to speak in the language, and according to the notions of the Jews, who ascribe gnashing of teeth to the devils in hell; for they say ⁴⁹⁴, that

“for the flattery with which they flattered Korah, in the business of rioting, “the prince of hell *שני הרק*, gnashed his teeth at them.”

The whole of this may be what they call *רעיד גהנום* “the indignation”, or “tumult of hell” ⁴⁹⁵.

Matthew 8:13

Ver. 13. **And Jesus said unto the centurion,**

Christ having finished the digression, returns an answer to the centurion, agreeably to his desire, saying to fol. 28. 2. Yoma, fol. 88. 1. & Sanhedrim, fol. 88. 2. Raziell, fol. 37. 1. & 38. 1. Caphtor, fol. 15. 1. & 18. 2. & 60. 1. & 84. 2. Raya Mehimna, in Zohar in Lev. fol. 34. 2.

⁴⁹³ Zohar in Gen. fol. 104. 3.

⁴⁹⁴ T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 52. 1.

⁴⁹⁵ Targum in Job, iii 17.

him,

go thy way;

not as displeased with him, but as granting his request: for it follows,

and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee.

As he had faith to believe, that Christ could cure his servant by a word speaking, it was done accordingly. Christ by his almighty “fiat” said, let him be healed, and he was healed: just as God in the creation said, “let there be light, and there was light”. He does not say according to thy prayer, or according to thy righteousness, and goodness, but according to thy faith: and it is further to be observed, that this cure was wrought, not so much for the sake of the servant, as his master; and therefore Christ says, “be it done unto thee”; let him be healed for thy sake, and restored unto thee, to thy use, profit, and advantage.

And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour,

at the very exact time, even in that moment. Some copies add, “and when the centurion returned to his house, in the selfsame hour he found his servant healed”; which the Ethiopic version has, and it agrees with Luke 7:10.

Matthew 8:14

Ver. 14. **And when Jesus was come into Peter’s house,**

And which was also Andrew’s, Mark 1:29 for these two brothers lived together, and this was in Capernaum, as appears from the context. Though Andrew and Peter were originally of Bethsaida, a place not far from this, but had removed hither since their call by Christ, this being his city; though probably this house was Peter’s wife’s mother’s, and only called their’s, because they lodged there, whilst in this city: into this house Christ entered, with James and John, and others;

when he saw his (Peter’s) wife’s mother, laid,

or “cast” on a bed, See Gill “Mt 8:6”.

and sick of a fever:

Luke says, Luke 4:38 that she “was taken”, or rather held, or “detained with a great fever”; the distemper was very raging and furious, it had got to a very great height. The other evangelists say, that the persons in the house told him of her, and besought him for her, that he would heal her, having a very great affection for her, and desire of her life, which seemed to be in great danger. Hence it may be observed against the Papists, that ministers of the Gospel may lawfully marry; Peter, an apostle, and from whom they pretend to derive their succession of bish-

ops, was a married man, had a wife, and that after he was called to be an apostle. His wife’s mother is expressly mentioned, being the person labouring under a violent fever, and whom Christ cured in the following manner.

Matthew 8:15

Ver. 15. **And he touched her hand,**

Sometimes he healed by a word, as the centurion’s servant; and sometimes by a touch, as here; and sometimes by both, as the leper. Luke says, that he “stood over her”, reached over her to take her by the hand, and lift her up, “and rebuked the fever”. Just as he did the winds and sea, having all diseases, as well as the elements, at his beck and control;

and the fever left her

immediately, as the other evangelists say.

And she arose and ministered unto them:

the former of these actions is a proof of her being restored to health and strength, in so much that she could rise and walk about of herself; whereas generally, persons after fevers continue very weak a considerable time; which shows what a miracle was wrought upon her by Christ: and the latter of them expresses her gratitude, for the mercy she had received; she rises and serves him and his friends, preparing proper and suitable provisions for them.

Matthew 8:16

Ver. 16. **When the even was come,**

The other evangelists say, when “the sun was set”, or “setting”; which circumstances are observed, not as some think, because the cool of the evening, and when the sun was set, it was more seasonable and convenient, in those hot countries, to bring out their sick, than in the heat of the day: nor are they remarked, as others think, because it was an unseasonable time to bring them to Christ, when he had been fatigued all day long, and yet he healed them; such was his goodness and compassion: but the true reason of the mention of them is, because it had been their sabbath day, as appears from Mark 1:21 and they could not, according to their canons, bring them sooner. Their sabbath began at sun setting; hence they say ⁴⁹⁶, that on the eve of the sabbath, that is, immediately preceding it, when the sabbath is about to begin, it is lawful to work *החמה*, “until the sun sets”; and so it ended at sun setting the next day, which they judged of by the appearance of three stars ⁴⁹⁷.

⁴⁹⁶ T. Hieros. Sheviith, fol. 33. 1.

⁴⁹⁷ T. Hieros. Beracot, fol. 2. 2. Maimon. Sabbat, c. 5. sect. 4.

”R. Phinehas, in the name of R. Aba Bar Papa, says, if but one star appears, it is certainly day; if two, it is a doubt whether it is night or not; if three, it is certainly night. On the eve of the sabbath, if he sees one star and does any work, he is free; if two, he brings a trespass offering for a doubt; if three, he brings a sin offering; at the going out of the sabbath, if he sees one star, and does any work, he brings a sin offering; if two, he brings a trespass offering for a doubt; if three, he is free.”

So that till the sun was set, and three stars appeared as a proof of it, it was not lawful to do any sort of business; but as soon as it was out of doubt, that the sun was set, they might do anything; and this being the case,

they brought to him (Christ) many that were possessed with devils;

whose bodies Satan had been suffered to enter into, and were acted, and governed, and thrown into strange disorders by him. Such possessions, through divine permission, were frequent; that Christ, who was come in the flesh, might have an opportunity of showing his power over Satan, and giving proof of his deity and Messiahship.

And he cast out the spirits with his word;

only by speaking to them; who were obliged, at his command, and by his orders, to quit their tenements, though unwillingly enough.

And healed all that were sick; whoever they were, without any respect of persons, of whatsoever disease attended them: the most stubborn, inveterate, and otherwise incurable disorder, was not too hard for him, which he cured without the help of medicine, and where that could be of no use, and either by speaking, or touching, or some such like means.

Matthew 8:17

Ver. 17. **That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet,**

In Isa 53:4 “He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows”, here rendered,

himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses:

very agreeable to the Hebrew text, *הוא*, “he himself”, not another; *נשא*, “took up”, upon himself voluntarily, freely, as a man lifts up a burden, and takes it on his shoulders; *הלינו*, “our infirmities”, diseases, sicknesses, whether of body or soul, *ומכאבינו בלם*, “and bare”, or car-

ried, as a man does a burden upon his back, “our sicknesses”, or diseases, which occasion pain and sorrow. And that these words are spoken of the Messiah, the Jews themselves own; for among the names they give to the Messiah, “a leper” is one; which they prove from this passage ⁴⁹⁸.”

The Rabbins say, “a leper” of the house of Rabbi is his name; as it is said, “surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted”. Says R. Nachman, if he is of the living, he is as I am, as it is said, Jer 30:21 Says Rab, if of the living, he is as our Rabbi, the holy.”

Upon which last clause the gloss is,

”If the Messiah is of them that are alive, our Rabbi the holy is he, “because Myawlx̄t lbwod he bears infirmities”.”

Elsewhere ⁴⁹⁹ they say,

”There is one temple that is called the temple of the sons of afflictions; and when the Messiah comes into that temple, and reads all the afflictions, all the griefs, and all the chastisements of Israel, which come upon them, then all of them shall come upon him: and if there was any that would lighten them off of Israel, and take them upon himself, there is no son of man that can bear the chastisements of Israel, because of the punishments of the law; as it is said, “surely he hath borne our griefs”, &c.” And in another ancient book ⁵⁰⁰ of their’s, God is represented saying to the Messiah,

”וְיִשְׁרִינִי תְּבוּלָה יְשׁוּרִינִי “wilt thou bear chastisements”, in order to remove their iniquities? (the iniquities of the children of God,) as it is written, “surely he hath borne our griefs”: he replied, “I will bear them with joy”.

Hence it is manifest, that according to the mind of the ancient Jews, this passage belongs to the Messiah, and is rightly applied to him by the evangelist. But the difficulty is, how it had its accomplishment in Christ’s healing the bodily diseases of men; since Isaiah speaks not of his actions and miracles, but of his sufferings and

death; and not of bearing the diseases of the body, as it should seem, but of the diseases of the mind, of sins, as the Apostle Peter interprets it, 1Pe 2:24. To remove which, let it be observed, that though the prophet chiefly designs to point out Christ taking upon him, and bearing the sins of his people, in order to make satisfaction for them, and to save them from them; yet so likewise, as to include his bearing, by way of sympathy, and taking away by his power, the bodily diseases of men, which arise from sin; and which was not only an emblem of his bearing and taking away sin, but a proof of his power and ability to do it: for since he could do the one, it was plain he could do the other.

Matthew 8:18

Ver. 18. **Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him,**

Who got together, partly out of novelty to see his person, of whom they had heard so much; and partly to see the miracles he wrought: some came to have their bodily diseases healed; few, if any, to hear the Gospel preached by him, and for the good of their immortal souls: the most part came with some sinister, selfish, and carnal views, wherefore

he gave commandment to depart unto the other side.

Different were the reasons, which at certain times moved Christ to depart from the multitude; as that he might have an opportunity of private prayer, or to preach, to others, or to show he sought not popular applause, and to avoid seditions: his reasons here seem to be with respect to himself, that being wearied as man, with the work of the day, he might have an opportunity of refreshing himself with sleep; with respect to his disciples, that he might have a trial of their faith, when in danger at sea; and with respect to the multitude, because of their carnality, and sole concern for their temporal, and worldly good. The persons he gave commandment to, must be either the multitude, or the disciples; not the former, because he studiously avoided their company, and his concern was to be rid of them; but the latter, and so the Vulgate Latin and Munster’s Hebrew Gospel read, “he commanded his disciples”. The place he would have them go to was, the other side of the lake of Tiberias, or Genesareth; not over the river Euphrates, as says the author of the old Nizzachon ⁵⁰¹

Matthew 8:19

⁵⁰¹ Pesikta in Abkath Rochel, l. 1. par. 2. p. 205. Ed. Huls.

Ver. 19. And a certain Scribe came,.... “As they went in the way”, Luke 9:57 to go to the sea side, in order to take shipping, and pass to the other shore; and said unto him, Master, or Rabbi, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. One would have thought, that this man desired in good earnest to be a disciple of Christ, were it not for Christ’s answer to him, who knew his heart: from whence it appears, that he, seeing the miracles which Christ wrought, and observing the fame of him among the people, began to think that he would be generally received as the Messiah; and by joining himself to him, promised himself much ease, honour, and wealth. These seem to be the motives, which prevailed upon him to take so sudden and hasty a step; for he did not wait to be called to follow Christ, as the other disciples were, but offers himself to be one; that is, to be one of his intimates, one of his apostles; and besides, he rashly promises to do that, which he knew nothing of, and which in some cases is impossible to be done.

Matthew 8:20

Ver. 20. And Jesus saith unto him,.... Knowing his heart, and the carnal and worldly views with which he acted; the foxes have holes in the earth, where they hide themselves from danger, take their rest, and secure their whelps; and the birds of the air have nests, where they sit, lay, and hatch their eggs, and bring up their young; but the son of man has not where to lay his head, when he is weary, and wants rest and sleep, as he did at this time. So that though he was Lord of all, as being the mighty God; yet as “the son of man”, a phrase, expressive both of the truth and meanness of his human nature, the most despicable of creatures in the earth and air, were richer than he. This he said, to convince the Scribe of his mistake; who expected much worldly grandeur and wealth, by becoming his disciple. When Christ styles himself “the son of man”, it is no contradiction to his being God; nor any objection to trust and confidence in him, as the Jew ⁵⁰² suggests; for he is truly and properly God, as well as really man, having two natures, human and divine, united in his person; so that he is, as was prophesied of him, Emmanuel, God with us, in our nature, God manifested in the flesh: and since he is so, it cannot be unlawful to trust in him; which it would be indeed, was he a mere man. The Jews ought not to object to this name and title of the “Messiah, the son of man”: since he is so called, as their own writers and commentators acknowl-

edge, in ⁵⁰³ Ps 80:17 and ⁵⁰⁴ Da 7:13. And whereas it is further urged against these words of Christ, that if he was God, why does he complain of want of place? Is not the whole world his, according to Ps 24:1? It may be replied, that it is very true, that the whole world is his, nor could he be in want of anything, as God; but yet, as man, for our sakes he became “poor”, that we “might be rich”: nor should this be any difficulty with a Jew, when they themselves say, as some have thought, if he (the Messiah) should come, hyb anbytyd atkwd yl, “there’s no place in which he can sit down” ⁵⁰⁵. Unless it be understood of Nebuchadnezzar, as the gloss explains it; let the learned inspect the place, and judge: the coming of the Messiah is immediately spoken of.

Matthew 8:21

Ver. 21. And another of his disciples said unto him,.... That is, one of his disciples; for this does not suppose, that the other, the Scribe before mentioned, was one. It is possible, he might be one of the twelve. The Persic version makes him one of the disciples, whom they call “Hawarion”, apostles; and, according to ancient tradition, it was ⁵⁰⁶ Philip. And certain it is, that he was one, who was called to preach the Gospel; so that he was not a common ordinary disciple; nor could he be one of the seventy disciples, since it was after this, that they were called and sent forth; as appears from Luke’s account, Luke 9:60. But who he particularly was, cannot be certainly known, nor is it of any great importance to know it: his address to Christ is made with great respect and reverence, and in a very modest and humble manner, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father: for it seems, according to Luke, that Christ had bid him “follow” him: he had given him a call to be his disciple, and to go and preach the Gospel, which he did not refuse; but desires leave “first” to attend his father’s funeral, who was now dead; as his requests, and Christ’s answer, both suppose: though some conjecture, that he was only very aged, or was dangerously ill; and therefore it could not be thought he would live long: hence he was desirous of doing this last good office, before he entered on his public work; but these are conjectures, without any foundation: it is plain, his father was dead, and what he requested was,

⁵⁰³ Targum & Aben Ezra in loc, Abarbinel Mashmia Jeshua, fol. 81. 2.

⁵⁰⁴ R. Jeshua in Aben Ezra in loc. & Saadiah Gaon & Jarchi in loc. Zohar in Gen. fol. 85. 4.

⁵⁰⁵ T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 96. 2.

⁵⁰⁶ Clement. Alex. Strom. l. 3. p. 436.

⁴⁹⁸ T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 98. 2.

⁴⁹⁹ Zohar in Exod. fol. 85. 2.

⁵⁰⁰ Pesikta in Abkath Rochel, l. 1. par. 2. p. 309. Ed. Huls.

⁵⁰² R. Isaac Chizzuk Emuna, par. 2. c. 12. p. 403.

to go home, which perhaps might not be a great way off, and perform the funeral rites, and then return. This may seem very reasonable, since burying the dead was reckoned by the Jews, not only an act of kindness and respect to the deceased, but an act of piety and religion; and in which, men are followers of God, and imitate him, who himself buried the body of Moses⁵⁰⁷. And though this man was called to preach the Gospel, yet he might think he would be easily excused for the present, on this account; since, according to the Jewish canons, such whose dead lay before them, who were as yet unburied, were excused reading the Shema, they were free from performing the duty of prayer, and were not obliged to wear their phylacteries⁵⁰⁸.

Matthew 8:22

Ver. 22. But Jesus said unto him, follow thou me,.... Christ would not excuse him on this account, but insists on what he had before called him to; to attend upon him, and give himself up to the ministry of the word: which was done, partly to shew, that a greater regard ought to be had to him, than to the nearest relation and friend whatever; and partly, on account of the dignity of the Gospel ministry, which greatly exceeds any such services; as also to signify, of what little account were the traditions of the elders with him; wherefore he says, let the dead bury the dead. Our Lord is not to be understood, as speaking against, or disrespectfully of burying the dead; his words suppose it ought to be done: only it was not proper, that this person should be concerned in it at this time, who was called to an higher employment; and therefore should leave this to be done by persons, whom it better became. And however strange and odd such a phrase may sound in the ears of some, of one dead man's burying another, it was easily understood by a Jew; with whom it is common to say, tmk bwvx ajwxh, "that a sinner is counted as⁵⁰⁹ dead, and that ungodly persons, even while they are alive", Mytm Nyywrq, are "called dead"⁵¹⁰. And in this sense is the word used, in the former part of this phrase; and Christ's meaning is, let such who are dead in trespasses and sins, and to all that is spiritually good, bury those who are dead in a natural or corporal sense. It is likely the deceased was

an unregenerate man; however, it is plainly suggested, that many of the relations were; and there were enough of them to take care of this service: and therefore, there was no need why he should neglect the ministry of the Gospel to attend that; but, ought to leave it to persons who were fitter for it.

Matthew 8:23

Ver. 23. **And when he was entered into a ship,**

Which was got ready by his disciples, or hired by them for his use, according to the directions he had given,

his disciples followed him

into the ship, and they only; for as for the men hereafter mentioned, they were the men that belonged to the ship, and had the management of it: the multitude were dismissed, and in order to be clear of them, Christ took this method; and being desirous also of trying the faith of his disciples, he ordered it so, that they should be alone with him.

Matthew 8:24

Ver. 24. **And behold, there arose a great tempest,**

"A great concussion", or "shaking" of the sea; the stormy wind moved the sea, and the waves thereof; and both wind and sea shook the ship, and the men that were in it. Luke calls this tempest a "storm wind", Luke 8:23 and Mark says, it was "a great storm of wind", Mark 4:37 and both use the word "loelaps", which signifies a particular kind of wind, which is suddenly whirled about upwards and downwards; or rather, a conflict of many winds: it seems to be a whirlwind, or hurricane. It is said, that this tempest "arose", not by chance, nor by the power of Satan, but by divine providence; for the trial of the faith of Christ's disciples, and that he might have an opportunity of giving proof of his deity on the sea, as he had lately done in several instances on the dry land. Luke says, that this storm of wind "came down"; referring to the motion and course of the winds, which are exhalations from the earth, raised up into the middle region of the air, from whence they are expelled by a superior force to the lower region, and from thence move in an oblique, slanting manner, downwards. The place where this tempest arose, or into which this storm of wind came down, is here said to be

in the sea.

Luke calls it a "lake", and it was the lake of Genesareth. But both Matthew and Mark call it the sea, and is what is sometimes called the sea of Tiberias, and the sea of Galilee; see Joh 6:1 agreeably to the language of the Jew-

507 T. Bab. Bava Metzia, fol. 30. 2. & Sota, fol. 14. 1.

508 Misn. Beracot, c. 3. sect. 1.

509 Tzeror Hammor, fol. 6. 2.

510 T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 18. 2. Jarchi in Gen. 11. 32. Baal Hatturim, in Deut. xvii. 6. Tzeror Hammor, fol. 58. 3. Midrash Kohelet. fol. 78. 2. Caphtor, fol. 79. 1, 2. & 84. 1.

ish⁵¹¹ writers. To all this, the word "behold!" is prefixed; which is sometimes used, when anything extraordinary and preternatural is spoken of: and this storm seems to be more than an ordinary one; at least, it was very sudden and unexpected: when the disciples entered the ship, the air was serene, and the sea still and quiet; but as soon as they had set sail, at once, on a sudden, this storm came down, with great force into the sea, and lifted up its waves;

insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves; it was just sinking to the bottom, so that they were in the utmost extremity: and what added to their distress was,

but he,

Christ,

was asleep.

Mark mentions the place where he was asleep, "in the hinder part of the ship"; that is in the stern: where he, as Lord and Master, should be, though to the great concern of his disciples, there asleep; and that in a deep sound sleep, as the word which Luke makes use of signifies; and as appears by the loud repeated call of his disciples to awake him: and though this sleep doubtless arose from natural causes, he being greatly fatigued with the business of the day past; yet was so ordered by the providence of God, to come upon him in such a manner at this time, for the trial of the faith of his disciples. Christ's body needing sleep, and refreshment by it, shows that it was a real human body he assumed; subject to the same infirmities as our's; excepting sin; and is no contradiction to the truth of his divinity, as the Jew⁵¹² suggests. He slept as man, though, as God, he is Israel's keeper, who neither slumbers nor sleeps.

Matthew 8:25

Ver. 25. **And his disciples came unto him,**

From some other part of the ship, being in great consternation, and distress,

and awoke him; saying, Lord, save us, we perish.

They awoke him by their loud cries, and repeated calls; for in Luke, the form of address is doubled, "Master, Master!" expressing their distress, importunity, and haste for deliverance saying, "save us, we perish", or "we are lost": which shows the apprehensions they had of their condition; not only that they were in danger of being lost, or were ready to be lost, but were lost: they saw no probability of escaping by any natural, rational

511 T. Bob. Moed. Katon, fol. 18. 2. Bava Kama, fol. 81.

2. Bereshit Rabba, fol. 86. 2.

512 Vet. Nizzachon, p. 210.

methods: wherefore they apply to Christ, believing that he was able to save them, in this their extremity; as they had indeed a great deal of reason to conclude, from the miracles they had that day seen performed by him.

Matthew 8:26

Ver. 26. **And he saith unto them, why are ye fearful?**

Though they had some faith in him, yet there was a great deal of fear and unbelief, for which Christ blames them, saying,

O ye of little faith: See Gill on "Mt 6:30". In Luke, the phrase is, "where is your faith?" what is become of it? You professed but just now to believe in me, is your faith gone already? In Mark it is, "how is it that ye have no faith?" That is, in exercise, their faith was very small, it could hardly be discerned: some faith they had, as appears by their application to him, but it was very little. They had no faith in him, as sleeping, that he could deliver them; but had some little faith in him that he might, could he be awaked out of sleep; and for this Christ blames them; for he, as the eternal God, was as able to save them sleeping as waking.

Then he arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm:

being awaked by his disciples, he raises his head from his pillow, stands up, and with a majestic voice, in an authoritative manner, showing some kind of resentment at the wind and sea, as if they had exceeded their commission; and the one had blown, and the other raged too much and too long; he rebukes them in such language as this, "peace, be still"; siwpa pefimwso, as it is in Mark, be silent, hold your peace, stop your mouth, put a bridle on it, as the words used signify; and go on no longer to threaten with shipwreck and loss of lives; upon which the wind ceased, the sea became calm, and the ship moved quietly on.

Matthew 8:27

Ver. 27. **But the men marvelled,**

Mark says, "they feared exceedingly"; and Luke, "they being afraid, wondered": they were filled with astonishment and fear, or reverence: there was such a shine of majesty, such a lustre of divine power appeared in this affair. The other two evangelists seem to refer this to the disciples, which Matthew seems to ascribe to the men, the mariners that were in the ship; it is likely it had the same effect on both; and both were abundantly convinced of his deity and dignity, saying,

what manner of man,

or person

is this?

For the word “man”, is not in the text; of what qualities, perfections and powers, is he possessed? Surely he must be more than a mere man; he can be no other than the mighty God, that even the winds and the sea obey him: which can be said of no other, than the most high God: never was such a thing heard of, that the winds and sea should be rebuked by a mere creature, and should obey. That man must be infidel to “revelation”, that can read this account, and deny the deity of Christ; to one or other of these he must be drove, either to deny the truth of the fact, and the circumstances of it, or believe that Jesus Christ is truly and properly God, as the disciples and mariners did.

Matthew 8:28

Ver. 28. **And when he was come to the other side,**

Of the lake, or sea of Tiberias, right over against Galilee,

into the country of Gergesenes,

the same with the Girgashites, Ge 15:21 whom Joshua drove out of the land of Canaan; and who, as a Jewish writer⁵¹³ says, left their country to the Israelites, and went to a country, which is called to this day, גורגסיטא, “Gurgestan”, of which these people were some remains: both in Mark 5:1 it is called “the country of the Gadarenes”; and so the Syriac and Persic versions read it here; which is easily reconciled by observing, not that Gergesa and Gadara were one and the same city, called by different names; but that these two cities were near each other, in the same country, which was sometimes denominated from the one, and sometimes from the other. Origen⁵¹⁴ has a remarkable passage, showing the different situations of Gadara and Gergesa; and that the latter cannot be Gerasa in Arabia; and also the signification of the name, for the sake of which, I shall transcribe it.

”Gerasa (says he) is a city of Arabia, having neither sea nor lake near it; wherefore the evangelists, who well knew the countries about Judea, would never have said so manifest an untruth: and as to what we find in some few copies, “into the country of the Gadarenes”, it must be said, that Gadara indeed was a city of Judea, about which were many famous baths; but there was no lake, or sea in it, adjacent with precipices; but Gergesa, from whence were the Gergasenes, is an ancient city about the lake; now called Tibe-

513 Juchasin, fol. 135. 2.

514 Comment. in Joannem, T. 2. p. 131. Ed. Huet.

rias; about which is a precipice adjacent to the lake, from whence is shown, that the swine were cast down by the devils. Gergesa is interpreted, παροιικια εκβεβληκοτων, “the habitation of those that cast out”; being called so perhaps prophetically, for what the inhabitants of those places did to the Saviour, beseeching him to depart out of their coasts.

”Dr. Lightfoot suggests, that this place might be so called, from גורגסיתא, which signifies “clay” or “dirt”, and mentions Lutetia for an example. But to pass this, as soon as Christ was got out of the ship, and come to land in this country,

there met him two possessed with devils.

Both Mark and Luke mention but one, which is no contradiction to Matthew; for they do not say that there was only one; and perhaps the reason why they only take notice of him is, because he was the fiercest, had a legion of devils in him, and was the principal one, that spake to Christ, and with whom he was chiefly concerned. This is to be understood, not of any natural disease of body, but of real possession by Satan. These possessed men met him, not purposely, or with design, but accidentally to them, and unawares to Satan too; for though he knows much, he is not omniscient: had he been aware of Christ’s coming that way, and what he was about to do, he would have took care to have had the possessed out of the way; but so it was ordered by providence, that just as Christ landed, these should be

coming out of the tombs.

Their coemeteria, or burying places, were at some distance from towns or cities; wherefore Luke says, the possessed met him “out of the city”, a good way off from it; for the Jews⁵¹⁵ say, שלא היו בתי הקברות מוכיני ליה, “that the sepulchres were not near a city”; see Luke 7:12 and these tombs were built so large, that persons might go into them, and sit and dwell in them, as these “demoniacs” did, and therefore are said to come out of them. The rules for making them are⁵¹⁶ these;”

He that sells ground to his neighbour to make a burying place, or that receives of his neighbour, to make him a burying place, must make the inside of the cave four cubits by six, and open in it eight graves; three here and three there, and two over against them; and the graves must be four cubits long, and seven high, and six broad.

515 Misn. Bava Bathra, c. 6. sect. 8.

516 T. Bab. Kiddushin. fol. 80. 2. Gloss.

R. Simeon says, he must make the inside of the cave six cubits by eight, and open within thirteen graves, four here, and four there, and three over against them; and one on the right hand of the door, and one on the left: and he must make rux, “a court”, at the mouth of the cave, six by six, according to the measure of the bier, and those that bury; and he must open in it two caves, one here and another there: R. Simeon says, four at the four sides. R. Simeon ben Gamaliel says, all is according to the nature of the rock.”

Now in the court, at the mouth, or entrance of the cave, which was made for the bearers to put down the bier or coffin upon, before the interment, there was room for persons to enter and lodge, as these possessed with devils did: which places were chosen by the devils, either because of the solitude, gloominess, and filthiness of them; or as some think, to confirm that persuasion some men had, that the souls of men after death, are changed into devils; or rather, to establish a notion which prevailed among the Jews, that the souls of the deceased continue for a while to be about their bodies; which drew persons to necromancy, or consulting with the dead. It is a notion that obtains among the Jews⁵¹⁷, that the soul for twelve months after its separation from the body, is more or less with it, hovering about it; and hence, some have been induced to go and dwell among the tombs, and inquire of spirits: they tell us⁵¹⁸,

”it happened to a certain holy man, that he gave a penny to a poor man, on the “eve” of the new year; and his wife provoked him, and he went דוהת קלני בבית הקב “and lodged among the tombs”, and heard two spirits talking with one another.”

Or the devil chose these places, to render the persons possessed the more uncomfortable and distressed; to make them wilder and fiercer, by living in such desolate places, and so do more mischief to others: which was the case of these, who were

exceeding fierce,

wicked, malignant, mischievous, and troublesome, through the influence of the devils in them;

so that no man might pass that way,

without being insulted or hurt by them.

Matthew 8:29

Ver. 29. **And behold they cried out, saying,**

517 Nishmat Chayim, par. 2. c. 22. p. 81. 2. c. 24. p. 85. 1. & c. 29. p. 93. 1. p. 94. 1, 2.

518 T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 18. 2.

This is an instance and proof, of the wonderful power of Christ over the devils; and has therefore the note of admiration, “behold!” prefixed to it, that the devils themselves who had took possession of these men, and made them so fierce and cruel, and outrageous, that there was no passing the way for them; yet upon the sight of Christ, and especially at hearing his orders to come out from them, not only say, but cry out, as being in great consternation, horror, and fear, and with the utmost subjection to him,

what have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God?

They had nothing indeed to do with him; they had no interest in his grace, blood, righteousness, and salvation; he was no Saviour for them: but he had to do with them, and that was what they dreaded; and therefore mean, that he would let them alone, in the quiet possession of these men, and not disturb and dislodge them; for they knew that he was Jesus, the Saviour of sinful men, though none of their’s, the true Messiah; and that he was also “the Son of God”, a divine person, possessed of almighty power, and so an overmatch for them; at whose presence they trembled, and whose all commanding voice they were obliged to obey, though sorely against their wills.

Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?

This question implies the apprehension the devils had of Christ as a judge, and their sense of his authority, and power, to punish them; as also that they deserved it, and expected it, nor do they say anything against it; only imagine that the time of their full torment was not yet come; which is generally referred unto the day of judgment, to which they were reserved by the appointment of God; which they had some notion of, and as at a distance; and therefore complain of Christ’s coming to them now, and expostulate with him about it: though it may be understood of the time they had proposed to themselves, to abide in the men they had possessed, and which they concluded they had a permission for; and nothing could give more torment, pain, and uneasiness, than to be turned out, and remanded to their prison, and restrained from doing more mischief to the bodies and souls of men. Or whether this may not have some respect to the time of the preaching of the Gospel, and setting up the kingdom of Christ among the Gentiles, the devils might have some hint of, as not yet to be, I leave to be considered, with this observation; that there seems to be a considerable “emphasis” on the word “hither”, meaning the country of the Gergesenes, an Heathen country, at

least where many Gentiles inhabited: and it is as if they had said, is it not enough, that thou turnest us out of the land of Judea, and hast dispossessed us out of the bodies of men dwelling there; but thou pursuest us hither also, and will not let us have any rest, even in this Heathenish land; though the time is not yet come, for the dissolution of our empire and government in the Gentile world?

Matthew 8:30

Ver. 30. **And there was a good way off from them,**

“Nigh unto the mountains”, as Mark says, or “on the mountain”, as Luke, bordering on the sea shore; so that though it was at some distance, yet within sight. The Vulgate Latin, and the Hebrew edition of Munster read, “not far off”; and the Persic version, “near them”: which agree with the accounts of Mark and Luke, who say, that there were “there”, or hard by, “an herd of many swine feeding”. Since swine’s flesh was forbidden the Jews to eat, Le 11:7 it may be asked, how came it to pass, that there should be any number of these creatures, or that such a herd of them should be kept in the land of Israel? To which may be replied, that though the Jews might not eat swine’s flesh, they were not forbid to bring them up; which they might do, in order to sell to the Gentiles, who dwelt among them; and particularly to the Romans, under whose government they now were, and with whom swine’s flesh was in great esteem: but still a difficulty remains; for it was not only forbidden by the law of God to eat swine’s flesh, but, by the Jewish canons, to bring them up, and make any advantage of them in any shape: their law was this, *לא יגדל ישראל חזירי בכל מקום*, “an Israelite might not bring up hogs in any place”⁵¹⁹: the reasons of this canon were many, partly because of the uncleanness of these creatures; hence one of their writers⁵²⁰ observing, that next to those words, they “are unclean unto you”, are, “and the swine”, says, that this is to teach us, that “it is forbidden to bring up hogs”; and partly, because of the damage which these creatures do to other men’s fields: hence⁵²¹

”the wise men say, cursed is he that brings up dogs and hogs, *מפני שהזיקן מרובה*, “because they do much hurt”.

”But the chief reason given by the Gemafists⁵²² for

519 Misn. Bava Kama, c. 7. sect. 7. Midrash Kohelet, fol. 77. 2.

520 Baal Hatturim, in Deut. xiv. 7, 8.

521 Maimon. Nezike Mammon, c. 5. sect. 9.

522 T. Bab. Bava Kama, fol. 82. 2. Menachot, fol. 64. 2. Sota, fol. 49. 2.

this prohibition, was the fact following:

”When the Hasmonean family, or Maccabees, were at war with one another, Hyrcanus was within (Jerusalem), and Aristobulus without, and every day they let down to them money in a box; and they sent up to them the daily sacrifices: there was one old man who understood the wisdom of the Greeks, and he said unto them, as long as they employ themselves in the service (of God), they will not be delivered into your hands: on the morrow they let down their money, and they sent them up a hog; and when it came to the middle of the wall, he fixed his hoofs in the wall, and the land of Israel shook, &c. at that time they said, cursed be the man *שיגדל חזירי*, “that breeds hogs”; and cursed is the man that teaches his son the learning of the Grecians.

”Before this time, it seems to have been lawful to bring them up, and trade with them: but now it was forbid, not only to breed them, but to receive any gain or profit by them; for this is another of their rules⁵²³.

”It is forbidden to bring up a hog, in order to get any profit by his skin, or by his lard, or fat, to anoint with, or to light (lamps) with; yea, though it may fall to him by inheritance.

”And nothing was more infamous and reproachful among them, than a keeper of these creatures: when therefore they had a mind to cast contempt upon a man, they would call him *מגדל חזירי*⁵²⁴, “a breeder of hogs”, or *חזירא*⁵²⁵, “a hog herd”. But after all, it was only an Israelite that was forbid this; a stranger might bring them up, for this is one of their canons⁵²⁶. ”A man may sell fetches to give to a stranger that breeds hogs, but to an Israelite it is forbidden to breed them.”

Yea, they say⁵²⁷,

”If others breed them to anoint skins with their lard, or to sell them to an Israelite to anoint with them, it was lawful: all fat may be sold, which is not for eating.

”And so some cities are supposed to have hogs in

523 Tosaphot in Pesach, art. 62.

524 T. Hieros. Shekalim, fol. 47. 3.

525 lb. Trumot, fol. 46. 3.

526 Piske Tosaphot in Sabbat, art. 317.

527 Yom. Tob. & Ez. Chayim, in Misn. Bava Kama, c. 7. sect. 7.

them, concerning which they observe⁵²⁸,

that”a city that has hogs in it, is free from the “mezuzah”;

”the schedules which were fastened to the posts of doors and gates: but now supposing this herd of swine belonged to Jews in these parts, it may easily be accounted for; for since they lived among Heathens, they might not have so great a regard to the directions of their Rabbins; and especially, since it was so much for their profit and advantage, they might make no scruple to break through these ordinances. Though this herd of swine may well enough be thought to belong to the Gentiles, that dwelt in this country; since Gadara was a Grecian city, and then inhabited more by Syrians, than by Jews, as Josephus relates⁵²⁹.

Matthew 8:31

Ver. 31. **So the devils besought him, saying,**

All the devils, the whole legion of them, who perceiving that they must be obliged to go out of these men, and after they had earnestly entreated they might not be sent out of the country where they had long been, and had made themselves masters of the tempers, dispositions, and circumstances of the inhabitants, and so capable of doing the more mischief, begged hard,

if thou cast us out

of these men, or “from hence”, as the Vulgate Latin, the Ethiopic, and Munster’s Hebrew Gospel read, or “out of our place”, as the Persic; since we must depart, and cannot be allowed to enter into other men,

suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.

This request shows the weakness of the infernal spirits, they are not able to do anything without leave, and the superior power of Christ over them, and their acknowledgment of it; as well as the wretched malignity of their nature, who must be doing mischief, if not to the bodies and souls of men, yet to their property and goods; and if they cannot vent their malice on rational creatures, are desirous of doing it on irrational ones. Many reasons have been thought of, why the devils should desire to go into the herd of swine; as because of the filthiness of these creatures, these impure spirits delighting in what is impure; or out of pure hatred to the inhabitants of this country, who, because they could no longer hurt their persons, would destroy their goods; or that by so doing, they might set the people against Christ, and so prevent his usefulness among them; which last seems to be the

528 lb. art. 130.

529 De Bello Jud. l. 2. c. 33.

truest reason, and which end was answered.

Matthew 8:32

Ver. 32. **And he said unto them, go,**

He gave them leave, as God did to Satan, in the case of Job; for without divine permission, these evil spirits cannot do anything to the bodies, souls, or estates of men: they could not enter into the swine without leave, and much less do things of greater moment and consequence; and therefore are not to be feared, or dreaded by men, especially by the people of God. It may be asked, why did Christ suffer the devils to enter the herd of swine, and destroy them, which was a considerable loss to the proprietors? To which may be answered, that if the owners were Jews, and these creatures were brought up by them for food, it was a just punishment of their breach of the law of God; or if to be sold to others, for gain and filthy lucre’s sake, it was a proper rebuke, both of the avarice and the contempt of the laws of their own country, which were made to be a hedge or fence for the law of God: or if they were Gentiles, this was suffered to show the malice of the evil spirits, under whose influence they were, and who would, if they had but leave, serve them as they did the swine; and to display the power of Christ over the devils, and his sovereign right to, and disposal of the goods and properties of men; and to evince the truth of the dispossession, and the greatness of the mercy the dispossessed shared in; and to spread the fame of the miracle the more.

And when they were come out of the men that had been possessed by them, they went into the herd of swine;

which shows the real existence of these spirits, the truth of possessions and dispossession; and that by these devils cannot be meant the sins and corruptions of men’s hearts, such as pride, covetousness, uncleanness, envy, malice, cruelty, &c. for these could never be said to enter into a herd of swine, or be the authors of their destruction:

and behold, the whole herd of swine,

and which was a very large one, consisting of about two thousand,

ran violently down a steep place;

a precipice of one of the rocks, by the sea side, into the sea of “Tiberias”, or lake of Genesareth, which were the same, and over which Christ had just now passed;

and perished in the waters

of the sea, or lake, and not any other waters near Gadara, and afar off from hence.

Matthew 8:33

Ver. 33. **And they that kept them fled,**

The hog herds, men of very low life, and whose employment was very infamous and reproachful, as has been observed. These, amazed at what they had seen, distressed with the loss of the swine, and so of their employment, and frightened also lest they should incur the blame and displeasure of their masters, ran away in great haste, fear, and astonishment;

and went their way into the city;

either of Gergesa, or Gadara. Mark and Luke say, they “went and told it in the city, and in the country”: in their fright and distress, some ran one way, and some another; some went into the city, others into the country, and so spread the affair far and near, and the fame of Christ, which was designed by this miracle;

and told everything

they saw and heard; how the devils entered into the swine, and they ran headlong into the sea, and were drowned: this they told first, as being done last, and with which they were most affected, and what chiefly concerned their employers; and after they had told every circumstance of the affair, next they gave a narrative of

what was befallen to the possessed of the devils,

and which was the occasion of the loss of their swine; how subject the devils, that were in them, were to Christ; how easily he dispossessed them by a word of command; how they entreated they might have leave to go into the herd of swine, which was granted; and how perfectly whole, and in health, both in body and mind, the men were.

Matthew 8:34

Ver. 34. **And behold, the whole city,**

The inhabitants of it, not every individual person, but the greater number of them, or, at least, a very great number of them. Luke says, “the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about”: for as the news was carried both into the city and country, great numbers flocked from all parts,

and came out to meet Jesus:

not out of any love and respect to him, and in order to invite him, and conduct him into their city, and there receive him kindly, and treat him with due honour and reverence; but either out of curiosity to see such an extraordinary person, which, doubtless, was the case of many; or, else being terrified at the report concerning him, and distressed with their present loss, which was the case of others, went out to prevent his coming any

further, lest they should suffer something worse: accordingly,

when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts;

which was done not as though they thought themselves unworthy the presence of so great a person, as did the “centurion”, in the former part of this “chapter”, or, as Peter, when he said, “depart from me, I am a sinful man”; but as fearing, lest some greater punishment should be inflicted on them for their sins, of which they were conscious; and therefore make no complaint of any injustice being done them by the loss of their swine; though these they preferred to the presence of Christ, and even to any cures wrought, or which might have been wrought, either upon the bodies, or souls of men.

Matthew Chapter 9**Matthew 9:1**

Ver. 1. And he entered into a ship,.... Or “the ship”, the selfsame ship he came over in, with his disciples. The Gergesenes, or Gadarenes, or both, having desired him to depart their coasts, showing an unwillingness to receive him, and an uneasiness at his company, he immediately turned his back upon them, as an ungrateful people, being no better than their swine; and who, by their conduct, judged themselves unworthy of his presence, ministry, and miracles: he returned to the sea side, took shipping, and passed over the sea of Tiberias again, and came into his own city; not Bethlehem, where he was born, nor Nazareth, as Jerom thought, where he was educated, but Capernaum, as is clear from Mark 2:1 where he much dwelt, frequently conversed, and his disciples: here he paid tribute as an inhabitant, or citizen of the place, which he was entitled to by only dwelling in it twelve months, according to the Jewish canons; where it is asked ⁵³⁰,

“how long shall a man be in a city ere he is as the men of the city? It is answered, “twelve months”; but if he purchases a dwelling house, he is as the men of the city immediately;”

that is, he is a citizen, and obliged to all charges and offices, as they are: though they seem to make a distinction between an inhabitant and a citizen ⁵³¹.

“A man is not reckoned כבני הנה, “as the children of the city”, or as one of the citizens, in less than twelve months, but he may be called, or account-

⁵³⁰ Misn. Bava Bathra, c. 1. sect. 5.

⁵³¹ Gloss. in T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 112. 1.

ed, מיושבי הנה, “as one of the inhabitants” of the city, if he stays there thirty days.”

One or other of these Christ had done, which denominated this city to be his, and he to be either an inhabitant, or a citizen of it.

Matthew 9:2

Ver. 2. **And behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy,**

That is, some of the inhabitants of Capernaum, four men of that city particularly; for Mark says, Mark 2:3 he “was borne of four”: these brought him to Jesus,

lying on a bed,

or couch, he being so enfeebled by the disease upon him, his nerves so weak, and the members of his body in such a tremor, that he was not able to walk himself, nor even to be carried by others in any other way than this.

And Jesus seeing their faith; the faith

of the bearers of him, his friends, who brought out a man to be healed, who was otherwise incurable; and though they could not, for the multitude, bring him directly to Christ, they were not discouraged, but took the pains to carry him to the top of the house, and there let him down through the roof, or tiling; as both Mark and Luke say; and then set him down before him, believing he was able to cure him: moreover, Christ took notice not only of their faith, but of the sick man’s too, who suffered himself to be brought out in this condition, and was contented to go through so much fatigue and trouble, to get at him; when he

said unto the sick of the palsy, son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.

He calls him son, either meaning by it no more than “man”; see Luke 5:20 or using it as a kind, tender, and endearing appellation; or as considering him in the grace of adoption, as one that God had put among the children, had given to him as such, and whom he should bring to glory. He bids him “be of good cheer”, whose animal spirits were fainting through the disease that was upon him, and the fatigue he had undergone in being brought to him; and his soul more distressed and dejected, under a sense of his sins and transgressions; which Jesus knowing, very pertinently says, “thy sins be forgiven thee”; than which, nothing could be more cheering and reviving to him: or Christ says this to show, that sin was the cause of the disease and affliction that were upon him, for אין יודין בלא נה, “there are no chastisements without sin”, as the Jews say ⁵³²; and that the cause being removed,

⁵³² . Bab. Sabbat, fol. 55. 1. Midrash Hohelet, fol. 70. 4.

the effects would cease; of both which he might be assured, and therefore had good reason to cheer up, and be of good heart. This was a wonderful instance of the grace of Christ, to bestow a blessing unasked, and that of the greatest moment and importance.

Matthew 9:3

Ver. 3. **And behold, certain of the Scribes said within themselves,**

And of the Pharisees also, as Luke says; for there were at this time Pharisees and doctors of the law, who were come out of every town of Galilee and Judea, and out of Jerusalem, sitting and hearing him teach, and observing what he said, and did; who upon hearing him pronounce the sentence of pardon, upon this “paralytic” man, reasoned and concluded in their own minds, though they did not care to speak it out, that

this man blasphemeth:

the reason was, because they thought he ascribed that to himself, which was peculiar to God: and so he did, and yet did not blaspheme; because he himself was God, of which he quickly gave convincing proofs.

Matthew 9:4

Ver. 4. **And Jesus knowing their thoughts,**

Which was a clear evidence, and full demonstration of his deity; for none knows the thoughts of the heart but God; and since he knew the thoughts of men’s hearts, it could be no blasphemy in him to take that to himself which belonged to God, even to forgive sins. And this, one would think, would have been sufficient to have approved himself to them as the true Messiah; since this is one of the ways of knowing the Messiah, according to the Jews, and which they made use of to discover a false one.

“Bar Coziba, (they say ⁵³³,) reigned two years and a half: he said to the Rabbins, I am the Messiah; they replied to him, it is written of the Messiah, that he is “of quick understanding, and judges”, (referring to Isa 11:3) let us see whether this man is of quick understanding, and can make judgment, i.e. whether a man is wicked, or not, without any external proof; and when they saw he was not of quick understanding, and could not judge in this manner, they slew him.”

But now Christ needed not any testimony of men; he knew what was in the hearts of men, of which this instance is a glaring proof: hence he said,

wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?

Tzeror. Hammor, fol. 99. 1.

⁵³³ T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 93. 2.

it was no evil in them to think that God only could forgive sin; but the evil was, that they thought Christ was a mere man, and ought not to have took so much upon him; and that, for so doing, he was a wicked man, and a blasphemous.

Matthew 9:5

Ver. 5. **For whether is easier to say,**

Christ proceeds to clear himself of the charge of blasphemy, and to prove his power to forgive sins, by putting a case to them, of which he makes themselves Judges, and is this: which is easiest to be said,

thy sins are forgiven thee? or to say, arise and walk?

Neither of them were easy to a mere creature, but both of them easy to God; and he that could say the one with power and efficacy going along with his word, could say the other as effectually: and whereas it was a plain case, and out of all question, that he could bid this “paralytic” man, though in this weak condition, arise from his bed, stand upon his feet, and go home of himself; and since he had already healed many that were sick of the palsy, and particularly the “centurion’s” servant, by a word speaking, he must have equal power to forgive sin. For to heal the diseases of the body in such a wonderful manner, was a very sensible proof of his power to heal the maladies of the soul; and though these are greater than those of the body, yet since both require divine power, he that is able to do the one, is able to do the other. And that it might appear he did not say this in a boasting manner, he adds,

Matthew 9:6

Ver. 6. **But that ye may know that the son of man,**

That they might have a visible proof, an ocular demonstration, that though he was the son of man, truly and really man, yet not a mere man; but also as truly and properly God, God and man in one person, and so

hath power on earth to forgive sins:

not only ability as God, but even authority to do it as mediator, even whilst he was on earth, in a state of humiliation, in fashion as a man, in the form of a servant, conversing with sinful mortals.

Then saith he to the sick of the palsy;

turning himself from the Scribes, unto him, and without putting up any prayer to God, but by a mere word of command, says to him,

arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house:

he ordered him to “arise” from his bed, on which he was carried by four men, and “take up his bed”, and carry it himself; which would be not only an evidence that the

disease had left him, but that he was in full strength, and perfect health; and to “go” to his own “house”, not only that the multitude might see that he could walk home himself, whom they had seen brought by others; but that those in the house, who had been eyewitnesses of his great disorder and weakness, might be also of his cure.

Matthew 9:7

Ver. 7. **And he arose, and departed to his house.**

Immediately, at the command of Christ, believing he was able to heal him by a word speaking; and, upon his attempt to arise, found himself perfectly healed of his disease, and endued with such strength, that he could, not only with the greatest ease, arise from his bed, stand upon his feet, and walk alone, without any help; but, as the other evangelists declare, took up his bed, on which he lay, carried it home on his shoulders, in the sight of all the people, praising, and giving glory to God for this wonderful cure, which he had received.

Matthew 9:8

Ver. 8. **But when the multitude saw it,**

The miracle that was wrought; when they saw the man take up his bed, and carry it home, which was done by Christ, as a proof of his having power to forgive sin,

they marvelled, and glorified God:

they were struck with amazement and astonishment at the sight, it being what was strange and unusual; the like to which they had never seen before, nor heard of: and concluding it to be more than human; they ascribed it to God; they praised, and adored the divine goodness, **which had given such power unto men;**

of working miracles, healing diseases, and delivering miserable mortals from such maladies, as were otherwise incurable; still looking upon Christ as a mere man, by whom God did these things; not knowing yet the mystery of the incarnation, God manifest in the flesh.

Matthew 9:9

Ver. 9. **And as Jesus passed forth from thence,**

That is, from Capernaum to the sea side; where, as Mark says, the multitude resorted, and he taught them;

he saw a man named Matthew;

the writer of this Gospel. The other evangelists call him Levi, who was the son of Alphaeus: he went by two names; Mark and Luke call him by the name, which perhaps was the more honourable, or the least known, on purpose to conceal the former life of the apostle, which might expose him to the contempt of some; but he himself chooses to mention the name by which he was most known, as an apostle, and that the grace of God might

appear the more illustrious in his calling and conversion. The Jews say ⁵³⁴, that one of Christ’s disciples was called מַתְּתָי, Matthew, which, as Levi, is an Hebrew name; for though he was a publican, yet a Jew; for it was common with the Jews either to be employed by the Roman officers in collecting the toll or tribute, or to farm it of them.

Sitting at the receipt of custom,

or “at the custom house”, or “toll booth”; which both the Syriac version, and Munster’s Hebrew Gospel, call okm, or בֵּית מוֹכָא, the “publican’s house”. In the ⁵³⁵ Talmud mention is made of it, in the following parable, upon citing Isa 61:8

“it is like, (say the doctors,) to a king of flesh and blood, who passing by בֵּית הַמֶּכֶּט “the toll booth”, or “publican’s house”, says to his servants, give “toll to the publicans”: they reply to him, is not all the toll thine? he says to them, all that pass by the ways will learn of me, and will not avoid the toll; so says the holy blessed God, &c.”

The publicans had houses, or booths built for them, at the foot of bridges, at the mouth of rivers, and by the sea shore, where they took toll of passengers that went to and fro: hence we read ⁵³⁶ of bridges being made to take toll at, and of publicans being at the water side ⁵³⁷, and of קִישְׁרֵי מוֹכּ “the tickets”, or “seals of the publicans”; which, when a man had paid toll on one side of a river, were given him by the publican, to show to him that sat on the other side, that it might appear he had paid: in which were written two great letters, bigger than those in common use ⁵³⁹. Thus Matthew was sitting in a toll booth, near the seashore, to receive the toll of passengers that came, or went in ships or boats.

And he saith unto him, follow me;

notwithstanding the infamous employment he was in, as accounted by the Jews: this was no bar in the way of his call to be a disciple of Christ; and shows, that there was no merit and motive in him, which was the reason of this high honour bestowed upon him; but was entirely owing to the free, sovereign, and distinguishing grace of

⁵³⁴ T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 43. 1.

⁵³⁵ T. Bab. Succa, fol. 30. 1.

⁵³⁶ T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 33. 2.

⁵³⁷ Jarchi in Jud. v. 10.

⁵³⁸ Misn. Sabbat, c. 8. sect. 2. T. Hieros. Sabbat, fol. 11. 2. T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 78. 2. & Bechorot, fol. 30. 2. & Avoda Zara, fol. 39. 1.

⁵³⁹ Jarchi, Maimonides, & Bartenora in Misn. Sabbat, c. 8. sect. 2. & Gloss. in T. Bab. Bechorot, fol. 30. 2.

Christ, and which was powerful and efficacious: for without telling him what work he must do, or how he must live, and without his consulting with flesh and blood, at once, immediately

he arose, and followed him:

such a power went along with the call, that he directly left his employment, how profitable soever it might be to him, and became a disciple of Christ.

Matthew 9:10

Ver. 10. **And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house,**

That is, as the Arabic version reads it, in the house of Matthew, not in the toll house, but in his own house; for he immediately quitted the toll booth, and his office there, and followed Christ, and had him to his own house, where he made a great feast for him, as Luke says, to testify the sense he had of the wondrous grace which was bestowed on him; and also, that other publicans and sinners might have an opportunity of hearing Christ, and conversing with him, whom he invited to this feast; his bowels yearning towards them, and sincerely desiring their conversion, which is the nature of true grace: for, when a soul is made a partaker of the grace of God, it is earnestly desirous that this might be the case of others, especially its sinful relations, friends, or companions; and it takes every opportunity of using, or bringing them under the means; so did Matthew: hence it is said,

behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples;

not of their own accord, but by the invitation of Matthew, and with the good will, and full consent of Christ, who was far from being displeased with their company and freedom; but gladly embraced every opportunity of doing good to the souls of the worst of men; for such as these he came to call and save.

Matthew 9:11

Ver. 11. **And when the Pharisees saw it,**

The feast Matthew made, the guests that were invited, and particularly that Christ sat down to meat with such vile and wicked company; they and the Scribes, as Mark and Luke add, who generally were together, of the same complexion, equally enemies to Christ, and watchful observers of his conduct, and pretending to a more strict and religious way of life, were offended at all this;

and said to his disciples,

which they chose to do, rather than to Christ himself; partly, because they were afraid to engage in a dispute with him, who had just given them a full proof of his

omniscience, that he knew the very thoughts and reasonings of their minds, and had so confounded them already, both by his arguments and miracles; and partly, because they might think themselves a match for the disciples, and might hope to stumble and ensnare them, and prevail upon them to quit their profession, and leave following him, whom they would suggest could not be a good man, that was guilty of so evil an action; which, with them, was very unlawful and abhorrent, as that for which they accuse and reprove him,

why eateth your master with publicans and sinners?

The “publicans”, or gatherers of the Roman tax, toll, or tribute of any sort, whether Jews or Gentiles, were persons of a very infamous character; and, as here, so often, in Jewish writings, are ranked with “sinners”, and those of the worst sort: so false swearing was allowed to be made *למורדי ולחרימי ולמורדי* “to murderers, and to robbers, and to publicans”⁵⁴⁰; and so “publicans and thieves” are joined together by Maimonides⁵⁴¹, and a publican is said by him to be as a thief. And indeed this was not only the sense of the Jews, but also of other people, according to those words of Zeno the poet, *pantev telwnai pantev eisin arpagev*⁵⁴², “all publicans are all of them robbers”: though this was not originally their character; for formerly the best of the Roman gentry were employed in this office, till by malpractices it became scandalous, when the meaner sort of people, yea, even vassals, were put into it⁵⁴³. Now, with such sort of men as these the Pharisees held it unlawful to have any sort of conversation; they expelled such their society, would not dwell with them in the same house, nor eat or drink with them; concerning which, their rules and methods are these;

“a companion, or friend, who becomes the king’s collector, or a “publican”, or the like, they drive him from society with them: if he abstains from his evil works, then he is as any other man⁵⁴⁴”

Again,

“when the king’s collectors enter into a house to dwell, all that are in the house are defiled⁵⁴⁵”

Moreover, it is⁵⁴⁶ said, that

540 Mis. Nedarim, c. 3. sect. 4.

541 Hilch. Gezela, c. 5. sect. 9. 11.

542 Apud Fabricii Graec. Biblioth. l. 2. c. 22. p. 755.

543 Alex. ab Alex. Genial. Dier. l. 2. c. 29.

544 Maimon. Mishcab & Moshab, c. 10. sect. 8.

545 lb. c. 12. sect. 12.

546 lb. Hilchoth Tumaot Okelim. c. 16. sect. 12.

“the former saints ate their common food with purity, i.e. with their hands washed, and took care of all defilements every day; and these were called Pharisees; and this sect was exceedingly holy, and was the way of piety; for such a man was separated, and he abstained from the rest of the people, and he did not touch them, *Mhme htvyw lkay alw*, “nor did he eat and drink with them””

It was a general rule with them, that a clean person ought not to eat with an unclean, as they judged the common people to be; nay, that a Pharisee, who was unclean himself, might not eat with another person that was so, and which they boast of, as a great degree of holiness.

“Come and see, (say they⁵⁴⁷), to what a pitch purity has arrived in Israel; for they not only teach, that a pure person may not eat with one that is defiled, but that one that has a “gonorrhoea” may not eat with another that has one, lest he should be used to transgress this way; and a Pharisee that has a “gonorrhoea” may not eat with a common person that has one, lest he should be used to do so.”

Hence they looked upon Christ and his disciples as such, and would insinuate that they were evil men, who had no regard to purity of life and conversation.

Matthew 9:12

Ver. 12. **But when Jesus heard that,**

The charge the Pharisees brought against him, and the insinuations they had made of him to his disciples; which he either overheard himself, or his disciples related to him,

he said unto them;

the Pharisees, with an audible voice, not only to confute and convince them, but chiefly to establish his disciples, they were endeavouring to draw away from him:

they that be whole need not a physician;

by which he would signify that he was a “physician”: and so he is in a spiritual sense, and that a very skilful one: he knows the nature of all the diseases of the soul, without being told them by the patient; what are the true causes of them; what is proper to apply; when is the best time, and what the best manner: he is an universal one, with regard both to diseases and to persons, that apply to him; he heals all sorts of persons, and all sorts of diseases; such as are blind from their birth, are as deaf as

547 T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 13. 1.

the deaf adder, the halt, and the lame, such as have broken hearts, yea the plague in their hearts, and have stony ones, and all the relapses of his people; which he does by his stripes and wounds, by the application of his blood, by his word and Gospel, through sinners looking to him, and touching him: he is an infallible one, none ever went from him without a cure; none ever perished under his hands; the disease he heals never returns more to prevail, so as to bring on death and destruction; and he does all freely, without money, and without price. So Philo the Jew calls the Logos, or word, *iatron kakon*, “an healer of diseases”⁵⁴⁸, and God our legislator, *των τηω θυχηω πασω ν αριστω ιατροω*, “the best physician of the diseases of the soul”⁵⁴⁹. Now Christ argues from this his character, in vindication of himself; as that he was with these persons, not as a companion of their’s, but as a physician to them; and as it is not unlawful, but highly proper and commendable, that a physician should be with the sick; so it was very lawful, fit, and proper, yea praiseworthy in him, to be among these publicans and sinners, for their spiritual good. He suggests indeed, that “they that be whole”, in perfect health and strength, as the Pharisees thought themselves to be, even free from all the maladies and diseases of sin, were strong, robust, and able to do anything, and everything of themselves; these truly stood in no “need of” him, as a physician, in their own apprehension; they saw no need of him; in principle they had no need of him, and in practice did not make use of him; and therefore it was to no purpose to attend them, but converse with others, who had need of him:

but they that are sick;

who are not only diseased and disordered in all the powers and faculties of their souls, as all Adam’s posterity are, whether sensible of it or not; but who know themselves to be so, these see their need of Christ as a physician, apply to him as such, and to them he is exceeding precious, a physician of value; and such were these “publicans” and sinners. These words seem to be a proverbial expression, and there is something like it in the⁵⁵⁰ Talmud, *דכאיב ליה כאיבא אויל לבי איא*, “he that is afflicted with any pain goes”, or “let him go to the physician’s house”; that is, he that is attended with any sickness, or disease, does, or he ought to, consult a physician.

Matthew 9:13

Ver. 13. **But go ye and learn what that meaneth,**

א ולמד, “go and learn”, is a phrase used by the Jews

548 Allegor. l. 2. p. 93.

549 Quod Deus sit immutab. p. 303.

550 T. Bab. Bava Kama, fol. 46. 2.

⁵⁵¹, when they are about to explain a passage of Scripture, and fetch an argument from the connection of the text. So the phrase *τι εστιν*, “what that is”, or “what that meaneth”, is Talmudic, as, *מהי מהי* “what is it?” *מהי דכתיב* “what is that which is written?” *מהי קרא* “what is the Scripture?” that is, what is the meaning of it? Our Lord speaks in their own dialect, and tacitly reproves their ignorance of the Scriptures; and instead of finding fault with him, and his conduct, he intimates, it would better become them to endeavour to find out the meaning of that passage in Ho 6:6 “I will have mercy, and not sacrifice”; which, if rightly understood, was sufficient to silence all their cavils and objections: and which words are to be taken, not in an absolute and unlimited sense; for sacrifices even of slain beasts, which were offered up in the faith of Christ’s sacrifice, and were attended with other acts of religion and piety, were acceptable to God, being his own institutions and appointments; but in a comparative sense, as the following clause in the prophet shows; “and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings”; and so the sense is given in the “Chaldee paraphrase”, after this manner: “for in those that exercise mercy is my good will and pleasure”, or “delight”, *ממורבה*, “more than in sacrifice”: and the meaning is, that God takes more delight and pleasure, either in showing mercy himself to poor miserable sinners; or in acts of mercy, compassion, and beneficence done by men, to fallen creatures in distress, whether for the good of their bodies, or more especially for the welfare of their souls, than he does even in sacrifices, and in any of the rituals of the ceremonial law, though of his own appointing; and therefore must be supposed to have a less regard to sacrifices, which were offered, neither in a right manner, nor from a right principle, nor to a right end; and still less to human traditions, and customs, which were put upon a level, and even preferred to his institutions; such as these the Pharisees were so zealous of. The force of our Lord’s reasoning is, that since his conversation, with publicans and sinners, was an act of mercy and compassion to their souls, and designed for their spiritual good; it must be much more pleasing to God, than had he attended to the traditions of the elders, they charge him with the breach of: besides, what he was now doing was the end of his coming into this world, and which was answered hereby;

for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.

551 T. Bab. Succa, fol. 5. 1. & Sanhedrim, fol. 86. 1. Moses Kotsensis Mitzvot Tora pr. neg. 116. Vid. Maimon. Hilchot Melachim, c. 5. sect. 11.

The phrase, “to repentance”, is not in the Vulgate Latin, nor in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel, nor in the Syriac, Ethiopic, and Persic versions; but is in the Arabic, and in the ancient Greek copies, and is very justly retained. The “repentance” here designed, is not a legal, but an evangelical one: which is attended with faith in Christ, with views, at least hopes of pardon through his blood, and springs from a discovery and sense of his love: it lies in a true sense of sin, and the exceeding sinfulness of it, by the light of the Spirit of God; in a godly sorrow for it, and hearty loathing of it; in real shame and blushing for it, ingenuous confession of it, and departing from it; all which is brought on, influenced, heightened, and increased, by displays of the love of God through Christ. The persons called to this are not the “righteous”; meaning either such who are really so, because these are already called to it, though, whilst in a state of imperfection, daily need the exercise of this grace; or rather such who are so in their own opinion, and in the sight of men only, not in the sight of God, which was the case of the Scribes and Pharisees, and very few of these were called and brought to repentance; but “sinners”, even the worst, and chief of sinners, who, as they stand in need of this grace, and when thoroughly convinced, see they do; so Christ came into this world as prophet and minister of the word to “call” them to it: which call of his does not suppose that they had a power to repent of themselves; for this man has not, he is naturally blind, and do not see his sin; his heart is hard and obdurate, and till his eyes are opened, and his stony heart taken away by a superior power to his own, he will never repent; though he may have space, yet if he has not grace given him, he will remain impenitent. No means will bring him to it of themselves, neither the most severe judgments, nor the greatest kindnesses, nor the most powerful ministry; repentance is entirely a free grace gift: nor does the call of Christ imply the contrary; which may be considered either as external, as a preacher of the word, and as such was not always attended to, and effectual, but often slighted and rejected: or as internal, being by the power of his grace effectual; for he who called to repentance, as a minister of the word, as a prince and a saviour, was able to give it, and which none but a divine person is able to do. The Jews have a saying⁵⁵² of

“shepherds, collectors of taxes and “publicans”, תשובתו קשה, “that their repentance is difficult”.

Now, since this was the end of his coming into the

⁵⁵² T. Bab. Bava Kama, fol. 94. 3.

world, his conduct in conversing with publicans and sinners was in all respects highly to be justified.

Matthew 9:14

Ver. 14. **Then came to him the disciples of John,**

Of John the Baptist, to whom they had addicted themselves, and by whom they abode: though their master was in prison, and the Messiah was known to be come, yet still they were attached to John, and particularly imitated him in the austerities of his life. These, either hearing of the great entertainment made at Matthew’s house for Christ, and his disciples, at which they were offended; or else being moved, and set on by the Pharisees, with whom they were agreed in the business of fasting, came to Christ where he was, and put this question to him,

saying, why do we, and the Pharisees, fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?

Not that they wanted to know the reason why they and the Pharisees fasted; that they could account for themselves, but why Christ’s disciples did not: and this is said not so much by way of inquiry, as reproof; and their sense is; that Christ’s disciples ought to fast, as well as they and the Pharisees, and not eat, and drink, and feast in the manner they did. The fastings here referred to are not the public fasts enjoined by the law of Moses, or in any writings of the Old Testament; but private fasts, which were enjoined by John to his disciples, and by the Pharisees to their’s; or which were, according to the traditions of the elders, or of their own appointing, and which were very “often” indeed: for besides their fasting twice a week, on Monday and Thursday, Luke 18:12 they had a multitude of fasts upon divers occasions, particularly for rain⁵⁵³. If the 17th of Marchesvan, or October, came, and there was no rain, private persons kept three days of fasting, viz. Monday, Thursday, and Monday again: and if the month of Cisleu, or November, came, and there was no rain, then the sanhedrim appointed three fast days, which were on the same days as before, for the congregation; and if still there was no rain came, they added three more; and if yet there were none, they enjoined seven more, in all thirteen, which R. Acha and R. Barachiah kept themselves⁵⁵⁴. Fastings were kept also on account of many other evils, as pestilence, famine, war, sieges, inundations, or any other calamity; sometimes for trifling things, as for dreams⁵⁵⁵, that they might have good ones,

⁵⁵³ Misn. Taanith, c. 1. sect. 4. 5, 6. & c. 3. sect. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Maimon. & Bartenora in ib.

⁵⁵⁴ T. Hieros. Taanlot, fol. 65. 2. & 66. 4.

⁵⁵⁵ T. Bab. Sabbath. fol. 10. 1. Maimon Taanot, c. 1. sect.

or know how to interpret them, or avoid any ill omen by them; and it is almost incredible what frequent fastings some of the Rabbins exercised themselves with, on very insignificant occasions. They⁵⁵⁶ say,

”R. Jose רבינו רבינו “fasted fourscore fasts” to see R. Chiyah Rubba; at last he saw, and his hands trembled, and his eyes grew dim: --R. Simeon Ben Lakish רבינו רבינו “fasted three hundred fastings” to see R. Chiyah Rubba, and did not see him.”

Elsewhere it is said, that R. Ase fasted “thirty days” to see the same person, and saw him not⁵⁵⁷. Again⁵⁵⁸,

R. Jonathan fasted every eve of the new year, R. Abin fasted every eve of the feast of tabernacles, R. Zeura fasted “three hundred fasts”, and there are that say “nine hundred fasts”.

This may serve to illustrate and prove the frequency of the Jewish fastings. Luke represents this question as put by the Pharisees, which is here put by the disciples of John: it was doubtless put by both agreeing in this matter; and which shows that John’s disciples were instigated to it by the Pharisees, who sought to sow discord between them, and to bring Christ and his disciples into contempt with them.

Matthew 9:15

Ver. 15. **And Jesus said unto them,**

To the disciples of John, the Pharisees being present, who both have here a full answer; though it seems to be especially directed to the former:

can the children of the bride chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom, is with them?

By the “bridegroom” Christ means himself, who stands in such a relation to his church, and to all, believers; whom he secretly betrothed to himself from all eternity, in the covenant of grace; and openly espouses in the effectual calling; and will still do it in a more public manner at the last day John, the master of those men, who put the question to Christ, had acknowledged him under this character, Joh 3:29 and therefore they ought to own it as belonging to him; so that the argument upon it came with the greater force to them. By “the children of the bride chamber” are meant the disciples, who were the friends of the bridegroom, as John also says he was;

12-14.

⁵⁵⁶ T. Hieros. Cilaim, fol. 32. 2. & Cetubot, fol. 35. 1.

⁵⁵⁷ Midrash Kohelet, fol. 79. 1.

⁵⁵⁸ lb. Nedarim, fol. 40. 4. & Taanioth, fol. 66. 1.

and therefore rejoiced at hearing his voice, as these did, and ought to do; their present situation, having the presence of Christ the bridegroom with them, required mirth and not mourning, John, their master, being witness. The allusion is to a nuptial solemnity, which is a time of joy and feasting, and not of sorrow and fasting; when both bride and bridegroom have their friends attending them, who used to be called בני החופה, “the children of the bride chamber”. The bride had her maidens waiting on her; and it is said⁵⁵⁹,

”she did not go into the bridechamber but with them; and these are called, בני חופתא, “the children of the bride chamber”.

So the young men that were the friends of the bridegroom, which attended him, were called by the same name; and, according to the Jewish canons, were free from many things they were otherwise obliged to: thus it is said⁵⁶⁰:

”the bridegroom, his friends, and all בני החופה, “the children of the bride chamber”, are free from the booth all the seven days;

”that is, from dwelling in booths at the feast of tabernacles, which was too strait a place for such festival solemnities. And again,

”the bridegroom, his friends, and all בני החופה, “the children of the bride chamber”, are free from prayer and the phylacteries;

that is, from observing the stated times of attending to these things, and much more then were they excused from fasting and mourning; so that the Pharisees had an answer sufficient to silence them, agreeably to their own traditions. Give me leave to transcribe one passage more, for the illustration of this text⁵⁶¹.

”When R. Lazar ben Arach opened, in the business of Mercava, (the visions in the beginning of Ezekiel,) Rabban Jochanan ben Zaccai alighted from his ass; for he said it is not fit I should hear the glory of my Creator, and ride upon an ass: they went, and sat under a certain tree, and fire came down from heaven and surrounded them; and the ministering angels leaped before them, hpwx ynbk, “as the children of the bride chamber” rejoice before the bridegroom.”

⁵⁵⁹ Zohar in Gen. fol. 6. 4.

⁵⁶⁰ T. Bab. Succa, fol. 25. 2. & Hieros. Succa, fol. 53. 1. Maimon. Succa, c. 6. sect. 3.

⁵⁶¹ T. Hieros. Chagiga, fol. 77. 1.

The time of Christ's being with his disciples, between his entrance on his public ministry, and his death, is the time here referred to, during which the disciples had very little care and trouble: this was their rejoicing time, and there was a great deal of reason for it; they had no occasion to fast and mourn; and indeed the Jews themselves say ⁵⁶², that

”all fasts shall cease in the days of the Messiah; and there shall be no more but good days, and days of joy and rejoicing, as it is said, Zec 8:19.”

But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them;

in a forcible manner, and put to death, as he was;

and then shall they fast

and mourn, and be in great distress, as John's disciples now were, on account of their master being in prison.

Matthew 9:16

Ver. 16. **No man putteth a piece of new cloth,**

These words are, by Luke 5:36 called a “parable”, as are those in the following verse; and both are commonly interpreted of the unreasonableness and danger of putting young disciples upon severe exercises of religion, as fasting, &c: and it is true, that young converts are to be tenderly dealt with, as they are by Father, Son, and Spirit, as the disciples were by Christ, and the first Christians were by the apostles: and some things in these parables may seem to agree; as that these austerities should be represented as “new”, and as burdensome and troublesome, and the disciples as weak, and easily staggered: but then there are others that will not bear; as that the disciples should be compared to “old garments, and old bottles”; when they were “young” converts, and men “renewed” by the Spirit and grace of God, and had on the beautiful robe of Christ's righteousness; and that such severe exercises, under the notion of religion, should be signified by “new wine”, which generally designs something pleasant and agreeable: nor were the disciples unable to bear such severities, who very probably had been trained up in them, and been used to them before their conversion; and could now as well have bore them as John's disciples, or the Pharisees, had they been proper and necessary; but the true reason why they were not required of them, was not their weakness, or danger of falling off, and perishing, of which there were none; but because it was unsuitable to their present situation, the bridegroom being with them. But our Lord, in this parable of putting

⁵⁶² Maimon. Hilchot Taaniot, c. 5. sect. 19.

“a piece of new”, or “undressed cloth”, such as has never passed through the fuller's hands, and so unfit to mend with,

unto an old garment,

refers not only to the fastings of the Pharisees, but to their other traditions of the elders, which they held; as such that respected their eating, drinking, and conversing with other persons mentioned in the context, and which observances they joined with their moral performances; on account of which, they looked upon themselves as very righteous persons, and all others as sinners: and to expose their folly, Christ delivers this parable. Wherefore, by “the old garment”, I apprehend, is meant their moral and legal righteousness, or their obedience to the moral and ceremonial laws, which was very imperfect, as well as impure, and might be rightly called “filthy rags”; or be compared to an old worn out garment, filthy and loathsome, torn, and full of holes, which cannot keep a person warm, nor screen him from the weather, and so old that it cannot be mended. And by the “piece of new cloth”, or “garment”, put unto it, or sewed upon it, are intended the traditions of the elders, these men were so fond of, concerning eating, and drinking, and fasting, and hundreds of other things, very idle and trifling, and which were new and upstart notions. Now, by putting, or sewing the new cloth to their old garment, is designed, their joining their observance of these traditions to their other duties of religion, to make up a justifying righteousness before God; but in vain, and to no purpose. Their old garment of their own works, in obedience to the laws of God, moral and ceremonial, was full bad enough of itself; but became abundantly worse, by joining this new piece of men's own devising to it;

for that which is put in to fill it up, taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse:

their new obedience to the traditions of men, making void the law of God, instead of mending, marred their righteousness, and left them in a worse condition than it found them: and besides, as it is in Luke, “the piece that was taken out of the new, agreeth not with the old”; there being no more likeness between the observance of the commandments of men, and obedience to the laws of God, than there is between a piece of new undressed cloth, that has never been washed and worn, and an old worn out garment. Much such a foolish part do those men under the Gospel dispensation act, who join the righteousness of Christ, or a part of it, with their own, in order to make up a justifying righteousness before God; for Christ's righteousness is the only justifying

righteousness; it is whole and perfect, and needs nothing to be added to it, nor can it be parted, any more than his seamless coat was; nor a piece taken out of it: nor is there any justification by works, either in whole or in part; the old garment of man's righteousness must be thrown away, in point of justification; it cannot be mended in such a manner; and if any attempts are made in this way, the rent becomes worse: such persons, instead of being justified, are in a worse condition; for they not only set up, and exalt their own righteousness, which is criminal, but disparage the righteousness of Christ as imperfect, by joining it to their's; and whilst they fancy themselves in a good state, are in a most miserable one; harlots and publicans being nearer the kingdom of heaven than these, and enter into it before them; self-righteous persons are more hardly, and with greater difficulty convinced, than such sinners. Moreover, nothing is more disagreeable than such a patch work; Christ's righteousness and a man's own bear no likeness to one another; and such a patched garment must ill become the character and dignity of a saint, a child of God, an heir of heaven.

Matthew 9:17

Ver. 17. **Neither do men put new wine into old bottles,**

As in the former parable, our Lord exposes the folly of the Scribes and Pharisees, in their zealous attachment to the traditions of the elders; so in this, he gives a reason why he did not call these persons by his Gospel, who were settled upon the old principle of self-righteousness, but sinners, whom he renews by his Spirit and grace: for by “old bottles” are meant, the Scribes and Pharisees. The allusion is to bottles, made of the skins of beasts, which in time decayed, waxed old, and became unfit for use: such were the wine bottles, old and rent, the Gibeonites brought with them, and showed to Joshua, (Joshua 9:4 Joshua 9:13) and to which the Psalmist compares himself, (Psalms 119:83) and which the Misnic doctors call twtmx, and their commentators ⁵⁶³ say, were נֹרָה שֶׁל עֹר, “bottles made of skin”, or “leather”, and so might be rent. Of the use of new and old bottles, take the following hint out of the “Talmud” ⁵⁶⁴.

”The bottles of the Gentiles, if scraped and חֲדָשִׁים “new”, they are free for use; if ישְׁנִים “old”, they are forbidden.”

⁵⁶³ Jarchi & Bartenora in Misn. Celim, c. 24. sect. 11. & Negaim, c. 11. sect. 11.

⁵⁶⁴ T. Bab. Avoda Zara, fol. 33. 1.

Now the Scribes and Pharisees may be signified by these old bottles, being natural men, no other than as they were born; having never been regenerated, and renewed in the spirit of their minds; in whom the old man was predominant, were mere formal professors of religion, and self-righteous persons: and by “new wine” is meant, either the love and favour of God compared to wine, that is neat and clean, because free from hypocrisy in him, or motives in the creature; to generous wine, for its cheering and reviving effects; and to new wine, not but that it is very ancient, even from everlasting, but, because newly manifested, in the effectual calling and conversion: or the Gospel is signified by wine, for its purity, good flavour, and pleasant taste; for its generous effects, in reviving drooping spirits, refreshing weary persons, and comforting distressed minds; and by new wine, not that it is a new doctrine, an upstart notion, for it is an ancient Gospel, but because newly and more clearly revealed by Christ and his apostles: or the blessings of grace which spring from the love of God, and are manifested in the Gospel, such as pardon of sin, reconciliation and atonement, justifying and sanctifying grace, spiritual joy and peace, and the like. Now as the new wine is not put into old bottles,

else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish:

so the love of God, the Gospel of the grace of God, and the blessings of it, are not received and retained, nor can they be, by natural men, by self-righteous persons: they do not suit and agree with their old carnal hearts and principles; they slight and reject them, and let them run out, which proves their greater condemnation.

But they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.

By “new bottles” are meant sinners, whom Christ calls by his grace, and the Spirit regenerates and renews, who are made new creatures in Christ; who have new hearts, and new spirits, and new principles of light, love, faith, and holiness, implanted in them; who have new eyes to see with, new ears to hear with, new feet to walk with, to and in Christ, new hands to work and handle with, and who live a new life and conversation. Now to such as these, the love of God is manifested and shed abroad in their hearts; by these, the Gospel of Christ is truly received and valued, and these enjoy the spiritual blessings of it; and so both the doctrine of the Gospel, and the grace of God, are preserved entire, and these persons saved in the day of Christ.

Matthew 9:18

Ver. 18. **While he spake these things unto them,**

To the Scribes and Pharisees, and to John's disciples, concerning, and in vindication of his, and his disciples, eating and drinking with publicans and sinners, and their not fasting as others did; and while he spake these parables, to expose the folly of self-righteous persons, and justify his own conduct, in calling sinners to repentance,

behold, there came a certain ruler and worshipped him.

This man, as both Mark and Luke say, was named Jairus; and was a ruler, not of the sanhedrim, or lesser consistory, but of the synagogue that was at Capernaum; and whom the Jews call, ראש הכנה, "the head of the synagogue". Mark says, he was "one of the rulers": not that there were more rulers than one, in one synagogue⁵⁶⁵; but as in great cities, so it is likely in Capernaum there were more synagogues than one, of which he was one of the rulers: so we read of ראשי בנייה⁵⁶⁶, "heads", or "rulers of synagogues". As this is one mistake, so it is another to say, that Dr. Lightfoot speaks of this ruler, as the same with the "minister" of the congregation; when both here, and in the place referred to, he manifestly distinguishes them; as do the Jews: for, by this ruler, as their commentators⁵⁶⁷ say,

the necessary affairs of the synagogue were determined, as who should dismiss with a prophet, who should divide the "shema", and who should go before the ark."

Whereas the business of הכנה, "the minister of the synagogue", was to bring in and out the ark, or chest, in which was the book of the law; and particularly, when the high priest read, or pronounced the blessings, "he" took the book, and gave it to "the ruler of the synagogue"; and the ruler of the synagogue gave it to the "sagan", and the "sagan" to the high priest⁵⁶⁸. The doctor makes indeed שליח הכנה, "the messenger of the congregation", to be the same with "the minister of the synagogue", and which is his mistake; for these were two different officers⁵⁶⁹: the former was the lecturer, or preacher; and the latter, a sort of a sexton to keep the synagogue clean, open and shut the doors, and do other things before mentioned. This Jairus was a man of great power and significance; who in

⁵⁶⁵ Vid. Rhenfurd. de decem otiosis dissert. 2. c. 7.

⁵⁶⁶ T. Bab. Gittin, fol. 60. 1.

⁵⁶⁷ Jarchi & Bartenora in Misn. Yoma, c. 7. sect. 1. & Sota, c. 7. sect. 7.

⁵⁶⁸ Misn. Sota, c. 7. sect. 7. & Bartenora in ib.

⁵⁶⁹ Vid. Rhenfurd, dissert. 1. p. 81, etc.

such a very humble manner prostrated himself at the feet of Jesus, and expressed such strong faith in him:

saying, my daughter is even now dead, but come and lay thine hand upon her, and she shall live.

Luke says, she was "his only daughter": and Mark calls her his "little daughter": though both he and Luke say, she was about "twelve" years of age, and that with strict propriety, according to the Jewish canons, which⁵⁷⁰ say; that

"a daughter, from the day of her birth until she is twelve years complete, is called קטנה, "a little one" and when she is twelve years of age, and one day and upwards, she is called hren, "a young woman".

Her case seems to be differently represented; Mark says, she was "at the point of death", or "in the last extremity"; and Luke, that she "lay dying": but Matthew here says, that she was "even now dead", which may be easily reconciled: for not to observe, that αργι signifies "near", and the phrase may be rendered, "she is near dead", or just expiring, the case was this; when Jairus left his house, his daughter was in the agony of death, just ready to give up the ghost; so, that he concluded, by the time he was with Jesus, she had made her exit; as it appears she had, by a messenger, who brought the account of her death, before they could get to the house. The ruler's address to Christ on this occasion, is a very considerable, though not so great an instance of faith as some others; that he, who was a ruler of a synagogue, should apply to Christ, which sort of men were generally most averse to him; that he should fall down and worship him, if not as God, since as yet he might be ignorant of his deity, yet behaved with the profoundest respect to him, as a great man, and a prophet; that he should come to him when his child was past all hope of recovery; yea, when he had reason to believe she was actually dead, as she was; that even then, he should believe in hope against hope; he affirms, that he really believed, that if Christ would but come to his house, and lay his hand upon her, an action often used in grave and serious matters, as in blessing persons, in prayer, and in healing diseases, she would certainly be restored to life again.

Matthew 9:19

Ver. 19. **And Jesus arose and followed him,**

Immediately, without delay, or any more ado: he did

⁵⁷⁰ Maimon. Hilchot lshot, c. 2. sect. 1. & Bartenora in Misn. Nidda, c. 5. sect. 6.

not upbraid him with the treatment he and his followers met with, from men of his profession; who cast out of their synagogues such, who confessed him to be the Messiah: nor does he take notice of any weakness in his faith; as that he thought it necessary he should go with him to his house, when he could as well have restored his daughter to life, absent, as present; and that he should prescribe a form of doing it, by laying his hands upon her. These things he overlooked, and at once got up from Matthew's table, and went along with him,

and so did his disciples,

to be witnesses of the miracle; and according to the other evangelists, a large multitude of people besides; even a throng of them, led by curiosity to see this wondrous performance.

Matthew 9:20

Ver. 20. And behold a woman which was diseased.... This affair happened in the streets of Capernaum, as Christ was going from the house of Matthew the publican, to the house of Jairus the ruler of the synagogue, which were both in this city. This poor woman's case was a very distressed one; she had been attended with an issue of blood twelve years; it was an uncommon flux of a long standing, was inveterate, and become incurable; though she had not been negligent of herself, but had made use of means, applied herself to regular physicians, had took many a disagreeable medicine, and had spent all her substance in this way; but instead of being better, was worse, and was now given up by them, as past all cure. This woman might be truly called hlwdg hbz,⁵⁷¹ "the greater profluvius woman", in the language of the doctors; for if one that had a flux but three days was called so, much more one that had had it twelve years. She having heard of Jesus, and his miraculous cures, had faith given her to believe, that she also should receive one from him; wherefore she came behind him, through modesty, being ashamed to come before him, and tell him her case, especially before so many people; and fearing lest if her case was known, she should be thrust away, if not by Christ, yet by the company; she being according to the law an unclean person, and unfit for society: and touched the hem of his garment; which was the tuyu, or "fringes", the Jews were obliged to wear upon the borders of their garments, and on it a ribband of blue; see Nu 15:38 in both which places Onkelos uses the word Nydpowrk, the same with kraspedon, used here, and in Mark 6:56 and rendered

⁵⁷¹ Ib. Issure Bia, c. 6. sect. 7, 8. & in Misn. Nidda, c. 4. sect. 7.

"hem". The Jews placed much sanctity in the wear and use of these fringes; and the Pharisees, who pretended to more holiness than others, enlarged them beyond their common size; but it was not on account of any peculiar holiness in this part of Christ's garment, that induced this poor woman to touch it; but this being behind him, and more easy to be come at, she therefore laid hold on it; for it was his garment, any part of it she concluded, if she could but touch, she should have a cure. However, we learn from hence, that Christ complied with the rites of the ceremonial law in apparel, as well as in other things.

Matthew 9:21

Ver. 21. **For she said within herself,**

That is, she thought within herself, she reasoned the matter in her mind, she concluded upon it, and firmly believed it; being strongly impressed and influenced by the Spirit of God, and encouraged by instances of cures she had heard were performed by persons only touching him; see Luke 6:19

if I may but touch his garment.

The Arabic version reads it, "the hem of his garment", as before; but is not supported by any copy, nor by any other version: her faith was, that if she might be allowed, or if she could by any means come at him, to touch any part of his garment, she should have a cure:

I shall be whole,

or "I shall be saved"; that is, from her disease, from which she could have no deliverance, by the advice and prescriptions of all her former physicians, and by all the means she had made use of.

Matthew 9:22

Ver. 22. **But Jesus turned him about,**

Knowing what was done behind him, that virtue was gone out of him, that the woman had touched him, and was healed; which is a clear proof of his omniscience, and so of his deity: not that he was angry with her for touching him, though she was an impure woman; for though men and garments were defiled by the touch of a profluvius⁵⁷² person; yet such was the power and holiness of Christ, that as he could not be defiled by any such means, so hereby, at once, this woman's impurity was also removed: but Christ turned about to observe and point out the woman, and her cure, to the company; not for the sake of his own honour, but for the glory of God, the commendation of the woman's faith, and chiefly for the strengthening the faith of Jairus, with whom he was

⁵⁷² Misn. Oholot, c. 1. sect. 5. & Zabim, c. 2. sect. 4. & 3. 1. 2, 3. & 4, 5. & 5. 1. {y} Misn. Yadaim. c. 3. sect. 1.

going to raise his daughter from the dead:

and when he saw her.

The other evangelists, Mark and Luke, record, that Jesus inquired who touched him, and what answer Peter and the disciples made to him; and how he looked around, and very likely fastened his eyes upon the woman; when she perceiving that she could not go off undiscovered, came trembling to him, fell down before him, and told him the whole matter; and then

he said, daughter be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole.

He addressed her in a kind and tender manner, calling her “daughter”; an affable, courteous way of speaking, used by the Jewish doctors⁵⁷³, when speaking to women: which showed his affection, and bespoke his relation; and bidding her take heart and be of good cheer, since he meant not to blame her for what she had done, but to commend her faith in him, whereby she had received a cure: meaning, not that there was such virtue in her faith as to effect such a cure; but that he, the object of her faith, had performed it for her:

and the woman was made whole from that hour;

her disease immediately left her, and from that time forward, was no more troubled with it: the cure was so effectual, and so perfect, that the disorder never returned more.

Matthew 9:23

Ver. 23. **And when Jesus came into the ruler’s house,**

Both Mark and Luke relate, how that before this, whilst they were in the way, and just as Christ had done speaking to the poor woman, that news was brought to the ruler, that his daughter was actually dead, and therefore need not give Jesus any further trouble; when Christ encouraged him not to be cast down at the tidings, but believe, and she should be restored again; and that he suffered none to follow him, but Peter, James, and John: and

saw the minstrels,

or “pipers”; how many there were, is not known: it is certain there were more than one; and it was a rule with the⁵⁷⁴ Jews that

”the poorest man in Israel (when his wife died) had not less חליליני תשני “than two pipes”, and one mourning woman.

”And since this was a daughter of a ruler of the syn-

⁵⁷³ Misn. Yadaim. c. 3. sect. 1.

⁵⁷⁴ Misn. Cetubot. c. 4. sect. 4. Maimon Ishot, c. 14. sect. 23.

agogue that was dead, there might be several of them. These instruments were made use of, not to remove the melancholy of surviving friends, or allay the grief of the afflicted family; but, on the contrary, to excite it: for the Jewish writers say⁵⁷⁵, these pipes were hollow instruments, with which they made a known sound, והאבל לנדר הבכיה, “to stir up lamentation and mourning”: and for the same purpose, they had their mourning women, who answered to the pipe; and by their dishevelled hair, and doleful tones, moved upon the affections, and drew tears from others; and very likely are the persons, that Mark says, “wept and wailed greatly”. Sometimes trumpets were made use of on these mournful occasions⁵⁷⁶; but whether these were used only for persons more advanced in years, and pipes for younger ones, as by the Heathens⁵⁷⁷, at least, at some times, is not certain.

And the people making a noise;

the people of the house, the relations of the deceased, the neighbours, who came in on this occasion; and others, in a sort of tumult and uproar, hurrying and running about; some speaking in the praise of the dead, others lamenting her death, and others preparing things proper for the funeral; all which shew, that she was really dead: among these also, might be the mourners that made a noise for the dead;

”for since mourning was for the honour of the dead, therefore they obliged the heirs to hire mourning men, and mourning women, to mourn for the same⁵⁷⁸.

Matthew 9:24

Ver. 24. **And he said unto them, give place,**

Depart, be gone; for he put them out of the room, and suffered none to be with him, when he raised her from the dead, but Peter, James, and John, and the father and mother of the child, who were witnesses enough of this miracle.

For the maid is not dead, but sleepeth:

not but that she was really dead; and Christ signifies as much, when he says, she “sleepeth”; a phrase that is often used in⁵⁷⁹ Talmudic writings, for one that is dead: but Christ’s meaning is, that she was not so dead as the company thought; as always to remain in the state of the

⁵⁷⁵ Maimon & Bartenora in Misn. Sabbat, c. 23. sect. 4.

⁵⁷⁶ Midrash Kohelet, fol. 77. 4.

⁵⁷⁷ Vid. Kirchman. de funer. Roman. l. 2. c. 5.

⁵⁷⁸ Maimon. Hilch. Ebel, c. 12. sect. 1.

⁵⁷⁹ T. Hieros. Beracot, fol. 6. 1. Avoda Zara, fol. 42. 3. Bereshit Rabba Parash. 91. fol. 79. 3.

dead, and not to be restored to life again: whereas our Lord signifies, it would be seen in a very little time, that she should be raised again, just as a person is awaked out of sleep; so that there was no occasion to make such funeral preparations as they did. The Jews say⁵⁸⁰ of some of their dead, that they are asleep, and not dead: it is said, Isa 26:19 “Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust”.

“These, say they, are they that sleep and die not; and such are they that sleep in Hebron, for they לאומותי אלא דמיכני, “do not die, but sleep”, --the four couples in Hebron (Adam and Eve, &c.) they “sleep, but are not dead”.

And they laughed him to scorn;

they mocked at his words, and had him in the utmost contempt, as a very weak silly man; taking him either to be a madman, or a fool; knowing that she was really dead, of which they had all the evidence they could have; and having no faith at all in him, and in his power to raise her from the dead.

Matthew 9:25

Ver. 25. **But when the people were put forth,**

Either out of the house or room, by Christ, or, at least, by his orders: which was done, partly because he was desirous it might be kept a secret, as much as possible, and to shew, that he did not affect popular applause; and partly, because they were unworthy to be admitted spectators of such a wondrous action, who had treated him with so much scorn and contempt: he went in; not alone, but with his three disciples, Peter, James, and John, who were taken in to be witnesses of this resurrection, and the parents of the child; who were so very solicitous for its life, under whose power she was, and to whom she was to be restored: and took her by the hand; just as one would do to awake another out of sleep; and, perhaps, in compliance with her father’s request, to lay his hand upon her: and though the touch of a dead body, according to the law, Nu 19:16 was defiling; yet this did not defile him, any more than his touching the leper, or the profluous woman’s touching his clothes; for these actions produced supernatural effects, which came not under the cognizance of the law. His taking her by the hand, was not all that he did, but he called, as to a person asleep, and said unto her these words, “Talitha cumi”, as recorded by Mark, and are also in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel of Matthew; and which, in the Syriac language, signify, “maiden, arise”; and immediately, directly, as soon as ever he had thus said, the maid arose, as out of

⁵⁸⁰ Zohar in Exod. fol. 62. 4.

sleep; she revived, her soul came to her again, and she got off of the bed, and walked about house, and food was ordered to be given to her. All which most fully demonstrated that she was really restored to life, which was as clear a case, as that before she was really dead.

Matthew 9:26

Ver. 26. **And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land.**

For though he strictly charged the parents, as the other evangelists say, that they should tell no man what was done, he not affecting the applause of men; yet it was not possible the thing should be entirely concealed; since there was such a number of people, not only relations, but neighbours, who full well knew, and were assured she had been dead: when these saw her alive, walk about, eat and drink, and converse with them, they must be persuaded of the miracle, and relate it wherever they came; so that the fame of it could not but be spread all over the country in which Capernaum was.

Matthew 9:27

Ver. 27. **And when Jesus departed thence,**

From the house of Jairus, to another in the same city; two blind men followed him: very closely, by the direction of others, having heard of the miracle just now performed by him; and from thence concluded he was able to restore them to their sight; crying and saying, with great faith and fervour, with much importunity, and frequently repeating the following words, thou son of David, have mercy on us. Whence it appears, that they firmly believed, and were fully persuaded, that he was the true Messiah; for “the son of David” was a known character of the Messiah among the Jews: nothing was more common than to call him by this title, without any other additional epithet, see Gill “Mt 1:1”, and since it had been prophesied of the Messiah, that he should “open the eyes of the blind”, Isa 35:5 they might be greatly encouraged to hope and believe they should obtain mercy from him in this respect.

Matthew 9:28

Ver. 28. **And when he was come into the house,**

In which he dwelt, whilst at Capernaum: for he took no notice of them by the way; but though they followed him close, and cried vehemently, he did not stop to speak to them, or give them a cure: according to their request, but went on his way; which he did, partly to avoid the populace, and that he might not be seen by men, in what he did, and partly to try their faith, and the constancy of it.

The blind men came to him;

being directed by others, into what house he went, and where he was, and very probably with the leave of Christ:

and Jesus saith unto them, believe ye that I am able to do this?

That is, to have mercy on them, as they requested, by curing them of their blindness; which, though not expressed, is implied, and is the thing designed: this question is put, not as being ignorant of, or as doubting their faith in him, which they had expressed, in calling him the son of David; and had shown the firmness and constancy of it, by following him, though he took no notice of them; but partly, for the further trial of their faith, and to bring them to a more open profession of it, as to this particular, his power to cure them of their blindness; and partly, for the sake of those, that were in the house:

they said unto him, yea, Lord.

They firmly believed he had power to do it, they had not the least doubt and hesitation in their minds about it; for though their bodily eyes were at present dark, the eyes of their understandings were enlightened, to see and know Jesus to be the true Messiah, David's Son, and Lord.

Matthew 9:29

Ver. 29. **Then touched he their eyes,**

Not but that he could have restored sight to them, without touching their eyes, by a word speaking, or by the secret communication of his power; but he might do this as a sign of his favour and kindness to them, and of his will to cure them; as also in compliance with their weakness, who might expect some manual operation upon them;

saying, according to your faith be it unto you:

not that faith in his person and power, was the cause or condition of this cure, or the rule and measure according to which Christ proceeded; but the sense is, that as they had believed he was able to heal them, accordingly a cure should be effected; which, upon his so saying, they immediately found performed in them.

Matthew 9:30

Ver. 30. **And their eyes were opened,**

Some copies read, "immediately"; and so do the Syriac, Persic, and Ethiopic versions: and this was certainly the true and real matter of fact, that as soon as Christ had touched their eyes, and said the above words, their sight was perfectly restored to them; and they had a clear, full, and true sight of objects, as men have, whose vision fac-

ulty is in its full strength and rigour, and their eyes open: **and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, see that no man know it.**

This was a very strict charge, and according to the signification of the word here used, it was given with great austerity of countenance, and severity of expression, in a very rough and threatening manner; which Christ might be the rather induced to, because he had given such like orders already, and they had not been observed: the reasons for concealing the miracle are not very obvious; it seems likely, that with the same view he took no notice of these blind men in the street, but went into an house, and cured them; which seems to be, to shun all appearance of vain glory, or seeking popular applause, that he gave these orders; or it may be, he did not choose to be made more known by this miracle, or at this time, or by these men; he might foresee that it would be attended with ill consequences; either the more to irritate the resentments of some persons against him; or to put others on doing things which were disagreeable to him; as setting him up for a temporal prince among them, being David's son.

Matthew 9:31

Ver. 31. **But they, when they were departed,**

That is, out of the house where they received their cure, and out of the city; for it appears, by what follows, they went into other parts, where it is probable they might originally belong; they spread abroad his fame in all that country. This they did, not in contempt of Christ and his orders; but rather out of gratitude to their benefactor, and through an honest zeal to spread his honour and glory: though they are not to be commended for disregarding the command of Christ; for, not our affection, but Christ's will, is to be the rule of our actions.

Matthew 9:32

Ver. 32. **As they went out,**

The Syriac version reads it, "when Jesus went out"; to which agrees the Arabic, against all the copies: for not he, but the men who had been blind, and now had their sight restored, went out from the house where Jesus was; which circumstance is mentioned, and by it the following account is introduced, partly to show how busy Christ was, how he was continually employed in doing good, and that as soon as one work of mercy was over, another offered; and partly, to observe how closely and exactly the prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled; in which, as it was foretold, that "the eyes of the blind" should "be opened"; so likewise, that "the tongue of the dumb" should "sing", Isa 35:5.

Behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.

The word signifies one that is deaf, as well as dumb; as does the Hebrew word שָׁמֵן often used by the Jewish writers for a deaf and dumb man; one, they say⁵⁸¹, that can neither hear nor speak, and is unfit for sacrifice, and excused many things: and indeed these two, deafness and dumbness, always go together in persons, who are deaf from their birth; for as they cannot hear, they cannot learn to speak: but this man seems to be dumb, not by nature, but through the possession of Satan, who had taken away, or restrained the use of his speech, out of pure malice and ill will, that he might not have the benefit of conversation with men, nor be able to say anything to the glory of God. This man did not come of himself to Christ, perhaps being unwilling, through the power and influence the devil had over him; but his friends, who were concerned for his welfare, and who were thoroughly persuaded of the power of Christ to heal him, by the miracles they had seen, or heard performed by him, brought him to him; and, no doubt, expressed their desire that he would cast out the devil, and cure him, which he did.

Matthew 9:33

Ver. 33. And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake,.... The cause of his dumbness being removed, the effect ceased, and the man spake as he did before, and as other men do; and this was done, according to the Persic version, "as soon as Christ saw him"; the devil not being able to bear his presence, much less withstand his power: but as soon as Christ had set his eyes upon the man possessed by him, and had given him orders to be gone, he immediately went out, and the man was restored to his speech again; and the multitude marvelled, saying, it was never so seen in Israel. The vast crowds of people, who were alarmed with the former miracles of Christ, and came along with the friends of the dumb man, when they heard him speak so suddenly and plainly, and with so much freedom, nothing being said or done to him, were surprised; and declared very frankly, that though many wonderful things had been done in Israel, in times past, by Moses, Elijah, Elisha, and others, yet never were such things seen, or heard, or known of, as were done by Christ: referring not to this miracle only, but to all the rest he had just wrought; as curing the woman of her bloody issue, raising Jairus's daughter from the dead, re-

storing sight to the two blind men, and now casting out a dumb devil.

Matthew 9:34

Ver. 34. **But the Pharisees said,**

Who were the sworn enemies of Christ, and were filled with envy at him, and malice against him: these men could not bear, that so much honour and glory should be given to Christ; and therefore said,

he casteth out the devils through the prince of the devils:

they could not deny matter of fact, that he had cast out a devil; nor could they say he had done an ill thing in so doing; they could not but own that it was a preternatural action, more than human; nor could they contradict what the multitude said, that no such thing had been ever seen, or known, in Israel: but that Christ might not have the glory of the action, and to fix a mark of infamy upon him, foolishly impute it to a diabolical influence, as if one devil would eject another; and to Christ's familiarity with, and the assistance he had from, not a common devil, but the prince of them. In Beza's most ancient manuscript, and in some others, this whole verse is wanting; and were it not, for the general consent of copies, one should be tempted to think these words were not said at this time, because Christ returns no answer to them; and what is observed by Luke 11:15 as following this miracle, is the selfsame as was spoken by Christ in Mt 12:24 and where this passage is more thoroughly considered.

Matthew 9:35

Ver. 35. **And Jesus went about all the cities and villages,**

He did not confine himself, and his acts of kindness and compassion, to his own city, Capernaum, but he took a circuit throughout all Galilee; and not only visited their larger and more principal cities and towns, but their villages also; doing good to the bodies and souls of men in every place, and of whatever state and condition.

Teaching in their synagogues;

which were places of public worship, where prayer was made, the law and the prophets were read, and a word of exhortation given to the people; and which, it seems, were in villages, as well as in cities and towns: and indeed it is a rule with the Jews⁵⁸², that

"in what place soever there are ten Israelites, they ought to build a house, to which they may go to prayer, at all times of prayer; and such a place is called tonkh tyb, "a synagogue".

⁵⁸¹ Maimon. & Bartenora in Misn. Trumot, c. 1. sect. 2. T. Bab. Chagiga, fol. 2. 2.

⁵⁸² Maimon Hilchot Tephilla, c. 11. sect. 1.

And hence we often read of ⁵⁸³ בית הכנה של כפרים, “the synagogue of villages”, as distinct from the synagogues of cities and walled towns; which confutes a notion of the learned Dr. Lightfoot ⁵⁸⁴, who thought there were no synagogues in villages. Now, wherever Christ found any of these, he entered into them, and taught the people publicly,

preaching the Gospel of the kingdom;

the good news and glad tidings of peace and pardon, reconciliation and salvation, by himself the Messiah; all things relating to the Gospel dispensation; the doctrines of grace, which concern both the kingdom of grace and glory; particularly the doctrine of regeneration, and the necessity of having a better righteousness than that of the Scribes and Pharisees; the one as a meetness, the other as a title to eternal happiness:

and healing every sickness, and every disease among the people.

As he preached wholesome doctrine for the good of their souls; for their spiritual health, and the cure of their spiritual maladies; so he healed all sorts of diseases the bodies of men were incident to, that were brought unto him; and by his miracles confirmed, as well as recommended, the doctrines he preached.

Matthew 9:36

Ver. 36. **But when he saw the multitudes,**

As he took his circuit through the several cities, towns, and villages, he made his observations upon the large numbers that flocked to his ministry, and seemed to be desirous of spiritual instructions, in what an unhappy and melancholy situation they were; and

he was moved with compassion on them:

his bowels yearned for them, he was touched with a feeling of their infirmities, as the merciful high priest, the good shepherd, and faithful prophet; being heartily concerned for the souls of men, their comfort here, and everlasting happiness hereafter:

because they fainted;

being fatigued and tired, not in their bodies, through journeying from place to place, to hear the word, but in their minds; being burdened and wearied with the various traditions and doctrines of the Scribes and Pharisees:

and were scattered abroad;

thrown and tossed about, and divided through the

⁵⁸³ T. Bab. Megilla. fol. 26. 1. & Gloss. in ib. Maimon. & Bartenora in Misn. Megilla, c. 3. sect. 1. & Maimon. Hilch. Tephilla, c. 11. sect. 16.

⁵⁸⁴ In Mark i. 38. & Chorograph. ad Matt. c. 98.

different sects of religion among them; no due care was taken of them, to gather and keep them together, and feed them with wholesome doctrine; but were as abjects, outcasts, that no man regarded, and in great danger of the loss and ruin of their immortal souls: being

as sheep without a shepherd;

that was good for anything, or did the office and duty of a shepherd to them: the Scribes and Pharisees were shepherds indeed, such as they were, but very bad ones; like the shepherds of Israel of old, who fed themselves, and not the flock; who strengthened not the diseased, nor healed the sick, nor bound up that which was broken; nor brought again that which was driven away, nor sought that which was lost: but on the contrary, caused them to go astray from mountain to hill; whereby they forgot their resting place, in the Messiah promised them, and who was now come.

Matthew 9:37

Ver. 37. **Then saith he unto his disciples,**

His heart being drawn out, and filled with pity to these poor people, upon observing the miserable and sad condition they were in; he turns himself to his disciples, whom he was about to call, and send forth in a more public manner to preach the Gospel, of which we read in the following chapter; and in order to quicken them to this service, and engage their hearts in it, says unto them,

the harvest truly is plenteous;

meaning the large number of God's elect, which were in these cities, towns, and villages, and in other places: not that these were maturely prepared by anything in themselves, or done by them, for the grace of God; and much less ripe for the kingdom of glory, and therefore called an harvest: but as there are the appointed weeks of the harvest, or a set time for the harvest to be gathered in, so there is a certain fixed time, settled in the counsel, and by the purpose of God, for the effectual calling and conversion of his elect; and this time being come, with respect to these in Galilee, and other parts, Christ calls them an “harvest”; and because of their number, a large, or “plenteous” one.

But the labourers are few:

Gospel ministers; whose calling is a laborious one; whose business is to labour in the word and doctrine; to be constant in prayer; to give up themselves to meditation and reading; to study to show themselves workmen; to preach the word in season, and out of season; and diligently discharge the several duties of their office, to the glory of Christ, and the good of souls: but such painful

and laborious ministers, who are willing to spend, and be spent for Christ and immortal souls, have been but few in all ages; generally speaking, there are more loiterers than labourers.

Matthew 9:38

Ver. 38. **Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest,**

By “the Lord of the harvest” is either meant God the Father, whose are all the elect, who has a hearty concern for them, and will have them all gathered in, not one of them shall be left; or the Lord Jesus Christ himself, who has the care and charge of the whole election of grace; and who as he must, he will bring them all in; and who has power of sending forth labourers, as the following chapter shows; and so this is a proof of prayer being made to Christ;

that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

This is the petition the disciples of Christ were put upon making to the Lord of the harvest, on consideration of the present condition multitudes of souls were in: they could not make, qualify, and send out ministers themselves; this is not man's work, but God's: he only is able to furnish with ministerial gifts, to work upon, and powerfully incline the hearts of men to this service, to call and send them forth into it, and to assist and succeed them in it. The persons desired to be sent are “labourers”; faithful, diligent, and industrious preachers of the Gospel; such as lay out themselves, their time, talents, and strength, in their master's service; and do not indulge themselves in sloth and idleness: the place they are desired to be sent into is, “into the harvest”; into the field of the world, where God's elect lie, and there labour in preaching the Gospel; hoping for a divine blessing, and an almighty power to attend their ministrations, for the conversion of sinners, and edification of saints. The request the disciples are directed to make, concerning these persons for this work, is, that the Lord of the harvest would “send”, or “thrust” them “forth”; implying power and efficacy, and authority, on the part of the sender; and backwardness on the part of those that are sent, through modesty: a sense of the greatness of the work, and of their own unworthiness and unfitness for it. Very opportunely did our Lord move his disciples to put up this petition, and was done, no question, with a view to, and to prepare for, his mission of the twelve to preach the Gospel, of which there is an account in the next chapter.

Matthew Chapter 10

Matthew 10:1

Ver. 1. **And when he had called to him his twelve disciples,**

These persons had been for some time called by the grace of God, and were already the disciples of Christ, and such as were more familiar and intimate with him, than others, that went by that name. They had sat down at his feet, and had received of his words; they had heard his doctrines, and had seen his miracles, and had been by him training up for public work; but as yet had not been called and sent forth to enter on such service: but now all things being ready, they being properly instructed, and the time for the conversion of a large number of souls being up, he called them together privately; and gave them a commission to preach the Gospel, ordained them ministers of the word, and installed them into the office of apostleship. The number “twelve”, is either in allusion to the twelve spies that were sent by Moses into the land of Canaan, or to the twelve stones in Aaron's breast plate; or to the twelve fountains the Israelites found in the wilderness; or to the twelve oxen on which the molten sea stood in Solomon's temple; or to the twelve gates in Ezekiel's temple; or rather, to the twelve patriarchs, and the tribes which sprung from them; that as they were the fathers of the Jewish nation, which was typical of God's chosen people; so these were to be the instruments of spreading the Gospel, not only Judea, but in all the world, and of planting Christian churches there. And that they might appear to come forth with authority, and that their doctrine might be confirmed,

he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out;

or “over all devils”, as Luke 9:1. It was usual with the Jews to call a demon or devil רוח טומאה, “an unclean spirit”; especially such as frequented burying places: so in one place ⁵⁸⁵, an unclean spirit is interpreted by the gloss שדיו, רוח, “the spirit of the demons”, or devils; and in another ⁵⁸⁶ שד בית הקברות, “the demon of the graves”; where necromancers sought to be, that these spirits might be their familiars, and assist them in their enchantments: accordingly the devils are here called, “unclean spirits”; being in themselves, in their own nature, unclean, and being the cause and means of defiling others, and delighting in impure persons, places, and things. There were many of these spirits, who, because of the great impiety of the Jews, the prevalence of magic arts among them, and by divine permission, had at this time taken possession of great numbers of persons; whereby Christ had an

⁵⁸⁵ T. Bab. Chagiga, fol. 3. 2.

⁵⁸⁶ T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 65. 2.

opportunity of giving proof of his deity, of his being the Messiah, the seed of the woman, that should bruise the serpent's head, by his ejecting them; and of confirming the mission of his disciples, and establishing the doctrine preached by them, by giving them power and authority over them, to cast them out also: and whereas various diseases frequently followed and attended such possessions; he likewise gave them power

to heal all manner of sicknesses, and all manner of diseases,

as he himself had done. The expressions are very full and strong, and include all sorts of maladies incident to human bodies, either of men or women; all distempers natural or preternatural, curable or incurable, by human methods: so that at the same time they were sent to preach the Gospel, for the cure of the souls of men, they were empowered to heal the diseases of their bodies; and which, one should think, could not fail of recommending them to men, and of ingratiating them into their affections.

Matthew 10:2

Ver. 2. **Now the names of the twelve apostles are these,**

This is the first time these disciples are called "apostles", they were learners before; now being instructed, they are sent forth to preach publicly, and therefore are called apostles, or messengers, persons that were sent: so the elders of the priesthood are called שלוחי בית דין "the apostles", or messengers "of the sanhedrim"⁵⁸⁷, to whom the high priest were delivered, before the day of atonement. So six months in the year, שלוחים "apostles", or messengers, were sent by the⁵⁸⁸ sanhedrim, throughout all the land of Israel, and to the captive Jews in other parts, to give notice of the new moon; in allusion to which, the disciples might be so called. It was proper to give the names of them, for the truth of the history, and confirmation of it; for the sake of the persons themselves, and the honour done them; and for the exclusion and detection of false apostles.

The first, Simon, who is called Peter;

his pure Hebrew name was

שמונ, Simeon, as he is called, Ac 15:14 but in the then Jerusalem dialect, and in Rabbinical language, this name is frequently read and pronounced שׂימון "Simon", as here: we often read of R. Simon, and of R. Juda bar Simon,

in both Talmuds⁵⁸⁹. This apostle is also called Peter, to distinguish him from Simon the Canaanite, and which signifies a stone, or rock, in allusion to the object of his faith, and the steadiness of it. He is said to be the "first"; not that he was the head of the rest of the apostles, or had any primacy, dominion, and authority over them; but because he was first called, and was the first that was to open the door of faith to the Gentiles: but chiefly he is said to be so for order's sake; for, some one in the account must be named first, and he as proper as any:

and Andrew his brother;

who was called at the same time with him, and therefore are put together. This name is also to be met with in the Talmudic writings; see Gill "Mt 4:18".

James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;

these two were called next and together, and therefore are placed in this order: the former is so called, to distinguish him from another James, the son of Alphaeus, after mentioned; and the latter is the beloved disciple; these were surnamed "Boanerges"; that is, "sons of thunder".

Matthew 10:3

Ver. 3. **Philip and Bartholomew,**

The first of these was called next; his name is a Greek one, which his parents, though Jews, might take from the Greeks that dwelt among them, see Joh 12:20 mention is made of one R. Phelipi, and Phulipa, in the Jewish writings⁵⁹⁰. The latter of these, Bartholomew, is conjectured, by Dr. Lightfoot, to be the same with Nathanael, he being called next in order after Philip; and that his name was Nathanael, ymlt rb, "Bar Talmai", or "the son of Talmai", or "Ptolomy": a name once common to the kings of Egypt: so Talmai, king of Geshur, is by the Septuagint, in 2Sa 3:3 2Sa 13:37 called Tholmi, and in 1Ch 3:2 Tholmai: hence it appears, that Bartholomew is no other than Bartholmi, or the son of Tholmi. We read of one R. Jonathan; בן אבטולימו, "ben Abtolemus", in the Talmud⁵⁹¹, whether the same name with this, may be considered.

Thomas, and Matthew the publican:

by the other evangelists Matthew is mentioned first; but he being the writer of this Gospel, puts Thomas first, which is an instance of his modesty; and also calls himself the "publican", which the other do not: this he men-

⁵⁸⁹ T. Hieros. Shekalim, fol. 46. 4. Bab. Sabbath, fol. 55. 1. & Bava Kama, fol. 47. 2.

⁵⁹⁰ Massechet Sopherim, c. 21. sect. 7. Bereshit Rabba, sect. 71. fol. 63. 4.

⁵⁹¹ T. Bab. Nidda, fol. 19. 1.

⁵⁸⁷ Misn. Yoma, c. 1. sect. 5.

⁵⁸⁸ Misn. Roshhashana, c. 1. sect. 3. & Maimon. & Bartenora in ib.

tions, to magnify the grace of God in his vocation. The Jews⁵⁹² speak of

מתי, "Matthai", or "Matthew", as a disciple of Jesus.

Thomas was sometimes called Didymus; the one was his Hebrew, the other his Greek name, and both signify a "twin", as it is very likely he was: mention is made of R. Thoma, or Thomas bar Papias, in a Jewish writer⁵⁹³. Next follow,

James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus:

the former of these is so called, to distinguish him from James, the son of Zebedee. This is the James, who was the brother of our Lord, Ga 1:19 and is called "James the less", Mark 15:40. Alphaeus his father, is the same with Cleopas, Luke 24:18 or Cleophas, Joh 19:25. The Hebrew name, הלפי, which often occurs among the Jews⁵⁹⁴, may be pronounced either Chlophi, or Alphi, or with the Greek termination Cleopas, or Alphaeus. The latter of this pair of apostles is the same person with Jude, the writer of the epistle, which bears that name, and was the brother of James, with whom he is coupled: he was called Lebbaeus, either from the town of Lebba, a sea coast town of Galilee, as Dr. Lightfoot thinks; or from the Hebrew word לבי, "my heart", as others, either for his prudence, or through the affections of his parents to him; as the Latins call one they love, "meum corculum", "my little heart"; or from aybl, "a lion", that being the motto of the tribe of Judah. His surname Thaddaeus, is thought by some to be a deflexion of Jude; or Judas, and as coming from the same root, hdy, which signifies "to praise", or "give thanks"; or from the Syriac word, dt, "a breast", and may be so called for the same reason as he was Lebbaeus. Frequent mention is made of this name, aydt, "Thaddai", or "Thaddaeus", among the Talmudic⁵⁹⁵ doctors. The Jews themselves speak⁵⁹⁶ of one hdwt, "Thodah", as a disciple of Jesus, by whom no doubt they mean this same disciple. Eusebius⁵⁹⁷ mentions one Thaddaeus, as one of the seventy disciples, who was sent to Agbarus, king of Edessa, who was healed and converted by him. This Agbarus is reported to have wrote a letter to Jesus Christ, desiring

⁵⁹² T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 43. 1.

⁵⁹³ Juchasin, fol. 105. 2.

⁵⁹⁴ Echa Rabbati, fol. 58. 4. Midrash Kohelet, fol. 60. 4. Juchasin, fol. 92. 1.

⁵⁹⁵ T. Hieros. Celaim, fol. 27. 2. Sabbath, fol. 6. 1. Erubim, fol. 23. 3. Bab. Sabbath, fol. 123. 1. & Erubim, fol. 71. 2. Juchasin, fol. 81. 1. & 105. 2. & 108. 1.

⁵⁹⁶ T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 43. 1.

⁵⁹⁷ Eccl. Hist. l. 1. c. 12, 13.

him to come and cure him of his disease; to which Christ is said to return an answer, promising to send one of his disciples, who should do it; and that accordingly, after Christ's death, Thomas sent this Thaddaeus to him.

Matthew 10:4

Ver. 4. Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot,

This is the last couple, for they are all mentioned by pairs, because they were sent forth "by two and two", as the Evangelist Mark says, Mark 6:7. The former of these is called Simon the Canaanite, to distinguish him from Simon Peter, before mentioned; not that he was a Canaanite, that is, an inhabitant of the land of Canaan, a man of Canaan, as a certain woman is called a woman of Canaan, Mt 15:22 for all the disciples of Christ were Jews; though in Munster's Hebrew Gospel he is called שמונ הכנני "Simeon the Canaanite", or of Canaan, as if he belonged to that country; nor is he so called from Cana of Galilee, as Jerorm and others have thought; but he was one of the קנאים "Kanaim", or "Zealots"; and therefore Luke styles him, "Simon called Zelotes", Luke 6:15, Acts 1.13. The Kanaites, or Zelotes, were a set of men, who, in imitation of Phinehas, who slew Zimri and Cozbi in the very act of uncleanness, when they found any persons in the act of adultery, idolatry, blasphemy, or theft, would immediately kill them without any more ado: this they did, from a pretended zeal for the honour and glory of God: nor were they accountable to any court of judicature for it; yea, such an action was highly applauded, as a very laudable one⁵⁹⁸: under this specious name of Zealots, innumerable murders, and most horrible wickedness were committed, both before, and during the siege of Jerusalem, as Josephus⁵⁹⁹ relates. Now Simon was one of this sect before his conversion, and still retained the name afterwards. Judas, the last of the twelve, is called Iscariot; concerning which name, the notation of it, and the reason of his being so called, many are the conjectures of learned men: some think that he belonged to the tribe of Issachar, and that he is called from thence, איש יששכר "a man of Issachar", as a certain man is, in Jud 10:1 others, that he takes his name from the place he belonged to, and that he was called איש קריית "a man of Kerioth". A place of this name is mentioned, Jos 15:25 and some manuscripts and copies in some places read Judas apo Καρυ-

⁵⁹⁸ Misn. Sanhedrim, c. 9. sect. 6. & Bartenora, in ib. T. Avoda Zara, fol. 36. 2. Maimon. Issure Bia, c. 12. sect. 4, 5, 6. 14. & Sanhedrim, c. 18. sect. 6. & Obede Cochabim, c. 2. sect. 9. Philo de Monarchia, l. 1. p. 818.

⁵⁹⁹ De Bello Jud. l. 5. c. 1, 2. & 6. 1. Vid. Abot R. Nathan, c. 6. fol. 3. 2.

ωτοου, of “Caryot”. Caryota is said ⁶⁰⁰ to be a plain of the city of Jericho, about eighteen miles from Jerusalem, which abounded in palm trees, called קריותי, “Caryotae”, of which mention is made in the ⁶⁰¹ Talmud, and other writers ⁶⁰². Others think he is so called, from the Syriac word, כריותא, “secariota”, which signifies a “purse”, or bag, because he carried the bag. Some copies read it, skariwtey, “scariotes”: others are of opinion, that he is so called, from the manner of death he died, which was strangling: for אכרא, “ascara”, a word often used in the ⁶⁰³ Talmudic writings, signifies “strangling”; and is accounted by the Jews the hardest of deaths, and an evil one; and which seems to bid fair for the true reason of his name: however, it is mentioned here, as elsewhere, to distinguish him from Jude, or Judas, the true and faithful apostle of Christ; for this was he,

who also betrayed him;

that is, Christ, as the Persic version reads it; and which is mentioned, not only for further distinction's sake, but to his great reproach. We learn from hence, that in the purest society on earth there has been an impure person; nor can it therefore be expected it should be otherwise in the best of churches, in the present state of imperfection; yea, that a man may have the highest gifts and attainments, as Judas had, ministerial gifts, and power of performing miracles, and yet be a vile person.

Matthew 10:5

Ver. 5. **These twelve Jesus sent forth,**

And no other but them, under the character of apostles. These had been with him a considerable time, to whom he had been gradually communicating spiritual knowledge; and by the benefit of private conference with him, and the observation they had made upon his doctrine and conduct, were greatly qualified for public usefulness: wherefore he gives them a commission, furnishes them with power and authority; and sends them forth from him by pairs, that they might be assisting to one another, and bear a joint testimony to the Gospel they preached; but before he sent them forth from his presence, he gave them some directions where they should go, and to whom they should minister, and where not:

and he commanded them,

as their Lord and Master; he gave them strict orders,

⁶⁰⁰ Vid. Wolfi Heb. Bibl. p. 410.

⁶⁰¹ T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 50. 2. & Avoda Zara, fol. 14. 2.

⁶⁰² Plin. Nat. Hist. l. 13. c. 4.

⁶⁰³ T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 8. 1. & Sabbat, fol. 33. 1. Sota, fol. 35. 1. Pesachim, fol. 105. 1. Taanith, fol. 19. 2. & 27. 2. Yebamot, fol. 62. 2.

which he expected them to comply with, and closely enjoined them, as they must answer it to him again,

saying, go not into the way of the Gentiles;

meaning, not the customs' and manners of the Heathens, they were to avoid; but that they were not to steer their course, or take their journey towards them: they were not, as yet, to go among them, and preach the Gospel to them; the calling of the Gentiles was not a matter, as yet, so clearly revealed and known, nor was the time of their calling come: besides it was the will of God, that the Gospel should be first preached to the Jews, to take off all excuse from them, and that their obstinacy and perverseness in rejecting Jesus as the Messiah, might manifestly appear; and since Christ himself was the minister of the circumcision, he would have his apostles, for the present, whilst he was on earth, act agreeably to the character he bore, that there might be an entire harmony in their conduct.

And into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not:

the word “any” is supplied, and that very rightly; for, not the city of Samaria, the metropolis of that country, as the Arabic version reads it, is only meant, but any, and every city of the Samaritans: not that it was strictly unlawful and criminal to go thither; for he himself went into one of their cities, and so did his apostles, Joh 4:4 Luke 9:52 and after his death preached the Gospel there; but he judged it not proper and expedient at this time, and as yet, to do it; that is, not before their preaching it to the Jews; for there was a very great hatred subsisting between the Jews, and the Samaritans, insomuch that they had no conversation with each other in things civil or religious. The Samaritans, though they boasted of their descent from Jacob, were a mongrel sort of people, partly Jews, and partly Gentiles, a mixture of both; and therefore are distinguished from both and though they had, and held the law, and five books of Moses, yet corrupted them in many places, to serve their purpose, and countenance their religion, particularly their worshipping at Mount Gerizim; on which account they were looked upon by the Jews as apostates, idolaters, and even as Heathens ⁶⁰⁴, and are therefore here joined with them; and to shun giving offence to the Jews, seems to be the reason of this prohibition; see Gill “Joh 4:20”.

Matthew 10:6

Ver. 6. **But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.**

⁶⁰⁴ T. Hieros. Shekelim, fol. 46. 2. Bartenora in Misn. Taharot, c. 5. sect. 8.

To whom he himself was sent, Mt 15:24. By “the house of Israel” is meant the whole Jewish nation; for though this phrase, when distinguished from the house of Judah, designs only the ten tribes; yet here it intends all the Jews, then living in the land of Judea, among whom there were some of all the tribes: and by “the lost sheep” of this house, are meant either all the people of the Jews in general, who were wandering, and were lost in error and sin, and to whom the external ministry of the Gospel came; or rather the elect of God among them, for whose sake particularly the apostles were sent unto them. These are called “sheep”, because they were chosen of God, and given to Christ to be redeemed, looked up, sought out, and saved by him; and “lost” ones, not only because lost in Adam, and by their own transgressions, so that neither they themselves, nor any mere creature, could save them from eternal ruin and destruction; but also, because they were made to go astray, and were lost through the negligence and errors of their pastors, the Scribes and Pharisees: and this character is the rather given of them, partly to reflect upon the characters of the shepherds of Israel: and partly to magnify the grace of God, in having regard to such ruined and miserable creatures; and also to excite the compassion and diligence of the apostles, to preach the Gospel to them: respect seems to be had to Jer 1:16.

Matthew 10:7

Ver. 7. **And as ye go,**

Through the cities of Judea, and the streets thereof, from one city to another, from place to place; for these were itinerant preachers, who were not to abide long in any place, but to move about, that the Gospel might be spread all over the land, and the lost sheep in every corner be sought out and found.

Preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

This was to be the subject matter of their ministry, which they were to proclaim aloud in every place; and which is expressed in the same words with which John the Baptist, and Christ himself, began their ministry, Mt 3:2 which shows the entire harmony, and strict agreement, there were between them: for the meaning of the phrase; see Gill “Mt 3:2”. The Cambridge copy reads, “repent, for the kingdom”, &c.

Matthew 10:8

Ver. 8. **Heal the sick,**

For so he had given them power to do, and this both for the confirmation of their doctrine, and the recommendation of them to men; for nothing could more evidently prove their mission to be divine, and their doc-

trine from heaven, or be more acceptable to men, than to “heal” their “sick” friends and relations, who were given up by physicians, and incurable by the art of man; and to do this without the use of medicines, either by a word speaking, or by laying on of their hands, or by anointing with oil, joined with prayer; and particularly to

cleanse the lepers,

of which there were many in Israel, who otherwise could not get rid of that disorder, and by the law were deprived of many privileges, and advantages, which others enjoyed: and especially to

raise the dead,

which had never been done before the times of Christ, since the days of Elijah and Elisha; and which must be allowed by all men to be more than human, and to require the arm of almighty power: and lastly, to

cast out devils,

the sworn enemies of mankind, and who had taken possession of the bodies, as well as souls of multitudes in the Jewish nation; all which they are ordered to do, without taking any thing of the people, for so doing:

freely ye have received, freely give;

which refers both to the working of miracles, and preaching of the Gospel. As they had these miraculous gifts freely imparted to them by Christ, they had them not of themselves, nor did they procure them at any charge, or expense of their's, or purchase them with their money, as Simon Magus impiously proposed to the apostles; so they were freely to make use of these wonderful powers, they were possessed of, for the relief of the distressed, without insisting upon, or receiving any thing for the same; a practice which was formerly disapproved and condemned in Gehazi, the servant of Elisha: and with respect to the Gospel, as the knowledge of it was freely communicated to them by Christ, and gifts qualifying them for the preaching of it, were of his mere grace and goodness bestowed upon them, so they were to dispense it without making a gain of godliness, or discovering in the least an avaricious disposition. Our Lord seems to have respect to a rule frequently inculcated by the Jews concerning teaching their oral law ⁶⁰⁵; which is this;

“in the place where they teach the written law for a reward, it is lawful to teach it for a reward; but it is forbidden to teach the oral law for a reward, as it is said, “behold, I have taught you statutes

⁶⁰⁵ Maimon. Talmud Tora, c. 1. sect. 7. T. Bab. Nedarim, fol. 36. 2. & 37. 1. & Becorat, fol. 29. 1. Maimon. & Bartenora in Misn. Nedarim, c. 4. sect. 3. & in Pirke Abot. c. 4. sect. 5.

and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me”, &c. De 4:5. As I have בְּחֵנֵי “freely” learned, and ye have also Mnxb, “freely” learnt of me; so when ye learn posterity, כמו שלמדתמומנוני, למדו בהנמ, “teach them freely, as ye have learnt of me.”

Now what the Jews say of their traditions, Christ applies to the Gospel: in dispensing of which he would not have his disciples come behind them; but as they had freely received the Gospel from his lips; so they would as freely, as well as faithfully, make it known to others; and which no ways contradicts the maintenance of the Gospel ministers by the people; only forbids amassing wealth and riches by it, or preaching for sordid gain, or filthy lucre’s sake: for otherwise it is Christ’s own ordinance, that the preachers of the Gospel should live by it; and which is confirmed in the following verses.

Matthew 10:9

Ver. 9. **Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass,**

That is, not any sort of “money”, as both Mark and Luke express it: for money was then coined, as now, of these three sorts of metals, and which include all kind of money; so that they were not to provide, get, prepare, or take along with them for their journey, as not gold, nor silver, or any parcel of this sort of money, which might be of considerable importance, and lasting consequence to them; so neither brass money, as, halfpence, and farthings, the least, and most inconsiderable: they were forbidden to carry any of either sort

in your purses:

or, as it may be rendered, “in”, or “within your girdles”; in which travellers, among the Jews, used to carry their money; and who, in their travelling dress, might not go into the temple, and are thus described ⁶⁰⁶;

”a man may not go into the mountain of the house with his staff, or with his shoes on, דָּרוֹר אִסּוּר, בפּוֹנֵי, “with his girdle”.

”The פּוֹנֵדָא “phunda”, Maimonides says ⁶⁰⁷, is an inner garment, wore to keep off sweat from other garments, to which were sewed hollow things like purses, in which a man put what he pleased; though other ⁶⁰⁸ interpreters say it is חֲגִיל בּוֹ מִנְתָּה, “a hollow girdle, in which

they put their money”: and so the Romans ⁶⁰⁹ had used to do; and so do the Turks {m} to this day; to which practice the allusion is here.

Matthew 10:10

Ver. 10. **Nor scrip for your journey,**

This the Jews call תְּרֵמִיל “tarmil”: and which their commentators ⁶¹⁰ say, is a large leathern bag, in which shepherds and travellers put their food, and other things, and carried with them, hanging it about their necks; so that the disciples were neither to carry money with them, nor any provisions for their journey:

neither two coats;

one to travel in, and another to put on, when they came to their quarters: they were not allowed change of raiment; either because superfluous, or too magnificent to appear in, or too troublesome to carry:

nor shoes,

only sandals, as Mark says; for there was a difference between shoes and sandals, as appears from the case of the plucking off the shoe, when a man refused his brother’s wife ⁶¹¹: if the “shoe” was plucked off it was regarded; but if the “sandal”, it was not minded: this was the old tradition, though custom went against it. Sandals were made of harder leather than shoes ⁶¹², and sometimes of wood covered with leather, and stuck with nails, to make them more durable ⁶¹³; though sometimes of bulrushes, and bark of palm trees, and of cork ⁶¹⁴, which were light to walk with.

”Says R. Bar bar Chanah ⁶¹⁵, I saw R. Eleazar of Nineveh go out on a fast day of the congregation, בגַּדְלֵי שֵׁן, “with a sandal of cork”.

Of what sort these were, the disciples were allowed to travel with, is not certain:

nor yet with staves:

⁶⁰⁹ Gracchus apud A. Gell. Noct. Attic. 1. 15. c. 12. Sueton. in Vita Vitellii, c. 16. {m} Bobovius de Peregr. Meccan. p. 14.

⁶¹⁰ Maimon. & Bartenora in Misn. Sheviith, c. 2. sect. 8. & in Celim. c. 16. 4. & 24. 11. & Negaim. c. 11. sect. 11.

⁶¹¹ T. Hieros. Yebamot, fol. 12. 3. T. Bab. Yebamot, fol. 102. 1. & Menachot, fol. 32. 1.

⁶¹² Gloss. in T. Bab. Yebamot, fol. 101. 1. & Bartenora in Misn. Yebamot, c. 12. sect. 1.

⁶¹³ Misn. Yebamot, c. 12. sect. 2. Maimon. Bartenora in Sabbat, c. 6. sect. 2. & Edayot, c. 2. sect. 8.

⁶¹⁴ T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 78. 2. Gloss. in ib. Maimon. Hilch. Shebitat. Ashur, c. 3. sect. 7.

⁶¹⁵ T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 78. 2. Juchasin, fol. 81. 1.

that is, with more than one staff, which was sufficient to assist them, and lean upon in journeying: for, according to Mark, one was allowed; as though they might take a travelling staff, yet not staves for defence, or to fight with; see Mt 26:55. Now these several things were forbidden them, partly because they would be burdensome to them in travelling; and partly because they were not to be out any long time, but were quickly to return again; and chiefly to teach them to live and depend upon divine providence. Now, since they were to take neither money, nor provisions with them, and were also to preach the Gospel freely, they might reasonably ask how they should be provided for, and supported: when our Lord suggests, that they should not be anxiously concerned about that, he would take care that they had a suitable supply; and would so influence and dispose the minds of such, to whom they should minister, as that they should have all necessary provisions made for them, without any care or expense of their’s:

for the workman is worthy of his meat;

which seems to be a proverbial expression, and by which Christ intimates, that they were workmen, or labourers in his vineyard, and they, discharging their duty aright, were entitled to food and raiment, and all the necessaries of life: this to have, was their due; and it was but a piece of justice to give it to them, and on which they might depend. So that this whole context is so far from militating against a minister’s maintenance by the people, that it most strongly establishes it; for if the apostles were not to take any money or provisions with them, to support themselves with, it clearly follows, that it was the will of Christ, that they should live by the Gospel, upon those to whom they preached, as the following words show: and though they were not to make gain of the Gospel, or preach it for filthy lucre’s sake; yet they might expect a comfortable subsistence, at the charge of the people, to whom they ministered, and which was their duty to provide for them.

Matthew 10:11

Ver. 11. **And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter,**

As Christ had instructed them in what manner they were to travel, so he directs them where to go, and who to ask for, and take up their abode with, in the several towns and villages to which they should come; that as soon as they had entered any town or village, they should, in the first place,

inquire, who in it is worthy;

not of them, as the Arabic version reads, nor of the Gospel they preached, or of the grace of God, of which no man is worthy: and besides, who could answer to such a question when asked? Who in any town, or city, could tell who in it were worthy of Christ, of his Gospel, and ministers, to which they were all equally strangers before they came among them? Nor does it mean a man famous for piety and religion, or one that feared God, and was a worshipper of him, but an hospitable man; one that was very liberal; who was willing and ready to entertain strangers; for such a man they would want, having neither money nor food: and so the same word, in the Hebrew language, signifies “to be worthy”, and “to give alms”, because an eleemosynary man, or a man given to alms, was reckoned by the Jews a very worthy man: they thought giving of alms to be a matter of merit. Christ here speaks in the language of the masters of Israel; take an instance or two:

”saith R. Jona, blessed is the man that giveth to the poor; it is not written so, but “blessed is he that considereth the poor”: he looks upon him, how he may לְזַכּוֹת מֵו, “give alms to him”.

And a little after,

”God hath set one against the other”, that when evil comes to thy friend, thou mayest see how wb לְזַכּוֹת, “to do thine alms to him”, and nourish him, so that thou mayest receive the gift of its reward.”

Again, so a man says to his neighbour, זָכִי בִי, “give alms unto me”: and afterwards, in the same place, it is said, אַתְּיָא בַּהֲרִיא זָכִי, “give alms unto that woman” ⁶¹⁶. Now, it was such a worthy generous man, that was beneficent to the poor, and kind to strangers, that the apostles were to inquire out, wherever they came; and having found such a person, they were to continue with him:

and there abide till ye go out;

of that city or town, to another city or town: for to be often changing houses would bring upon them an ill character, as if they were difficult to be pleased, not content with the provision made for them; and would look as if they sought to serve their own bellies, and gratify their appetites, more than to do good to the souls of men; and besides, moving from the house of a bountiful man, might bring some reproach upon his character, as if he had not used them well, and therefore left him. In short, Christ’s meaning is, that he would not have his disciples

⁶¹⁶ Vajikra Rabba, sect. 34. fol. 173. 3, 4. & 174. 4. Midrash Kohelet c. 11. 1. fol. 82. 2.

⁶⁰⁶ Misn. Beracot, c. 9. sect. 5.

⁶⁰⁷ In ib. & Celim. c. 29. 1. & Sabbat, c. 10. 3.

⁶⁰⁸ Bartenora & Yom Tob in ib. Gloss in T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 62. 2. & in Sabbat. fol. 92. 1. & 113. 1. & 120. 1. & Nedarim, fol. 55. 2.

be difficult, and dainty, or fickle, and inconstant, but be content with such things they should have provided for them; and not seek for other, and better quarters, nor fear being troublesome where they were.

Matthew 10:12

Ver. 12. **And when ye come into an house,**

Or the “house”; that is, the house of an hospitable man, when, upon inquiry, found out:

salute it;

meaning the inhabitants of it; or, as the Persic version reads, those of the household, especially the master of the family. Some copies add, saying, peace be to this house, as in Luke 10:5 and so read the Vulgate Latin, and Munster’s Hebrew Gospel; and is a very just, and proper explanation of saluting: for the usual form of salutation among the Jews was in such words; of which See Gill on “Mt 5:47” by which is meant all kind of happiness, and prosperity, temporal, spiritual, and eternal.

Matthew 10:13

Ver. 13. **And if the house be worthy,**

If the family, and particularly the master of it, appeared to be civil, courteous, friendly, and hospitable, upon such a salutation, and ready to receive and embrace them, and provide for them,

let your peace come upon it, or it shall come upon it;

the imperative for the future, which is not unusual; and so read the Syriac and Vulgate Latin. The sense is, the peace the apostles wished for, in their form of salutation, should come, and abide on the family; for not the Gospel of peace, and the preaching of it, are here meant, but the salutation itself, or the things desired in it, which should be granted, and the house be blessed for their sake, and as a reward of their generosity, and hospitality:

but if it be not worthy:

does not prove to be what it was said to be, and they expected; namely, to be generous, liberal, and beneficent; but, on the contrary, uncivil and churlish, should neglect their salutation, discover an unwillingness to receive them, and turn their backs upon them: **let your peace return to you,** or “it shall return to you”; the happiness wished for shall not come upon them, and the prayers and good wishes of the apostles shall be void, and of none effect, with respect to that family, but should be made good to themselves; and they should be directed to another house, where they should find persons more generous and free to entertain them.

Matthew 10:14

Ver. 14. **And whosoever shall not receive you,**

Into their houses, and refuse to entertain them and provide for them in a friendly manner;

nor hear your words,

slight their salutations, make no account of, but despise their good wishes for their welfare; and also treat with contempt the doctrines of the Gospel preached by them; and either would not attend on their ministry, or if they did, give no credit to what they should say, but deride and reject them.

When ye depart out of that house, or city;

to another house, or to another city, being obliged to remove, through their contemptuous rejection of them:

shake off the dust of your feet.

So Paul and Barnabas did at Antioch in Pisidia, when the Jews contradicted and blasphemed the Gospel preached by them, raised a persecution against them, and expelled them out of their coasts, Ac 13:51 which ceremony was ordered by Christ to be observed even to the cities of Judea, that should despise and reject the ministry of his apostles; and that either to show that they did not come to them with worldly views, with any design to amass riches and wealth to themselves, for they would not so much as carry away with them the dust on their feet, but it was purely with a view to their welfare, both spiritual and temporal; or to testify that they had been among them, and that that very dust they shook off their feet would rise up in judgment against them, and declare that the Gospel had been preached among them, and they had rejected it, which will be an aggravation of their condemnation; or rather to observe to them, that such was their wickedness, that even the dust of their country was infected thereby, and therefore they shook it off, as though it defiled them, as the dust of an Heathen country was thought by the Jews to do; so that by this action they signified that they would have nothing more to do with them, or say to them, and that they looked upon them as impure and unholy, as any Heathen city or country. There seems to be an allusion to some maxims and customs of the Jews, with respect to the dust of Heathen countries.”

On account of six doubts, they say ⁶¹⁷, they burn the first offering, for a doubt of a field in which a grave might be, and for a doubt **Mymeh Uram abh rpe**, “of the dust which comes from the land of the Gentiles”, &c.”

⁶¹⁷ Misn. Taharot, c. 4. sect. 5. Vid. c. 5. 1. & Maimon & Bartenora in ib.

On which Bartenora has this note;

”all dust which comes from the land of the Gentiles, is reckoned by us as the rottenness of a dead carcass; and of these two, “the land of the Gentiles”, and a field in which is a grave, it is decreed that they “defile” by touching, and by carrying.”

Again ⁶¹⁸,

”the dust of a field in which is a grave, and the dust without the land (of Israel) which comes along with an herb, are unclean.” Upon which Maimonides makes this remark, “that the dust of a field that has a grave in it, and the dust which is without the land of Israel, defile by touching and carrying; or if, when it hangs at the end of an herb, when they root it out of the dust of such a field, it is unclean”.

Hence they would not suffer herbs to be brought out of an Heathen country into the land of Israel, lest dust should be brought along with them.”

A Misnic doctor teaches ⁶¹⁹, that they do not bring herbs from without the land (of Israel into it), but our Rabbins permit it; what difference is there between them? Says R. Jeremiah, they take care of their dust; that is the difference between them.

”On that clause, “they take care of their dust”, the gloss is,

”lest there should be brought with it **מגוש ארץ הגוים**, “any of the dust of the land of the Gentiles”, which defiles in the tent, and pollutes the purity of the land of Israel.”

Matthew 10:15

Ver. 15. **Verily, I say unto you,**

This was not all the punishment that should be inflicted on such despisers of the Gospel of Christ, and the ministers of it; as not to enjoy that peace and prosperity wished for by the apostles, and to be declared to be on an equal foot with Heathen cities and countries: but they were to suffer everlasting punishment in the world to come; which is here asserted by Christ in the strongest manner, saying:

it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha, in the day of judgment, than for that

⁶¹⁸ Misn. Oholot. c. 17. sect. 5.

⁶¹⁹ T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 12. 1.

city.

The inhabitants of the land of Sodom and Gomorrha are the rather mentioned, because, as they were very notorious and abominable sinners, so their temporal punishment was well known, exemplary and awful, though not that, but their future damnation is here regarded, of which the Jews made no doubt; for they say ⁶²⁰,

”the men of Sodom have no part in the world to come; as it is said, Ge 13:13 “the men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners, before the Lord exceedingly”: they were “wicked” in this world, and “sinners” in the world to come;”

meaning, that by this passage is designed their double punishment in this, and the other world. But though their punishment was very tremendous, and they will suffer also “the vengeance of eternal fire”, as Jude says; yet, their punishment will be milder, and more tolerable, than that of the inhabitants of such a city, that rejects the Gospel of the grace of God: as there are degrees in sinning, for all sins are not alike, as the Stoics say; so there will be degrees in suffering; the sins of those that are favoured with the Gospel, are greater than those who only have had the light of nature, and so their torments will be greater. The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrha, though they sinned against the light of nature, despised the advice and admonitions of Lot, and ill treated the angels, yet will be more mildly punished than the wicked Jews, who rejected Christ, and his Gospel, and despised his apostles, and ministers; because they sinned not against so much light, and such means of grace, and knowledge, as these did; see La 4:6 which is thus paraphrased by the Targumist, and may be aptly applied to the Jews in Christ’s time:

”the sin of the congregation of my people is greater than the sin of Sodom, which was overturned in a moment; and there dwelt no prophets in it to prophesy, and turn it to repentance.”

The time referred to, signified by “the day of judgment”, respects not the destruction of Jerusalem, which was a very severe judgment on that people, but the general judgment, at the end of the world, which is appointed and fixed by God, though unknown to angels and men. The phrase is Jewish, and often to be met with in their writings, who use it in the same sense; particularly **in the book of Zohar** ⁶²¹, mention is made of **ימיא דדינא** ש,

⁶²⁰ Misn. Sanhedrim, c. 11. sect. 3. Hieros. Sanhedrim, fol. 29. 3.

⁶²¹ In Gen. fol 13. 3. & 16. 1.

“the day of judgment”, when there will be no pollution in the sanctuary.

Matthew 10:16

Ver. 16. **Behold, I send you forth, as sheep among wolves,**

This, and the following verses, chiefly respect the troubles, afflictions, persecutions, and sufferings which should befall the apostles after the death and resurrection of Christ; when their commission was enlarged, and they afresh sent out by Christ to preach his Gospel; of which he gives a faithful account before hand, that they might be prepared for them, and not be surprised when they came upon them. He compares them to “sheep”, because they were meek and humble in their spirits, harmless, and inoffensive, in their lives and conversations; were weak, and unable to protect themselves, and were sent out by him unarmed and defenceless; and their oppressors and persecutors to “wolves”, because fierce and furious, voracious and ravenous, cruel and hurtful, as these creatures are, especially to sheep; wherefore Christ gives them this wholesome advice,

be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

Much such an expression as this God is represented as saying of Israel ⁶²²:

”Says R. Judah, in the name of R. Simon, the holy blessed God said, concerning Israel, with me they are תמימים כיונים, “harmless as doves”; but among the nations of the world, they are כחשיבים רומים, “subtle as serpents”.

”The serpent is a very sharp sighted, cunning creature, and uses various arts and stratagems for its own preservation, and especially of its head; and is so far to be imitated by the followers of Christ, as to make use of all proper methods to preserve themselves from the insults and rage of men, and not expose themselves to unnecessary dangers: and, as much as in them lies, they should be careful to give no just occasion of offence, or irritate, and provoke them to use them ill, and to avoid all snares and traps that are laid for them; and, at the same time, maintain the innocence and harmlessness of the dove, being free from all wicked cunning and craftiness, without rancour, malice, and wrath; not meditating and seeking revenge, but meek and humble in their deportment, leading inoffensive lives, and proceeding in

the course of their calling, though liable to many insults, and much oppression.

Matthew 10:17

Ver. 17. **But beware of men,**

Of these men, comparable to wolves, before spoken of: the phrase is somewhat uncommon and emphatical, and designs not merely wicked men in common, the men of the world, and enemies of the Gospel; but chiefly such of them as were men of note and authority, ecclesiastical and civil governors of the people, the Scribes, Pharisees, elders, and chief priests, and other rulers; and the advice to the apostles is, to take care how they came into their company, and put themselves into their hands; who would seek all opportunities and occasions against them, and use their power and interest to do them hurt:

for they will deliver you up to the councils,

or sanhedrim, of which there were three sorts; the greater, which consisted of seventy one persons, and was only held in Jerusalem; the lesser one, which was made up of twenty three members, and was kept in every place where there were an hundred and twenty Israelites; and the third, where there was not that number, and was a triumvirate, or a bench of three judges only ⁶²³.

And they will scourge you in their synagogues;

where the triumvirate, or bench of three Judges kept their court; under whose cognizance were pecuniary judgments, and such as related to thefts, damages, restitutions, ravishing, and enticing of virgins, and defamation; also to plucking off of the shoe, and refusing a brother's wife, to the plant of the fourth year, second tithes whose price is unknown, holy things, and the estimations of goods; to these belonged also laying on of hands, the beheading of the heifer, and, among the rest, מכות בשלשה, “scourging was by the bench of three” ⁶²⁴. The manner of performing it was this ⁶²⁵:

”they bind both his hands to a pillar, here and there; and the minister of the synagogue takes hold of his clothes, and if they are rent, they are rent; and if they are ripped in the seam, they are ripped till his breast is uncovered; for he is not to beat him on his clothes, as it is said, “he shall beat him”, but not his clothes: and a stone is placed behind him, on which the minister that scourges stands, and a white leather whip in his hand,

⁶²³ Maimon. Hilch. Sanhedrim, c. 1. sect. 3, 4.

⁶²⁴ Misn. Sanhedrim, c. 1. sect. 1, 2, 3.

⁶²⁵ Maimon. Hilch. Sanhedrim, c. 16. sect. 8, 9, 10, 11. Misn. Maccot, c. 3. sect. 12, 13, 14.

doubled two and two with four, and two lashes of an ass's hide, going up and down: the breadth of the whip was an hand's breadth, and the length of it, so as to reach to the navel, and the handle of the whip, by which he took hold, was the length of an hand; and he lifts up the whip with both his hands, and strikes with one hand, with all his might; and gives him the third part of his stripes before, upon his breast, between his paps, and two thirds behind him; one third upon this shoulder, and the other upon the other shoulder. He that scourges neither stands, nor sits, but bows; as it is said, “the judge shall cause him to lie down, and to be beaten before his face”; for the eyes of the judge shall be upon him, that he do not look upon anything else, and smite him from thence; for no two strokes are as one; the greatest of the judges reads all the time he is scourging, viz. these passages; “if thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law”, &c. and “the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful”, &c. and he intends to finish the verses with the stripes; but if he does not finish, he returns to the beginning of the Scripture, and reads, and returns, and reads until the whole scourging is over: and the second of the judges numbers the stripes; and the third says to the minister strike: every time he strikes, it is at his orders he strikes.

”Now, as this punishment was inflicted by the chazan, or minister of the synagogue, who was a sort of sexton, so it was done in the synagogue itself: and according to our Lord's predictions here, and in Mt 23:34 as the former of these, delivering up to councils, had its accomplishment in part, in the apostles, Ac 4:1 so the latter, scourging in their synagogues, was fulfilled both by Paul, Ac 22:19 and upon him, 2Co 11:24. Epiphanius tells ⁶²⁶ us of one Joseph, a Jew, who was caught by the Jews reading the Gospels in his own house; upon which they dragged him away, and had him to the synagogue, and there “scourged” him. Now as these things did not befall the apostles till after the death of Christ, it is clear that the context refers not to their first, but to an after mission.

Matthew 10:18

Ver. 18. **And ye shall be brought before governors,**

Meaning Roman governors; so Paul was had before Gallio, Felix, and Festas; for judgments relating to life and death were to be taken away, and were taken away

⁶²⁶ Contra Haeres. 1. 1. Haeres. 30.

from the Jewish sanhedrim; and as they themselves say ⁶²⁷, forty years before the destruction of the second temple, which was much about the time of Christ's death: so that what power they had, was only with regard to lesser matters, and to inflict lesser punishments, as beating and scourging: if they sought to take away life, they were obliged to bring the cause before the governors of the Roman provinces, who are here intended:

and kings for my sake;

as Herod, Agrippa, Nero, Domitian, and others, before whom one or other of the apostles were brought; not as thieves, or murderers, or traitors, and seditious persons, or for having done any wrong or injury to any man's person or property; but purely for the sake of Christ, for the profession of their faith in him, and for preaching his Gospel; of all which they had no reason to be ashamed, nor were they:

for a testimony against,

or “to”

them, and the Gentiles;

that is, that thereby they might have an opportunity of bearing a testimony to the truths of the Gospel, which would be either to the conviction and conversion of many Gentiles, as well as Jews; or would be a testimony which would stand against them another day, both against the Jews, who charged, and accused them, and brought them before the Heathen kings and governors, to punish them with death; and against those Gentile magistrates, and others, who should join with them in rejecting the Gospel, and putting them to death for preaching it: so that they should have no pretext or excuse; since the Gospel had been faithfully and clearly preached to them, and they had despised it, and evil treated the ministers of it. This confirms what is before observed, that this passage refers to an after mission.

Matthew 10:19

Ver. 19. **But when they deliver you up,**

The apostles hearing that they should be delivered up to councils, and brought before governors and kings, might be under some concern how they should behave, and what they should be able to say in vindication of themselves and truth, before such great persons; they not being used to converse with men in such high stations: they were illiterate men, and of no elocution; men of mean birth, low life, most of them poor fishermen; and might fear, on these accounts, that the Gospel would

⁶²⁷ Hieros. Sanhedrim, fol. 18. 1. & 24. 2. Juchasin, fol. 26. 2. & 51. 1. Maimon. Hilch. Sanhedrim. c. 14. sect. 13.

⁶²² Shirhashirim Rabba, c. 2. 14. fol. 12. 1.

suffer for want of able persons to defend it before the great ones of the earth. Now, in order to remove these their fears and objections, and to strengthen and comfort their minds, our Lord bids them, when this would be their ease, that the Jews would deliver them to the Roman magistrates, to

take no thought how, or what ye shall speak;

not to be anxiously concerned, neither as to the matter, or manner of what they should say in their defence: they should have no occasion, as orators do, to take pains, and rack their thoughts, to prepare a studied, elaborate oration, dressed with all the flowers of rhetoric, filled with the most moving and powerful arguments, and clothed with diction of the strictest propriety and elegance; for they should want neither words, nor things; they should have arguments put into their mouths, and helped to proper language to express them in:

for it shall be given you in the same hour, what ye shall speak;

immediate assistance should be afforded them either by his father, or himself; or rather, the blessed Spirit, who would suggest unto them, at once, things, the most proper to be said, and help them to deliver them in the most proper manner: and these are the most convincing arguments, and that the best elocution, which the Spirit of God helps men to; these vastly exceed all the art of men, and strength of nature. This was greatly verified in Peter and John, two poor fishermen, when before the council, and in Stephen the protomartyr.

Matthew 10:20

Ver. 20. **For it is not ye that speak,**

Not but that they were to speak the words, and did; but then both the things they spoke, and the very words in which they spoke them, were not of themselves, but were suggested and dictated by the Spirit of God; for as “the preparation of the heart” in them, so “the answer of the tongue” by them, were both “from the Lord”: the Spirit, he was the efficient cause, they were only instruments; for not they of themselves spoke; or not so much they,

but the Spirit of your father, which speaketh in you,

or “by you”: what they should say was not to be dictated by their own spirit or natural understanding, nor by an angel, but by the Spirit of God; called the “Spirit of” their “father”, because he proceeds from him, is of the same nature with him, and is the reason of his being given to them: and this character of him might serve to strengthen their faith in the expectation of him, and in

the assistance promised, and to be had by him; since he was the spirit of him, who stood in the relation of a father to them, and bore a paternal affection for them.

Matthew 10:21

Ver. 21. **And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death,**

Christ having fortified the minds of his disciples by the foregoing promises of divine influence and assistance, proceeds to open more largely and particularly the sorrows, troubles, and afflictions they must expect would attend the faithful ministration of his Gospel; as, that the true followers of Christ should not only be persecuted and betrayed, and delivered up into the hands of the civil magistrate, by persons that were strangers to them; but even by their nearest relations, brethren, whom the nearness of blood, should oblige to the tenderest regards to each other, to the securing of property and preserving of life: these should deliver up those that were so nearly related to them in the bonds of consanguinity, into the hands persecuting men in power, in order to be put to death; than which scarce anything can be more barbarous and unnatural, though the next instances exceed it:

and the father the child, and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death.

The father laying aside his natural affection for his child, whom he has begotten, and brought up, and has took so much care of, and delight in, and perhaps his only one, his son aud heir; and yet, professing a faith different from his, such is his blind zeal and bigotry, that, breaking through all the ties of parental relation and affection, he delivers him up into the hands of wicked magistrates, to put him to death: and, on the other hand, children, forgetting the bonds they are in, and the obligations they lie under to their aged parents, rise up against them, and either with their own hands murder them, or appear as witnesses against them, and give their hearty consent to the taking away of their lives; even of them who have been the means and instruments of bringing them into the world, and of bringing them up in it. This shows the sad corruption of human nature, its enmity to the Gospel of Christ, and the inveterate malice and hatred of Satan against Christ, and his interest. Something like this is said by the Jews themselves, as what shall be in the times of the Messiah; for a little before his coming, or in the age in which the son of David comes, they say,

”the son shall deal basely by his father, the daughter shall rise up against her mother--a man’s en-

emies shall be of his own household; the face of that generation shall be as the face of a dog; and the son shall not reverence his father ⁶²⁸.”

Matthew 10:22

Ver. 22. **And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake,**

This is more particularly directed to the apostles themselves, as what is said before regards the followers of Christ in general; for this was to be the lot of the apostles, that they should not only be ill treated in common with others, by their near friends and relations, whose love would be turned into hatred to them, but should be the butt and mark of the malice and wrath of all men; that is, of most men, or of the far greater part of the Jews, even of all wicked men who disbelieved and rejected the Messiah: for that the words are not to be understood in the utmost latitude, without any restriction, is certain; since there would be some who would be converted; and believe in Christ through their ministry, and consequently would love, esteem, and honour them as their spiritual fathers and guides, and as the disciples and apostles of Christ. This hatred they should be exposed to, would not be on account of any ill will to their persons; or because of any evil or immorality committed by them; but purely, and alone, for the name of Christ, in whom they believed, by which they were called, of which they made a profession, and zealously preached: which consideration, as it must needs secure peace and tranquillity in their breasts; so for their further encouragement, it is added,

but he that endureth to the end, shall be saved:

which words suggest, that the tribulations and persecutions of the disciples of Christ, through the hatred of wicked men against them, shall not last always; there will be an end to them; respecting either the end of time and life, or the destruction of Jerusalem, when these their enemies would be cut off, or removed, and be capable of giving them no further trouble; and that such persons are happy, who patiently endure the hatred of men, and all manner of persecution, for Christ’s sake; who are not moved by the afflictions they suffer, but stand fast in the faith, hold fast the profession of it, go on in their Christian course, and hold out to the end; for such shall be saved, not only with a temporal salvation, as the Christians were at the destruction of Jerusalem, but with an eternal one.

Matthew 10:23

Ver. 23. **But when they persecute you in this city,**

⁶²⁸ Misn. Sota, c. 9. sect. 15.

Or any city into which they went, and preached the Gospel; and would not suffer them to go on in their work, they were not to desist, but to go elsewhere, where they might hope for a better reception, and a longer continuance, and so of doing more good:

flee ye into another;

not so much for their own safety, though this, according to the circumstances of things, is lawful, but for the further spreading of the Gospel. The exhortation is not to take methods to avoid persecution, or to make an escape from it, but to perseverance under it: the sense is, they were not to be discouraged, and to leave off, because of persecution in one place, but to persist in the ministration of the Gospel, by carrying it to other cities; and it seems to be a spur to them to make haste, and fulfil their office of preaching the Gospel, in the land of Judea: nor need they fear going on too fast, lest they should have no places to preach in;

for verily I say unto you,

this is a certain and indisputable truth not to be called in question, being strongly affirmed by truth itself,

ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel,

or “finished” them; that is, their tour through them, and their ministry, or the preaching of the Gospel in them,

till the son of man be come;

which is not to be understood of his second coming to judgment, but either of his resurrection from the dead, when he was declared to be the Son of God, and when his glorification began; or of the pouring forth of the Spirit at the day of Pentecost, when his kingdom began more visibly to take place, and he was made, or manifested to be the Lord and Christ; or of his coming to take vengeance on his enemies, that would not have him to rule over them, and the persecutors of his ministers, at the destruction of Jerusalem.

Matthew 10:24

Ver. 24. **The disciple is not above his master,....** So far from it, that he is inferior to him; as in knowledge, so in reputation and character; and cannot expect the same honour to be given him, and the same respect shown to him, as to his master; and therefore if his master is not used with that decency, and in that becoming manner he ought to be, he must not think it any hardship if he is treated in the same way. Our Lord hereby intends to fortify the minds of his disciples against all the reproach and persecution they were to meet with from the world, by observing to them the treatment he himself met with;

wherefore, if he who was their master, a teacher that came from God, and taught as never man did, and was worthy of the utmost deference that could be paid, was maligned and evilly treated by men, it became them who were his disciples, to look for, and patiently bear such indignities; since they could expect no better usage than he himself had: the same doctrine is suggested in the next clause, **nor the**

servant above his Lord;

and both seem to be proverbial expressions. The Jews have a saying ⁶²⁹ much like unto them, *הַבֵּר זֹכֵר מֵרַבּוֹ, אֵין*, “no servant is worthier than his master”; and Christ might make use of such common, well known expressions, that he might be the more easily understood, and in the most familiar manner convey what he intended, into the minds of his disciples; as, that since he was their Lord, and they were his servants, if his superior character and dignity did not secure him from the obloquy and insults of men, it could not be thought by them, who were inferior to him, that they should escape them.

Matthew 10:25

Ver. 25. **It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master,**

A disciple should think himself very well off, be entirely satisfied, yea, abundantly thankful, if he meets with no worse treatment than his master; if he has the same honour done him his master has, this is more than could be expected by him; and if he has the same ill usage with his master, he need not wonder at it, but should solace himself with this consideration, that it is no other, nor worse than his master had before him: and the same is equally true in the other case,

and the servant as his Lord:

these expressions, as before, were proverbs, or common sayings among the Jews, which our Lord chose to make use of, and adapt to his present purpose; *להיות כרבו*, “*vel*” *לְבַד שִׁיהֵא*” *לְבַד*, “it is enough for the servant, that he be as his master”, is a saying often to be met with in their writings ⁶³⁰; which our Lord applies, and reasons upon, in the following manner :

if they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of the household?

By “the master of the household”; he means himself, who is master of the family both in heaven and in earth;

⁶²⁹ T. Hieros. Maaser Sheni, fol. 55. 1.

⁶³⁰ T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 58. 2. Bereshit Rabba, fol. 43. 3. Juchasin, fol. 93. 1. Tzeror Hammor, fol. 64. 2. Aben Ezra in Hos. i. 2.

who is son over his own house, the high priest over the house of God, the lord and governor of all the household of faith; who takes care of, provides for, and protects all that are of God’s household: and yet, though in such an high office, and of such great usefulness, he did not escape the severest lashes of the tongues of the wicked Jews; who called him by the most opprobrious names they could think of, and among the rest Beelzebub; see Mt 12:24. This was the god of the Ekronites, 2Ki 1:2. The word signifies “a masterfly” or the “lord of a fly”: and so the Septuagint there call him baal muian, “Baal the fly”, the god of the Ekronites. And this idol was so called, either because it was in the form of a fly: or else from the abundance of flies about it, by reason of the sacrifices, which it was not able to drive away; and therefore the Jews contemptuously gave it this name. They observe ⁶³¹, that in the temple, notwithstanding the multitude of sacrifices offered up there, there never was seen a fly in the slaughter house: or else this deity was so called from its being invoked to drive away flies, and the same with Myiodes, the god of flies, mentioned by Pliny ⁶³², or Myagros, which the same author ⁶³³ speaks of; so Jupiter was called apomuiov, a driver away of flies; as was also Hercules ⁶³⁴; and were worshipped by some nations on this account. In most copies, and so in the Arabic version, it is read Beelzebul; that is, as it is commonly rendered, the “lord of dung”, or a dunghill god; and it is generally thought the Jews called the god of the Ekronites so, by way of contempt; as it was usual with them to call an idol’s temple *זבול*, “zebul”, “dung”, and worshipping of idols *מוזבל*, “dunging” ⁶³⁵: but I must own, that I should rather think, that as Beelsamin, the god of the Phoenicians, is the same with Beelzebul, the god of the Ekronites, so it signifies the same thing: now *בְּל שְׁמִינ* “Beelsamin”, is “the lord of the heavens”, and so is Beelzebul; for *זבול*, “Zebul”, signifies “heaven”; so the word is used in Hab 3:11 “the sun and the moon stood still”, *זבלה*, “in their habitation”; by which, as a Jewish ⁶³⁶ writer observes, *בו השמיים*, *הריג*, “is meant the heavens”; for they are the habitation of the sun and moon: see also Isa 63:15 and so among the seven names of the heavens, reckoned up by them,

⁶³¹ Pirke Abot, c. 5. sect. 5.

⁶³² Nat. Hist. 1. 29. sect. 6.

⁶³³ lb. 1. 10. c. 28.

⁶³⁴ Pausanias, 1. 5. p. 313. & 1. 8. p. 497. Clement. Alex.

ad Gentes, p. 24.

⁶³⁵ T. Hieros. Beracot, fol. 13. 2.

⁶³⁶ R. Sol. Urbinas in Ohel Moed, fol. 100. 1.

this is accounted one ⁶³⁷. Now as the Jews looked upon all the deities of the Gentiles as demons, or devils; and since Beelzebub was the chief of them, they thought they could not fix upon a more reproachful name, to give to Christ, than this: and our Lord suggests, that since the great master of the family was called in such an abusive manner, it should be no cause of stumbling and offence, if those of a lower class in the family should be so stigmatized; if Christians are called by ever such hard names, even devils, they should not be disturbed at it; since their lord and master was called the prince of them.

Matthew 10:26

Ver. 26. **Fear them not, therefore,**

That is, be not afraid of men, and of their reproaches and revilings; which our Lord intimates would do them no more hurt, than they did him, and which in a little while would be all wiped away: time would bring all things to light, when the wickedness of these men would be discovered, their evil designs seen through; which were now covered with the specious pretences of sanctity, and zeal for religion, and the glory of God; and the innocence and integrity of him and his disciples would be made manifest. There is no need to refer this to the great day of account, when every secret thing shall be brought to light; but it chiefly regards the times when the Gospel should be more publicly known, and embraced, and should prevail against all the opposition made unto it; and then all these reproachful names and characters would be seen plainly to arise from spite and malice: to which may be applied those proverbial sayings in common use,

for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed, and hid, that shall not be known.

Men may cover their malice and wickedness, for a while, under the best of names, but ere long it will all be revealed to their great shame and reproach: the innocence of the followers of Christ may, for some time, lie out of sight, and they may be traduced as the worst of men; but in process of time things take another turn, and their characters appear in quite another light: and so it is with the Gospel preached and professed by them, which, though sometimes it is little known, lies hid, and is covered with disgrace; yet in the Lord’s own time its light breaks forth, power attends it, and it is made manifest to the consciences of men.

Matthew 10:27

Ver. 27. **What I tell you in darkness,**

⁶³⁷ T. Bab. Chagiga, fol. 12. 2.

Hence Christ proceeds to encourage his disciples to an open, plain, and faithful ministration of the Gospel, not fearing the faces and frowns of men. For with respect to the Gospel, his meaning is, that what was hid and covered should not remain so, but should be revealed, and made known, and they were the persons who were to do it; and it was with that view that he had communicated it to them: and whereas he had told them it “in darkness”; not in a dark and obscure manner; for though he spoke in parables to others, yet to them he made known the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven: and if at any time he delivered parables, or dark sayings, to them, he would afterwards, or when alone, explain them to them; but his meaning chiefly is, that what he communicated to them in private houses, when they were by themselves, and no one saw, or heard them, and so were in darkness with respect to others,

that speak ye in light;

openly and publicly in the synagogues and temple, in the high places of the city, streets, or fields, wherever there is a concourse of people; hide and conceal nothing, but speak out all clearly, distinctly, fully, without the least reserve, or throwing any obscurity on it, which may cover the true sense of it from the view of the people.

And what ye hear in the ear,

or is whispered to you by me, as your master. Christ alludes to the custom of the Jewish doctors, who had each an interpreter, into whose ear he used to whisper his doctrine, and then the interpreter delivered it to the people: so it is said ⁶³⁸,

”Rab came to the place of R. Shilla, and he had no speaker to stand by him; wherefore Rab stood by him, and explained.

The gloss upon it is,

”an interpreter stands before a doctor whilst he is preaching, and the doctor *לוחש לו*, “whispers to him” in the Hebrew tongue, and he interprets it to the multitude in a tongue they understand.

Again ⁶³⁹,

”they said to Judah bar Nachmani, the interpreter of Resh Lekish, stand for a speaker for him.”

The gloss upon it is,

”to cause his exposition to be heard by the congregation, *לפני*” *לפני*, “which he shall whisper to thee”.

⁶³⁸ T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 20. 2.

⁶³⁹ T. Bab. Sanhed. fol. 7. 2.

”Now it was absolutely requisite, that the speaker, or interpreter, should faithfully relate what the doctor said; sometimes, it seems, he did not: it is said ⁶⁴⁰ in commendation of the meekness of R. Aba,

”that he delivered one sense, and his speaker said another, and he was not angry.”

The gloss says,

”his speaker was, he that interpreted to the multitude what he לוחש לו “whispered to him” in the time of preaching.”

Sometimes one doctor is said to whisper in the ear of another, when he instructed him, or informed him of anything. R. Jochanan ⁶⁴¹ whispered R. Joshua באודניה “in his ear”. The Jews have a notion that the law was given this way; so they interpret “the eloquent orator” in Isa 3:3 ⁶⁴² this is he to whom it is fit to deliver the words of the law, שניתנה בלחש, “which was given by whispering”: and so, it seems, the Gospel was in like manner delivered by Christ to his disciples. It was reckoned a very great honour, and a token of magisterial dignity, to have one to whisper in the ear to, and speak for them. So to one that related his dream, that he saw an ass standing at his pillow, and braying, answer is made, thou shalt be a king, that is, the head of a school; and “a speaker” or “an interpreter shall stand by thee” ⁶⁴³. Our Lord very justly takes upon him the character of a doctor, master, and dictator, and solemnly charges his disciples, clearly, loudly, and faithfully to declare what he suggested to them.

That preach ye,

says he,

upon the housetops;

for the roofs of their houses were not ridged, but plain, and flat, upon which they could stand or walk; and battlements were made about them to prevent their falling off, according to the law in De 22:8. Here many religious actions were performed: here Peter went up to pray, Ac 10:9 and here persons sometimes sat and read: hence that passage in the Misna ⁶⁴⁴ if any ברשׁא הגג one קרא, “was reading on the top of a roof”, and the book is rolled out of his hand, &c. and sometimes they made their proclamations from hence of their festivals and solemn days, and particularly of their sabbath; which was done by the sound of a trumpet, that the people might

cease from work in the fields, and shut up their shops in the city, and light up their lamps. This proclamation, by the sound of a trumpet, was made six times by the chazan, or minister of the congregation, from an housetop; and, it is said, that there was, נג מיוחד בנובה היר, “a peculiar roof in the highest part of the city”, and from the middle of it he blew the trumpet ⁶⁴⁵. In allusion to this, our Lord orders his disciples to blow the trumpet of the everlasting Gospel; and loudly proclaim to all the truths and mysteries of grace, which he had made known to them.

Matthew 10:28

Ver. 28. **And fear not them which kill the body,**

This is a “periphrasis” of bloody persecutors, who, not content to revile, scourge, and imprison, put the faithful ministers of Christ to death, in the most cruel and torturing manner; and yet are not so to be feared and dreaded by them, as to discourage and divert them from the performance of their important work and office; for, as Luke says, Luke 12:4 “after” that they “have no more than they can do”. This is all they are capable of doing, even by divine permission, when they are suffered to run the greatest lengths in violence against the saints; this is the utmost of their efforts, which Satan, and their own wicked hearts, can put them upon, or is in the power of their hands to perform: and the taking away of the lives of good men is of no disadvantage to them; but sends them the sooner out of this troublesome world to their father’s house, to partake of those joys that will never end; so that they have nothing to fear from their most implacable enemies; but should boldly and bravely go on in their master’s service, openly, freely, faithfully, and fully discharging the work they were called unto: for, the loss of a corporal life is no loss to them, their souls live after death, in eternal happiness; and in a little time God will raise up their bodies, and reunite them to their souls, and be for ever happy together. A noble argument this, which our Lord makes use of, to engage his disciples to a public and diligent ministration of the Gospel, in spite of all opposers; who, when they have vented all their malice, can only take away a poor, frail, mortal life; and which, if they did not, in a little time would cease in course:

but are not able to kill the soul;

which is immortal, and cannot be touched by the sword, by fire and faggot, or any instruments of violence: it is immortal, it survives the body, and lives in a separate state, enjoying happiness and bliss, whilst the body is in

⁶⁴⁵ T. Bab. Sabbath, fol. 35. 2. & Gloss. in ib.

⁶⁴⁰ T. Bab. Sota, fol. 40. 1.

⁶⁴¹ T. Hieros Kiddushin, fol. 65. 4.

⁶⁴² T. Bab. Chagiga, fol. 14. 1.

⁶⁴³ T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 56. 1.

⁶⁴⁴ Erubin, c. 10. sect. 3.

a state of death:

but rather fear him, which is able to destroy both body and soul in hell.

This is a description of God, and of his power, who is able to do that which men are not: all that they can do, by divine permission, is to kill the body; but he is able to “destroy”, that is, to torment and punish both body and soul “in hell”, in everlasting burnings; for neither soul nor body will be annihilated; though this he is able to do. As the former clause expresses the immortality of the soul, this supposes the resurrection of the body; for how otherwise should it be destroyed, or punished with the soul in hell? Now this awful being which is able to hurl, and will hurl all wicked and slothful, unfaithful and unprofitable, cowardly and temporising servants and ministers, soul and body, into the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, is to be feared and dreaded; yea, indeed, he only is to be feared, and to be obeyed: cruel and persecuting men are not to be feared at all; God alone should be our fear and dread; though the argument seems to be formed from the lesser to the greater; yet this, is the sense of the word “rather”, that God is to be feared, not chiefly and principally only, but solely; and in some versions that word is left out, as in the Arabic, and Ethiopic, and in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel.

Matthew 10:29

Ver. 29. **Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?**

A farthing, with the Jews, was a very small coin; according to them it contained four grains of silver ⁶⁴⁶; was the ninety sixth part of a “sela”, or shilling ⁶⁴⁷; and sometimes they make it to be of the same value with an Italian farthing: for they say ⁶⁴⁸, it is of the value of eight “prutahs”: and a “prutah” is the eighth part of an Italian farthing: it is used proverbially to signify a very little thing in the Misna ⁶⁴⁹;

”if of a command, which is light כאיר “as a farthing”, which Bartenora explains a “very little thing”, the law says, “that it may be well with thee”, much more of the weighty commands in the law.”

Hence, in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel, it is rendered by קטני טב, “a little piece of money”; and this was the common price of two sparrows. Our Lord appeals to his

⁶⁴⁶ Maimon. in Misn. Peah, c. 8. sect. 1.

⁶⁴⁷ Maimon. & Bartenora in Misn. Maaser Sheni, c. 4. sect. 3.

⁶⁴⁸ Ib. in Misn. Eracin, c. 8. sect. 1.

⁶⁴⁹ Cholin, c. 12. sect. 5.

disciples, for the truth of it, as a thing well known: according to the question in Luke, five sparrows were sold for two farthings, which makes them somewhat cheaper still. This shows they were of little account.

And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father:

some copies add, “which is in heaven”; meaning, that one of them should not be shot, or be killed, without the knowledge, will, and pleasure of God. The design of Christ is to assert the doctrine of providence, as reaching to all creatures and things, even the most minute and worthless: he instances not in men, nor in the beasts of the field, but in the fowls of the air, and in those of the inferior sort, and more useless, in sparrows, yea in little sparrows; as the word may be rendered; whose price was so low, that two are obliged to be put together to fetch the least sum of money current: and yet the providence of God is concerned with each of these; so that not one of them is taken in a snare, or killed with a stone, or shot flying, or sitting, but by the will of God: from whence it may be strongly concluded, that nothing comes by chance; that there is no such thing as contingency with respect to God, though there is to men, with respect to second causes; that all things are firmly ordained by the purpose of God, and are wisely ordered by his providence: and our Lord’s further view is, from this consideration, to animate his disciples to a free, open, and constant preaching of his Gospel, not regarding their lives for his sake; for since their heavenly Father, in his providence, takes care of the meanest, even of the most irrational creatures, so that the life of one of them is not taken away without his will, much more will he take care of them; nor could their valuable lives be lost without his will and pleasure. Much such a way of arguing is used by the Jews, who ⁶⁵⁰ say, פור מבדלי שמיא לא יבדא כל שכנ בר נשא “a bird without God does not perish, much less a man”; or, as it is elsewhere ⁶⁵¹ expressed,

”a bird “without God” is not hunted, or taken, how much less does the soul of a man go out of him?”

And again ⁶⁵²,

”a bird “without God” does not fly away, much less the soul of a man.”

⁶⁵⁰ T. Hieros. Sheviith, fol. 38. 4. {g} Bereshit Rabba, fol. 69. 3.

⁶⁵¹ Bereshit Rabba, fol. 69. 3.

⁶⁵² Midrash Kohelet, fol. 81. 2. & Midrash Esther, fol. 89. 3.

Two birds, or sparrows, as the word may be rendered, in Le 14:4 were used in cleansing the leper; one was killed, and the other let loose into the open field: and though it might be a contingent thing with men which was killed, and which preserved, yet not with God; and some think the allusion is here to that case.

Matthew 10:30

Ver. 30. **But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.**

A proverbial expression, showing the perfect knowledge God has, and the exquisite care he takes, in providence, of all his creatures, particularly men, and especially his dear children and faithful ministers; as not a sparrow, so not a single hair of a man's head falls to the ground without the knowledge, and will of God: a way of speaking sometimes used to signify, that not the least hurt or damage should befall a person; see 1Sa 14:45 and the phraseology of the text was in use, and very well known by the Jews; for so they represent God speaking⁶⁵³;

“do not I number all the hairs of every creature?”

As our Lord applies this particularly to his disciples, his sense is, that they had no reason to be afraid of men, or fear anything that should befall them, for their bearing a faithful testimony to him; for, their valuable lives were under the special and peculiar care of divine providence; not only the days, months, and years of their lives were with God, and put down in his book of purposes and decrees, which could neither be shortened nor lengthened; and not only the more principal, and even all the members of their bodies were written in his book of providence, and a singular care taken of them; but even their very excrescences, the more minute parts, and which were of no great account with them, the “hairs” of their head”, even “all” of them, were not only known, but numbered”, taken account of; yea, the thing was done already, it was not to be done; a very strong way of setting forth the doctrine of divine providence: a doctrine which the Jews were not unacquainted with, who say⁶⁵⁴;

”that the events of man, and accidents which come upon him, *הכל בידי שמיים* “are all by”, or “in the hands of God”

and⁶⁵⁵ that

“nothing is by chance, but all things are *בכונת*

653 Pesikta, fol. 18. 4. apud Drusium in loc.

654 Piske Tosaphot ad Cetubot, art. 119.

655 Kimchi in Ps. civ. 4.

“with design”

or, as they elsewhere say⁶⁵⁶,

“a man does not hurt his finger below, but they proclaim concerning it above;

“that is, as the gloss explains it, *גזרו לוי*, “it is decreed” concerning it: which comes very near to the phrase here used.

Matthew 10:31

Ver. 31. **Fear ye not therefore,**

Neither be afraid of men, nor distrust the providence of God; for if that reaches to the meanest of creatures, sparrows, and to that which is of the least account with men, the single hair of a man's head; much more must it regard the lives of men, and still more such useful lives as those of the disciples were, who were called to, and employed in preaching the everlasting Gospel; a work which so much concerned the glory of God, the interest of Christ, and the good of immortal souls:

ye are of more value than many sparrows.

Two of them were worth no more than a farthing; there must be a great multitude of them to be mentioned with any man: and indeed there is no comparison between the whole species of them and the life of a single man, and much less between them and the apostles of the Lamb. Any man is more valuable, as a man, than many sparrows, and much more a Christian man, and still more an apostle: the argument then is, that if God takes care of sparrows and is concerned for their lives, much more will he take care of his faithful ministers, and not suffer their lives to be taken away, till they have done the will and work of their Lord.

Matthew 10:32

Ver. 32. **Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men,**

The confession of Christ here, more especially designed, does not so much intend, though it may include, that which is less public, and is necessary to be made by every believer in Christ: for it is not enough to believe in him, with the heart, but confession of him must also be made with the mouth; and which lies in ascribing their whole salvation to him, giving him the glory of it; declaring their faith in him to others, and what he has done for their souls; and subjecting themselves to his ordinances, and joining in fellowship with his church and people: which confession, as it ought to be both by words and deeds, and to be hearty and sincere, so likewise visible,

656 T. Bab. Cholin, fol. 7. 2.

open, and before men. This, I say, may be included in the sense of these words; but what they chiefly relate to, is a confession of Christ by his ministers, in the public preaching of the Gospel; who ought openly, and boldly, to acknowledge, and declare, that Christ is truly and properly God, the eternal Son of God, the only mediator between God and men, the Saviour and Redeemer of lost sinners; through whose blood alone is the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of grace; by whose righteousness only men can be justified before God; and by whose sacrifice and satisfaction sin is only expiated; that he died for, and in the room and stead of his people, rose again for their justification, ascended to heaven in their name, is set down at the right hand of God, and ever lives to make intercession for them, and will come again, and judge both quick and dead: such a free and open confession of Christ ought to be made by all his ministers before men, and in spite of all the rage and opposition of earth and hell; and such shall not fail of being taken notice of, and requited by Christ; for he himself says,

him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven:

as he has a perfect knowledge of them, and bears an affectionate love to them; so he will openly own, and acknowledge them as his ministers, and speak in the praise and commendation of their works and labours; though they have been performed through the gifts, grace, and strength, which he has communicated to them: he will introduce them into his Father's presence, and recommend them to him, to be honoured, blessed, and glorified by him.

Matthew 10:33

Ver. 33. **But whosoever shall deny me before men,**

Deny that he is a disciple of Christ, and that Christ is his Lord and master, act contrary to him, deliver things repugnant to his mind and will; which for a disciple to do to his master was a very heinous crime with the Jews:

”if (say they⁶⁵⁷ Rabbi Jochanan, *יכפור* “deny” Rabbi Eleazar, his disciple, he will not “deny” Rabbi Jannai, his “master”.

Some regard may be had here to Peter's after denial of Christ; and this proviso be supposed, “except he repent”, as he did. Moreover, to deny Christ, is to drop, or oppose any of those truths which regard his person, office, and grace; or to hide and conceal them from men, through fear, shame, or cowardice of mind: and even not to confess him, through fear of men, is interpreted, by

657 Juchasin, fol. 80. 2.

Christ, a denial of him; and such who deny him in any form and shape, either by words or deeds,

him,

says he,

will I also deny before my Father which is heaven;

he will deny them to be disciples, or that they belong to him; he will deny that he ever knew them, loved or approved of them; he will declare in the presence of his Father, his disapprobation of them, his indignation against them, that they are workers of iniquity; yea, he will do more, he will banish them from his presence, and send them into everlasting burnings.

Matthew 10:34

Ver. 34. **Think not ye that I am come to send peace on earth,**

The Jews had a notion of great outward peace and prosperity in the days of the Messiah; which was grounded on several prophecies of the Old Testament, not rightly understood by them; and the disciples of Christ had imbibed the same notion: wherefore our Lord thought fit to let them know the contrary; and that they must not expect outward ease and quiet, and worldly tranquillity would attend their ministry; for though he came to be a peace maker between God and sinners, by the blood of his cross; and was both the author and donor of spiritual peace to his people; and the Gospel he brought with him, and sent them to preach, was the Gospel of peace; which, accompanied with his power, would produce peace in the consciences of men, and be the means of cultivating and maintaining peace among the saints; yet “peace on earth” in a temporal sense, whether in the world in general, or in Judea in particular, must not be expected as the consequence of his coming; so far from it, that he subjoins,

I came, not to send peace, but a sword.

By the “sword” may be meant the Gospel, which is the means of dividing and separating the people of Christ from the men of the world, and from their principles and practices, and one relation from another; as also of divisions, discords, and persecutions arising from it: not that it was the intention and design of Christ, in coming into the world, to foment and encourage such things; but this, through the malice and wickedness of men, was eventually the effect and consequence of his coming; see Luke 12:51 where, instead of a “sword”, it is “division”; because the sword divides asunder, as does the sword of the Spirit, the word of God.

Matthew 10:35

Ver. 35. **For I am come to set a man at variance against,**

Or “to divide a man from his father”. Here our Lord opens and explains what he means by the sword, intestine divisions, domestic broils, family differences, as well as such as appear in towns, cities, and kingdoms, which are exemplified by other instances following;

and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law:

the case is this, a father believing in Christ, embracing his Gospel, and submitting to his institutions, is contradicted, opposed, and persecuted by his own son, and a mother by her own daughter; in both which relations, natural affection knit them together; and the mother-in-law by her daughter-in-law, who before lived together in the most peaceable, kind, and tender manner: which must be imputed, not to Christ, and the doctrines of Christ, and the natural tendency of them, embraced by the father, the mother, and mother-in-law; but to the natural enmity of the son, the daughter, and the daughter-in-law, to everything divine, spiritual, and evangelical, or “vice versa”.

Matthew 10:36

Ver. 36. **And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.**

His children, and his servants, such that he has either begotten and brought up, or are daily fed at his table, and maintained by him. This, with the former instances, are borrowed from Mic 7:6 and the times of the Gospel are set forth in the same dismal and black characters, as those in which the prophet lived; and much such a description do the Jews themselves give, of the times of their expected Messiah; which agreeing in words, as well as things, I cannot forbear transcribing.

”The government shall be turned to heresy (Sadducism), and there will be no reproof; the synagogue shall become a brothel house, Galilee shall be destroyed, and Gablan shall be laid waste, and the men of the border shall wander from city to city, and shall obtain no mercy; the wisdom of the Scribes shall stink, and they that fear to sin shall be despised, and truth shall fail; young men shall turn pale, or put to shame, the faces of old men, and old men shall stand before young men; the “son” shall deal basely “with his father, the daughter shall rise up against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and the enemies of a man shall be they of his own

house”: the face of that generation shall be as the face of a dog, and the son shall not reverence his father⁶⁵⁸.

”All which characters, how exactly they agree with the generation in which Christ lived, is easy to observe.

Matthew 10:37

Ver. 37. **He that loveth father or mother more than me,**

The design of these words, is not at all to lessen the due affection of children to their parents; or to detract from the respect and esteem, in which they ought to be had by them: it is the duty of children, to love, honour, and, obey them; who have been the means of bringing them into the world, and of bringing them up in it; nor do any of the doctrines of Christ break in upon the ties and obligations of nature, or in the least set aside any of the duties of natural religion: but the intent of this passage is, to show, that as Christ is infinitely above all creatures, he is to be loved above the nearest and dearest relations and friends; being God over all blessed for ever, and also the Saviour and Redeemer; which itself, makes him more amiable and lovely than a common parent. That man therefore, that prefers father and mother to Christ, and their instructions, and orders, to the truths and ordinances of Christ: who, to please them, breaks the commands of Christ, rejects his Gospel, and either denies him, or does not confess him, our Lord says,

is not worthy of me;

or, as in Munster's Hebrew Gospel, he is not לאווי ראוי, “fit for me”: it is not fit and proper, that such a person should name the name of Christ, or be called by his name, and should be reckoned one of his disciples; he is not fit to be a member of the church of Christ on earth, nor for the kingdom of heaven, but deserves to be rejected by him, and everlastingly banished his presence: for otherwise no man, let him behave ever so well, is worthy of relation to Christ, and interest in him; or of his grace, righteousness, presence, kingdom and glory. The same is the sense of the following clause,

and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me:

whoever, to gratify a child, drops the profession of Christ, renounces his Gospel, and neglects his commands, it is not proper and convenient that he should

⁶⁵⁸ Misn. Sota, c. 9. sect. 15. T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 97. 1. Zohar in Num. fol. 102. 3. & Raya Mehimna in ib. in Lev. fol. 28. 2. Shirhashirim Rabba, fol. 11. 4. Derech Eretz Zuta, fol. 19. 4.

bear the name of Christ, be accounted one of his, or be treated as such, but all the reverse.

Matthew 10:38

Ver. 38. **And he that taketh not his cross,**

By the “cross”, which was a Roman punishment, whereby malefactors were put to death, are meant all sorts of afflictions, reproaches, persecutions, and death itself; and particularly the ill will, hatred, and persecution, of near relations and friends, which must be expected by such, who bear a faithful testimony for Christ. Every minister of Christ, or professor of his name, has “his” own cross, his own particular afflictions, appointed by God, and laid on him by Christ, and which he should cheerfully take up, and patiently bear, for his sake. The allusion is to the custom of persons sentenced to be crucified, to carry their own cross, as Christ did his, and Simon the Cyrenian for him; and which our Lord here may have a respect unto, as well knowing what death he was to die, and that some of his disciples also would die the same death: wherefore Christ says,

and followeth after me;

led on by his example, to preach or profess the Gospel, submit to the ordinances of it, and cheerfully suffer for the sake of it, when called to it. If a man, who would be thought to be a disciple of Christ, is not willing to do all this, but, in order to avoid it, complies with his friends, conforms to the world, and turns his back on Christ; of such an one he may well say,

he is not worthy of me;

it is not convenient that he should stand among his disciples and followers.

Matthew 10:39

Ver. 39. **He that findeth his life shall lose it,**

That man that seeks to preserve his life, and the temporal enjoyments of it, by a sinful compliance with his friends and the world, and by a denial of Christ, or non-confession of him; if he is not, by the providence of God, deprived of the good things of life, and dies a shameful death, both which are sometimes the case of such persons; yet he is sure to lose the happy and eternal life of his soul and body, in the world to come: so that the present finding of life, or the possession of it, on such sinful terms, will in the issue prove an infinite and irreparable loss unto him. On the other hand, Christ observes,

he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it.

That man that is willing to forego the present advantages of life, to suffer reproach and persecution, and lay

down his life cheerfully for the sake of Christ and his Gospel, for the profession of his name, rather than drop, deny, conceal, or neglect any truth and ordinance of his, shall find his soul possessed of eternal life, as soon as separated from his body; and shall find his corporal life again, in the resurrection morn, to great advantage; and shall live with Christ in soul and body, in the utmost happiness, to all eternity.

Matthew 10:40

Ver. 40. **He that receiveth you, receiveth me,**

This is said to comfort the disciples, lest they should conclude from this account of the sorrows, afflictions, and persecutions they were to meet with, that there would be none that would receive them and their message; Christ therefore suggests, that there would be some that would embrace the Gospel preached by them, and receive them kindly into their houses, and entertain them in a very hospitable manner: and, for the encouragement of such persons, who would risk their own goods and lives by so doing, he lets them know, that receiving of his disciples, was interpreted by him, a receiving of himself; and what they did to them, would be taken as kindly, as if done to him personally; and, in like manner, would it be understood and accepted by his Father:

and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me.

To which agrees, what the Jews say⁶⁵⁹ of the angel, in Ex 23:22 “If thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I shall speak”: who observe, that it is not written, “that he shall speak”, but “that I shall speak”; intimating, that אממקבליני אחמ דימנו כאלו לי אחמ מקבלימי, “if ye receive him, it is all one as if you received me”: and the whole of this accords with a common saying among⁶⁶⁰ them, מורו של ארמכ, “that a man's messenger is as himself”. The Jew⁶⁶¹, therefore, has no reason to reproach Christ and his followers as he does, as if it was the sense of these words of Christ, and which the Christians give of them, that Christ and his twelve apostles were but one person.

Matthew 10:41

Ver. 41. **He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet,**

By “a prophet” is meant, not one that foretells things to come, but a preacher of the Gospel; for as prophesying sometimes signifies preaching, so a prophet designs a

⁶⁵⁹ Shemot Rabba Parash. 32. fol. 135. 3.

⁶⁶⁰ T. Bab. Baracot, fol. 34. 2. Kiddushin, fol. 41. 2. 42. 1. & 43. 1. Bava Metzia, fol. 96. 1.

⁶⁶¹ R. Isaac Chizzuk Emuna, par 2. sect. 14. p. 404.

minister of the word: and to “receive” him, is not only to embrace his doctrine, but to entertain him in a kind, and generous manner; and he that does this, “in the name of a prophet”, not as coming in the name of another prophet, but upon this account, and for this consideration, because he himself is a prophet; so the phrase, לְשֵׁם “in the name”, or on the account of anything, is often used in the Misnic writings⁶⁶²: he that regards such a person, and shows him respect, by an hospitable entertainment of him; not because he may be related to him after the flesh; or because he may be a man of good behaviour, of a singular disposition and temper, of much learning and eloquence, of great natural parts and abilities; but because he is a faithful minister of the Gospel; he

shall receive a prophet’s reward:

either a reward from the prophet himself, who shall interpret the Scriptures to him, preach the Gospel to him, lead him more fully into the truths of it, and guide him to the true, and more clear and distinct sense of the sacred writings; which is an ample reward for his kind entertainment of him: or else, that reward which God has appointed, prepared, and promised, to them who receive his prophets; and which indeed is no other, than what the prophets themselves shall receive, even the reward of the inheritance, the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world, a reward of grace, and not of debt; since both, in their way, serve the Lord Christ.

And he that receiveth a righteous man, in the name of a righteous man.

He that is kind and liberal to any good man, whether he is a minister of the Gospel or not, who appears to have the work of grace upon his soul, and is justified by the righteousness of Christ, and expects eternal life on that account; if he shows respect to him, purely because he has the image of Christ stamped on him, and the righteousness of Christ imputed to him, and not on any natural, worldly, or civil accounts, he shall receive a righteous man’s reward; either from the good man himself, who will not fail to pray for his benefactor, to wish him well, and give him all the assistance he can in his Christian course; to exhort, comfort, instruct him as much, and as far as his Christian experience will furnish him with; or else the same reward of grace the righteous man himself shall have, namely, eternal life, as God’s gift, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Matthew 10:42

⁶⁶² Misn. Zebachim, c. 1. sect. 1. 2, 3, 4. & 4. 6. & 6. 7. & 7. 1, 2, 3, 4.

Ver. 42. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones,

Our Lord gradually descends from prophets to righteous men, and from righteous men, to those of the lowest form and class among them; who have the least measure of grace, and share of spiritual light, and knowledge; who are outwardly the poorest, meanest, and most contemptible in the eyes of the world; and are little, even the least of saints, in their own esteem and account: whosoever takes notice but of “one” of these, receives him into his house, and gives him

a cup of cold water only,

is regarded, a phrase used to express the least favour, or benefit whatever.

”So says⁶⁶³ Maimonides, one that calls to his friend to dine with him, and he refuses, and swears, or vows, that he shall not enter into his house, nor will he give him to drink, טַפַּחַת יַיִן “a drop of cold water”, &c.

”Moreover, this is said to prevent any objection, on account of the mean and low condition persons may be in, to their relieving necessitous objects; for everyone is capable of doing this, and if they can do no more, it is accepted. Now whosoever takes notice of, and shows favour to the meanest of Christ’s people, though it be but bestowing so small a benefit as a cup of cold water; yet, if it is done **in the name of a disciple** or because that poor person is a disciple of Christ, **verily**, says Christ,

I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward:

it will be observed another day by Christ, who takes what is done to the least of his brethren, as done to himself. The Jews say many things in praise of hospitality, to תַּלְמִיד חַכָּם, “a disciple of a wise man”; and observe⁶⁶⁴, that he that hospitably entertains such an one in his house, and causes him to eat and drink, and partake of the goods of his house, there is reason to believe, he shall be much more blessed than the house of Obed Edom was for the ark’s sake, which neither ate nor drank with him; and which may be compared with this passage.

Matthew Chapter 11

Matthew 11:1

Ver. 1. And it came to pass,

In the course of things, and as before determined and resolved on, that

when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples;

when he had given them a commission to preach the

⁶⁶³ Hilchot Nedarim, c. 8. sect. 10.

⁶⁶⁴ T. Bab, Beracot, fol. 63. 2. & 64. 1.

Gospel, had finished all his instructions he thought fit to give them, and orders he enjoined them, relating to that work; as where they should go, what they should say, how they should behave, and what treatment they should meet with; and had given them all proper advice and encouragement,

he departed thence,

from the place where he then was: he did not desist either from the ministry of the word, or from working of miracles, but went out into other parts of the country,

to teach and to preach in their cities:

meaning either in the cities of the Jews, or in the cities of his disciples; and these, either the cities they belonged to, from whence they came, namely, the cities of Galilee; for the disciples were Galilaeans, and in which parts Christ now was; or else the cities where he sent them to preach first, and then came himself, and confirmed their doctrine by his own ministry and miracles.

Matthew 11:2

Ver. 2. Now when John had heard in the prison,

The person here spoken of is John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, who was now in the prison of Machaerus; being put there by Herod, for his reproving him for taking Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife; and whilst he was there, an account was brought him by his own disciples, see Luke 7:18 of

the works of Christ,

the miracles he wrought; as the healing of the centurion’s servant, the raising from the dead the widow’s son of Nain, and the like; upon hearing of which,

he sent two of his disciples,

who might be the most prejudiced against Christ, because of the increase of his followers, and the decrease of their master’s; and because he did not live such an austere life as John did; and who, notwithstanding all that they had heard, and their master had told them of Jesus, were not easily persuaded that he was the true Messiah. Moreover, two of them were sent, both because it was more honourable to Christ, and that they might be proper witnesses of what they saw and heard; and since it was not so much for himself, as for the sake of his disciples, that these messengers were sent.

Matthew 11:3

Ver. 3. And said unto him,

By the disciples he sent; this was the message they came with, and this the question they were to ask, and did,

art thou he that should come?

A “periphrasis” of the Messiah, well known to the Jews; for he had been spoken of frequently in the prophecies of the Old Testament, as the Shiloh, the Redeemer, the Prophet, and King that should come; particularly, by this circumlocution, reference seems to be had to Hab 2:3. “It shall surely come”, כִּי בֹא יְיָ which may be rendered, “for he that cometh”, or “is to come, shall come”. So that the question in plain terms is, whether he was the Messiah? John could not be ignorant of this, who had seen the Spirit of God descending on him at his baptism, heard a voice from heaven, declaring him the Son of God; and had so often pointed him out to others, and had borne frequent testimonies that he was the Lamb of God, and bridegroom of his church: wherefore this question was put, not upon his own account, but his disciples, that they might have from the mouth of Christ a full and satisfactory answer, which would remove all their doubts and scruples, and attach them to Christ, now he was about to die, and leave them, than which nothing was more desirable to him. Though some have thought, that John’s faith was somewhat slackened; and through his long imprisonment, he began to doubt whether he was the Messiah or not: and others have been of opinion, as particularly Dr. Lightfoot, that the reason of this message was, neither the ignorance and unbelief of John, or his disciples; but that John, with the rest of the Jews, having a notion of a temporal kingdom, and hearing of the mighty works of Christ, wonders that he himself was not delivered out of prison by him, grows impatient upon it, and asks, if he was the Messiah? And if he was, why did he suffer his forerunner and chief minister to lie in prison?

or do we look for another,

to release me, and set up this kingdom?

Matthew 11:4

Ver. 4. Jesus answered and said unto them,

Not by an express declaration, that he was the Messiah that was to come, and they were not to look for any other; but he bids them

go, and show John again, those things which ye do hear and see.

Christ would have them go back to John in prison, and relate to him the doctrines which they had heard preached by him to the poor; and the miracles which they had seen with their own eyes, then wrought by him; as well as many others, which were attested to them by credible witnesses; for there were at that time about Christ, that had infirmities, plagues, and evil spirits, and

that were blind, and he instantly cured them in their presence; see Luke 7:21.

Matthew 11:5

Ver. 5. **The blind receive their sight,**

Our Lord here, has reference to several prophecies concerning the Messiah, in Isa 35:6 and which having their accomplishment in him, John and his disciples might easily and strongly conclude, that he was he that was to come, and that they should not look for another. The several things here mentioned, were not all done at this time, but were what these disciples had sufficient and authentic evidence of; sight was restored to the blind before them then; and no doubt they were informed of the two blind men, that had their eyes opened, Mt 9:30

and the lame walk;

as did the man sick of the palsy, who was brought to him on a bed, carried by four men, but went away himself, with his bed upon his shoulders, Mt 9:2

the lepers are cleansed:

as the poor man was, that was full of leprosy, and who was cured by Christ, by touching him, Mt 8:3

and the deaf hear;

as did the man, into whose ears Christ put his fingers and said, Ephphatha, be opened, Mark 7:33 **and the dead are raised:** as were Jairus's daughter, Mt 9:18 and the widow's son of Nain, Luke 7:15

and the poor have the Gospel preached them;

by "the poor" are meant, either the preachers of the Gospel; for so the words may be rendered, "the poor preach the Gospel": and such were the apostles of Christ; they were poor with respect to the things of this world; they were chiefly fishermen; and, with respect to human literature, they were unlearned men, had no stock or furniture of acquired learning, and were mean, abject, and contemptible, in the sight and opinion of men; and yet Christ called, qualified, and sent them forth to preach the Gospel. Or else, the hearers of it are designed; who were also the poor of this world, made a very low figure in life, and had but a small share of knowledge and understanding, and so were despised, and reckoned as cursed by the Scribes and Pharisees: or they were such, who were poor in spirit, or spiritually poor; who saw their spiritual poverty, bewailed and acknowledged it, and sought after the true riches of grace, and glory in Christ. Now these, as they had the Gospel preached to them more fully and clearly, with more power and authority, and so as it never was before or since, so they "received" it, as Tremellius from the Syriac reads the text,

readily and willingly, joyfully and gladly, with faith and love; and were, as it may be also rendered, "evangelized" by it, or thrown into a gospel mould and frame: which may be said to be done, when a man has a spirit of liberty, in opposition to a spirit of bondage; when he lives by faith on Christ alone; when his comforts do not spring from his works, but from Christ; when the love and grace of God influence his repentance and obedience; when a man has a spirit of meekness and of love to the saints, is of a forbearing and forgiving spirit: when he is desirous of performing all duties both to God and man, and yet depends upon none of them, but upon Christ alone, for salvation.

Matthew 11:6

Ver. 6. **And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.**

The Jews were offended at Christ's parentage and birth, at the poverty of his parents, and at the manner of his birth, by a virgin; and at the place of his birth, which they thought to be Galilee; at his education, because he had not learnt letters, and was brought up to a mechanical employment; at his mean appearance in his public ministry, in his own person, and in his attendants: his company and audience being the poorer sort, the more ignorant, and who had been loose and scandalous persons, publicans and sinners; at the doctrines he preached, particularly, which respected his own deity and eternity, the distinguished grace of God, and living by faith upon his flesh and blood. The disciples of John also were offended in him, because he and his disciples did not fast, and lead such an austere life as they and their master did; because of the meanness and obscurity of Christ's kingdom; the imprisonment of John, and the many reproaches, afflictions, and persecutions, which did, and were likely to attend a profession of Christ: this our Lord knew, and had a peculiar respect to them in these words; but happy are those persons, who, notwithstanding all these difficulties and discouragements, are so far from stumbling at Christ, and falling from him, that they heartily receive him and believe in him, make a profession of him, and hold it fast; greatly love, highly value, and esteem him, and are willing to part with all, and bear all for his sake: these are blessed, notwithstanding all their sufferings for him even now; they have spiritual peace, joy, and comfort in their souls, and shall be happy in the full enjoyment of him to all eternity.

Matthew 11:7

Ver. 7. **And as they departed,**

That is, the messengers of John, Luke 7:24 when they returned to their master, to give an account to him of what they had heard and seen,

Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John;

he took this opportunity before the whole company, who had heard what passed in conversation between him and the disciples of John, to say some things concerning his character and ministry: and which he did, partly to rectify and remove any wrong opinion they might have conceived of him, from this message of his, as if he had retracted his former sentiments concerning Christ, at least was wavering and doubtful about him; and partly, to put them in mind of their former zeal and attachment to John's ministry, when they went out in large bodies to attend upon it; and to revive a good opinion of him; and signifies, that they would do well to ask themselves, what views they had in attending on him, and how they came to grow indifferent to so great a man: and Christ, by giving an account of his character and office, confirms his own Messiahship; and this commendation of John, he chose to enter into, after the departure of his messengers, lest what he said of him should be interpreted as mere flattery:

what went ye out in the wilderness to see?

This refers to Mt 3:5 where we read, that great numbers from Jerusalem, Judea, and the country round about Jordan, went out into the wilderness of Judea, where John came preaching, to hear him, and be baptized by him; and our Lord asks, what was it that led such multitudes of them into the wilderness? What did they expect to see there?

A reed shaken with the wind?

This may either refer to John's gesture in preaching, who might wave to and fro as a reed does, when shaken by the wind; and Christ's question is, did ye go out only to see and observe the preacher's gesture, to see him move his body to and fro? Was it not to hear his doctrine, and receive benefit for your souls? And did you not? Wherefore, you ought still to retain a valuable respect for him. Or this may regard their opinion of him; and the sense of the interrogation is, when you first went out to him, did you take him to be an unstable, inconstant man? Like a reed shaken with every wind! If you did, you were mistaken; he was firm and stable in his sentiments and ministry, his preaching was not yea and nay, his doctrine was all of a piece; he stood to it, that he was not the Messiah, but his forerunner; the testimony he bore was always alike, consistent with himself, and he is the same man

now he ever was. The Jews use this comparison of a man to a reed, in a sense just the reverse, and make it to signify constancy, and not inconstancy, as well as tenderness, in opposition to roughness, severity, and stubbornness.

"Let a man (say they ⁶⁶⁵) be always רב בקנה "tender as a reed", and let him not be hard and stubborn as a cedar: when the four winds of the world go out, the reed goes and comes with them; and when the winds are still, the reed stands in its place."

So they observe ⁶⁶⁶, that it is said, that "the Lord shall smite Israel, as a reed shaken in the water"; 1Ki 14:15 which they interpret by way of blessing.

"As a reed (say they) stands in a place of water, its body waves about, and its roots are many; and though all the winds in the world come and blow upon it, they cannot move it out of its place, but it goes and comes with them; and when the winds are still, the reed stands in its place."

Matthew 11:8

Ver. 8. **But what went ye out for to see?**

Since it cannot be thought it was to see the reeds in the wilderness blow to and fro by the wind, or a man like one of them, either in gesture or doctrine; was it to see **a man clothed in soft raiment?**

In raiment made of soft materials, as fine wool, cotton, silk, &c. such as Mecaenos wore, and who was therefore called Malacinus ⁶⁶⁷: one finely dressed, and richly apparelled, draws the eyes of persons to him; but such an one is not to be expected in a wilderness: and if the Jews went to see such a person, they were greatly disappointed; for John's raiment was of camel's hair, undressed, and he had a leathern girdle about his loins; and as for his diet, it was locusts and wild honey: no,

behold they that wear soft clothing,

or, as Luke says, are "gorgeously apparelled"; to which he adds,

and live delicately, are in kings' houses,

or "courts"; not in a desert, where John came preaching, nor in a prison, where he now was: he was no light, inconstant, flattering person, as generally courtiers are; had he, he would not have been in a prison; it was for his uprightness and faithfulness, in reproving Herod the king, that he was in such a place and condition. Thus

⁶⁶⁵ Derech Eretz, fol. 18. 1.

⁶⁶⁶ T. Bab. Taanith, fol. 20. 1.

⁶⁶⁷ Alex. ab Alex. Genial Dier. 1. 5. c. 18.

from his very garb and diet, his character is vindicated from the charge of levity and change.

Matthew 11:9

Ver. 9. **But what went ye out for to see?**

Since it was not any thing so mean as a shaking reed, or so grand as a man in gay clothing, pray what was it you went out to see?

A prophet?

This was the truth of the matter, they expected to see a prophet, and they believed he was one; this was the common voice of the people; all held John to be a prophet. This made Herod afraid to put him to death, and the Pharisees to speak against his baptism: now, though this was giving him a great character, to believe and own him to be a prophet, yet it did not come up to his full character.

Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet;

when they saw him, they saw not only a prophet, but one that was greater, and more excellent than any of the prophets that went before him: they prophesied of the Messiah at a distance, and in words not so clear, and easy to be understood; they spoke of him as to come, but he pointed him out with his finger, and declared that he was come; he saw him himself, and showed him to others; he saw the Spirit of God descending on him, and he himself baptized him; his office, as the harbinger of Christ, and the administrator of the ordinance of baptism to him, gave him a preference to all the prophets; and was such an one, as never any man was vested with but himself.

Matthew 11:10

Ver. 10. **For this is he of whom it is written,** Mal 3:1

Behold I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

That these words belong לְיָמֵי הַבָּא, to the world to come, or the times of the Messiah, that is, the Gospel dispensation, the Jews⁶⁶⁸ themselves own; but as to the particular person meant by the “messenger”, or “angel”, because they are not willing to acknowledge the right person, are at the utmost loss. Jarchi makes him to be the angel of death, who is to destroy the wicked; Aben Ezra conjectures it may be Messiah the son of Joseph, who they fancy will come before Messiah the son of David. Kimchi thinks an angel from heaven is designed; and Abarbinel Malachi himself: but the more ancient sense of the synagogue was, that the same person is meant, as in Mark 9:5 under the name of Elijah the prophet; and

⁶⁶⁸ Bemidbar Rabba, sect. 15. fol. 219. 4. {a} Vid. Pocco in Mal. iii. 1.

some have thought, that Elijah the Tishbite himself, is intended; though others think, that some great prophet of equal degree with him, and who is called by his name, is what the prophecy has regard unto {a}; which last is the true sense of the passage: nor should it be once called in question, when our Lord himself has applied it to John the Baptist; to whom the things said in it perfectly agree. He was an “angel”, not by nature, but by office; a “messenger” sent by God, “before the face” of the Messiah; six months before him: such a space of time he was born before him; and such a space of time he entered on his public ministry before him; and “prepared” his “way before” him, by preaching the doctrine of repentance, administering the ordinance of baptism, pointing at the Messiah, and exhorting persons to believe on him. All which proves him to be, what Christ says he was, “more than a prophet”.

Matthew 11:11

Ver. 11. **Verily I say unto you,**

What Christ had before said, he proved from a testimony of Scripture; what he was about to say depending on his word, he asseverates in the most solemn manner:

among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.

The phrase, “them that are born of women”, is a “periphrasis”, of men born into the world by ordinary generation; see Job 14:1 and the sense is, that of all the prophets that have been in the world, since the beginning of it, Moses himself not excepted, there has not been raised up by God a greater prophet than John, the first administrator of baptism; were but considered, the uncommonness of his birth, his being filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother’s womb, his exemplary life, the excellency of his doctrine; and especially, his work and office, as the harbinger of Christ, and the preparer of his ways.

Notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than he;

which is to be understood, not of Christ, who was younger in age, and a junior preacher, and less in the esteem of the Pharisees, being greater than he, in nature and office, nor of the saints in heaven, where he that was least, the meanest, and most abject, when on earth, is more happy than John, who was then in prison; nor of all the believers under the Gospel dispensation; but of the apostles of Christ, and the least among them, who were then the kingdom of heaven, or the visible Gospel church state. These had a better opportunity of convers-

ing with Christ, and of seeing and hearing the things they did, than John had; they had the power of performing miracles, which John had not; were immediately sent forth by Christ, to preach the Gospel, and had a clearer insight into the truths of it, than John; especially, after the Holy Ghost was in such an extraordinary manner poured forth upon them, on the day of Pentecost; particularly after the death and resurrection of Christ, they were able to preach him, not only as come in the flesh, but as having suffered and died, and obtained eternal redemption: they could speak of his blood being shed, of his righteousness being wrought out, and of his sacrifice and satisfaction as made, which John could not; and besides, were more successful in the conversion of sinners, both Jews and Gentiles, than ever he was. The comparison does not lie so much between their persons, as their several different degrees of light and doctrine.

Matthew 11:12

Ver. 12. **And from the days of John the Baptist until now,**

From the time that he began to preach, to the then present time,

the kingdom of heaven,

the Gospel, and the ministry of it, first by John, then by Christ and his apostles,

suffereth violence;

or “comes with force”, and power upon the souls of men: it was attended with the demonstration of the Spirit, and of power; as appeared by its being the means of quickening persons that were dead in trespasses and sins; enlightening the blind; causing the deaf to hear; melting and softening hearts of stone; making, of enemies, friends to God and Christ; turning men from the power of Satan unto God; setting at liberty such as were slaves and vassals to their own corruptions; and, in a word, in being the power of God unto salvation, to many souls: and which was further seen, in the manner it did all this; suddenly, secretly, powerfully, and effectually, and yet not against the wills of men; and by such instruments as the apostles were, poor, sinful, mortal men; despised by the world, and attended with opposition and persecution: or “suffers violence”; which may be understood, either of the vast numbers, that pressed and crowded to hear the Gospel preached: great numbers followed John, when he first began to preach, and baptize: still a greater number followed Christ, some to hear his doctrine, others to see his miracles, others to behold his person, others out of selfish ends; and some behaved rudely and indecently: or

of the ardour and fervency of spirit, which appeared in some, to the ministry of John and Christ, and in their desires and expectations of the kingdom of the Messiah: or of the Gospel’s suffering violence by the persecutions of its enemies opposing and contradicting it, reproaching it, intimidating the professors of it, and seeking to take away the life of Christ, the great subject of it:

and the violent take it by force;

meaning either publicans, and harlots, and Gentile sinners; who might be thought to be a sort of intruders: or rather the same persons, as being powerfully wrought upon under the ministry of the Gospel; who were under violent apprehensions of wrath and vengeance, of their lost and undone state and condition by nature; were violently in love with Christ, and eagerly desirous of salvation by him, and communion with him; and had their affections set upon the things of another world: these having the Gospel preached to them, which is a declaration of God’s love to sinners, a proclamation of peace and pardon, and a publication of righteousness and life by Christ, they greedily caught at it, and embraced it.

Matthew 11:13

Ver. 13. **For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.**

These words are to be considered in connection with Mt 11:11 and are a further proof of John’s being greater than any of the prophets; because all the inspired writers and prophets, who were before him, prophesied of the Messiah as to come; and either spoke of him in obscure terms, or represented him under dark shadows and figures: whereas John spake of him as already come, and in plain terms, and directed to his very person; and since his time, there have been no prophecies concerning the Messiah and his kingdom; vision and prophecy are now sealed up; all which are acknowledged by the Jews themselves, who⁶⁶⁹ say, אלא לימות המשיח, “all the prophets did not prophesy but to, or of the days of the Messiah”. This was the subject, and these the limits of their prophecies; for they own⁶⁷⁰, that

“from the day that the temple was destroyed, בְּטִילָה נְבוּאָה מִן הַנְּבִיאִי, “prophecy was taken away from the prophets.”

Since that time, they confess they have had no prophets⁶⁷¹ and that they are not able to observe their signs.

⁶⁶⁹ T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 34. 2. Sabbat, fol. 63. 1. Sanhedrim, fol. 99. 1.

⁶⁷⁰ T. Bava Bathra, fol. 12. 1.

⁶⁷¹ Abarbinel in Dan. fol. 63. 4.

Matthew 11:14

Ver. 14. **And if ye will receive it,**

The words carry in them some suspicion of unbelief and hardness of heart, as though they would not receive it: however, whether they would or not, it was a certain truth, that

this

same person, “John the Baptist”,

is Elias, which was for to come;

who was appointed by God to come, and was prophesied of Mal 4:5 that he should come; and even according to the doctrine of the Scribes and Rabbins, he was expected to come before the Messiah; only they in general thought that Elijah the Tishbite, in person, was meant; though some, as before observed ⁶⁷², were of opinion, that some great prophet equal to Elijah, and endued with the same spirit, is intended; and which is true of John the Baptist, who came “in the Spirit” and “power” of Elias, Luke 1:17. And, as it was usual with the Jews ⁶⁷³, to call Phinehas by the name of Elias, and Elias Phinehas, because of his zeal for the Lord of hosts; for the same reason may John be called by the same name, there being a great resemblance between Elias and him; in their temper and disposition; in their manner of clothing, and austere way of living; in their very great piety and holiness; in their courage and integrity, in reproofing vice; and in their zeal and usefulness in the cause of God, and true religion: in respect to which, Christ must be here understood, when he affirms John to be Elias; not Elias in person, but he that was intended by Elias, that was said should come: hence here is no contradiction to the words of the Baptist, in Joh 1:21 when he says, that he was not Elias; for the Jews, who put the question to him, whether he was Elias, or not? meant whether he was Elias in person, Elias the Tishbite, or not; and so John understood them, and very honestly and sincerely replies, he was not: but he does not deny that he was intended by this Elias, that was prophesied should come; yea, he says such things as might induce them to believe he was that person; hence, Christ, and he, say nothing contrary to, and irreconcilable, as the Jew ⁶⁷⁴ suggests, with each other.

Matthew 11:15

Ver. 15. **He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.**

A way of speaking used by Christ, when anything serious, and of great importance, was delivered; and which

⁶⁷² Vid. Pocock. not. in porta Mosis, p. 219.

⁶⁷³ Baal Hatturim in Num. xxv. 12. Kimchi in 1 Chron. ix. 20. Targum Jon. in Exod. vi. 18.

⁶⁷⁴ R. Isaac Chizzuk Emuna, par. 1. c. 39. & par. 2. c. 15.

required attention, and was not easily understood: and such were the several things he had mentioned in this context; as that John was more than a prophet, more excellent than all the prophets; that the law and prophets were now at an end, and that John was Elias; which things, if rightly understood, would serve greatly to settle their judgment, with respect to himself as the Messiah: but his words imply, that everyone had not spiritual ears and understandings, to hear and take in things of such an high nature, and excellent use; none but those to whom they were given; and such ought to attend to them, and, seriously weigh and consider the importance of them. The phrase is to be met with in Jewish writings, where it is thus expressed ⁶⁷⁵;

“He that hears let him hear, and he that understandeth let him understand”. See Mt 13:43.

Matthew 11:16

Ver. 16. **But whereunto shall I liken this generation?**

The men of that age, the stubborn and perverse Jews; who were pleased with nothing, with no man’s ministry, neither with John’s, nor with Christ’s, but found fault with whatever they heard, or saw done:

it is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling to their fellows:

that is, the case of such persons may be fitly represented by children in a public market, calling to their companions, to pipe or mourn with them, and who are so morose and sullen as to do neither: for the men of that generation, are not the good natured children, that called to their fellows, and were willing to join in innocent diversions and exercises; but rather John the Baptist, Christ and his disciples, who may be compared to “children”, for their harmlessness and simplicity; and are represented as “sitting in markets”, places of concourse, where much people met together; which may intend the synagogues and temple, and other public places, which they made use of to publish their doctrines in, to preach to, and exhort the people; and as “calling to their fellows”, to their contemporaries, to those of their own nation, by the external ministry of the word.

Matthew 11:17

Ver. 17. **And saying, we have piped unto you, and ye have not danced,**

The allusion is to Jewish children, who having seen their parents and friends at their festivals and weddings,

⁶⁷⁵ Zohar in Num. fol. 60. 3.

some play upon the pipe, and others dance to them, mimicked the same in their diversions; and also having observed, at funerals, the mourning women, making their doleful ditties, and others answering to them, acted the part of these persons, expecting their fellows would make their responses, but did not: hence the complaint,

we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.

The different characters of John and Christ, are here set forth, by “piping” and “mourning”. The character and ministry of Christ and his disciples, by “piping”; by which is meant, the clear, comfortable, and joyful ministry of the Gospel; which is delightful music to a sensible sinner; and may be compared to it, for distinction of sounds, harmony, and agreement, being charming and delightful; its notes are all grace, mercy, love, liberty, peace, pardon, righteousness, and free salvation; and it is very powerful and engaging, it quickens and animates, attracts, allures and charms. The character and ministry of John, is signified by “mourning”: his life was a very austere one; he and his disciples fasted oft; he appeared in a very coarse habit; his speech was rough, his voice thundering; his doctrine was the doctrine of repentance, and he used very severe threatenings, in case of impenitence: on the other hand, by the “fellows” to whom they piped, or ministered, in their different ministrations, are meant, the Scribes and Pharisees; who were neither affected to, nor with, either of them: as for John, he was too austere for them; they did not like his garb, nor his diet; nor did his doctrine, or baptism please them; nor were they wrought upon, or brought to repentance by his ministry; they did not lament, weep, or shed one tear, but sat unmoved, like stocks and stones, under those awful striking discourses, on mournful subjects, delivered by him: nor were they pleased with the free conduct, and pleasant conversation of Christ; nor did they dance, or rejoice, at the good news and glad tidings of grace, and salvation, which were brought by him: of such froward, peevish spirits they were, that neither John, nor Christ, could please them: they were a true picture and emblem of many persons, who like neither law nor Gospel, but are morose, sullen, and quarrelsome, let them hear what they will; as Solomon says,

“If a wise man contendeth with a foolish man, whether he rage or laugh, there is no rest”, Pr 29:9. Upon which the Talmudists ⁶⁷⁶ comment, and illustrate it in this manner, and produce a proverbial saying, much like this in the text.

⁶⁷⁶ T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 103. 1.

“Says God, I was angry with Ahaz, and I delivered him into the hands of the kings of Damascus; he sacrificed and burnt incense to their gods, 2Ch 28:22. I played with Amaziah, and I gave the king of Edom into his hands; he brought their gods and worshipped them, 2Ch 25:14. Says R. Papa, this is what men say, or it is a common proverb, יד בכיי ליה למר דלא יד חייכי ליה למר דלא, “they weep to a man who takes no notice of it, they laugh to a man who does not observe it”; woe to that man, who knows not the difference between good and evil.”

Matthew 11:18

Ver. 18. **For John came neither eating nor drinking,**

This and the following verse are an explanation of the foregoing “parable”; and this shows, that John and his disciples are the persons that mourned, of which his austere life was a proof: for when he “came”, being sent of God, and appeared as a public preacher, he was “neither eating nor drinking”; not that he did not eat or drink at all, otherwise he could not have lived, and discharged his office: but he ate sparingly, very little; and what he did eat and drink, was not the common food and drink of men; he neither ate bread nor drank wine, but lived upon locusts and wild honey; he excused all invitations to people’s houses, and shunned all feasts and entertainments; he abstained from all free and sociable conversation with men, in eating and drinking; and though the Scribes and Pharisees pretended to much abstinence and frequent fastings, yet they did not care to follow his very severe way of living, and lament, in answer to his mournful ditty; but in a calumniating way,

they say he hath a devil;

is a demoniac, a madman, one that is unsociable and melancholy; under a delusion of Satan, and influenced by him to abstain from proper food and company of men, under a pretence of religion.

Matthew 11:19

Ver. 19. **The son of man came eating and drinking,**

Meaning himself, who ate and drank as men usually do, lived in the common way of life, was free and sociable, went to feasts, entertainments, and weddings, when he was invited; and was affable, courteous, and friendly in his deportment, to all men;

and they say, behold a man gluttonous,

a voracious man, an epicurean, one that indulges his appetite to a very great degree, and in a scandalous manner;

a winebibber,

a common tippler, one that drinks to excess; whom the Rabbins call ⁶⁷⁷ גַּרְגָּרִי, who is one, they say, that drinks up his cup at one draught; one that is given to wine, and is greedy of it:

a friend of publicans and sinners;

such as are openly and notoriously wicked; and loves their company, for the sake of tippling with them; and encourages them in their revelling and drunkenness; a very black charge this!

But wisdom is justified of her children;

either the wisdom of God, in making use of ministers of a different disposition and deportment, whereby some are gained, and others left inexcusable: or the Gospel, in which there is such a display of divine wisdom, which is vindicated from the charge of licentiousness, by the agreeable lives and conversations of the children of God: or rather Christ himself, who is the wisdom of God; and in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; who, however he may be traduced by ignorant and malicious men, yet will be acquitted from all such charges, as here insinuated, by all the true sons of wisdom; or by such, who are made wise unto salvation. We may learn from hence, that no sort of preachers and preaching will please some men; that the best of Gospel ministers may be reproached as libertines, or madmen; and that they will be sooner, or later, justified and cleared from all such aspersions.

Matthew 11:20

Ver. 20. **Then began he to upbraid the cities,**

When he had sent forth his disciples to preach, and had been in these several cities hereafter mentioned himself, and had taught and preached in them, and confirmed his doctrine by many wonderful works; when he had observed how ill they had used both John and himself, representing the one as having a devil, and the other as a licentious person; when they could not be pleased with the ministry of the one, nor of the other, he very seasonably and righteously began to reproach them with their ungenerous treatment of him, their ingratitude to him, their unbelief in him, the hardness and impenitence of their hearts; which could not be moved to repent of their evil ways, and believe in him, and acknowledge him as the Messiah, by all the instructions he gave them, and miracles he wrought among them: for the cities he has a view to, were such,

⁶⁷⁷ T. Bab. Pesachim, fol. 86. 2. Betza, fol. 25. 2.

wherein most of his mighty works were done;

the most for number, and the greatest in their kind; as particularly at Capernaum; where he cured the centurion's servant, recovered Peter's wife's mother from a fever, healed the man sick of a palsy, raised Jairus's daughter from the dead, made whole the woman that had a bloody issue, opened the eyes of two blind men, and cast out a devil from a dumb man, possessed with one: all these, and more, he did in this one city, and therefore he might justly upbraid them,

because they repented not:

not because they did not commend him, and speak well of his works, for he sought not his own glory, but their good: all he did was, in order to bring men to repentance of their sins, and faith in himself, that they might be saved.

Matthew 11:21

Ver. 21. **Woe unto thee, Chorazin!**

Though many of Christ's mighty works were done in this place, yet mention is made of it no where else, but here; whether it was a single city, or a country, is not easy to determine: the word חֹרַשִׁי "Chorasin", signifying "woody places", Dr. Lightfoot ⁶⁷⁸ conjectures it might include Cana, in which Christ wrought his first miracle, and a small adjacent country, situated in a wood, and be so called from thence; and Origen ⁶⁷⁹ reads it, χοροα ζιν, "the region of Zin":

woe unto thee, Bethsaida!

This was the city of Andrew and Peter, see Gill "Joh 1:44"; so that as bad as it was, some persons were called out of it by the grace of God, and to the high office of apostleship; and which makes that grace in such the more distinguishing:

for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

These words are to be understood in a popular sense, as Grotius observes, and express what was probable, according to an human judgment of things; and the meaning is, that if the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon had had the advantages of Christ's ministry, and of seeing his miracles, as the inhabitants of Chorazin and Bethsaida had, it looks very likely, or one would be ready to conclude, especially from many coming out of these parts, to attend on Christ's ministry, Mark 3:8 and from the conversion of some of them in after times, Ac 21:3 they

⁶⁷⁸ Chorogr. Cent. in Matth. p. 84. Vol. 2.

⁶⁷⁹ Philocalia, p. 109.

would have repented of their sins; at least, in an external way, signified by sackcloth and ashes, which were outward signs of repentance; see Isa 58:5. And which, if it had been only performed in such a manner by the inhabitants of Chorazin and Bethsaida, would have saved them from temporal judgments, which their sins now called for. The words are an hyperbolical exaggeration of the wickedness of those cities, like to Eze 3:5 showing, that they were worse than the Tyrians and Sidonians; an Heathenish and idolatrous people, who lived very profligate and dissolute lives, in all intemperance, luxury, and impiety; and therefore would be punished in a severer way: neither this passage, nor what follows, can be any proof of God's giving sufficient grace to all men alike, which in some is effectual to conversion, and in others not, but of the contrary; since the men of Tyre and Sidon had not the same means, or the same grace, as the inhabitants of the other cities, if the mighty works done among them are to be called so; or that man has a power to repent of himself, in a spiritual and evangelical way; or that outward means, as doctrines and miracles, are sufficient to produce such a repentance, without efficacious and unfrustrable grace; since only an outward repentance is here supposed, such as that of Ahab, and of the Ninevites.

Matthew 11:22

Ver. 22. **But I say unto you,**

What may be depended upon as true, and which shall certainly come to pass, however the inhabitants of these cities might flatter themselves; or in whatsoever light they might look upon their neighbours, the Tyrians and Sidonians; and fancy themselves to be the favourites of heaven, and these as the most execrable of creatures;

it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day off judgment, than for you.

Their punishment in another world will be more mild and moderate; they will not have such severe stings of conscience, nor have reason to make such bitter reflections on themselves, as those will who have had the advantages of a Gospel revelation: all sins are not alike, nor will the punishment of them be the same; there will be degrees of torments in hell, and which the justice of God requires. These words suppose, that the men of Tyre and Sidon will be punished for their many abominable sins, committed against the law and light of nature; but that the inhabitants of Chorazin and Bethsaida, having rejected the Messiah, and the doctrines of the Gospel, against all the evidence of miracles, and convictions of

their own minds, and probably sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost; as their sins are aggravated, their condemnation will be the greater, and their punishment the more intolerable.

Matthew 11:23

Ver. 23. **And thou Capernaum,**

This city is singled out from all the rest, and spoken to particularly, because of its peculiar advantages:

which art exalted unto heaven;

which has respect to the very great privileges this place enjoyed, it being the city where Christ chose to dwell, and for a time fixed his abode in; where he first began to preach, and where such a train of miracles were done; a particular enumeration, of which has been before given: as also it may refer to the situation of the place, which was very high and lofty, so that it seemed to reach unto heaven; for the account that R. Benjamin Tudelensis ⁶⁸⁰ gives of it is, that

"Capernaum, which is, by interpretation, "the village of comfort", at first sight looks to be כַּרְמֵלִי מִקְדָּם, "a place higher than Mount Carmel"

And Nonnus on Joh 6:59 calls it, βαψυκρηπιδι χαρναουσι which the interpreter renders, the land of "Capernaum founded on high". But notwithstanding all this,

shalt be brought down to hell;

meaning, it should be attended with very humbling providences, be reduced to a very low condition, see Isa 14:15 be destroyed and laid waste, as a city, as it was in the times of Vespasian; and the inhabitants of it not only punished with temporal, but everlasting destruction;

for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

The sense of these words is the same with that of Mt 11:22 only this may be observed, that whereas Capernaum was superior in privileges and advantages than the other cities, and yet acted the vile and ungrateful part it did; so that its impenitence and unbelief were the more aggravated; hence a still viler set of men are pitched upon, even the men of Sodom, to make the comparison of them with: for as wicked as the men of that place were, who were so infamous for their unnatural lusts; yet if they had enjoyed such a ministry as Christ's, and had had such miracles wrought among them, for the attestation of the doctrines taught them, in all human probability they would have repented of their flagitious crimes;

⁶⁸⁰ Itinerarium, p. 37.

at least in an external way, in such a manner as to have escaped that dreadful judgment, which laid their city, and several adjacent ones, in ashes; and so would have continued a city until this day. The phrase remained is Jewish, and is used of Sodom by the Rabbins, who say⁶⁸¹, that

”Abraham was “ninety nine” years of age when he was circumcised, and then was the overthrow of Sodom; which was “fifty one” years, after the generation of the division (of the people and languages), and near “fifty two” years; but “Zoar remained” one year, אחר־ישוב דוֹם, “after Sodom remained”.

According to the Jews, it stood but fifty two years at most⁶⁸²: and they have a notion, that Sodom and Gomorrah will be built again in the future state⁶⁸³, or world to come, the times of the Messiah.

Matthew 11:24

Ver. 24. **But I say unto you,**

Capernaum, and the inhabitants thereof, as before, to Chorazin and Bethsaida.

It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment, than for thee:

though the punishment of the men of Sodom will be very great, their iniquities being horribly dreadful and enormous, yet more easy to be borne than the vengeance, which, in the last and general judgment, will fall upon such, who have had the means of grace, and have despised them; especially such as had the personal presence, ministry, and miracles of Christ among them, as the Capernautes had. Such a way of expressing and setting forth the severer punishment of others, by that of Sodom, is not unusual in the Old Testament; see La 4:6 nor in Jewish writers, who say⁶⁸⁴, that

”the Israelites were fit for, or deserved, מִדּוֹ מַעַשׂוֹתָם לְיִשְׂרָאֵל יִתְרַחֲמוּר, “a far more heavy punishment than the punishment of Sodom”: because they abounded with prophets, rising early, and sending them, but they did not hearken; whereas Sodom had no hands stayed on her, or prophets to warn them.”

⁶⁸¹ Juchasin, fol. 8. 1.

⁶⁸² T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 11. 2. & Gloss. in ib. Jarchi in Gen. xix. 20.

⁶⁸³ Shemot Rabba, sect. 15. fol. 101. 3.

⁶⁸⁴ Tzeror Hammor, fol. 82. 1

Matthew 11:25

Ver. 25. **At that time Jesus answered, and said,**

The time referred to is, when the disciples returned to him, and gave him an account of the success of their ministry, Luke 10:17 who say nothing of the conversion of sinners, but of the spirits being subject to them; and may also refer to the several things spoken of in the context: it was at that time when Christ spoke to the multitude about John, and the excellency of his ministry, which yet was ineffectual to great numbers, who for a while attended on it; and when he took notice to the people, how he himself, as well as John, was rejected and vilified by the Pharisees, and received by publicans and sinners; and when he upbraided Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, for their impenitence and unbelief: taking occasion from hence, he “answered and said”; an Hebrew way of speaking, used when nothing goes before, to which what is said can be an answer; see Job 3:2.

I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth.

This is an address to God, by way of thanksgiving; glorifying and praising him, confessing and acknowledging his wisdom, power, grace, and goodness, discovered in the things he after mentions: so far was he from being discouraged and dejected at the poor success of the Seventy: at his ill treatment by the Pharisees; and at the general impenitence and unbelief of the cities, where he preached and wrought his miracles; that he is abundantly thankful, and admires the distinguishing grace of God in the calling of a few in those places. This address is made to God as a “Father”, as his Father, his own Father; for he was the only begotten of him, and dearly beloved by him: this epithet he makes use of, to show the near relation he stood in to him, and the freedom he could use with him: he also addresses him as “the Lord of heaven and earth”; he being the maker, upholder, and governor of both, and which he fills with his presence; the one is his throne, and the other is his footstool. This he mentions to show the sovereignty of his Father, in the conversion of men; and that it was not for want of power in him, that there were no more wrought upon under the ministry of John, himself, and his disciples. The things he expresses his thankfulness for, follow;

because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent.

The “things” he means are the doctrines of the Gospel; such as respect himself, his person, as God, and the Son of God; his office, as Messiah, Redeemer, and Saviour; and the blessings of grace, righteousness, and salvation by him. The persons from whom these things

were hid, are “the wise and prudent”; in things worldly, natural, and civil; men of great parts and learning, of a large compass of knowledge, having a considerable share of sagacity, penetration, and wisdom; or, at least, who were wise and prudent in their own conceits, as were the Scribes and Pharisees, and the schools of Hillel and Shammai, the two famous doctors of that day: and indeed the people of the Jews in common were so; who thus applaud themselves at the eating of the passover every year, and say, כלנו חכמים כלנו נבונים כלנו יודיִם את החורה, “we are all wise, we are all prudent, we all understand the law”⁶⁸⁵; the same is elsewhere⁶⁸⁶ said of all Israel; in their opinion they were so, yet the things of the Gospel are hidden from them. God may be said to “hide” these things, when either he does not afford the outward revelation of the Gospel; or, if he does, it is given forth in parables, or he does not give along with it the light of his Spirit and grace, but leaves men to their own darkness and blindness; so that they cannot see, perceive, and understand the beauty, glory, excellency, and suitableness of the doctrines of it. Now, when Christ confesses this, or gives thanks to God for it, it is a declaration that God has done so, and denotes his acquiescence in it; and is not properly a thanksgiving for that; but rather, that for as much as he has thought fit, in his infinite wisdom, to take such a method, he has been pleased to make a revelation of these things to others;

and hast revealed them unto babes;

foolish ones, comparatively speaking, who have not those natural parts, learning, and knowledge others have, that wisdom and prudence in worldly and civil things; and are so in their own account, and in the esteem of the world; and who are as babes, helpless, defenceless, and impotent of themselves, to do or say anything that is spiritually good, and are sensible of the same: now to such souls God reveals the covenant of his grace, Christ, and all the blessings of grace in him, the mysteries of the Gospel, and the unseen glories of another world. The veil of darkness and ignorance is removed from them; spiritual sight is given them; these things are set before them; they see a glory and suitableness in them; their desires are raised after them; their affections are set on them; their hearts are impressed with them; and they are helped to view their interest in them. The Jews themselves have a notion, that in the days of the Messiah, children and babes shall have knowledge of divine things.

⁶⁸⁵ Haggada Shel Pesach, p. 5. Ed. Ritangel.

⁶⁸⁶ Tzeror Hammor, fol. 135. 1.

”Says Simeon ben Jochai⁶⁸⁷, it is not the pleasure of God that wisdom should be so revealed to the world; but when it is near the days of the Messiah, even אמלד רבֵּי “little children”, or the “babes that are in the world”, shall find out the hidden things of wisdom, and know thereby the ends, and the computations of times; and at that time it shall be revealed to all:”

and there is more truth in what they own elsewhere⁶⁸⁸, than they themselves are aware of, when they say, that

”from the day that the temple was destroyed, prophecy has been taken away from the prophets, and given לשוטימולתינוקח, “to fools and babes”.

Matthew 11:26

Ver. 26. **Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.** Or, “so is the good will”, or “pleasure before thee”: thus, יהוה מלפניך “let it be the good will before thee”, or “in thy sight, O Lord”, is a phrase often to be met with in the Jews’ forms of prayer⁶⁸⁹. Here the word designs the sovereign counsel and purpose of God, to which, and to which only, our Lord refers the different dispensations of God towards the sons of men: this is a reason which ought to satisfy everyone, and is better than ten thousand others that can be thought of, or devised by men. This difference among men, with respect to the Gospel revelation, cannot be owing to natural sagacity, prudence, and penetration; for these things are with those from whom it is hid; nor to any worthiness in those to whom it is revealed; for they are the poor, the base, the foolish things of this world, and even things that are not; nor to any foresight of their making a better use and improvement of such a revelation, but to the good will and pleasure of God only.

Matthew 11:27

Ver. 27. **All things are delivered unto me of my Father,**

This is to be understood of Christ, as mediator; for, as God, nothing was delivered to him; he had all things, all perfections, power, and glory his Father has; and is to be considered in the utmost extent: all persons are delivered to him, angels and men; good angels are delivered to him, to be confirmed in him, as their head, and to

⁶⁸⁷ Zohar in Gen. fol. 74. 1.

⁶⁸⁸ T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 12. 2.

⁶⁸⁹ Seder Tephillot, fol. 4. 2. & 5. 1. & passim. Ed. Amsterdam.

be made use of by him; spirits, evil spirits, which were subject to his disciples, are under him, and at his command and disposal; and their subjection to his disciples is owing to his power over them, which he communicated to them; all the elect of God are delivered to him, to be kept and saved by him; all the babes and little ones, to whom it was the Father's will to reveal the mysteries of grace, were his care and charge; all power in heaven, and in earth, are given unto him; and all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid with him, which are distributed to any of the sons of men; all the blessings of grace, and the promises of the everlasting covenant, and all the glory and happiness of his people, are put into his hands:

and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father;

the transcendent glories and perfections of his nature, as the Son of God; nor the whole of his work and office, as mediator: or all that is committed to his charge, as such: all that he was to do, and suffer, for his people; all that he had done for them, and should communicate to, and bestow upon them.

Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son;

his essence and glory, his mind and will, his purposes and decrees, his counsels and covenant; the grace and love of his heart to his chosen people; what he has prepared and laid up for them, and will make them partakers of to all eternity;

and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him;

both himself, and his Father, and the grace and glory of each, which he does by his Spirit; who is a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; and which entirely depends on his own sovereign will and pleasure.

Matthew 11:28

Ver. 28. **Come unto me,**

Christ having signified, that the knowledge of God, and the mysteries of grace, are only to be come at through him; and that he has all things relating to the peace, comfort, happiness, and salvation of men in his hands, kindly invites and encourages souls to come unto him for the same: by which is meant, not a local coming, or a coming to hear him preach; for so his hearers, to whom he more immediately directed his speech, were come already; and many of them did, as multitudes may, and do, in this sense, come to Christ, who never knew him, nor receive any spiritual benefit by him: nor is it a bare coming under the ordinances of Christ, submission to baptism, or an attendance at the Lord's supper, the latter of which was not yet instituted; and both may be performed by men,

who are not yet come to Christ: but it is to be understood of believing in Christ, the going of the soul to him, in the exercise of grace on him, of desire after him, love to him, faith and hope in him: believing in Christ, and coming to him, are terms synonymous, Joh 6:35. Those who come to Christ aright, come as sinners, to a full, suitable, able, and willing Saviour; venture their souls upon him, and trust in him for righteousness, life, and salvation, which they are encouraged to do, by this kind invitation; which shows his willingness to save, and his readiness to give relief to distressed minds. The persons invited, are not "all" the individuals of mankind, but with a restriction,

all ye that labour, and are heavy laden;

meaning, not these who are labouring in the service of sin and Satan, are laden with iniquity, and insensible of it: these are not weary of sin, nor burdened with it; not do they want or desire any rest for their souls; but such who groan, being burdened with the guilt of sin upon their consciences, and are pressed down with the unsupportable yoke of the law, and the load of human traditions; and have been labouring till they are weary, in order to obtain peace of conscience, and rest for their souls, by the observance of these things, but in vain. These are encouraged to come to him, lay down their burdens at his feet, look to, and lay hold by faith on his person, blood, righteousness, and sacrifice; when they should enjoy that true spiritual consolation, which could never be attained to by the works of the law. **And I will give you rest;** spiritual rest here, peace of conscience, ease of mind, tranquillity of soul, through an application of pardoning grace, a view of free justification by the righteousness of Christ, and full atonement of sin by his sacrifice; and eternal rest hereafter, in Abraham's bosom, in the arms of Jesus, in perfect and uninterrupted communion with Father, Son, and Spirit. The Jews say⁶⁹⁰, that בְּנוּחַת תּוֹרָה, "the law is rest"; and so explain Ge 49:15 of it: but a truly sensible sinner enjoys no rest, but in Christ; it is like Noah's dove, which could find no rest for the soles of its feet, until it returned to the ark; and they themselves expect perfect rest in the days of the Messiah, and call his world בְּנוּחָה, rest⁶⁹¹.

Matthew 11:29

Ver. 29. **Take my yoke upon you,**

The phrase is Rabbinical. The Jewish doctors often speak⁶⁹² of גַּל מַלְכוּת שְׁמַיִם, "the yoke of the kingdom of

⁶⁹⁰ Tzeror Hammor, fol. 39. 3.

⁶⁹¹ Tzeror Hammor, fol. 150. 2.

⁶⁹² T. Hieros. Beracot, fol. 4. 1. Bab. Beracot, fol. 61. 2. Zohar in Lev. fol. 46. 4. Caphtor, fol. 44. 2. Tzeror Hammor,

heaven"; and of persons taking it upon them; and which they exhort to, and express in much such language as here⁶⁹³; קְבִילוּ לֵייכוּ גַל מַלְכוּתֵי שְׁמַיִם, "take upon you the yoke of the holy kingdom", every day. They distinguish this from the yoke of the law, and say⁶⁹⁴

"a man must first take upon him the yoke of the kingdom of heaven, and after that take upon him the "yoke" of the commandment."

Their sense I take to be this, that a man must first make a profession of his faith in the God of Israel, and then live conformably to his law: agreeably to this, Christ exhorts such persons who come to him for rest and happiness, to profess their faith in him, to embrace the doctrines of the Gospel, to submit to his ordinances, and to walk according to those laws, commands, and orders, which he, as king of saints, has made, and requires obedience to: so those who come to him for life, and believe in him, as the Saviour of their souls, though they are not to trust in, and depend upon any duties performed by them; yet they are not to sit still, or lay aside the performance of good works, or live a licentious course of life, but are always to be doing the will and work of their Lord. And this he calls "his yoke", in distinction from the yoke of the law of Moses, and of the traditions of the elders.

And learn of me, for I am meek, and lowly in heart:

respect seems to be had to Zec 9:9 where such characters as these are given of the Messiah. The meekness, humility, and lowliness of Christ appear in his assumption of human nature; in his subjection to his Father; in the whole of his deportment and conversation among men; in his submission to the ordinance of baptism; in the whole course of his obedience to God, and in his sufferings and death: and he is to be imitated herein, by all his followers, who may learn many excellent things from his example, as well as from his doctrine; and particularly, that whereas, though he was so great a person, yet condescended to perform every duty with readiness and cheerfulness, his disciples should not think it below them to conform to every ordinance of his, to every branch of his will; for he has set them an example, that they should tread in his steps, and walk even as he has walked. There never was such an instance of humility, and lowliness of mind, as Christ; nor is there any example so worthy of

fol. 2. 2.

⁶⁹³ Zohar in Num. fol. 51. 2. Caphtor, fol. 48. 2.

⁶⁹⁴ Misn. Beracot, c. 2. sect. 2. T. Hieros. Beracot, fol. 4. 2. {d} T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 30. 2.

our imitation as his. The Jews have a saying {d},

"for ever let a man נִוְתַנּוּ כַהִלֵּל, "be meek as Hillel", and let him not be wrathful as "Shammai":

which two men were presidents of their universities about the times of Christ. But our Lord says, "learn of me", not of "Hillel", or any of your doctors,

and ye shall find rest unto your souls;

referring to Jer 6:16 and which shows the rest he speaks of in the preceding verse, to be not a corporal, but a spiritual one; and which is to be enjoyed "in", though not "for" the observance of Christ's commands; whose "ways are ways of pleasantness, and all" whose "paths are peace".

Matthew 11:30

Ver. 30. **For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.**

Christ calls a profession of faith in him, and subjection to his ordinances, a yoke, in allusion to the law of Moses, and in distinction from it; and a "burden", with respect to the very heavy ones the Scribes and Pharisees laid upon the shoulders of the people, obliging them to a strict observance of them; though of a different nature from either of them; "for his commandments are not grievous", hard and heavy to be borne, as their's were, but "easy and light": not that they are so to unregenerate men, or are easily performed by the strength of nature, and power of men's free will: but they are good and amiable, and lovely in their own nature, and are cheerfully complied with, and abundance of spiritual pleasure and delight is enjoyed in them by believers, when they have the presence of God, the assistance of his Spirit, and the discoveries of his love. Moreover, the commands of Christ, and the ordinances of the Gospel, are so in comparison of the law of Moses; which required perfect obedience, but gave no strength to perform, and threatened with condemnation and death, in case of the least failure; and of the numerous, and some very severe rites and usages of the ceremonial law; and of the bulky and heavy traditions of the elders, and ordinances of men.

Matthew Chapter 12

Matthew 12:1

Ver. 1. **At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn,**

That is, the corn fields, as the other evangelists express it. It being on a sabbath day, it is very probable, that Christ and his disciples were going to some public place of worship, the way to which lay through some fields of corn, which were now ripe: for Luke says, it was on the

“second sabbath after the first”, or rather “the first sabbath after the second”; that is, the first sabbath after the second day of the passover, when the sheaf of the first fruit was offered, and harvest was begun.

And his disciples were an hungred;

it being in the morning before they had broke their fast; and this circumstance is mentioned to show the reason of the following action, and to excuse it: at which the Pharisees were so much offended, and of which they accused them, as having done what was very criminal:

and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat;

Luke adds, “rubbing them in their hands”; and so here in the Syriac, Arabic, and Persic versions, it is rendered, “they began to rub”: as they passed along, they plucked off the ears of corn, either barley or wheat, and rubbed them in their hands, to get the grain clear of the husk, or beard, and eat them; contenting themselves with such mean and unprepared food, when the Jews on that day fed on the best of dainties ⁶⁹⁵.

Matthew 12:2

Ver. 2. **But when the Pharisees saw it,**

Who went along with him, or followed him, being employed to make observation on his words and actions, **they said unto him;** Luke says, “unto them”, the disciples: it seems, they took notice of this action both to Christ and his disciples, and first spoke of it to the one, and then to the other, or to both together:

behold thy disciples do that which it is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day!

they mention it with astonishment, and indignation. What they refer to, is not their walking on the sabbath day: this they might do, according to their canons, provided they did not exceed two thousand cubits, which were a sabbath day’s journey ⁶⁹⁶ nor was it their passing through the corn fields; though, according to them ⁶⁹⁷,

“it was not lawful for a man to visit his gardens, וישדותיו, “or his fields”, on the sabbath day, to see what they want, or how the fruits grow; for such walking is to do his own pleasure.”

But this they knew was not the case of Christ, and his disciples, who were not proprietors of these fields: nor was it merely their plucking the ears of corn, and rubbing and eating them, which were not their own, but another man’s; for this, according to the law, in

De 23:25 was lawful to be done: but what offended

⁶⁹⁵ Vid. Maimon. Hilch. Sabbat, c. 30. sect. 7, 8, 9, 10.

⁶⁹⁶ Ib. c. 27. sect. 1.

⁶⁹⁷ R. Moses Kotzensis Mitzvot Tora prec. neg. 65.

the Pharisees was, that it was done on a sabbath day, it being, as they interpret it, a servile work, and all one as reaping; though, in the law just mentioned, it is manifestly distinguished from it. Their rule is ⁶⁹⁸

“he that reaps (on the sabbath day) ever so little, is guilty (of stoning), והולש תולדה קור הוא, and “plucking of ears of corn is a derivative of reaping”;

and is all one as its primitive, and punishable with the same kind of death, if done presumptuously: so Philo the Jew observes ⁶⁹⁹, that the rest of the sabbath not only reached to men, bond and free, and to beasts, but even to trees, and plants; and that ου ερνωσ ου κλαδον, αλλ ουδε πεταλον εφειται τεμειν, “it was not lawful to cut a plant, or branch, or so much as a leaf”, on a sabbath day: and it may be what might make this offence of the disciples the more heinous was, that they plucked these ears, and ate them, and so broke their fast before morning prayer; for a man might not eat any thing on a sabbath day until morning prayers were ended in the synagogue, nor indeed on any other day; for they used not to eat bread till after they had offered the daily sacrifice, which was about the third hour of the day, or nine o’clock in the morning; nor did they eat till the fourth hour, or ten o’clock ⁷⁰⁰.

Matthew 12:3

Ver. 3. **But he said unto them, have ye not read,**

If they had not read the Scriptures, they were very unfit persons either to be teachers, or censurers of others, and must have been very slothful and negligent; and if they had, they could not but have observed the case of David, which Christ produces in vindication of his disciples:

what David did when he was an hungred;

which was the case of the disciples, and is therefore mentioned; it being also the circumstance which could, and did excuse what was done by David and his men: and the Jews themselves own, that in case of hunger the showbread might be eaten, by those that were not priests; not only that which was removed from the table, but that which was upon it; yea, even when there was none to put in its room ⁷⁰¹; and that David was in the utmost distress,

⁶⁹⁸ Maimon. Hilch. Sabbat, c. 8. sect. 3. & 7. 1.

⁶⁹⁹ De Vita Mosis, 1. 2. p. 657.

⁷⁰⁰ Vid. Targum in Eccl. x. 17. Maimon. Hilch. Tephilla, c. 6. sect. 4.

⁷⁰¹ R. David Kimchi in 1 Sam. xxi. 5. {m} Laniado Cli Jaker, fol. 227. 2.

and therefore desired it, and it was granted him on that account. They represent him as thus saying to the priest {m},

“when he found there was none but showbread, give it me, that we may not die with hunger; שבת שפך נפשות דוהה, “for danger of life drives away the sabbath”;

which perfectly agrees with our Lord’s argument, and justifies the apostles conduct: and this was not a single fact of David’s, but of others also;

and they that were with him;

for though in 1Sa 21:1 he is said to be “alone, and no man with him”; yet this must be understood either comparatively, having but very few with him, and which were as none, considering his dignity; or thus, though none came with him to Ahimelech, pretending to the priest he had a secret affair of the king’s to transact; and therefore had left his servants in a certain place, and desires bread for himself and them; concerning whom the priest and he discourses, as may be seen in the place referred to: so that though no man was with him at the priest’s house, yet there were some with him, and who partook with him in eating of the showbread.

Matthew 12:4

Ver. 4. **How he entered into the house of God,**

Not the temple, which was not then built; but the tabernacle, which was then at Nob, the city of the priests, and which probably adjoined to Abimelech’s house:

and did eat the shewbread;

for that this is meant by the hallowed bread, in 1Sa 21:6 is certain; though R. Joseph Kimchi ⁷⁰² thinks it was the bread of the thank offering; to which R. Levi ben Getsom ⁷⁰³ seems to incline: but the general sense of the Jewish doctors ⁷⁰⁴ is, that it was the showbread; and which is very clear from that text, and is rightly affirmed by Christ;

which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests:

see Le 24:5 and so the Jews say that this bread לזרים אור, “is forbidden to strangers” ⁷⁰⁵; that is, to any but the priests, which, after the burning of the frankincense, was divided equally among them: that course of priests that came into the service had six cakes, and that which went

⁷⁰² Apud R. David Kimchi in 1 Sam. xxi. 6.

⁷⁰³ In ib.

⁷⁰⁴ T. Bab. Menachot, fol. 95. 2. R. David Kimchi, Abarbinel & Laniado in 1 Sam. xxi. 6.

⁷⁰⁵ Laniado & Abarbinel in ib.

out six; though the high priest had a right to half himself, but he did not use to take it, it being judged not to his honour to do so ⁷⁰⁶. No hint is here given, nor in the history, in 1Sa 21:1 that it was on the sabbath day that David came to Ahimelech, and ate the showbread; but this is observed, and disputed, by the Jewish writers. Some indeed are in a doubt about it; but others ⁷⁰⁷ readily give into it, that it was on the sabbath day, which he chose to flee in, for the greater safety and preservation of his life: and indeed it seems reasonable it should be on that day; since on that day only the showbread was removed from the table, and other loaves put in the room. One of their writers ⁷⁰⁸ says,

“that showbread was not to be eaten, but on the day, and night of the sabbath day; and on the going out of the sabbath day; and on the going out of the sabbath David came there.”

Now our Lord’s argument stands thus, that if David, a holy, good man, and, the men that were with him, who were men of religion and conscience, when in great distress, through hunger, ate of the showbread, which was unlawful for any to eat of but priests, the high priest himself assenting to it; then it could not be criminal in his disciples, when an hungred, to pluck, rub, and eat a few ears of corn, which were lawful for any man to eat, even though it was on the sabbath day: and for the further vindication of them, he adds,

Matthew 12:5

Ver. 5. **Or have ye not read in the law,**.... Nu 28:9 by which law the priests were obliged, every sabbath day, to offer up two lambs for a burnt offering; to which were annexed many servile works, as killing the sacrifice, flaying it, cutting it in pieces, and laying it on the altar, cutting of wood, and putting that in order, and kindling the fire: from all which, it might be observed,

how that on the sabbath days, the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless. There were many things, which, according to the Jewish canons, the priests might do on the sabbath day; particularly they might slay the sacrifice: it was a rule with them,

“that slaying drives away the sabbath” ⁷⁰⁹. They might also knead, make, and bake the

⁷⁰⁶ Maimon. Hilch. Tamidin, c. 4. sect. 12. 14.

⁷⁰⁷ Bemidbar Rabba Parash. 23. fol. 231. 9. Laniado Cli Jaker, fol. 226. 4. & 227. 2, 3, 4. & Jelammedenu in ib.

⁷⁰⁸ R. Isaiah in 1 Sam. xxi. 5.

⁷⁰⁹ T. Bab. Menachot, fol. 72. 2.

showbread on the sabbath day: their general rule was, as R. Akiba says, that what was possible to be done on the evening of the sabbath, did not drive away the sabbath; but what was not possible to be done on the sabbath eve, did drive away the sabbath⁷¹⁰: so they might kill the passover, sprinkle its blood, wipe its inwards, and burn the fat on the sabbath day⁷¹¹, with many other things. What exculpated these men was, that what they did was done in the temple, and for the service of it, upon which an emphasis is put; and agrees with their canons, which say, that there is no prohibition in the sanctuary; **התר הוא** **אזר שבות במקדש**, “that which is forbidden to be done on the sabbath, is lawful to be done in the sanctuary”⁷¹²: and whereas, it might be objected to the disciples of Christ, that they were not priests; and what they did was not in the temple, but in the fields; to this it is replied, in the following words:

Matthew 12:6

Ver. 6. **But I say unto you,**

Who Christ knew would be ready to object, as above, and therefore prevents them, by saying,

that in this place is one greater than the temple;

meaning himself, who was the Lord and Proprietor of the temple, and in his human nature the antitype of it; see Joh 2:19 and was infinitely more sacred than that. Some copies read **ניח**, “something greater”; referring either to the human nature of Christ, in which the God-head dwells bodily, and so infinitely greater than the temple; or to the health of his disciples, which was in danger, through hunger: or to the ministry of the apostles, which, by satisfying nature, they were more capable of performing; either of which was of more moment than the sacrifices and service of the temple. Christ’s argument is, that if the temple, and the service of it, excused the priests from blame, in doing things in it on the sabbath day, which otherwise might not be done; then much more might his presence, who was greater than the temple, excuse his disciples from blame in this action of rubbing and eating the ears of corn; which was done to satisfy hunger, and to render them the more capable of performing their ministerial function; and which was of more importance than the service of the priests.

Matthew 12:7

Ver. 7. **But if ye had known what this meaneth,**

⁷¹⁰ Misn. Menachot, c. 11. sect. 3.

⁷¹¹ Misn. Pesachim, c. 6. sect. 1. Maimon. Pesach. c. 1. sect. 18.

⁷¹² lb. sect. 16. & Hilchot Sabbat, c. 21. sect. 27.

The passage of Scripture in Hos 6:6

I will have mercy, and not sacrifice;

of the sense of which, see Gill “Mt 9:13”

ye would not have condemned the guiltless.

Our Lord taxes the Pharisees both with ignorance of the Scriptures, in which they pretended to be very knowing, and took upon them to be the interpreters of; and with inhumanity, for condemning innocent persons, the apostles, for rubbing a few ears of corn, for the refreshment of nature; which they would never have done, had they understood the word, and will of God; who prefers acts of humanity, compassion, and mercy, to the observance of rites and ceremonies; or had they the common affections of human nature, and those bowels of compassion which one man ought to show to another.

Matthew 12:8

Ver. 8. **For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.**

By “the Son of man” is meant, not any man, as some have thought; for no mere man is lord of any law, moral or ritual, natural or positive; or has a power of disposing of it, and dispensing with it at pleasure; but Christ himself; which is the constant sense of this phrase in the New Testament, and is a character of the Messiah in the old, Da 7:13 who, as he was the institutor of the sabbath among the Jews, that being a ritual, and of mere positive institution, could dispense with it, and even abrogate it at his pleasure. The Jews so far agree to this, that he that commanded the law of the sabbath, could dispense with it; they say⁷¹³, that

“the day on which Jericho was taken was the sabbath day; and that though they slew and burnt on the sabbath day, **מי שנה ל השבת זה לחלל שבת**, “he that commanded the observation of the sabbath, commanded the profanation of it”.

And since Christ is greater than the temple, and has all the perfections of the divine nature in him, is equal to the Father in power and glory; and even as mediator, has all power in heaven and earth given him; so as he is Lord of all other things, he is of the sabbath, and has a power of dispensing with it, and even of abolishing it; see Col 2:16 and since the Lord of the sabbath had a power of dispensing with it, and made use of it in the cases of David and his men, and of the priests in the temple formerly; the Pharisees ought not to think it strange, that the Son of man, who is equally Lord of the sabbath, dispensed with it in his disciples now.

⁷¹³ R. David Kimchi in Josh. vi. 11.

Matthew 12:9

Ver. 9. **And when he was departed thence,**

From the corn fields, where the disciples had plucked the ears of corn, and this conversation passed between Christ and the Pharisees about the violation of the sabbath, he went into their synagogue; not on the same sabbath day, as one might be led to conclude from the account of this evangelist, but on another sabbath, as Luke expresses it, Luke 6:6. He might indeed directly go into one of their synagogues the same day, where he and his disciples seem to have been going, and stay in the city the week following; and then, as it is said in Mark 3:1 he entered again into the synagogue; not being afraid of the Pharisees, who sought an advantage against him; nor deterred by them from doing good to men; and willing to take another opportunity of exposing their ignorance and malice.

Matthew 12:10

Ver. 10. **And behold, there was a man which had his hand withered,**

Or dry; the juices were dried up, the nerves and sinews contracted, so that it was of no manner of use to him: Luke says, it was his right hand, which was so much the worse; and means not only his hand, but the whole arm. Such a case is mentioned in the Talmud⁷¹⁴, “it happened to one, **שיבשה זרונה**, that his arm was dry, or withered. Jerom says⁷¹⁵, in the Gospel which the Nazarenes and Hebionites used, this man is said to be a plasterer, and so might possibly come by his misfortune through his business; and being a man that got his bread by his hand labour, the case was the more affecting. This account is introduced with a “behold!” it being remarkable that such a case should offer so opportunely, of showing his divine power in healing such a disorder; and of his authority, as the Son of man, over the sabbath; and of putting to silence his enemies, the Pharisees: and who, upon seeing such an object, put the following question to him;

and they asked him, saying, is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?

and which was put, not for information sake, as willing to be instructed in this point; for their determinations were, that healing was not lawful on such a day; nor were any means to be made use of for that purpose: if a man received a cure accidentally, it was very well; but no methods were to be taken with intention: as for instance

⁷¹⁴ T. Hieros. Yoma, fol. 40. 1.

⁷¹⁵ In loc.

⁷¹⁶;

“if a man had an ailment in his throat, he might not gargle it with oil, but he might swallow a large quantity of oil, **ואמ נתרפא נתרפא** “and “if he was healed, he was healed” (i.e. it was very well, it was no breach of the sabbath); they may not chew mastic, nor rub the teeth with spice, on the sabbath day, **hawprl Nywktmv Nmzb**, “when it is intended “for healing”; but if it is intended for the savour of his mouth, it is free.”

There are several things they allowed might be done on the sabbath; but then they did not reckon them to come under the notion of healing.

“Three⁷¹⁷ things R. Ishmael bar Jose said he had heard from R. Matthia ben Charash; they might let blood for the stranguary on the sabbath day; one that was bit by a mad dog, they might give him hog’s liver to eat; and he that had an ailment in his mouth, they might put spice to it on the sabbath day: but the wise men say of these, that there is not in them **hawpr Mwvm**, anything of medicine.”

Indeed, in case of extreme danger of life they did admit of the use of medicine, by the prescription of a physician⁷¹⁸.

“Danger of life drives away the sabbath; wherefore, if there is any danger in a sick person, it is lawful to kindle a fire for him, &c. and they may kill, and bake, and boil: and though there may be no apparent danger, only a doubt of danger; as when one physician says there is a necessity, and another physician says there is none, they may profane the sabbath for him.”

Hence it is very clear with what view the Pharisees asked Christ this question; and that it was, as the evangelist says, that they might accuse him: either of cruelty and weakness, should he answer in the negative, that either he was not able to heal the poor man before him, or wanted compassion; or should he answer in the affirmative, as they expected, and act upon it, then they might have wherewith to charge him before the sanhedrim as a violator of the sabbath, and of their canons concerning

⁷¹⁶ Maimon. Hilchot Sabbat, c. 21. sect. 24.

⁷¹⁷ T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 84. 1. Vid. Misn. Yoma, e. 8. sect. 7.

⁷¹⁸ Kotsensis Mitzvot Tora pr. neg. 65. Maimon. in Misn. Sabbat, c. 18. sect. 3

it.

Matthew 12:11

Ver. 11. **And he said unto them,**

Well knowing their intentions, and also their usages and customs, which he was able to produce and object to them; in which, through covetousness, they showed more regard to their beasts, than they did humanity to their fellow creatures:

what man shall there be among you, that 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?

Christ appeals to them in a case which was usually done among them, and which, without delay, no man would scruple to do; though their present rule of direction, in such a case, is this ⁷¹⁹:

“if a beast fall into a ditch, or a pool of water, if food can be given it, where it is, they feed it till the going out of the sabbath; but if not, bolsters and pillows may be brought, and put under it, and if it can come out: it may come out:”

and which is elsewhere ⁷²⁰ a little differently expressed;

“if a beast fall into a ditch, or pool of water, it is forbidden a man to bring it out with his hand; but if he can give it food where it is, it may be fed till the going out of the sabbath:”

which seems to have been made since the times of Christ, and in opposition to this observation of his.

Matthew 12:12

Ver. 12. **How much then is a man better than a sheep?**

As a rational creature must be better, and more excellent, than an irrational one, more care is to be taken of, and more mercy shown unto, the one, than the other: even the health of a man is preferable to the life of a beast; and if it is lawful to give food to a beast, and make use of means for its relief, and for the lifting it up out of a ditch, when fallen into it on the sabbath day, “wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days”, to men; to do acts of beneficence and humanity to them, among which must be reckoned healing of diseases and infirmities: and particularly, if it is lawful to take a sheep out of a ditch on the sabbath day, it must be right to restore to a man the use of his hand on such a day; and especially to one that gets his bread by his hand labour, as it is very likely

this man did. This was such a strong way of arguing, that the Jews could not well object to it; and it appears, that they were confounded and put to silence; for, as Mark observes, “they held their peace”: and indeed they allow of everything to be done where life is in danger, though not otherwise: they say ⁷²¹,

“they may take care of the preservation of life on the sabbath; and if he is prepared for it, lo! this is praiseworthy, and there is no need to take a licence from the sanhedrim: as when a man sees a child fallen into the sea, he may spread a net, and bring him out; and if he is prepared for it, lo! this is praiseworthy, and there is no need to take a licence from the sanhedrim, though he was fishing: if he sees a child fallen into a ditch, he may rake into the mud and bring him out; and if he is prepared for it, lo! this is praiseworthy, and there is no need to take a licence from the sanhedrim, though he had set a ladder ready.”

It is said of Hillel ⁷²², that

“he sat by a window to hear the words of the living God, from the mouth of Shemaia and Abtalion; and they say that that day was the evening of the sabbath, and the winter solstice, and the snow descended from heaven; and when the pillar of the morning ascended, (when it was daylight,) Shemaia said to Abtalion, brother Abtalion, all other days the house is light, but today it is dark, perhaps it is a cloudy day: they lift up their eyes, and saw the form of a man at the window; they went up, and found upon him snow the height of three cubits; they broke through and delivered him; and they washed him, and anointed him, and set him over against his dwelling, and said, very worthy is this man *שבתה ליו את שבתה*, “to profane the sabbath for him”.

And if it was lawful to dig a man out of the snow, and do these several things for him on the sabbath day, why not cure a man of a withered hand, and especially when done by a word speaking, and without any labour?

Matthew 12:13

Ver. 13. **Then saith he to the man,**

That is, after he had looked round about upon them, to observe their countenances; and what answer they would make to his arguments; and with anger for their

⁷²¹ T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 84. 2..

⁷²² T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 35. 2

⁷¹⁹ Maimon. Hilchot Sabbat, c. 25. sect. 26.

⁷²⁰ Kotsensis Mitzvot Tora pr. neg. 65.

inhumanity and cruelty; being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, i.e. their unmercifulness to their fellow creatures, and the stupidity and blindness of their minds, being ignorant of the Scriptures, and of the sabbath, the nature, use, and Lord of it; which things are observed by the Evangelist Mark; then, in a commanding authoritative way, almighty power going along with his word, he says to the man who stood forth before him, and the Pharisees,

stretch forth thine hand,

which was before contracted and shrivelled up;

and he stretched it forth

with all the ease imaginable, and was, not only able to do this, but to make use of it any way;

for it was restored whole like as the other;

his left hand, which had never been damaged. This was an instance of Christ’s power; a proof of the lawfulness of healing on the sabbath day; and a rebuke to the Pharisees for their cruelty and uncharitableness. This man was an emblem of the inability of men to do anything that is spiritually good, and of the power and efficacy of divine grace to enable persons to stretch out their hands, and do things which they of themselves are not equal to.

Matthew 12:14

Ver. 14. **Then the Pharisees went out,**

Of the synagogue, being, as Luke says, filled with madness, at the unanswerableness of his arguments; and because of the violation of the sabbath, as they thought; and most of all, because of the miracle wrought by him; and which was so glaringly a proof of his being Lord of the sabbath, and could not fail of creating him esteem among the people: and held a council against him, how they might destroy him. Mark says, the council was held by them with the Herodians; of whom, See Gill on “Mt 22:16” who, though they differed from them both in religion and politics, yet might be thought very proper persons to advise with about this matter; and especially, as they might have a greater interest at court, than they had. Nor did they scruple to enter into such a consultation, though on the sabbath day, and about the taking away of the life of an innocent person; which shows what scared consciences, and hard hearts they had, and how full of hypocrisy they were.

Matthew 12:15

Ver. 15. **But when Jesus knew it,**

Their consultation against him, as he did, not by any discovery made to him by men, but as the omniscient

God; he withdrew himself from thence; from the synagogue and city, where he was, to the sea of Galilee, and his disciples with him, as Mark observes; not through fear, but because his time was not yet come, that he must suffer and die for his people; he had some other work to do first, and therefore rightly and wisely provides for his safety. And great multitudes followed him; from Galilee, Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and from beyond Jordan; and were joined by another multitude of people, who came from about Tyre and Sidon, as Mark relates: so that his departure was not so very private; nor was he forsaken by the common people, though the Pharisees were so offended with him. And he healed them all; that stood in need of healing, as many as had plagues and unclean spirits; practising agreeably to his doctrine, that it was lawful to do good on the sabbath day, and to heal the bodies as well as the souls of men.

Matthew 12:16

Ver. 16. **And charged them that they should not make him known.**

This charge was given, either to the multitude that followed him, and were healed by him, that when they returned to the respective places from whence they came, they would not make it known to his enemies where he was, and what he had done to them; being neither desirous of popular applause and glory, nor willing to provoke them more, nor to fall into their hands as yet; or else, as Mark seems to intimate, to the unclean spirits, that they would not declare who he was, the Son of God, they confessed him to be: and very likely it was given to both, and that they should neither tell where he was, nor who he was; and this charge was a very severe one; for the word signifies a charge with threatenings, should they not observe his orders.

Matthew 12:17

Ver. 17. **That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying.** Isa 42:1

not that Christ gave the above charge with this view, that this passage in Isaiah might have its accomplishment: but this is an observation of the evangelist, that what was now done by Christ, by his private departure from the Pharisees, being unwilling to irritate them more; by his preaching to the Idumeans, Tyrians, and Sidonians; by healing their diseases, and shunning all ostentation and popular applause; and prohibiting to tell who and where he was, was a fulfilling of this prophecy; in which the Holy Spirit foreknowing the disposition and actions of Christ, predicted them: which, when considered, must

be looked upon as a very large proof of the truth of his being the Messiah. For that this prophecy belongs to the Messiah, is owned by the Jews themselves ⁷²³.

Matthew 12:18

Ver. 18. **Behold, my servant whom I have chosen,**

These are the words of God the Father, speaking to the church, concerning Christ, as mediator; who, as such, is God's servant, employed by him, and obedient to him, in the work of man's salvation; and is a righteous, faithful, prudent, and diligent one; whom he, from all eternity, had chosen to this service, and in the fulness of time sent him to do it, and supported and upheld him in it; for it is whom I uphold, in the Hebrew text. My beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased; who always was the object of his love, not only as his own and only begotten Son, but as in his office capacity, as mediator; in regard to which he was his elect, as it is in Isaiah; and, as such, he was always delighted in his person, well pleased with his office, and the discharge of it, and which he declared more than once by a voice from heaven, as at his baptism, and at his transfiguration on the mount: I will put my Spirit upon him; as he did without measure, whereby he was abundantly qualified for his whole work, and particularly for preaching the Gospel, being richly anointed with gifts and graces, above his fellows; of which the descent of the Holy Spirit upon him, as a dove at his baptism, which immediately preceded his public ministry, was a symbol. And he shall show judgment unto the Gentiles; meaning, not the general judgment, at the last day, which is committed to him; nor the laws of Justice and equity; but the Gospel, which is the produce of the God of judgment; best informs the judgment of men about the business of salvation; gives an account of the righteous procedure of God in justifying sinners, by the righteousness of his Son; and teaches men to live soberly, righteously, and godly: this Christ brought forth, and showed, at this time, to the Heathens, the Idumeans, Tyrians, and Sidonians; who flocked unto him; whereby this part of the prophecy had its fulfilment: in the Hebrew it is, "he shall bring forth"; that is, out of his heart and mouth, and is the same as "show" here.

Matthew 12:19

Ver. 19. **He shall not strive,**

Or contend in a wrangling way, as the disputers of this world do about words to no profit, and for the sake

⁷²³ Targum & Kimchi in loc. Abarbinel Mashmia Jeshua, fol. 9. 1, 2. & 10. 1, 2. & 21. 2. & in Is. fol 64. 3, 4. R. Isaac Chiz-zuk Emuna, p. 299.

of victory only, and popular applause, but shall choose rather to withdraw, than to carry on a controversy to a great length, to little purpose; or, as men litigate a point in a court of judicature, where one is plaintiff, and the other defendant. In the Hebrew text it is, "he shall not cry"; he shall not act the part of a plaintiff; he shall not complain, or bring in any charge, or accusation against any, but choose rather to suffer wrong, than to contend: thus hqeu signifies such a cry, as is a complaint of injustice, Isa 5:7 and qewu a plaintiff, one that brings an action against another ⁷²⁴: but Christ did not so, he would not accuse to the Father, nor complain against his most implacable enemies, but left that to Moses, in whom they trusted; "nor cry", or, as in the Hebrew text, lift up; that is, his voice, in a clamorous way, using reviling and opprobrious language, or menaces and threatenings; but, on the contrary, he silently put up all abuses, and patiently bore every affront, and behaved peaceably, quietly, committing himself and cause to a righteous God.

Neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets;

or, as in the Hebrew text, "nor cause his voice to be heard in the street": the sense is the same, and the meaning is, that he sought not worldly honour, popular applause, and to be seen of men; he did nothing in an ostentatious way, said nothing in his own commendation, was never heard to praise himself, and chose that others should be silent concerning him: for this does not so much regard the lowness of his voice, as if that was not so sonorous as to be heard without doors, when he preached within, as his modest mein and suitable deportment; nor the places where he usually ministered, which was sometimes in the street, as well as in an house, or on a mountain, or by the sea side, or in the temple, and the synagogues. The Ethiopic version here is very wrong, "no man shall hear his voice in the synagogues"; for his voice was often heard there.

Matthew 12:20

Ver. 20. **A bruised reed shall he not break,**

Various are the thoughts of interpreters, about what is meant by this, and by

the smoking flax shall he not quench.

Some think the Scribes and Pharisees are designed, whose power Christ could easily crush, and their wrath and fury restrain, but would not, till the time of his vengeance was come. Others that the publicans and sinners are intended, of whose conversion and salvation there were more hope than of the Scribes and Pharisees; and

⁷²⁴ Vid. Cocc. Heb. Lex. in rad. qeu.

which Christ greatly sought after, and therefore cherished and encouraged them in his ministry and conversation. Some are of opinion, that such who have fallen into sin, and are under great decays of grace, are meant, whom Christ has compassion on, succours, and restores: but rather young converts, such as are under first awakenings, are here pointed at; who, like to a "bruised reed", or "broken" one, one that is in some measure broke, near being broken to pieces, are wounded in their spirits, have their hearts broken and contrite, under a sense of their sinfulness, vileness, weakness, and unworthiness; whom Christ is so far from breaking and destroying, that he binds up their broken hearts, heals their wounds, and restores comforts to them: and who are like to "smoking flax", or, as the Syriac reads it, שְׂרִינְאֵר מְטַפֵּט "a smoking lamp"; to which the Arabic and Persic versions agree; meaning the wick of the lamp, which being just lighted, seems ready to go out, having scarce any light, only a little fire in it, which makes it smoke: so these have but little light of knowledge, faith, and comfort, and a great deal of darkness and infirmity; only there is some warmth in their affections, which go upwards "like pillars of smoke, perfumed with frankincense"; and such Christ is so far from neglecting, and putting out, that he blows up the sparks of grace into a flame, and never utterly leaves the work,

till he sends forth judgment into victory;

that is, till he sends forth the Gospel into their hearts, accompanied with his mighty power, in the light and comfort of it; which informs their judgments, enlightens their understandings, bows their wills, raises their affections, sanctifies their souls, works effectually in them, under the influence of his Spirit and grace, to the carrying on of the work of grace in them to the end; and making them victorious over all their enemies, and more than conquerors, through him that has loved them. The Targum of Jonathan paraphrases the words thus;

"the meek, who are as a bruised reed, he will not break; and the poor, who are as an obscure lamp, he will not quench."

Matthew 12:21

Ver. 21. **And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.**

The former part of the text is omitted, "he shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth"; but is inserted in Munster's Hebrew Gospel; and which some understand of the bruised reed, and smoking flax, and others of Christ; the latter sense is to be preferred. The passage, here cited, is somewhat different in

Isaiah: for there it is, "and the isles shall wait for his law"; but the difference, at least, in sense, is not so great as it may appear at first sight: for, אִיִּים, as Grotius observes, does not always signify "islands", but nations, and countries, that are upon the continent, Ge 10:5 and so might be rightly rendered here, the Gentiles, or "nations"; and by "the name" of Christ is meant his Gospel: see Ac 9:15 which Isaiah calls his "law": that is, his doctrine, the doctrine of righteousness, life, and salvation by him, which is the ground and foundation of hope, and trust in him; and they that wait for it, may be truly said to hope, or trust in it. This began to have its accomplishment in the Idumeans, Tyrians, and Sidonians, now attending on the ministry of Christ; and has had a greater accomplishment since: the Gospel having been preached in the Gentile world, both upon the main land, and in the isles afar off; whereby multitudes have been brought to hope, and believe in Christ, as their Saviour and Redeemer.

Matthew 12:22

Ver. 22. **Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil,**

About this time, or some little time after, when he was returned from the sea of Galilee, and was come into a certain house; see Mark 3:19 some persons brought him a demoniac, in compassion to the possessed man, and being persuaded of the power of Christ to heal him by the late cures he had performed. A like instance we have in Mt 9:32, which had a like effect upon the people, and cavilled at by the Pharisees in much the same way; and which cavils were answered in much the same words; and yet the case is not the same; for that man was only dumb, but this both

blind and dumb;

not by birth, or through the defect of nature, or by any natural distemper that had attended him, but through the malice of Satan, by divine permission; his blindness, and dumbness, were the effects of his being possessed with a devil, who had deprived him of his sight, and speech. The word rendered "dumb", signifies both deaf and dumb, and answers to the Hebrew word קֵרֵא which sometimes ⁷²⁵ is used of a deaf man only, who can speak, but not hear; and often of one that can neither speak, nor hear; which is the case of such as are born deaf: it seems as if this man could hear, though he could not speak; since no mention is made of his want of hearing, or of Christ's restoring it to him; for it follows,

and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and

⁷²⁵ Maimon. & Bartenora in Misn. Trumot, c. 1. sect. 2.

dumb, both spake and saw.

This he did, not by making use of medicines, but by a word speaking, dispossessing Satan; so that the cause of blindness and dumbness being removed, the effects ceased, and the man was restored to his sight, and speech, as before. He had his sight to behold his Saviour, and a tongue to praise his name: so when men are turned from Satan unto God, and are delivered from his thralldom and bondage, they are brought into marvellous light, and put into a capacity of showing forth the praises of God.

Matthew 12:23

Ver. 23. **And all the people were amazed,**

At the cure; it was such an instance of divine power, and so glaring a proof, that the person who wrought it was more than a man, and must be the Messiah. This is to be understood of the greater part of the people, not of every individual, and of the common people only; for it had a different effect upon the Pharisees, as hereafter appears; but in these it not only produced admiration, but conviction, faith, and confession:

and said, is not this the son of David?

or the Messiah; for בן דוד, “the son of David”, is a character of the Messiah, well known among the Jews; See Gill “Mt 1:1” because he was promised to David, was to be raised up of his seed, and to spring from his loins. This question they put, not as doubting of it, but as inclining, at least, to believe it, if not as expressing their certainty of it: and is, as if they had said, who can this person be but the true Messiah, that has wrought such a miracle as this? for from his miracles they rightly concluded who he was; though the Jews since, in order to deprive Jesus of this true characteristic of the Messiah, deny that miracles are to be performed by him ⁷²⁶.

Matthew 12:24

Ver. 24. **But when the Pharisees heard it,**

Very probably not the same that went out, and held a council against Christ to destroy him, Mt 12:14 but others that were come from Judea and Jerusalem, and were with him in the house, and saw the miracle: these, when they heard what the people said, and how ready they were to believe, and own Jesus to be the Messiah, in order to prevent it, being filled with envy and malice,

they said, this fellow doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub, the prince of devils.

They could not deny the miracle, or that it was one; but to deprive him of the glory of it, and even reproach

⁷²⁶ Maimon. Hilch. Melacim, c. 11. sect. 3.

him for it, and to bring him into contempt with the people, they not only speak of him in a scornful manner, שׂח, “this” sorry man, “this” vile fellow; but ascribe the miracle he wrought to familiarity with the devil, to diabolical influence and skill in magic art: they pretended he was in confederacy with Satan, and was carrying on his interest: and therefore, that he might gain credit and reputation, the prince of devils suffered the inferior ones to remove at his word: and of these their ancestors, the Jews have learnt to fix this vile imputation, and blasphemous piece of slander upon Christ; who, they say ⁷²⁷, brought enchantments, or witchcrafts, out of Egypt, in the cuttings of his flesh, whereby he performed the things he did. Concerning Beelzebub, See Gill “Mt 10:25” here called “the prince of devils”; it being a prevailing notion among the Jews, that there is one devil who is the head of all the rest, and who is by them sometimes called Asmodeus: they say ⁷²⁸, when Solomon sinned against the Lord, he sent to him אֲשֶׁמֶדֶי־מֶלֶכָה דְּשִׂדִּי, “Asmodeus the king of the devils”, and drove him from his throne, and so elsewhere ⁷²⁹: and sometimes Samael, who is styled ⁷³⁰ Samael the prince, מֶלֶכָה דְּשִׂדִּי, “the king of devils”; and the angel Samael, the wicked, כֹּל הַשְּׂטָנִים, “the head of all the Satans”, or devils ⁷³¹: and we often read ⁷³² of שֹׁר הַגִּיהֵנוֹם, “the prince of hell”; by whom the same is meant, as here, by Beelzebub; for if anyone devil is more wicked, odious, and execrable than the rest, the chief of them may be thought to be so; for which reason he is here mentioned.

Matthew 12:25

Ver. 25. **And Jesus knew their thoughts,....** He not only heard their blasphemous words, but was privy to their secret thoughts; he knew their vile malicious intentions and designs, with what view they expressed themselves in this manner, on purpose to reproach him, and set the people against him, contrary to the inward light of their minds, and dictates of their consciences; who must, and did know the contrary of what they said: and regarding the inward frame of their minds, as well as their words, and which is a proof of his omniscience, and so of his deity, and consequently of his Messiahship, **said unto**

⁷²⁷ T. Hieros. Sabbat, fol. 13. 4. T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 104.

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⁷²⁸ Targum in Eccl. i. 12.

⁷²⁹ T. Bab. Pesach, fol. 110. 1. Gittin, fol. 68. 1. & Raziel, fol. 41. 2.

⁷³⁰ Zohar in Deut. fol. 120. 3.

⁷³¹ Debarim Rabba, fol. 245. 3.

⁷³² T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 52. 1. Imre Binah in Zohar in Gen. fol. 22. 3.

them the following parables, as Mark calls them, Mark 3:23 or proverbial expressions: **every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation;** a government, in which there is a disagreement between the chiefs of it, and the body of the people, or where one part is opposed to the other, or in which a civil and intestine war is begun and prosecuted, cannot continue in any comfortable situation, and flourishing state, but must come to nothing: this is a maxim that has been so often fatally verified, that no one will doubt the truth of it; and the same holds true of lesser communities, of cities, and families: and every city, or house, divided against itself, shall not stand. If citizens fall out with their magistrates, or one with another, and turn out, and disfranchise each other; and if the heads of families, and the respective branches thereof, quarrel with, and divide from one another, a dissolution of the whole must ensue; and the same may be said of the kingdom and government of Satan. These, it is very likely, were common sayings among the Jews, and they might be very easily understood by them; and are very appropriately produced by Christ to illustrate the present case, and confute the vile and blasphemous suggestions of the Pharisees: a proverbial expression, much like to these, is to be read in the writings of the Jews, וְפִי לִיחָרֵב וְכָל בַּיִת שִׁישׁ בּוֹ מִחֻלּוּקָתוֹ “every house, in which there is a division, at the end shall come to desolation”⁷³³

Matthew 12:26

Ver. 26. **And if Satan cast out Satan,**

That is, if Satan, the same with Beelzebub, casts out the rest of the Satans, or other devils, of which he is the prince and head,

he is divided against himself;

he acts contrary to his own interest, which is to keep possession of the bodies and souls of men; and consequently it must, in course, be subversive of his power and dominion:

how shall then his kingdom stand?

he will never be able to maintain his authority, and keep up the show of a government, as he does: for these words suggest, that there is a form of government among the devils, who are united in one body, under one head; and whose unity and concord are their greatest strength, as in all other governments. Our Lord’s argument, and which is his first, for others follow, is, that since Satan, who is so cunning and crafty, can never be thought to act such an opposite part to himself, subversive of his king-

⁷³³ Derech Eretz, c. 5.

dom and government; and which would give so much credit to Christ, and serve so much to strengthen his interest, as to assist him in the casting out of devils; the weakness, and maliciousness of such a suggestion, must be clear and evident to all.

Matthew 12:27

Ver. 27. **And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils,**

As the Pharisees asserted, and would have the people believe; for this is not allowed, only for argument sake supposed:

by whom do your children cast them out?

meaning not the apostles and disciples of Christ, the children of the Jews, to whom Christ gave power of casting out devils, and who had exercised it in his name; and therefore argues, if they in his name cast out devils, why could he not do it himself, without the help of Satan? wherefore these would be judges against them: but, no doubt, the Pharisees had no better opinion of the disciples, and of their ejection of devils, than of Christ; wherefore, it is not likely, that our Lord should argue with them from hence: but rather, he means, some among themselves, who pretended to have a power of exorcising and ejecting of devils, either in the name of Jesus, as some of them did, Mark 9:38 or in the name of their kings, righteous men, prophets and patriarchs, as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ⁷³⁴; and which practice, perhaps, they took up and made pretensions to, in imitation of Christ and his apostles; so as Christ healed men possessed of devils, they also affected to do the same. A story is reported ⁷³⁵

”concerning Ben Talmion, that a miracle was wrought by R. Eleazar bar Jose, who healed a king’s daughter at Rome, in whose body the devil entered, whose name was Ben Talmion; and they brought him (the Jew) to the king’s treasury, to take what he would, but he would take nothing from thence, but letters, in which were written the decrees they had decreed against Israel; and when he found them, he tore them to pieces, and there he saw the vessels of the house of the sanctuary, in the treasury.”

Now since the Jews pretended to do these things, Christ asks them, by whom they cast out devils? Whether by the Spirit of God, or by Beelzebub? They would doubtless say by the former, and not the latter, which would show their great partiality; for admitting that the

⁷³⁴ Justin Martyr, adv. Tryphon. p. 311.

⁷³⁵ In Gloss. in T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 57. 1. Meilah, fol. 17.

2.

like actions were done by them, as by him, why not by the same power? Why should their ejection of devils be ascribed to God, and his to Beelzebub?

Therefore they shall be your judges;

who will rise up against you, and condemn you one day, for this unequal judgment you now pass; and which was just the reverse of the true state of the case: for he cast out devils by the Spirit of God, which they imputed to the assistance of Beelzebub; their children cast out devils, or pretended to do so, and it was by the help of Satan; and yet they ascribed it to a divine power, even though they made use of the name of Satan, under that of Beelzebub, or Asmodeus, their exorcising, of which take the following form ⁷³⁶. "By the authority of the glorious and fearful name, I adjure thee Asmodeus, "king of the devils", and all thy company, &c. that ye hurt not, nor put in fear, nor trouble such an one, the son of such an one, but that ye help him, and sustain him (or deliver him) out of every distress and anguish, and from every evil thing, and from all diseases, that enter into the two hundred and forty eight members, &c."

Matthew 12:28

Ver. 28. **But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God,**

As it was certain he did, from the nature, use, and design of such miracles; and it could not be reasonably thought, that Satan would assist in what was so very opposite to his kingdom and interest, and was so serviceable to the cause and glory of Christ. All the three persons had an hand in the miracles of the Messiah; they were done by Christ, in his Father's name, and by the power of the Spirit of God; from which the following inference may be justly deduced,

then the kingdom of God is come unto you:

meaning, either the Messiah himself; or rather, his kingdom, the Gospel dispensation, which both Christ and John had declared to be at hand; of which the performing of miracles, particularly the casting out of devils, whereby the kingdom of Satan was so much weakened, was a clear proof.

Matthew 12:29

Ver. 29. **Or else, how can anyone enter into a strong man's house,**

This is another argument of Christ's proving that his casting out of devils could not be by Satan, but by the Spirit of God; for if he did not act by any superior power to Satan's, and such by which he was able to master, overcome, and bind him, he could never

⁷³⁶ Raziell, fol. 41. 2.

spoil his goods,

as he did; or dispossess devils out of the bodies or souls of men: just as if a man should enter into another man's house, who is strong and robust, with a design to spoil his goods, who would never make use of the man himself to do it, and can never be thought to effect it, unless he has a power superior to his, and uses it;

except he first bind the strong man, and then he will spoil his house:

by the "strong man", is meant the devil, see Isa 49:24 who is powerful and mighty, as appears from his nature, being an angel, though a fallen one, excelling in strength human creatures; from his names, such as the roaring lion, the great red dragon, leviathan, &c. from the extent of his dominion, here called "his house"; which reaches to the whole posse of devils, and world of men; whence he is called the prince of the power of the air, and the prince of this world, and the god of it; and from his works and actions, in and over the bodies and estates of men, by divine permission; which might be exemplified in the case of Job, and the demoniacs in the time of Christ; and in and over the souls of men, not only over wicked men, but men under a show of religion, as antichrist and his followers; yea, saints themselves, and even over Adam in a state of innocence; but Christ is stronger than he, and attacked him, and dispossessed him of the bodies of men; and restraining him from doing them any hurt, enters into the souls of men, dethrone him, and leads him captive, who led others; and keeps him from doing them any damage; as he will in the latter day "bind" him and shut him up in prison a thousand years; and also "spoils his goods", or "vessels", and "his house"; the palace of Satan, by taking bodies and souls out of his possession; by awakening the conscience, enlightening the mind, working upon the affections, subduing the will, and implanting principles of grace and holiness in the heart; and so making it a fit habitation for God, which spoils it for the devil: in all which, Satan can never be thought to have any hand; and therefore the suggestion that Christ casts out devils by his assistance, even out of the bodies of men, has no show of reason in it.

Matthew 12:30

Ver. 30. **He that is not with me, is against me,**

These words chiefly refer to Satan, and are a further proof, that Christ did not cast out devils by him; since they two are as much opposites, as can possibly be; Satan is not on the side of Christ, but an adversary to him; there is an original, and implacable enmity, between the

serpent and the seed of the woman; there is an open war between them, and therefore one cannot be thought to lend assistance to the other. They were concerned in different things, had different views and interests, and so took different methods;

and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth:

Christ is the good shepherd, that gathers his sheep to himself, and into his fold, by the external ministry of the word, and internal efficacy of his grace; Satan is the wolf, that catches and scatters the sheep, and seeks to kill and destroy them: and since there is such an open war proclaimed and carried on between Christ and the devil, none ought to be neutral; whoever is not on the side of Christ, is reckoned as an enemy; and whoever is not concerned by prayer or preaching, or other means to gather souls to his word and ordinances, and to his church, and to himself, is deemed by him a scatterer of them.

Matthew 12:31

Ver. 31. **Wherefore I say unto you,**

This shows, that what follows is occasioned by what the Pharisees had said, concerning the miracles of Christ; imputing them to diabolical influence and assistance, when they were done by the Spirit of God, of which they themselves were conscious;

all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: not unto all men, for there are some, who,

as they are never truly convinced of sin, and brought to repentance for it, so they never have the remission of it; but to such to whom God of his free grace has promised, and for whom he has provided this blessing, in the covenant of his grace; for whom the blood of Christ was shed, for the remission of their sins; and who, by the Spirit of God, are made sensible of them, and have repentance unto life given them, and faith in Christ, by which they receive the forgiveness of them: the sense is, that all kind of sin, whether committed more immediately against God, or man, the first or second table of the law, or against any of the divine precepts; be they sins small or great, secret or open, sins of heart, lip, or life, or attended with whatsoever aggravating circumstances; and all kind of blasphemy, or evil speaking of men, or of angels, or of the name of God, but what is hereafter excepted, there is forgiveness of in the grace of God, through the blood of Christ, even for all sorts of men and sinners whatever. The Jews have a saying ⁷³⁷, that God pardons all sins

"עַל כָּל חַטָּאת מִן הַזֵּוֹהָר" "except lasciviousness".

But this is not excepted by Christ, only what follows,

⁷³⁷ Tanchuma apud Buxtorf. Heb. Florileg. p. 126.

but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, shall not be forgiven unto men:

by which is meant, not every ignorant denial of, and opposition to his deity and personality; nor all resistance of him in the external ministry of the word; nor every sin that is knowingly and wilfully committed; but it is a despiteful usage of the Spirit of grace, an opposing, contradicting, and denying the operations wrought, or doctrines revealed by him, against a man's own light and conscience, out of wilful and obstinate malice, on purpose to lessen the glory of God, and gratify his own lusts: such was the sin of the Scribes and Pharisees; who, though they knew the miracles of Christ were wrought by the Spirit of God, yet maliciously and obstinately imputed them to the devil, with a view to obscure the glory of Christ, and indulge their own wicked passions and resentments against him; which sin was unpardonable at that present time, as well as under that dispensation then to come, when the Spirit of God was poured down in a more plenteous manner.

Matthew 12:32

Ver. 32. **And whosoever speaketh a word against the son of man,**

By whom is meant, not any man, as Grotius thought, but the Lord Jesus Christ, so often called "the son of man", on account of his human nature, in which he appeared in great meanness and obscurity. Now many might, through ignorance of him, thinking him to be a mere man, and taking up with common fame, speak evil of him, deny him to be the Messiah, reproach him for the meanness of his parentage and education, and for the freedom of his conversation with publicans and sinners; and do many things contrary to his name, as Saul, whilst a Pharisee did, and thought he ought to do; and yet be afterwards convinced of their mistakes, and be brought to a sense and acknowledgment of them, and obtain pardoning grace and mercy, as Saul did, though a blasphemer; and who is an instance of what is here promised,

it shall be forgiven him

through the grace of God, the blood and mediation of Christ, under the application of the blessed Spirit.

But whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost,

in the sense before declared,

it shall not be forgiven him:

not because the Holy Ghost is greater than Christ; or for want of efficacy in the blood of Christ; or because God cannot pardon it; but because such persons wilfully, maliciously, and obstinately oppose the Spirit of God,

without whom there can be no application of pardon made; and remain in hardness of heart, are given up to a reprobate mind, and die in impenitence and unbelief, and so there is no forgiveness for them, neither in this world, nor in the world to come; that is; they shall never be forgiven, see Mark 3:29. The distinction here used, does not refer to a common one among the Jews, of the Jewish state and the times of the Messiah; but to the present state of life, and that which will be after, or upon death: and it does not suppose there may be forgiveness of other sins, though not of this, in the other world; but strikes at a notion the Jews had, that there are some sins, which repentance and the day of atonement expiate in this life; but there are others, which repentance and the day of atonement do not expiate; and these a man's death expiates, or makes atonement for⁷³⁸. The form of confession used by sick persons is the following⁷³⁹;

"I confess before thee, O Lord our God, and the God of our fathers, that my cure is in thy hands, and my death is in thy hands; if it be thy good pleasure, heal me with a perfect healing: but if I die, תהא מיתתי ליהוה, "let my death be for the pardon", forgiveness, and atonement of all the sins, iniquities, and transgressions, which I have sinned, acted perversely in, and transgressed before thee; and give me my portion in paradise, and justify me "in the world to come", which is hidden for the righteous."

But the sin against the Holy Ghost is such, as is not forgiven, neither before, nor at, nor after death, nor by it: all sins that are forgiven, are forgiven in this world, and that perfectly and at once; and all that are forgiven in this world, there will be a manifestation and declaration of the pardon of them in another; but such sins as are not forgiven here, there will be no declaration of the pardon of them hereafter. In short, the sense is, that the sin against the Holy Ghost never has forgiveness; it is not pardoned now, and consequently there will be no declaration of the pardon of it hereafter. The Jews use the phrase in the same sense⁷⁴⁰; a certain sick man said to his son,

"give me water, and such certain food; but if not, I will not "forgive thee, neither in this world, nor in the world to come".

⁷³⁸ T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 86. 1.

⁷³⁹ Seder Tephillot, fol. 333. 2. Ed. Basil. Vid. T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 60. 1.

⁷⁴⁰ Sepher Chasidim: num. 234.

"That is, I will never forgive thee.

Matthew 12:33

Ver. 33. **Either make the tree good, and his fruit good,**

That is, either assert them both good, or

else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt:

say they are both evil, for the contrary cannot be affirmed with any consistency and propriety: the matter is easy to be determined, **for the tree is known by his fruit;** fruit will discover what a tree is, and accordingly judgment may be made. No man will say a tree is good, and its fruit corrupt; or say, that a tree is corrupt, and its fruit good: these are glaring contradictions, and can never be reconciled. The case Christ here puts, is a very easy and familiar one, and is obvious to common sense: the application of it may be made, either to the foregoing instance of Christ's casting out devils, which the Jews ascribed to the help of Satan; and then the sense is, either say I am a good man, and do good works, or that I am an evil man, and do evil works: to say that I do good works, as the casting out of devils must be allowed to be, and yet am an evil man, and do this under satanical influence, is as great an inconsistency, as to say that a corrupt tree brings forth good fruit; either therefore condemn these miracles as evil actions, done by confederacy with Satan; or if you will allow them to be good ones, as you do, ascribe them to the Spirit of God; for these things may as easily be determined, as the cause by its effect, or as a tree is known by its fruit: or else this may be applied unto the Pharisees, who, though wicked men, pretended to do good works; and though they set up for men of religion and holiness, yet did evil things, as their words and actions testified; particularly the blasphemy just now uttered by them, charging the miracles of Christ as done by the assistance of the devil, which discovered the malignity and rottenness of their hearts: and the meaning of Christ is, that they would either both say, and do, that which is right and good; or relinquish their pretensions to the character of good and religious men: nothing can be concluded from hence in favour of free will, or a power in the creature to make himself good; for the word "make", here signifies to "say, affirm, assert", and the like; see Joh 5:18. Though it may be fairly inferred from hence, that a man must first be a good man, ever he can perform good works, truly and properly so called; and that these are fruits and evidences of the inward real goodness of a man; which must be understood not of a few single actions, but of the common, constant series and course

of life.

Matthew 12:34

Ver. 34. **O generation of vipers,**

Though they boasted of their being the seed of Abraham, yet their immediate ancestors were no other than vipers, deceitful, hurtful, poisonous creatures; and they were exactly like them: for though they made a fair show in the flesh, and outwardly appeared righteous, yet were inwardly full of the poison of wickedness, envy and malice; and which their pestilential breath, their blasphemy against the Spirit, fully discovered; and gave just cause and reason for so severe a reproof, and such resentment, as here made by Christ.

How can ye, being evil, speak good things?

This is not to be expected, nor is it commonly and constantly done; an evil man may sometimes speak good things, or which seem to be so; but these are not his common talk; as he is, so, for the most part, is his language; his speech betrays him: and since these men were by nature evil, were destitute of the Spirit and grace of God, had no good thing in them, how should any good thing come out of them? And since they were so full of wickedness, spite and malice, it is no wonder that they belched out such blasphemous expressions concerning the miracles of Christ;

for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh:

a phrase much like this is used by the Septuagint, in Ec 2:15. "I spoke abundance", or "much in my heart"; δι-στο ο αφρων εκ περισσευματωπλαλει, "for the fool out of his abundance speaketh": as there is abundance of folly in him, there is much delivered out by him; and where there is abundance of wickedness in the heart, if the grace of God is wanting to restrain it, much of it will come out by the lips; as is a man's heart, ordinarily is his language.

Matthew 12:35

Ver. 35. **A good man, out of the good treasure of the heart,**

"A good man", is a regenerated man, one that is renewed by the Spirit of God, a believer in Christ, a sincere lover of him, and one that follows him, wheresoever he goes, and who has the grace of God implanted in him: for "the good treasure the heart", is not what he is naturally possessed of, but what is put into him: and is no other than the superabundant grace of God, or that grace for grace, which he has received out of Christ's fulness, and the rich experience of it he is blessed with: and may

well be called a "treasure"; for as a treasure is a collection of riches, so this consists of various graces, each of which is more precious than gold, silver, and precious stones; a "good" one, both from the quality and quantity of it; and "of the heart", though this is left out in many copies, from the seat and subject of it; and out of this the gracious man **bringeth forth good things;** tells his experience, speaks of what God has done for his soul; says many things to the glory of the grace of God; of the person, offices, blood, righteousness, and fulness of Christ; and of the operations and influences of the blessed Spirit; and which are pleasant, profitable, useful, and edifying to the saints:

and an evil man, out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.

The "evil man", is a man as he was born; who is wholly flesh, carnal, and in a state of nature; destitute of the Spirit, and having no principle of grace in him: "the evil treasure", is the corruption of his nature, the desperate wickedness of his heart; and those swarms of lusts, and all manner of sin that dwell there; from whence are continually proceeding evil and corrupt communications, which not only defile himself, but others; and among the rest, not only vain words and unprofitable talk, but blasphemies against God, Christ, and the blessed Spirit; all which men will be accountable for another day.

Matthew 12:36

Ver. 36. **But I say unto you,**

This form of speaking is used, the more strongly to asseverate the truth of what is after said; and the rather, because men are apt to indulge a liberty with their tongues; fancying no great crime is committed, when only words are spoken, and no facts done;

that every idle word that a man shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

By an "idle word" is meant, what the Jews call, קלה שיחה "light conversation", and דבר בשל "vain discourse", as the Hebrew Gospel of Munster reads it here; frothy language, unprofitable talk, which, though it does not directly hurt God or man, yet is of no use to speaker or hearer; and yet even this, in the last general and awful judgment, if not forgiven, and repented of, must be accounted for; and much more such horrid blasphemies the Pharisees had vented against Christ, and the Spirit of Christ. The Jews⁷⁴¹ have a saying pretty much like this,

"That even ל שיחה קלה, "for any light conversation", which passes between a man and his wife,

⁷⁴¹ R. Jonah apud L. Capell. in loc.

he shall “be brought to judgment”.”

Matthew 12:37

Ver. 37. **For by thy words thou shalt be justified,**

Theophylact seems to take these words to be a passage of Scripture cited by Christ, in proof of what he had said, but does not point to any; nor is any such Scripture to be found. They are rather proverbial expressions, in common use among the Jews; or refer to the usual methods of proceeding in courts of judicature, upon the acknowledgments and confessions of persons.

”Says Resh Lakish ⁷⁴², such an one and such an one, they justify; and such an one and such an one, they condemn. R. Eliezer replies, פלוני נזרכה פלוני, מדבריהם, “by their words such an one and such an one are justified”.

”The gloss upon it is,

”upon hearing the difference there is between them, and between their words, they are justified.”

Our Lord’s meaning is, that not only works and actions, but words of all sorts, will come into account in the day of judgment, and will be evidences for, or against a man, to acquit or condemn him: **and by thy words thou shalt be condemned:** according to these, the sentence of justification, or of condemnation, will be pronounced; as these will appear to be evidences for, or against a man’s being in a state of grace and righteousness: thus for instance, a man that has spoken for Christ, and has freely confessed that all his hope of justification before God, and acceptance with him, is solely upon the account of the righteousness of Christ imputed; such a man will be declared a justified man according to the tenor of his own words: on the other hand, a man that has spoken hard speeches against Christ, and his righteousness; declaring he has no dependence on it, expects no justification by it; he will be convinced of these ungodly sayings, and out of his own mouth will be condemned. Some have thought, that Christ here strikes at a notion which obtained among the Jews, that little or no account would be taken of a man’s words in the day of judgment; provided his life and actions were good, and regular; but whatever were the sentiments of the Pharisees, or of any of Christ’s present hearers, it is certain, that it is the opinion of Jewish writers, that words, as well as actions, will be accounted for hereafter: they say ⁷⁴³,

⁷⁴² T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 30. 1.

⁷⁴³ Zohar in Num. fol. 53. 2.

”When a man dies, he lifts up his eyes and sees two come to him, and write before him all that he has done in this world, וכל מה דאפיק מן פומיה, “and all that has proceeded out of his mouth,” כלא, “and he gives an account for all”; and a little after, כל אינון מליני, “all the words” of a man in this world, are prepared before him, and not one of them lost; and in the hour he goes to his grave, they are all set before him.”

Matthew 12:38

Ver. 38. **Then certain of the Scribes and Pharisees answered,**

Not the same that charged him with casting out devils, by the prince of devils; but others, that were present, as appears from Luke 11:16 and who do not take upon them to make a proper reply to what he had said, or return an answer to that, but address him on another account; being willing to divert the discourse, and try what they could do with him in another, and more gentle and crafty way; saying, master, not fellow, magician, Samaritan, thou that hast a devil, and casts out devils by Beelzebub, and art a devil, and Beelzebub himself; but doctor, teacher, allowing him, at least, in a flattering way, that he was an instructor of mankind, though they would not own him to be a prophet, unless he would give such signs, as would make it appear he was one; hence they say,

we would see a sign from thee:

that is, a sign from heaven, as they desired at another time, Mt 16:1 and, as Luke says, they did now, Luke 11:16 they had seen a sign from him on earth, in the cure of the man that had a withered hand; and another, in dispossessing the devil out of the man, that was blind and dumb; but these they looked upon rather as signs from hell, and done by confederacy with the devil; and therefore desire, or rather, in an imperious way, demand one from heaven, where they thought Satan had not such power, as on earth; and where there could not be such collusion and deception, as they wickedly imagined were in this last action: they seem to require some such things to be done, as were on Mount Sinai, at the giving of the law, when there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud, and the voice of a trumpet, and some visible appearances of the divine majesty; and intimate, that if something of this kind was done, if there was any visible and miraculous appearance in the heavens, produced by him, they should believe him to be the prophet that was spoken of, and the true Messiah; but if not, should

give no credit to him: however, this is to be learned from hence, that the Jews, in Christ’s time, expected signs and wonders to be wrought by the Messiah, in proof of his being so, though now they reject them as needless ⁷⁴⁴.

Matthew 12:39

Ver. 39. **But he answered and said unto them,**

Not to the Pharisees, who were unworthy of an answer from him; having, in such an imperious manner, and with a sole view to tempt him, and after such miracles were wrought by him, required of him a sign from heaven; but to the multitude, the throng of people gathered thick together on this occasion, see Mt 12:45 he turns himself from the Scribes and Pharisees, to the common people, and says to them concerning the former, **an evil and adulterous generation;** not only in a spiritual sense, being degenerated from the faith, religion, and piety of their ancestors; but literally, which appeared not only in their polygamy, and frequent divorces on trivial occasions, but by criminal conversation with other women; see Joh 8:9 and this, with the Jews themselves, is a character of the generation in which the Messiah comes: for they say ⁷⁴⁵,

”that just when the Messiah comes, or in the age the son of David comes, “impudence shall be increased”, corn and wine shall be dear, the government shall be heretics, בית ווד יהיהלנות, “and the synagogue shall become a brothel house”.

Their meaning is, that the chief magistrates should be Sadducees, and those that pretended to religion and holiness would be adulterers, which was now the case. Their writings ⁷⁴⁶ frequently speak of the increase and abounding of adulteries, under the second temple, and about this time; which obliged Jochanan ben Zaccai and the sanhedrim, to leave off the use of the bitter waters.

Seeketh after a sign;

this is perfectly Talmudic language, the language of the Jews ⁷⁴⁷.

”The disciples of R. Jose ben Kismai, asked him, when the Son of David came? He replied, I am afraid, lest חבקשומוני אות, “ye should seek of me a sign”; they say unto him, we will not “seek of

⁷⁴⁴ Maimon. Hilch. Melachim. c. 11. sect. 3.

⁷⁴⁵ Misn. Sota c. 9. sect. 15. T. Bab. Sanhed. fol. 97. 1.

⁷⁴⁶ Misn. Sota, c. 9. sect. 9. & Maimon. Hilch. Sota, c. 3. sect. 19.

⁷⁴⁷ T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 98. 1. so Nmyo vqbm, “seeketh a sign”, Shemot Rabba, Parash. 9. fol. 97. 2.

thee a sign”.

This the Jews sought of Christ, time after time; not content with one, sought another, though such wonderful ones were wrought, which most fully demonstrated him to be the Messiah; and therefore he would not indulge this temper in them; but declared, that

there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas.

Not that no miracles should afterwards be wrought amongst them; for, after this, many wondrous works were done by Christ; but no such signs should be given they desired, not one from heaven; but one particularly should be given them, out of the earth, and should be, not for their conviction, but condemnation; and would seem very much like that which was done to the prophet Jonas, or Jonah; for so is his name in the Hebrew language, the other being the Greek termination of it.

Matthew 12:40

Ver. 40. **For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly,**

Or “in the belly of a great fish”, as is said, Jon 1:17 for that it was a whale, is not there said, nor is it certain it was; nor from the smallness of its swallow, is it thought probable it should; nor does the word here used, necessarily imply one, but some large fish; nor are there whales in the Phoenician Sea: it might be a kind of a sea dog, called Carcharias, and sometimes Lamia, or Lamina, from its vast swallow; in which whole men; even in coats of mail, have been found. However, be it what it will, Jonas was three days and three nights in the belly of it; which agrees with the account in the above mentioned place, and is the sign Christ speaks of in the foregoing verse; and a very great sign and miracle it was, that being swallowed down by such a fish, he should remain in the belly of it three days and three nights, as one dead; for, without a miracle, he could not have lived an hour; and on the third day, as one raised from the dead, be cast out of it upon the dry land; which was a very eminent type of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, as appears by what follows. The Jews reckon up several wonders or miracles in this case of Jonah’s; as that a fish was prepared to swallow him up, and he not drowned in the sea; and that this was prepared for him from the creation of the world; that he should be three days and three nights in the fish’s belly, and be alive; and that he should retain his senses and his understanding, so as to be able to pray: they represent him also as if he was in the state of the

dead⁷⁴⁸, and that the fish itself was dead, and was quickened again. According to Josephus, after he had been carried 250 miles in the Hellespont of the Euxine Sea, he was cast ashore⁷⁴⁹.

So shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

That Christ means himself by the “son of man”, there is no reason to doubt; and his being laid in a tomb, dug out of a rock, is sufficient to answer this phrase, “the heart of the earth”, in distinction from the surface of it; but some difficulty arises about the time of his continuing there, and the prediction here made agreeable to the type: for it was on the sixth day of the week, we commonly call “Friday”, towards the close, on the day of the preparation for the sabbath, and when the sabbath drew on, that the body of Christ was laid in the sepulchre; where it lay all the next day, which was the sabbath of the Jews, and what we commonly call “Saturday”; and early on the first of the week, usually called “Sunday”, or the Lord’s day, he rose from the dead; so that he was but one whole day, and part of two, in the grave. To solve this difficulty, and set the matter in a clear light, let it be observed, that the three days and three nights, mean three natural days, consisting of day and night, or twenty four hours, and are what the Greeks call *αιρημεραι*, “night days”; but the Jews have no other way of expressing them, but as here; and with them it is a well known rule, and used on all occasions, as in the computation of their feasts and times of mourning, in the observance of the passover, circumcision, and divers purifications, that *היום ככולו*, “a part of a day is as the whole”⁷⁵⁰; and so, whatever was done before sun setting, or after, if but an hour, or ever so small a time, before or after it, it was reckoned as the whole preceding, or following day; and whether this was in the night part, or day part of the night day, or natural day, it mattered not, it was accounted as the whole night day: by this rule, the case here is easily adjusted; Christ was laid in the grave towards the close of the sixth day, a little before sun setting, and this being a part of the night day preceding, is reckoned as the whole; he continued there the whole night day following, being the seventh day; and rose again early on the first day, which

⁷⁴⁸ R. David Kimchi & Jarchi, in Jonah i. 17. & ii. 1. Zohar in Exod. fol. 20. 3. & 78. 3.

⁷⁴⁹ Antiq. 1. 9. c. 18.

⁷⁵⁰ T. Hieros. Pesach. fol. 31. 2. T. Bab. Moed. Katon, fol. 16. 2. 17. 2. 19. 2. & 20. 2. Bechorot, fol. 20. 2. & 21. 1, Nidda, fol. 33. 1. Maimon. Hilch. Ebel, c. 7. sect. 1, 2, 3. Aben Ezra in Lev. xii. 3.

being after sun setting, though it might be even before sun rising, yet being a part of the night day following, is to be esteemed as the whole; and thus the son of man was to be, and was three days and three nights in the grave; and which was very easy to be understood by the Jews; and it is a question whether Jonas was longer in the belly of the fish.

Matthew 12:41

Ver. 41. **The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment,**

Alluding either to the custom and practice of witnesses, who rise up from their seats, and stand, when they give in their testimonies in a court of judicature; or else, referring to the time of the general resurrection from the dead, at the last day, when these men shall rise from the dead, and stand in judgment

with this generation;

shall rise when they do, and stand before the judgment seat together, and be against them,

and shall condemn them;

not as judges of them, but by their example and practices, which will be brought above board, and observed as an aggravation of the guilt and condemnation of the Jews: so the lives and conversations of the saints condemn the wicked now, and will do hereafter: in this sense the word is used in the Talmud⁷⁵¹; where having related how Hillell, though a poor man, and R. Eleazar, though a rich man, studied in the law, and Joseph, though youthful, gay, and beautiful, withstood the importunities of his mistress, it is observed, that Hillell *בזייב*, “condemned” the poor; and R. Eleazar ben Harsum condemned the rich; and Joseph condemned the wicked: in like manner, the Ninevites will condemn the Jews,

because they repented at the preaching of Jonas;

a mere man, a single prophet, a stranger to these men, who only preached, and wrought no miracle among them, and his stay with them was very short; whereas the men of this generation had the Son of God “sent” to them, had the ministry of his apostles, and of John the Baptist, and a variety of miracles wrought among them; and all this for a series and course of years, and yet remained impenitent: the chief aggravation of their impenitence, and what made it the more astonishing was, that so great a person was in the midst of them;

and behold, a greater than Jonas is here;

meaning himself, who was greater in person, office, doctrine, miracles, life, obedience, sufferings, death, and resurrection from the dead. The Ninevites, though a

⁷⁵¹ T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 35. 2.

Heathenish people, having but forty days allowed them to repent in, upon Jonas’s preaching, repented immediately; whereas the Jews, though God’s: professing people, and having forty years, from Christ’s resurrection, allowed them to repent in, yet did not at all; and though the repentance of the Ninevites was but an external one, in dust and ashes, yet it was what secured them from temporal ruin; as the Jews would have been saved from the destruction that came upon their temple, city, and nation, had they repented but as they did.

Matthew 12:42

Ver. 42. **The queen of the south,**

Called the queen of Sheba, 1Ki 10:1. Sheba was one of the sons of Joktan, a grandchild of Arphaxad, who settled in the southern parts of Arabia: hence this queen is called the queen of the south. Sheba is by the Targumist⁷⁵² called Zemargad: and this queen the queen of Zemargad: she goes by different names. According to some, her name was Maqueda⁷⁵³, and, as others say, Balkis⁷⁵⁴: a Jewish chronologer⁷⁵⁵ tells us, that the queen of Sheba, who is called Nicolaa, of the kingdom of Jaman, or the south, came to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, and gave him much riches: and Josephus⁷⁵⁶ calls her Nicaulis, queen of Egypt and Ethiopia; of whom it is here said, that she

shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it:

the meaning is, as before; that she shall rise from the dead, and stand as a witness against that generation at the day of judgment, and, by her example and practices, which will then be produced, condemn them, or aggravate their condemnation:

for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth;

an hyperbolic expression, meaning a great way off from a far country, a very distant part of the world from Jerusalem, *לשמור חכמה שלמה*, “to hear the wisdom of Solomon”; the very phrase used by the above Jewish⁷⁵⁷ writer.

And behold, a greater than Solomon is here;

one that was infinitely greater than Solomon was, in everything; so particularly in that, in which he excelled others, and on the account of which the queen of the south came unto him, namely, wisdom: for he is the wis-

⁷⁵² In 1 Chron. i. 9. & 2 Chron. ix. 1.

⁷⁵³ Ludolph. Hist. Aethiop. 1. 2. c. 3. & not. in Claud. Confess. sect. 1.

⁷⁵⁴ Pocock. Specimen Hist. Arab. p. 59.

⁷⁵⁵ Juchasin, fol. 136. 1.

⁷⁵⁶ Antiqu. 1. 8. c. 2.

⁷⁵⁷ Juchasin, fol. 136. 1.

dom of God, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. The Jews themselves⁷⁵⁸ own, that the king, meaning the Messiah, that shall be raised up of the seed of David, *בְּלִ חכמה יהיה יתר משלמה* “shall be a greater master of wisdom”, or “wiser than Solomon”. Now what an aggravation of the condemnation of the Jews will this be another day, that a Gentile woman, living in a foreign and distant land, should, upon the fame of the wisdom of Solomon, leave her own kingdom and country, and come to Jerusalem, to hear his wise discourses about things natural, civil, and moral; and yet the Jews, who had a greater than Solomon in the midst of them, and had no need to take much pains to come to the sight and hearing of him, yet rejected him as the Messiah, blasphemed his miracles, and despised his ministry; though it was concerned about things of a spiritual and evangelic nature, and the eternal welfare of immortal souls.

Matthew 12:43

Ver. 43. **When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man,**

By “the unclean” spirit, is meant Satan, the old serpent, the devil; who by the Jews, is wont to be called as here, *רוח מאבא* “the unclean spirit”⁷⁵⁹; and that, because he is by sin become so, though he was not so originally; is the cause of uncleanness in men, and delights in unclean persons, places, and things: his “going out of a man”, is not to be understood of his being dispossessed of the bodies of men; nor of the ejection of him, and his going by force, through the power of divine grace, out of the souls of men; but either of his leaving the Jews for a while, in some sort, whilst Christ and the Gospel continued among them; and of his going out of the Scribes and Pharisees; not really, but putting on another form, appearing as an angel of light, and under the guise of holiness and righteousness: and so he may be said to go out of men, when any outward reformation is made in them; and they take up a profession of religion, though destitute of the grace of God:

he walketh through dry places;

referring to a prevailing notion, that unclean spirits walk in, and haunt, desert and desolate places; and may have regard to the Gentiles, among whom Satan might go, seeking rest and satisfaction among them, in their idolatries and other wickedness, till he was there also disturbed by the Gospel sent among them: or by these

⁷⁵⁸ Maimon. Hilchot. Teshuba, c. 9. sect. 2.

⁷⁵⁹ Zohar in Gen. fol. 77. 2.

“dry places” may be meant the saints, whom he takes his walks among, in order, by tempting, to distress them, being secure of pharisaical persons: and these may be so called, not for what they are in themselves; not because the sun of righteousness shines upon them: or because thirsty and desirous of divine and spiritual things; much less as if they had no moisture, since they have a well of living water in them, and are watered by the Lord; or were unfruitful, as dry places usually are; but for what they were to the unclean spirit, there being nothing in their grace, and the exercise of it, and in their spiritual performances, grateful to him; nothing to quench his thirst, and satisfy his sinful appetite; nor were there in them the mire and dirt of iniquity to roll in, as in unregenerate persons: wherefore he is represented as

seeking rest, and findeth none:

his view in walking in these places, or among such persons, is rest; not the rest of the saints, he seeks their disturbance, but his own rest; which is to do all the mischief he can, by stirring up corruption, tempting to sin, and discouraging the exercise of grace; but is not able to do so much mischief as he would, and so cannot find the rest he seeks for, nor satisfy his envious, spiteful, and malicious temper: and this being the case, it follows,

Matthew 12:44

Ver. 44. **Then he said, I will return into my house,**

Into the land of Judea, particularly into the Scribes and Pharisees, outward professors of religion; who, notwithstanding their outward reformation, and great pretensions to holiness, are Satan’s house still: he has a property in them, a claim upon them; and though he says,

from whence I came out,

yet he never really and properly quitted it, only seemingly, and in appearance; and therefore his returning is only throwing off the guise, and reassuring his former character, as a vicious and unclean spirit.

And when he is come, he findeth it empty:

not empty of sin: this puts me in mind of a passage in the Misna ⁷⁶⁰, where it is said, that on a fast day,

”when they stand in prayer, they cause to descend, or go before the ark, an old man, who is used (to prayer,) whose children, *וביתו ריקם*, “and his house, are empty”, so that his heart is perfect in prayer,”

or entirely at leisure for it. The commentators ⁷⁶¹ on that phrase, “his house is empty”, note, that he was emp-

⁷⁶⁰ Taanith, c. 2. sect. 2.

⁷⁶¹ Maimon. & Bartenora in ib.

ty of sin, and free from it, and one concerning whom an evil report had not gone forth from his youth: but such was not this house; it was empty of God, of the true knowledge of him, of the fear of him, and love to him; of Christ, of faith in him, affection for him, and hope on him; of the Spirit of God, and of his graces, and of spiritual, internal religion, and powerful godliness.

Swept;

not with the Spirit of grace convincing of sin, righteousness, and judgment; but with the besom of an outward reformation:

and garnished;

not with internal grace, which makes saints all glorious within; but with secret lusts and corruptions, which rendered it an agreeable habitation for this unclean spirit; and at most, with some show of morality, a little negative holiness, or abstinence from outward acts of sin, an observance of some external rites and ceremonies, and a few hypocritical performances of fasting and prayer; which Satan can very well bear with, so long as the heart is empty of spiritual grace, and till an opportunity offers of throwing off all appearance of good.

Matthew 12:45

Ver. 45. **Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits,**

This is said in allusion to, and in imitation of the seven spirits before the throne; or may denote a large number of devils, seven being a number of perfection; or else the various corruptions of a man’s heart, the swarms of internal lusts which are there stirred up by Satan;

more wicked than himself,

as these are more pernicious to man, than the devil himself:

and they enter in and dwell there;

that is, though they were there before, now they exert and show themselves, and such men appear to be under the power and government of them; when leaving their seeming religion and holiness, they return like the dog to the vomit, and the swine to the wallowing in the mire.

And the last state of that man is worse than the first:

he becomes more wicked than ever he was, before he made pretensions to religion; as such apostates generally are more extravagant in sinning, and are seldom or ever recovered by repentance, and their last end is eternal damnation; see 2Pe 2:20

even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.

This parable fitly suited them, the Scribes and Phar-

isees, and the men of that generation, from whom in some measure the unclean spirit might be said to depart through the doctrine, and miracles of Christ, to go into the Gentile world; but being followed there with the preaching of the Gospel by the apostles, returns to the Jews, and fills them with more malice, blasphemy, and blindness, than ever, which issued in their utter ruin and destruction; of which this parable may be justly thought to be prophetic.

Matthew 12:46

Ver. 46. **While he yet talked to the people,**

Upon these subjects, which so nearly concerned the Scribes and Pharisees, and which could not fail of drawing upon him their resentment and ill will.

Behold his mother and his brethren:

by “his mother” is meant Mary; but who are “his brethren”, is not so easy to say: some are of opinion, that Joseph had children by Mary, who are here meant; but it is more generally believed, that these were either the sons of Joseph by a former wife, whose name is said to be Escha; or rather, Mary’s sister’s sons, the wife of Cleophas, the cousin-germans of Christ, it being usual with the Jews to call such kindred brethren; and so they might be James, Joses, Simon, and Judas: these

stood without:

for Christ was within doors, not in a synagogue, as Piscator thought, but in an house; see Mt 13:1 and his mother and brethren stood without doors, either because they could not get in for the throng of the people; or because they would not, it not being proper to make all within acquainted with what they had to say to him:

desiring to speak with him;

not with a pure view to interrupt him in his work, or to divert him from it, lest he should overspend himself; nor from a principle of ambition and vain glory, to show that they were related to him, and that he was at their beck and command; but rather, to observe unto him the danger he exposed himself to, by the freedom he took with the Pharisees in his discourses, and probably to acquaint him with some conspiracies formed against him.

Matthew 12:47

Ver. 47. **Then one said unto him,**

Either one of his auditors, or, as the Ethiopic version has it, one “of his disciples”: the other evangelists intimate, that more than one acquainted him with it; which is easily reconciled: for, upon his mother and brethren calling to him, as Mark says they did; first one and then another, and more, might apprise him of it, and especial-

ly as he did not immediately go out unto them.

Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee:

whether this message was carried at the request of the mother and brethren of Christ, and delivered in a simple manner, and with an honest intention; or whether it was officiously done, and with a design to interrupt him, and to try him, whether he would prefer his natural relations, and their society and conversation, to the spiritual work in which he was engaged, in doing good to the souls of men, is not certain; the latter seems probable, from the following words, and conduct of Christ. Some copies read, “desiring to see thee”.

Matthew 12:48

Ver. 48. **But he answered and said unto him that told him,**

Of his mother and brethren being without doors, desiring, and waiting to speak to him,

Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?

These questions are put, not as if he himself was ignorant who were his mother or his brethren; or as suggesting as if he had none; or as denying that these were in such a relation to him; or as casting any slight upon them; or as intending to teach men disrespect to parents and kindred, according to the flesh; but as displeased with the man, or men, for interrupting him in his work; and to let them know, that the business of his heavenly Father was preferred by him to any his natural relations could have with him; and that he might have an opportunity of pointing out who were his relations in a spiritual sense.

Matthew 12:49

Ver. 49. **And he stretched forth his hand towards his disciples,**

By whom are meant, not only the twelve, but all others present, who truly believed in him, both men and women; and who might sit near him and together, and whom, by this motion of his hand, he pointed out as his spiritual relations, to the multitude that sat round him:

and said, behold my mother, and my brethren;

in whose hearts he was formed, and who were the children of God by adopting grace, and so his brethren; and were as dear to him as his mother and brethren. It is reasonable to suppose, that when he said, “behold my mother”, and, as in the following verse, “sister”; he might stretch forth his hand particularly, toward the pious and religious women that believed in him, and ministered to him of their substance, who might be now present; such

as Mary Magdalene, Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and others; since these are mentioned by Luke in the same chapter in which this passage stands in his Gospel; and when he said "behold my brethren", he might point directly to the twelve, and the rest of the men that believed in him, and followed him.

Matthew 12:50

Ver. 50. **For whosoever shall do the will of my Father,**

This is not to be understood of a perfect obedience to the will of God, revealed in his righteous law; for since this cannot be performed by any mere man, no one could be in such a spiritual relation to Christ: but of the obedience of faith to the will of God, revealed in the Gospel; which is to believe in Christ, and have everlasting life; see Joh 6:40. This is the will of Christ's Father,

which is in heaven,

and which is good news from heaven, to sinners on earth; and which Christ came down from heaven to do, and to declare to the children of men: such as "hear the word of God and do it", as Luke says, Luke 8:21 that is, hear the Gospel, understand and believe it, and become obedient to the faith of it; these are in this near manner related to Christ, evidentially and openly, as well as those who were now present:

the same is my brother, and sister, and mother;

as dear to me, as such are to those, to whom they stood thus related in the flesh: and these natural relations serve to convey some ideas of that relation, union, nearness, and communion, there are between Christ and his people; all these relative characters may be observed in the book of Solomon's Song, to which our Lord may be reasonably thought to have respect; see (Song of Solomon 3:11) (Song of Solomon 4:9 Song of Solomon 4:10 Song of Solomon 4:12) (Song of Solomon 5:1 Song of Solomon 5:2) (8:1) ..

Matthew Chapter 13

Matthew 13:1

Ver. 1. **The same day Jesus went out of the house,**

Where he had been preaching, and working miracles: where this house was, is not certain; it seems to have been in one of the cities of Galilee, probably Capernaum, since that was by the sea coast: the reason of his going out of the house was, either to converse with his mother and brethren, as they desired; or to withdraw himself from company, and take some refreshment by the sea side; or because it would not hold the people, and therefore he quitted it for a more convenient place. The time he went

out of it, was the same day he had cast the devil out of the man blind and dumb, and had delivered himself so freely concerning the Scribes and Pharisees, who had blasphemously ascribed that miracle to the assistance of Satan; and the same day his mother and brethren came to see him, and speak to him.

And sat by the sea side; either as weary, and for his refreshment, or in order to preach to the people; for, Mark says, "he began again to teach by the sea side", Mark 4:1. This was the sea of Galilee, sometimes called the sea of Tiberias.

Matthew 13:2

Ver. 2. **And great multitudes were gathered unto him,**

Some on one account, and some on another; some to see his person, others his miracles; some healing for their bodies, and others for their souls; some for the loaves, and others to hear him preach; and of these there were several sorts, as the following parable shows.

So that he went into a ship:

both for his own advantage, that he might not be crowded, and pressed by the people, and have more room, and a freer air to speak in, and for theirs, that they might both see and hear him better.

And sat, and the whole multitude stood on the shore;

as was the then custom of the Jewish doctors and hearers, the one to sit, and the other to stand. See Gill on "Mt 5:1". Christ sat upon the deck of the ship; or perhaps this ship was no other than an open boat, which was put to sea, some little distance from the shore; upon which the people stood in great numbers, with much convenience and attention.

Matthew 13:3

Ver. 3. **And he spake many things unto them in parables,**

For the parables of the sower, and the different sorts of ground the seed fell in, of the wheat and tares, of the grain of mustard seed, of the leaven in three measures of meal, of the treasure hid in a field, of the pearl of great price, of the net cast into the sea, and of the householder, were all delivered at this time. This way of speaking by parables was much in use among the eastern nations, and particularly the Jews. R. Meir was very famous among them for this way of teaching: they say ⁷⁶²,

"that when R. Meir died, *בטלו מושלי מושלי*, "they that were skilled in, and used parables, ceased"

⁷⁶² Misn. Sota, c. 9. sect. 15.

The commentators ⁷⁶³ on this passage say,

"that he preached a third part tradition, and a third part mystical discourse, *והילתה מחלי*, "and a third part parables":

which method of discoursing was judged both pleasant and profitable, and what served to raise the attention of the hearer, and to fix what was delivered the more firmly in their minds: what was our Lord's reason for using them, may be seen in Mt 13:13. He begins with the parable of the sower. The design of which is to set forth the nature of the word of God, the work and business of the ministers of it, the different success of the preaching of it, and the fruitfulness of it; and to show when it is truly received, and the various degrees of fruit it produces; that the efficacy of it depends on the grace of God, which makes the heart good, and fit to receive it; and how few they be which hear the word to any spiritual advantage and benefit; and how far persons may go in hearing, and yet fall short of the grace of God; and therefore no dependence is to be had on the external hearing of the word.

Behold, a sower went forth to sow;

Luke adds, "his seed"; as does also Munster's Hebrew Gospel here; and Mark introduces the parable thus, "hearken, behold!" it being a matter of great importance and concern, which is expressed by this parable, it deserves the most diligent attention. By "the sower" is meant "the son of man", as may be learnt from the explanation of another parable, Mt 13:37 which is Jesus Christ himself, who is often so called on account of his human nature; and may the rather be thought to be intended here, since the seed he sowed is called "his seed"; meaning the Gospel, of which he is the author, publisher, sum and substance; and since he is, by way of eminency, called *גורפס*, "the sower"; which must be understood of him as a prophet, or preacher of the word, who was eminently sent of God, and richly qualified for such an office, and was most diligent in it, and yet his success was but small. Indeed, every minister of the Gospel may be called a sower, who bears precious seed, sows spiritual things, and though in tears, he shall not return empty, but shall reap in joy, and bring his sheaves with him. This sower "went forth" from his own house to his field; which, as applied to Christ, may intend his incarnation, his coming into this world by the assumption of human nature, his appearance in the public ministry, in the land of Judea, and his going forth still in his ministers, and by

⁷⁶³ Jarchi & Bartenora in *ib. e* Talmud. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 38. 2.

his Spirit, in the preaching of the Gospel; and, as applied to the preachers of the word, may be explained of their commission, of their being sent, and of their going forth into the field of the world, preaching the Gospel every where. The end of the sower's going forth is to "sow his seed": by "his seed" is meant the word, the word of God; see Mark 4:14 so called, because of the choiceness and excellency of it in itself, that grain which is reserved for seed being usually the best of the kind; and because of its smallness, it being mean and contemptible in the eyes of those, who know not the nature of it; and because of the generative virtue it has, though not without a divine influence. Nor does it bring forth fruit, unless it is sown in the heart, as seed in the earth; where its operation is secret, its growth and increase gradual, and its fruitfulness different. By "sowing", is meant preaching; which, as sowing, requires knowledge and skill, and an open and liberal hand; keeping back nothing that is profitable, a declaring the same doctrine in one place as another; and designs a constant ministration of it, notwithstanding all discouragements, and a patient waiting for success.

Matthew 13:4

Ver. 4. **And when he sowed,**

Or, "as he sowed", as the other evangelists; that is, "whilst he was sowing";

some seeds fell;

either out of his hand, or out of the cart drawn by oxen; hence the ⁷⁶⁴ Talmudists distinguish between *לית יד מפיו*, "the falling of the hand", or what falls out of the hand; and *מפולת שווריו* "the falling of the oxen", or what falls from them; where the gloss is,

"in some places they sow the grain with the hand; and in other places they put the seed on a cart full of holes, and oxen draw the cart on the ploughed land, and it falls upon it."

By the wayside; by the common road, or private paths, which led through corn fields, in which Christ and his disciples walked, Mt 12:1 and which being beaten and trodden hard, the seed must lie open on it, and so be liable to be trampled upon by men, or devoured by the fowls of the air; and designs such hearers as are careless, negligent, and inattentive, who hear without understanding, judgment, and affection; see Mt 13:19

and the fowls came and devoured them;

the other evangelists say, "the fowls of the air"; and so the Vulgate Latin, and Munster's Hebrew Gospel, and some copies; and mean the devils; so called, because

⁷⁶⁴ T. Bab. Bava Metzia, fol. 105. 2.

their habitation is in the air; hence they are said to be “the power of the air”: and because of their ravenous and devouring nature, their swiftness to do mischief, and their flocking in multitudes, where the word is preached, to hinder its usefulness, as fowls do, where seed is sowing. Satan, and his principalities, and powers, rove about in the air, come down on earth, and seek whom they may devour, and often mix themselves in religious assemblies, to do what mischief they can; see Job 1:6.

Matthew 13:5

Ver. 5. **Some fell upon stony places,**

Such a place as the Jews call חולית, a barren, stony place, a place from whence, they say, they take stones, and בית ל, and which אינו ראוי לזרייה, “is not fit for sowing”⁷⁶⁵; and such were those places and spots of ground, that some of these seeds fell upon; and design such hearers, in whom the natural hardness of their hearts continues, and who remain unbroken by the word, and are without any true sense of sin, and repentance for it.

Where they had not much earth,

to cover them and take root in: this is expressive of such persons who have slight convictions of sin, and awakenings of the natural conscience; some little, light, and speculative notions of the word, in the understanding and judgment; some flashes of natural affection for it, and outward expressions of delight and pleasure in it; some show of grace, and a form of godliness, but no real heart work.

And forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth;

to strike their roots downwards: and through the reflection of the heat, upon the rocks and stones, they quickly broke through the thin surface of the earth over them, and appeared above ground before the usual time of the springing up of seed: which may not only denote the immediate reception of the word by these hearers, and their quick assent to it; but their sudden and hasty profession of it, without taking due time to consider the nature and importance thereof; and the seeming cheerfulness in which they did both receive and profess it; though it was only outward and hypocritical, and more on account of the manner of preaching it, than the word itself, and through a selfish principle in them; and did not arise from any real experience of the power of it on their souls, or true spiritual pleasure in it: nor could it be otherwise, since their stony hearts were not taken away,

⁷⁶⁵ T. Bab. Erachin, fol. 32. 1. & Gloss. in ib. & Bava Bathra, fol. 156. 2. & Gloss. in ib.

nor hearts of flesh given them; wherefore the word had no place in them, and made no real impression on them; they remained dead in trespasses and sins; the word was not the savour of life unto life unto them, or the Spirit that giveth life; they did not become living and lively stones; they continued as insensible as ever of their state and condition by nature, of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, of the danger they were in, and of their need of Christ, and salvation by him; they were as hard, and obdurate, and as inflexible, as ever, without any real contrition for sin, or meltings of soul through the influence of the love and grace of God; and as backward as ever to submit to the righteousness of Christ, being stout hearted, and far from it; and being no more cordially willing to be subject to the sceptre of his kingdom, or to serve him in righteousness and holiness, than they ever were; for the word falling upon them, made no change in them; their hearts were as hard as ever, notwithstanding the seeming and hasty reception of it; though they did not refuse to hearken to the word externally, did not put away the shoulder, or stop their ears, yet their hearts were still like an adamant stone: nothing but the mighty power of God, and his efficacious grace, can break the rocky heart in pieces; or give an heart of flesh, a sensible, soft, and flexible one, with which a man truly repents of sin, believes in Christ, and becomes subject to him.

Matthew 13:6

Ver. 6. **And when the sun was up,**

Some time, and its heat was increasing, and it began to shine out hot, and beat with some vehemency and strength; which may denote some sore temptation, or severe affliction, or fiery trial of persecution and tribulation; see Mt 13:21 for this is not to be understood of the glorious light of the Gospel, which, though very comfortable and refreshing, as well as illuminating to good men, is very distressing and tormenting to carnal minds; they cannot bear its truths and doctrines; this is the fire which comes out of the mouth of God's faithful witnesses, and torments them that dwell on the earth, and devours their enemies, Re 11:5. And it, moreover, like the sun, has different effects on different objects; as the sun hardens clay, and melts wax, so the Gospel is to the hardening of some, and softening of others; to the one it is the savour of life unto life, and to the other the savour of death unto death; but this cannot be intended, because the word by these hearers is first received with joy. Nor is Christ the sun of righteousness meant, who arises with healing in his wings, and gives grace and glo-

ry to his people; but the sun of persecution and affliction, in which sense the metaphor is used, in So 1:6 the heat of which the church patiently bore, though she was made black with it: but these hearers think it strange that such a fiery trial should befall them; wherefore, as they take up their profession in haste, they as quickly drop it; see Re 7:16.

They were scorched, and because they had not root, they withered away:

they were offended with what they met with, for the sake of Christ, and the profession of his word; and therefore, not being rooted in him, nor in the love of God, nor having the root of the matter, true grace, in themselves, or, as Luke says, “lacked moisture”, of divine grace, of the dews and waterings of it, fell away finally and totally. This is no instance of the apostasy of real saints, or any proof of true believers falling away finally and totally; since these were not rooted, and grounded in the everlasting and unchangeable love of God, were not interested in it, or were partakers of the effects of it; had they been so, they could never have been separated from it; tribulation, distress, and persecution could never have done it; none of these would ever have moved them; had they had the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, they would have gloried in tribulation: nor were they united to Christ, rooted and built up in him; had they, they would have continued to have derived life and nourishment from him; in him the life of believers is hid, and because he lives they live also; as long as there is life in the root, the branches will not die; he is the root that bears the branches, the root of the righteous that yields fruit, and is never moved: nor had these the truth of grace, which is an incorruptible seed, a well of living water springing up to everlasting life; had they, they could never have withered away; to such God gives more grace, he himself is as the dew unto them, and he waters them every moment.

Matthew 13:7

Ver. 7. **And some fell among thorns,**

On a spot of ground which was full of the roots of thorns, and briars, which was not cleared of them as it should be. We often read ⁷⁶⁶ שדה שנתקרה ש, “a field cleared of thorns”; but such was not this piece of ground, it was overrun with them, not on the surface of the earth, but within it: for it follows,

and the thorns sprung up:

naturally, being neither sown nor planted; either be-

⁷⁶⁶ Misn. Sheviith, c. 4. sect. 2. T. Hieros. Sheviith, fol. 34. 3. & 35. 1. T. Bab. Bechorot, fol. 34. 2.

fore the seed, or, at least, as soon; and however grew faster, and higher,

and **choked them;**

so that they came to nothing; hence the advice, “sow not among thorns”, Jer 4:3 and a lost kindness, or what is bestowed in vain, is expressed in this proverbial manner ⁷⁶⁷ שְׂקוּלָה טִיבוֹתִיב וּשְׂרִיא אַחֲזִירִי, “thy beneficence is taken away, and cast among thorns”: these point out such hearers who seemed to be contrite, to have the low ground of their hearts broken up, their consciences tender, and to have a true sense of sin, as well as to be outwardly reformed; and yet inwardly were full of the thorns of sinful lusts, particularly of the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, the lusts of other things, and the pleasures of this life, which rendered the word useless and unfruitful; see Mt 13:22 all which are comparable to thorns; it is hardly possible to be in the midst of, and meddle with these, without being scratched by them; they pierce, afflict, and wound, even where they have not their greatest power and influence; and where they do prevail, and get the ascendant, as they are fruitless themselves, they make others so too; they choke the word, and make that, and all ordinances, and opportunities, useless, and unserviceable. Thorns are a part of the earth's curse for the sin of man; and such persons in whom thorny cares and lusts prevail, as they are like unto the earth which beareth thorns, so, as that, they are rejected, and nigh to cursing, whose end is to be burned in everlasting flames of divine wrath and fury, Heb 6:8.

Matthew 13:8

Ver. 8. **But others fell into good ground,**

Not beaten and trodden by the feet of men, nor stony, nor thorny, but well broke up, manured, and tilled; which designs good, honest hearted hearers who become so by the Spirit and grace of God; who with a spiritual understanding, experience, savour, and relish, what they hear; see Mt 13:23

and brought forth fruit, some an hundred fold, some sixty fold, some thirty fold:

some seeds produced an hundred, others sixty, and others thirty. The first of these especially was a large increase, but what was sometimes had, and which Isaac received in Gerar, in the land of the Philistines, Ge 26:12 and is what Pliny says ⁷⁶⁸ of Byzacium, a country of the Lybiphoenicians, that it yielded an hundred fold to its husbandmen; and of such fruitfulness was the land of Is-

⁷⁶⁷ T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 63. 2. Bava Kama, fol. 83. 1. Cetubot, fol. 53. 2. & Betza, fol. 29. 2.

⁷⁶⁸ Nat. Hist. 1. 5. c. 4.

rael, of which the Jewish doctors say some things incredible: they tell us a story⁷⁶⁹ of

“one that sowed a measure of vetches, or pease, וְשָׂה שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת אִיָּן, “and it produced three hundred measures”; they say unto him, the Lord hath begun to bless thee, &c.”

Here, in the parable, these various increases intend the different degrees of fruitfulness in gracious souls; for though the fruits of grace, in believers, are of the same quality, yet not of the same quantity. Some believers are grown to a greater maturity than others; some are but little children, some are young men, some are fathers.

Matthew 13:9

Ver. 9. **Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.**

Not externally only, but internally; he that has ears given him to hear, so as to understand, let him make use of them, and seriously consider of, and diligently attend to the use and importance of this parable. It is a way of speaking used by Christ, when anything of moment was delivered, and not so easy to be understood, on purpose to quicken the attention of his auditors, and stir up in them a desire of understanding what was said; which effect this had upon his disciples; see Mark 4:10.

Matthew 13:10

Ver. 10. **And the disciples came, and said unto him,**

Not the twelve only, but others that were about him, as Mark says, who also were his disciples, and believed in him: these, when he was alone, came nearer to him, who, whilst he was preaching to the people, were at some little distance from him, either in the ship, or on the shore, though within the hearing of him, and addressed him after this manner;

why speakest thou unto them in parables?

not that this way of speaking was new and surprising to them; but because it was not easily understood, especially not by the common people, without an explanation, which, as yet, Christ had not given: and indeed the parable was not understood by the disciples themselves; who put this question, not only for the sake of the multitude, but for their own also, hoping to be favoured with the meaning of it.

Matthew 13:11

Ver. 11. **He answered, and said unto them,**

Christ was always ready to give an answer to his inquiring disciples, concerning his ministry, and his conduct in it; which shows great respect to them, and con-

descension in him:

because it is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven:

by the “kingdom of heaven”, is meant the Gospel, which treats of the kingdom of heaven, and of things pertaining to it; of the saints’ meetness for it, which is the regenerating and sanctifying grace of the Spirit; and of their right to it, which lies in the justifying righteousness of Christ. The “mysteries” of it intend the sublime doctrines thereof; such as relate to the Trinity of persons in the Godhead, to the incarnation of Christ, and the union of the two natures, human and divine, in him, eternal predestination, redemption by Christ, satisfaction by his sacrifice, justification by his righteousness, and pardon through his blood, the resurrection from the dead, &c. things, though clearly revealed, yet may have difficulties attending them, and which are not very easily solved: now to know and understand the great truths of the Gospel, spiritually, savingly, and experimentally, is not from nature, or to be acquired by men’s industry, but is the gift of God’s grace, flowing from his sovereign will and pleasure; a favour which the disciples of Christ, as a chosen people, receive from the Lord, and which is denied others:

but to them it is not given;

to the wise and prudent, to the Scribes and Pharisees, to the multitude, to the bulk and generality of the people, to the rest that were blinded. Mark calls them “them that are without”; who are not in the number of God’s elect; nor within the covenant of grace, nor among the disciples of Christ; referring to a common way of speaking among the Jews, who used to call the Gentiles, all without their land, “they that are without”; and indeed all within themselves that despised the rules and judgment of the wise men⁷⁷⁰: but Christ here calls the wise men themselves such. Now our Lord, who was privy to the secret and sovereign dispensation of God, who, of his own will and pleasure, had determined to give a spiritual and saving knowledge of divine things to some, and deny it to others, made this the rule of his conduct in his ministry; that is to say, he preached in parables to some without an explication, whilst he spoke plainly to others; and, if in parables, yet gave them an interpretation, and an understanding of them.

Matthew 13:12

Ver. 12. **For whosoever hath, to him shall be given,....** Whoever has the true grace of God implanted in

⁷⁷⁰ Vid. T. Bab. Megilla, fol. 24. 2. & Gloss. in ib.

him, has a saving knowledge of Christ, and a spiritual acquaintance with the doctrines of the Gospel, shall have more grace given him; he shall grow in the knowledge of Christ, and the Spirit of truth shall lead him into all truth:

and he shall have more abundance: of grace, light, knowledge, and experience: all grace shall be made to abound towards him; he shall be filled with all the fulness of God, and shall arrive to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; and his light shall shine more and more unto the perfect day.

But whosoever hath not: the truth of grace, nor a spiritual knowledge of Christ, nor any experience of the doctrines of the Gospel,

from him shall be taken away, even that he hath, or “that which he seemed to have”, as Luke expresses it; for everything besides true grace is a mere show, and has no solidity in it; as natural parts, human learning, and a form of knowledge and of truth in the law, the national church state of the Jews, with all the outward privileges appertaining thereunto, all which may be here meant; and even speculative notions of the Gospel, the external gifts of the Spirit, the means of grace, the Gospel of the kingdom of God, and the ministry of it, which in process of time were wholly taken from these people.

Matthew 13:13

Ver. 13. **Therefore speak I to them in parables,**

Because it was the will and pleasure of his Father to give the knowledge of divine mysteries to some, and not to others; and because even the outward good things they had, being wrongly used or abused by them, would be taken away from them:

and because they seeing, see not:

they saw Christ with their bodily eyes, but not with an eye of faith; they saw the miracles he did, but did not discern, at least did not acknowledge the evidence of them, proving him to be the true Messiah.

And hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand:

they heard externally, but not internally; they heard the sound of Christ’s voice, but did not understand his words, even when he spake in the plainest and most intelligible manner; nor were they concerned to know the meaning of them: wherefore he spoke to them in this abstruse and parabolical way, that they might be what they really were, seers and not seers, hearers and not hearers, at least not understanding ones; and that what he said might remain sealed and hidden to them, as the things

contained in the sealed book were to the Jews of old; the reason of which was, as a writer of their’s⁷⁷¹ says, and which agrees with our Lord’s reason and conduct here, וְהָיָה בְּמִשְׁלַל הַחֵידָה “because they were in parable and riddle”.

Matthew 13:14

Ver. 14. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias,.... In Isa 6:9 which saith, which runs, or may be read thus,

by hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive.

The words are a prophecy concerning the people of the Jews, which began to be accomplished in the times of Isaiah; and were again fulfilled in the times of some after prophets; and had been in part fulfilled under the more plain and easy ministry of Christ; and was to have a further accomplishment under this parabolical way of preaching; as it also was to have, and had, a yet further completion under the ministry of the apostles; see Ac 28:26 and the judicial blindness here predicted was to go on among them, until the land of Judea was utterly destroyed by the Romans, and the cities and houses thereof left without any inhabitants; all which accordingly came to pass: for that this prophecy refers to the times of the Messiah, and to the people of the Jews, is clear from this one observation made by Christ himself, that Esaias foretold those things when he saw the glory of the Messiah, and spake of him, Joh 12:40 and because it was to have, and had, its accomplishment over and over again in that people, therefore the word *anaplhroutai*, which may be rendered “is fulfilled again”, is made use of. The sense of the prophecy is, with respect to the times of the Messiah, that the Jews, whilst hearing the sermons preached by him, whether with, or without parables, should hear his voice, and the sound of it, but not understand his words internally, spiritually, and experimentally; and whilst they saw, with the eyes of their bodies, the miracles he wrought, they should see the facts done, which could not be denied and gainsayed by them, but should not take in the clear evidence, full proof, and certain demonstration given thereby, of his Messiahship. In the prophecy of Isaiah, the words run in the imperative, “hear ye, see ye”, &c. but are here rendered in the future, “shall hear, shall see”, &c. which rendering of the words is supported and established by the version of the Septuagint, by the Chaldee paraphrase, and by many Jewish commentators⁷⁷²; **who allow**, that the words in Isaiah may be so un-

⁷⁷¹ Abarbinel in Isa. 29. 11.

⁷⁷² In R. David Kimchi in Isa. vi. 9.

⁷⁶⁹ T. Hieros. Peah, fol. 20. 2.

derstood, which is sufficient to vindicate the citation of them, by the evangelist, in this form of them.

Matthew 13:15

Ver. 15. **For this people's heart is waxed gross,**

Or fat, become stupid and sottish, and without understanding; and so incapable of taking in the true sense and meaning of what they saw with their eyes, and heard with their ears; for they had their outward senses of hearing and seeing, and yet their intellectual powers were stupefied.

And their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed;

which is expressive of the blindness and hardness, which were partly brought upon themselves by their own wilfulness and obstinacy, against such clear evidence as arose from the doctrine and miracles of Christ; and partly from the righteous judgment of God, giving them up, for their perverseness, to judicial blindness and obduracy; Joh 12:40 and are in the prophet ascribed to the ministry of the word; that being despised, was in righteous judgment, the savour of death unto death, unto them; and they under it, as clay, under the influence of the sun, grew harder and harder by it, stopping their ears, and shutting their eyes against it:

lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart:

which may be understood either of God's intention, and view, in giving them up to judicial blindness, and hardness of heart, under such miracles, and such a ministry, as a punishment for their wilful contempt of them; that so they might never have any true sight, hearing, and understanding of these things, and be turned from the evil of their ways, have repentance unto life, and remission of sins; which seems to be the sense of the other evangelists, Mark 4:12 or, as if these people purposely stupefied themselves, stopped their ears, and pulled away the shoulder, and wilfully shut their eyes; fearing they should receive some conviction, light, and knowledge,

and be converted

by the power and grace of God:

and I should heal them;

or, as in Mark, "and their sins should be forgiven them"; for healing of diseases, and forgiveness of sins, are, in Scripture language, one and the same thing; and this sense of the phrase here, is justified by the Chaldee paraphrase, which renders it, Nwhl qbtvyw, "and they

be forgiven", or "it be forgiven them", and by a Jewish commentator on the place; who interprets healing, of the healing of the soul, and adds והיא הליחה, "and this is pardon" ⁷⁷³.

Matthew 13:16

Ver. 16. But blessed are your eyes, for they see,.... Which is to be understood both of corporal and intellectual sight: it was their happiness to see Christ in the flesh, and converse with him in person, be eyewitnesses of his majesty, and see with their own eyes the miracles performed by him, the proofs and attestations of those doctrines they were to publish to all the world; and it was still their greater happiness, that they saw his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth: many saw him in the flesh, as they did, with their bodily eyes, but saw no beauty, nor comeliness in him, nothing amiable and desirable in him; but these saw his personal and transcendent glories, as the Son of God, his fulness as mediator, his suitableness as a Saviour and Redeemer, and all the characters of the Messiah in him; and so believed, and were sure that he was the Christ, the Son of the living God: they saw Christ, not in the promise, as Abraham, and other patriarchs did; nor through types and shadows, as the saints of the Old Testament did; to them it was given to know and understand the mysteries of grace, respecting the person, offices, obedience, sufferings, and death of Christ. And your ears, for they hear. This also must be understood of corporal and intellectual hearing, another branch of their present happiness. They heard the words of truth from the lips of that great prophet Moses said should rise up among them, like unto him, whom they should hear: they heard, with their own ears, a voice from heaven, declaring him to be the beloved Son of God, in whom he was well pleased. They heard the Gospel preached by him, not only so as to be affected with it, and give their assent to it, but also to understand it spiritually, and experimentally, and to bring forth the fruit of it; and so were that sort of hearers, signified by the good ground in the parable Christ had just delivered. The forms of speech, in which the happiness of the disciples is here expressed, seem to be in common use with the Jews, when they would extol the peculiar attainments of a man, especially in matters of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. Thus, it being told R. Jochanan ben Zaccai of some persons that had expounded the work of Mercavah, that is, the beginning of Ezekiel's prophecy, and the mysterious passages in it,

⁷⁷³ R. David Kimchi in loc.

and what befell them, expressed himself thus concerning them ⁷⁷⁴;"blessed are you, and blessed are your children, war אֲשֶׁרֵי יִישַׁכַּכּ "and blessed are the eyes that so see." And elsewhere ⁷⁷⁵ mention being made of a book of secrets delivered to Solomon, and which he had understanding of, it is said, emv v אֲשֶׁרֵי יִן שְׂרָאָה וְאוּזוֹן, "blessed is the eye that sees, and the ear that hears"; and the heart that understands, and causes to understand, the wisdom of it."

Matthew 13:17

Ver. 17. **For verily I say unto you,**

This is added for the further confirmation of what is before said, concerning the happiness of the disciples, in seeing and hearing what they did:

that many prophets, and righteous men;

Luke says, Luke 10:24 "kings"

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.

To see Christ in the flesh, and have a clearer insight into the knowledge of the mysteries of grace, were things very desirable to men of the highest class in church and state, and of the best characters, such as Abraham, Joh 8:56. Jacob, Ge 49:18. David, Ps 14:7. Solomon, and the church in his time, So 8:1. Isaiah, and the saints with him, Isa 25:9 with many others. These indeed had a sight of Christ, but a very distant one; they saw him afar off in the promises and prophecies of him; and not very clearly, but through dark types and cloudy sacrifices; whereas the disciples saw him in person, heard him preach, took in the evidence of his miracles, and felt the power of his doctrines, and spiritually and savingly understood them. A way of speaking, somewhat like this, stands in the Talmud ⁷⁷⁶;

"Many have watched to expound in Mercavah (the beginning of Ezekiel's prophecy), אורח מימיהו, war alw, "and have not seen it all their days".

Matthew 13:18

Ver. 18. **Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.**

That is, the interpretation of the parable; for they had heard the parable before, and had desired an explanation of it; which, though not mentioned by Matthew, is, by the other evangelists, Mark 4:10, Lu 8:9 and since it was given to them to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, therefore Christ calls upon them to attend unto, and hear, so as to understand the spiritual meaning of

⁷⁷⁴ T. Bab. Chagiga, fol. 14. 2.

⁷⁷⁵ Sepher Raziel, fol. 34. 1.

⁷⁷⁶ T. Bab. Megilla, fol. 24. 2.

this parable. Mark relates, that he moreover said to his disciples at this time, "know ye not this parable?" Do ye not understand the meaning of it, so easy to be taken in? them as it were reproving for their dulness of hearing, notwithstanding the grace given them, and the advantages they enjoyed: "how then will ye know all parables?" all that he had delivered, or was about to deliver at this time, or should hereafter; which were of more difficult interpretation, and not so easy to be understood as this.

Matthew 13:19

Ver. 19. **When anyone heareth the word of the kingdom,**

Hence it appears, that by the "seed" in the parable is meant the Gospel, called the "word of the kingdom": because it treats of the king Messiah, of his person, office, and grace; and of his kingdom, and the administration of it by him, under the present dispensation; of the kingdom of grace saints enjoy now, and of the kingdom of heaven they shall enter into hereafter, through the grace and righteousness of Christ. Now such a hearer of this word is here described, who hears it accidentally, and only externally; hears the sound of it with his ears,

and understandeth it not

with his heart. He is one that is careless and inattentive, negligent and forgetful; has some slight notions of things as he hears, but these pass away as they come; his affections are not at all touched, nor his judgment informed by them, but remains as stupid, and as unconcerned as ever; his heart is not opened to attend to, and receive the word, but continues hard and obdurate; and is like the common and beaten road, that is trodden down by everyone, and is not susceptible of the seed, that falls upon it.

Then cometh the wicked one,

Satan, the devil, Mark 4:15 who is, by way of eminency, so called, being the first creature that became wicked, and the worst that is so; who is entirely and immutably wicked; whose whole work and employment lies in wickedness; and who, was the original cause of the wickedness that is among men, and which he is continually instigating and promoting: so the Jews frequently call ⁷⁷⁷ Samael, by whom they mean the devil, Samael, הַדָּשׁ "the wicked". This evil spirit, as soon as ever he observes one hearing the word, especially that has not been used to attend, comes immediately, and, as he is hearing,

catcheth away that which is sown in his heart:

⁷⁷⁷ Sepher Bahir apud Zohar in Gen. fol. 27. 2. Debarim Rabba, fol. 145. 3.

not the grace of God, which being once implanted in the heart, can never be taken away by Satan; but the word which was sown, not in his understanding, in a spiritual sense, nor even in his affections, so as to love it, delight, and take pleasure in it; much less in his heart, so as to become the engrafted word able to save, or so as to believe in it, and in Christ revealed by it; but in his memory, and that but very slightly neither; for the heart sometimes means the memory; see Luke 2:51. Besides, the word only fell “upon”, not “into” his heart, as into the good ground, as the metaphor in the parable shows; and it made no impression, nor was it inwardly received, but as soon as ever dropped, was “caught” away by the enemy; not by frightening him out of it, by persecution, as the stony ground hearer; nor by filling the mind with worldly cares, as the thorny ground hearer; but by various suggestions and temptations, darting in thoughts, presenting objects, and so diverted his mind from the word, and fixed his attention elsewhere; which is done at once, at an unawares, secretly, and without any notice of the person himself; so that the word is entirely lost to him, and he does not so much as remember the least thing he has been hearing:

this is he which receiveth the seed by the way side;

such an hearer is comparable to such ground, on whom the word has no more effect, than seed sown upon a common beaten path.

Matthew 13:20

Ver. 20. **But he that receiveth the seed into stony places,**

Such a hearer, who is like to the stony ground on which the seed fell, is one that is not an accidental hearer of the word, as the former, but a settled constant hearer of it; and not one that is careless and negligent, but diligent and attentive, and has some understanding of what he hears;

the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it:

he is one that not only constantly attends upon it, but he receives it; he gives an assent to it, he believes in it historically, makes a profession of his faith in it, and holds it for a while, being under some convictions of the truth of it: and having some speculative notions of it, and light in his understanding and judgment in it, he has some flashes of natural affection for it, and delivers some outward expressions of pleasure and delight in it, like Herod, and the hearers of John the Baptist; but has no heart work, and so is like to the rock in stony ground; the natural

hardness of his heart continues, it remains unbroken by the word, without any true sense of sin, and repentance for it, and destitute of spiritual life, and of true faith, love, and joy: hence, as his profession is taken up in haste, immediately, upon a flash of affection, and a little head knowledge, it does not last long, nor prove honourable.

Matthew 13:21

Ver. 21. **Yet hath he not root in himself,**

Nor in Christ; the word is not rooted in him, nor has he the root of the matter, or the truth of grace in him:

but dureth for a while;

a hearer of the word, a professor of religion, showing some outward respect to the word, and to the preachers of it:

for when tribulation or persecution ariseth, because of the word;

which is often the case, and must be expected by those who embrace the Gospel, profess the name of Christ, and are willing to live godly in him. Tribulation may intend some lesser and lighter troubles for the sake of Christ, and his Gospel; such as the revilings and reproaches of men, loss of character, and trade, &c. and persecution may design something more public and vehement; such as confiscation of goods, imprisonment, and danger of life, the most exquisite tortures, and death in the most cruel form and shape; things very disagreeable to flesh and blood, and which cannot be endured, and submitted to, by persons without a principle of grace, by one that has no root in himself. Luke calls this a time “of temptation”, or trial, as it is either way, both by private troubles, and more public persecutions: these try men’s principles and professions, and whether the truth of grace is in them or not; and where it is not in any person,

by and by he is offended;

at the cross; he shrinks back from it, does not care to take it up, and follow Christ; but drops his religion, and the profession of it; apostatises, falls away, and comes to nothing.

Matthew 13:22

Ver. 22. **He also that receiveth seed among the thorns,**

The hearer that is like to the thorny ground, on which the seed fell,

is he that heareth the word;

not a profane sinner, nor a reviler of religion, or a persecutor of the saints; but one that not only shows a love to the word, but who seems to have his heart broken

under it, and by it, his conscience tender, and his life outwardly reformed; one, who besides his being a settled, diligent, understanding, and affectionate hearer of the word, and a believing receiver and professor of it, seems to have a thorough work of grace upon him, to have the fallow ground of his heart ploughed up, and to be truly contrite; the thorns being under ground, and not yet to be seen, but afterwards appear:

and the care of this world;

not the care of another world, nor a care about spiritual things in this world, nor even a proper, laudable care of the things of this present life, but an anxious and immoderate care of them; which, as thorns, is very perplexing and distressing to the persons themselves, and is what is vain and fruitless.

And the deceitfulness of riches:

in opposition to some riches, the riches of grace and glory, which have no deceit in them; and not riches themselves, bare worldly riches but the deceitfulness of them, is here taken notice of; for riches often delude, and lead persons out of the right way, out of God’s way; cause them to err from the faith; they do not give the satisfaction they promise, and often do not continue, as is expected: and are as thorns, pungent to the owners of them, who pierce themselves through with many sorrows in acquiring and keeping them; and are frequently injurious to others, their fellow creatures; and in the issue are useless and unprofitable, especially with respect to the concerns of another world. Mark adds, “and the lusts of other things”; besides riches; and Luke adds, and “pleasures of this life”; meaning divers other worldly lusts and pleasures, such as the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life: which also, like thorns, are distracting and afflicting, sooner or later; are vain, and unprofitable, and lead to destruction: and these are called “the pleasures of this life”, in opposition to, and distinction from the pleasures of that which is to come, which are real and lasting: the phrase is Jewish ⁷⁷⁸;

”says R. Judah, the prince, whoever takes upon him, תַּנְיֵי הַגִּלְמוּדָה, “the pleasures of this world”, to him are denied the pleasures of the world to come: and whoever does not take upon him “the pleasures of this world”, to him are given the pleasures of the world to come.”

Now these, all, and each of them,

choke the word:

⁷⁷⁸ Abot R. Nathan, c. 28. Vid. Kimchi & Ben Melech in Psal. xvi 5. & Eben Ezra in Psal. xix. 10.

by overspreading all the powers and faculties of the soul, as thorns do a field; by over topping the seed of the word, and by hiding it from the influences of the sun of righteousness, and rain of grace; and by attracting everything in the heart to themselves; and by bearing and pressing down all thought, concern, and care for the use, fruitfulness, and increase of the word.

And he becometh unfruitful:

as in such circumstances he must needs be; or if there be any show of fruit in outward respect to the word, in an historical faith of it, in an external profession, and outward reformation, “yet brings not fruit to perfection”, as Luke says; these in process of time shrivel up, wither away, and come to nothing.

Matthew 13:23

Ver. 23. **But he that received seed into the good ground,**

The hearer compared to good ground into which the seed fell, is he that heareth the word and understandeth it; has a new and spiritual understanding given him, feels the power of it on his heart, enlightening and quickening him; has an application of it made to him by the Spirit of God, and can discern the worth and excellency of it, and distinguish it from all others; and, as Mark says, “receives it”; as the word of God in faith, and with the love of it, and with all readiness and meekness; and, as Luke observes, “keeps it”; holds it fast against all opposition with great struggling; will not part with it at any rate, nor depart from it in the least, nor entertain any doubt about it; but abides by it, stands fast in it, and is valiant for it: and this he does in and with “an honest and good heart”; which no man naturally has; nor can any man make his heart so: this is the work of God, and is owing to his efficacious grace. This is an heart of flesh, a new and right heart, and spirit; an heart to fear God, to love him, and to trust in him; in which Christ dwells by faith; in which the Spirit of God has his temple; and in which every grace is implanted: and such an one, as he hears with a strict, and an honest intention, and in the exercise of grace; so he holds fast the word he hears, understands and receives, with all faithfulness and honesty:

which also beareth fruit and bringeth forth, some an hundred fold, some sixty, and some thirty:

the fruit bore, and brought forth by such an hearer, is the true fruit of grace and righteousness, and is all from Christ, under the influences of the Spirit, through the word and ordinances, as means, and issues in the glory of God; and though not brought forth in the same quan-

tity in all, yet is of the same quality; and is brought forth, as Luke says, “with patience”: constantly, and continually, in all seasons, in old age, and even unto death; and is at last brought “to perfection”, holds, and remains unto the end.

Matthew 13:24

Ver. 24. **Another parable put he forth unto them, saying,**

Somewhat like the former, but with a different view: for whereas the design of the former was to show the different sorts of hearers that attend upon the ministry of the word, three parts in four being bad; this is to show the difference of members in churches, some being comparable to good seed, and others to tares.

The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:

by “the kingdom of heaven”, is not meant the ultimate glory of the saints in heaven, or the state of happiness in the other world; for there will be no tares there; nor the Gospel, and the ministration of it, but the Gospel dispensation, and times, and kingdom of the Messiah; or rather the Gospel visible church state, on earth, called a “kingdom”, of which Christ is king, and in which the saints are subject to him; where proper laws are made for the orderly government of it, and proper officers appointed to explain, and put those laws in execution; and which consists of various persons, united under one head, and independent of any other government: and it is styled the kingdom of heaven, in distinction from the kingdoms of this world; the subjects of it are, or should be, heaven born souls; the word, laws, and ordinances of it are from heaven; and there is some resemblance between a Gospel church state and heaven, and it is very near unto it, and is even the suburbs of it: or else the king Messiah himself is intended, who is compared to a man, a sower; and so it is explained, Mt 13:37 “he that soweth the good seed is the son of man”: which is a name and title of the Messiah, by which he is called both in the Old and New Testament; who, though the seed of the woman, yet was the son of man, as of Abraham, and David; and which denotes the truth, and yet the infirmity of his human nature: he is the sower that went about preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, in the Jewish world, or throughout Judea and Galilee, in his own person: and who also, by the ministry of his apostles, sowed the seed of the word in the several parts of the world, which was made effectual for the beginning of a good work of grace on the souls of many; for by “his field” is meant “the world”, as appears from Mt

13:38 and means either the whole world, in which both good and bad men live and dwell; and is the field Christ is the proprietor of, both by creation, as God, and by gift, as mediator: or the church, the visible Gospel church state throughout the world; which is as a field well tilled and manured; and is Christ’s by gift, purchase, and grace: and by the good seed sown in it, are meant “the children of the kingdom”; as is said, Mt 13:38 such as have a good work begun in them, and bring forth good fruit in their lives and conversations.

Matthew 13:25

Ver. 25. **But while men slept,**

Good men, ministers, and churches; whose case this sometimes is to be asleep in a spiritual sense: and which sleepiness lies in a non-exercise of grace; in a sluggishness to and in duty; in a contentment in external exercises of religion; in lukewarmness about the cause of Christ; in an unconcernedness about sins of omission and commission; and in a willingness to continue in such a state; and which arises from a body of sin and death; from worldly cares; weariness in spiritual duties; a cessation from spiritual exercises; an absenting from spiritual company; oftentimes from outward ease, peace, and plenty, sometimes from a long expectation of the bridegroom’s coming, and the delay of it; and from its being a night season, a time of darkness and security: such a case with the church, and good men, is very dangerous, as it exposes to every sin and snare; renders them liable to lose the presence of Christ, their liveliness and comfort; and tends to poverty and leanness of soul: such are in danger of being surprised with the midnight cry; and the churches are likely to be filled with hypocrites and heretics:

his enemy came;

by whom is meant the devil, Mt 13:39 who is an enemy to Christ personally, and showed himself to be so in his infancy, by stirring up Herod to seek his life: and, when grown up, by instigating the Jews to contrive his death; which they attempted by various methods, and which, at last, he compassed by Judas, and the Scribes and Pharisees; and also to Christ mystical, to the church, and all true believers; whose adversary he is, going about, like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour: the same came into the field, the world, and church in it;

and sowed tares among the wheat;

by “the wheat”, is meant the same with the “good seed”, the children of God, true believers in Christ; who are comparable to wheat, for the choiceness of it, that

being the choicest grain, so they are the chosen of God, and precious, and the excellent in the earth: and because it dies before it rises and springs up; so the saints do, and will do, both in a spiritual and corporal sense; and because of the purity and whiteness of it, so they are pure and white, being sanctioned by the Spirit, washed in the blood of Christ, and justified by his righteousness; and because of its substance, fulness, weight, and permanence, so they are filled from Christ’s fulness, and with the fulness of God, and fruits of righteousness, and remain, and cannot be driven as the chaff is, but continue to live, because Christ their head lives; and because of its gradual increase, so they increase in spiritual light, grace, and experience; and because of the chaff that adheres to it, so sin and corruption cleave to the saints in this life; and lastly, because it needs both the flail and the fan, so believers need chastisements, afflictions, and corrections: by “the tares” sown among them, are meant “the children of the wicked one”; Satan, the enemy and adversary, as in Mt 13:38 who are to be understood, not of profane sinners; though these are the children of the devil; but of professors of religion, men either of bad principles, or of bad lives and conversations; whom Satan, by some means or another, gets into churches, and they become members thereof: at first they look like wheat, like true believers, have a show of religion, a form of godliness, an appearance of grace, but are destitute of it; and prove tares, unfruitful, unprofitable, and of no account, yea hurtful, and whose end is to be burned. **And went his way;** somewhere else, to do more mischief; and having done all he could at present here, undiscovered, not taken notice of by ministers and churches; they being all asleep, and having lost, in a great measure, the spirit of discerning. The word תַּרְסֵנִי we render “tares”, and the Ethiopic version “thistles”, probably means the same the Jewish doctors call תַּרְסֵנִי נֶזֶק⁷⁷⁹; and which, they say, is a sort of wheat, and not of a different kind from it; that when it is sown it looks like wheat, and is sown for it, but is changed in the earth, both as to its nature and form, and brings forth this kind. In the generation in which the flood was, they say⁷⁸⁰, they sowed wheat, and the earth brought forth תַּרְסֵנִי תַּרְסֵנִי, what we render “tares”, and bids fair to be what is here meant; and fitly expresses false professors, nominal Christians, men of degenerate principles and practices: for not what we call tares, or vetch-

⁷⁷⁹ Misn. Kilaim, c. 1. sect. 1. & Trumot, c. 2. sect. 6. & Maimon. in ib. T. Hieros. Kilaim, fol. 26. 4. Maimon. Hilch. Kilaim, c. 3. sect. 3.

⁷⁸⁰ Bereshit Rabba, sect. 28. fol. 23. 4.

es, can be meant, which may be removed from the wheat without danger, but rather this degenerate wheat; or that wheat which is blasted, and which may be observed sometimes to grow upon the same root, and therefore cannot be taken away, without rooting up the wheat also.

Matthew 13:26

Ver. 26. **But when the blade was sprung up,**

That is, the blade of the wheat; which designs the taking up, a profession of religion on principles of grace, called a profession of faith; and when right, it springs up from, and proceeds upon a work begun in the heart: and such a profession ought to be made by all that are partakers of the grace of God; and ought to be made both verbally, by a confession of the mouth, and a declaration of the work of God upon the heart, and by deeds, by submitting to the ordinances of the Gospel; and should be sincere, and from the heart, and be visible to men, and be held fast unto the end without wavering.

And brought forth fruit;

which intends not the conversion of sinners, nor the performance of duties, nor the perfection of grace, but the first appearances of grace under a profession, such as sorrow for sin, after a godly sort, fear and reverence of God, great humility, much self-denial, ardent love to Christ, pantings and breathings after him, and communion with him, strong affection for the people of God, some exercise of faith on Christ, zeal for his cause and interest, and a concern to honour and glorify God.

Then appeared the tares also.

They were not discernible for some time when they were first sown; they looked like good seed when they first appeared among the people of God; they seemed to have the truth of grace, as others had; their blade of profession, when it sprung up, looked like that of true wheat; but were now discernible both by their unfruitfulness in their lives and conversations, and by their bad principles, which they now endeavoured to spread, to the hurt of the churches where they were: they always appeared to be what they were to God the searcher of hearts; but now, through the zeal of true converts, to which these opposed themselves, and the fruitfulness of their lives, from which they were so very different, they became manifest to ministers and churches.

Matthew 13:27

Ver. 27. **So the servants of the householder came,**

Christ is the “householder”; the house of which he is master is the church, called the household of God, the

household of faith, the family in heaven, and in earth; in which house he bears and sustains many relations, as those of a son, a priest, a master, or governor. By “the servants” that came to him, are meant, not civil magistrates, who have nothing to do in the affairs of churches; nor the angels, though these are ministering servants to Christ, and will be employed by him, in the close of time, to gather up the tares, bind them in bundles, and cast them into the fire; but the ministers of the Gospel, the servants of Christ, and of the most high God, who are made use of in planting, and sowing, and weeding his field, the church: these observing the tares, and fearing the danger the wheat was in by them, as well as troubled and surprised at the appearance and growth of them, came to him, and spread the case before him in prayer; **and said unto him,**

Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?

Their manner of address, calling him Sir, or Lord, is expressive of their reverence of him, and obedience to him; and which is said, not in word only, but in the sincerity of their hearts, and under the influence of the Spirit of God. They ascribe the field, the church, the good seed, converts that sprung up in it, and the sowing, or making of them such, all to Christ, and not any of this kind, or any part of it to themselves; though they were employed by him in tilling this field, in sowing spiritual things to the saints, and were useful to them in their profession of religion. Moreover, they intimate, that nothing but good could come from Christ; no bad seed, no tares could be of his sowing; and declare their ignorance of the rise of them; which ignorance was owing to their being asleep, when the enemy sowed them.

Matthew 13:28

Ver. 28. **He said unto them, an enemy has done this,**

This is the answer of the householder to the question of his servants. In the Greek text it is, “an enemy man”; and is so rendered in the several versions; meaning, not that the enemy was a man; for he was the devil, as in Mt 13:39 but it is an Hebraism; such as in Es 7:6, אִישׁ הָאֵוִיב, “the man adversary and enemy” is this wicked Haman; and signifies a certain enemy, and one indeed that is an implacable enemy to man.

The servants said unto him, wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?

which words express the concern of the ministers of Christ for the true members of the church, comparable to wheat, lest they should receive any damage by the ill

examples, and pernicious principles of evil men among them; also their detestation and abhorrence of men of wicked lives and erroneous principles; they cannot bear them which are evil; likewise, they show great regard to the glory of God, and interest of religion, and their readiness to execute any orders Christ should give them; but not willing to proceed of themselves, ask counsel and advice of him.

Matthew 13:29

Ver. 29. **But he said, nay,**

The answer is in the negative; and which, if spoken to angels, is to be understood, that they should not inflict punishments, or pour out, their vials, as yet, on formal professors, lest the righteous should share in them; and if to magistrates, the sense of it is, that they should not persecute with the sword, or put men to death for heretical opinions; but if to ministers of the word, which sense I choose, the meaning is, that not everyone suspected to be a tare, or a nominal professor, is to be removed from the communion of the church, because there is often danger in so doing:

lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them:

not that men of openly scandalous lives are to be tolerated in churches; they are to be withdrawn from, and put away; nor men of known, avowed, heretical principles; such, after the first and second admonition, are to be rejected: yet there may be such in churches, not altogether agreeable in principle and practice, whose character and situation may be such, that there is no removing them without offending some truly gracious, useful persons, in whose affections they stand, who may be tempted, by such a step, to leave their communion; and so cannot be done without a considerable prejudice to the church. The scope of the parable, and the design of our Lord in it, are chiefly to be attended to; which are to show, that a pure and perfect church cannot be expected in the present state of things; and that saints should not be immoderately uneasy, but patiently bear such exercises, until Christ’s time is come to relieve them, when the tares and chaff shall be separated from the wheat; when sinners shall not stand in the congregation of the righteous, and there shall be no more a pricking briar, nor a grieving thorn in the house of Israel.

Matthew 13:30

Ver. 30. **Let both grow together until the harvest,**

By “the harvest”, is meant “the end of the world”, Mt 13:39 either of the Jewish world, the dissolution of

their church and state, which was near; or of a man’s life, which is the end of the world to him; or rather of this present world, the system of the universe, of the material world, as to its present form and use, and of the inhabitants of it, and of time in it. Now the end of the world is compared to harvest, because the time of it is fixed and settled; though it is not known when it will be, yet it is as certain as the time of harvest; and because as that is in the summer season, in hot weather, so this will be a time of wrath, when the day of the Lord will burn like an oven; and as the harvest time is a time of hurry and labour, so will it be in the end of the world, especially with the angels, who will be gathering the elect from the four winds, and all men, to appear before the judgment seat of Christ; and as at harvest the corn is cut down, the fields cleared, and all brought home, so it will be at the end of the world; the sickle will be thrust in, and the earth reaped, the tares bound in bundles, and cast into the fire, and the wheat gathered into the garner; and as the harvest, as it falls out to be good or bad, is matter of joy or sorrow, so will the end of the world be joy to saints, who will then enter into the joy of their Lord, and be forever with him, and sorrow to the wicked, who will then go into everlasting punishment. Until this time, wheat and tares are to “grow” together. The “wheat”, or true believers, “grow” in the exercise of grace, as of faith, hope, love, humility, &c. and in spiritual knowledge of the will of God, of the doctrines of grace, and of Christ; which growth is owing to the dews of divine grace, to the sun of righteousness shining upon them, to the gracious influences of the blessed Spirit, and to the word and ordinances as means. The “tares”, or nominal professors, may “grow” in riches, in credit, and reputation among men, and in speculative knowledge; and oftentimes so it is, that they grow worse and worse, both in doctrinal and practical wickedness: when they are ordered to “grow together”, the meaning is, not that their growth is equal, or of the same kind, nor in the same way, nor in the same things; but this only notes the time and duration of their growth: nor is this suffered and permitted, because of any love God has unto them, or any delight in, or approbation of them; but either because they are not fully ripe for ruin; or for the exercise of the saints, and for their temporal and spiritual good; for it is entirely a tender regard to the wheat, and not to the tares, that they are ordered to grow together.

And in the time of harvest, I will say to the reapers, the angels, Mt 13:39

gather ye together first the tares;

that is, formal professors, hypocrites, and heretics; whom he will have removed out of his kingdom, his church, his field, in the world: and this order shows, that the angels will have a perfect and exact knowledge of these persons; and that their work will be to separate them from the righteous; when the churches will be pure, and without spot, or wrinkle: and this will be done first; that is, these wicked men will be first removed out of the church, before their more severe punishment takes place:

and bind them in bundles to burn them:

which denotes the power of angels over these persons, the certainty and inevitableness of their ruin, their association together, and their destruction in company with one another; which will be an aggravation of their misery, which is expressed by “burning” with fire; not material, but metaphorical; the wrath of God, which will be a consuming fire, and be everlasting and unquenchable.

But gather the wheat into my barn;

meaning the kingdom of heaven, which is as a garner or repository, in which none but wheat is put, and where it is safe, and lies together: so none but righteous, pure, and undefiled persons, are admitted into heaven; and being there, they are safe, and out of the reach of all enemies; and what adds to their happiness is, that they are together, enjoying all satiety and fulness; and are in Christ’s barn, or garner, which he has made, and prepared for their reception. The gathering of them into it designs the introduction of the saints into heaven by angels, as their souls at death, and both souls and bodies, at the last day, when their happiness will be perfect and complete.

Matthew 13:31

Ver. 31. **Another parable put he forth unto them, saying,**

As the former parable sets forth the condition of the Gospel church state until the end of the world; this expresses the small beginnings of it, and the large increase and growth of it, and its great usefulness to the saints. The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field: by “the kingdom of heaven” is meant, as before, the Gospel dispensation, or the Gospel church state, and the ministry of the word, and the administration of ordinances in it: by the grain of mustard seed, either the Gospel, or the people of God, or the grace of God in them; and by the man that took and sowed it, the Lord Jesus Christ; and by his field,

in which he sowed it, the world, or his church throughout the world.

Matthew 13:32

Ver. 32. **Which indeed is the least of all seeds,**

So mustard with the Jews ⁷⁸¹, is called בנין זרין, “a kind of seeds”; and being very small, hence לדרק, “as a grain of mustard”, is often used, proverbially ⁷⁸², for the least thing, as it is by Christ, Mt 17:20. Not but there are seeds lesser than this; but the meaning is, that this is one of the least of all seeds; or was the least of seeds, which were commonly known in Judea; or the very least which grew to the size this sometimes did, and as here related. Now this is designed to express the small beginnings of the Gospel dispensation, of the ministry of the word, of the grace of God in the hearts of his people, and of the small number of them at first. The Gospel, and the ministry of it were like a grain of mustard seed, little, mean, and contemptible; the author of it, Christ, was so to the Jews, in his birth, parentage, education, and outward appearance; the subject of it a crucified Christ, and salvation by him; and the doctrines out of the reach, and contrary to carnal reason; the preachers of it, were persons of very mean and low life, few in number, weak, illiterate, and despicable, and the whole world against them; the circumstances which attended the Gospel were very discouraging; it was charged with novelty, represented as contrary to common sense, and the reason of mankind, and as opening a door to licentiousness; and was followed with violent opposition and persecution, wherever it went. The grace of God, which under the ministry of the word is implanted in the hearts of the Lord’s people, is at first very small, like a grain of mustard seed; it is a day of small things; faith in Christ is very weak and low, spiritual strength small, comfort little, experience of the love of God not large, light and knowledge in the doctrines of grace but very obscure and glimmering: the church of God, which sprung up under the ministry of the word, and through the work of grace, upon the hearts of particular persons, was like the small grain of mustard seed; the persons of which it consisted were but few in number in Christ’s time, and at his ascension into heaven, and when the Gospel was first preached among the Gentiles; and those persons which laid the foundation, and were at the beginning of the Gospel church state, made a very contemptible figure, by reason of their outward poverty, and mean circumstances in the world; and on account

⁷⁸¹ Misn. Kilaim, c. 3. sect. 2.

⁷⁸² T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 31. 1. Megilla, fol. 23. 2. Nidda, fol. 66. 1.

of the severe persecutions which every where attended them; and also through the errors and heresies introduced by evil men, that crept in among them.

But when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree.

Luke says, “a great tree”, Luke 13:19 for to such a size did the mustard tree grow in the land of Judea, of which take the following instances ⁷⁸³.

”At Shichin there was a mustard stalk, which had three branches, and one of them was cut down, and they covered a potter’s booth with it; and found in it שלשת קבין של חרדל, “three kabs of mustard seed” (elsewhere ⁷⁸⁴ it is said, nine kabs). Says R. Simeon ben Chelphetha, I have one stalk of mustard seed in my field, and I go up to it, התאנה כולהבראש “as one goes up to the top of a fig tree.”

And though the mustard tree grew to this height and size, it was reckoned among herbs, as here by Christ; for they say ⁷⁸⁵,

”they do not put mustard in a field of fruits, but in a field of herbs.”

All which serve to illustrate and confirm the account here given by Christ, and alluded to; and which expresses the very large growth and increase of the Gospel, and the ministry of it; of the grace of God in the heart, and of the church of Christ, and his interest in the world: of the Gospel, and the ministry of it, as to its large spread in the world; which at first was confined to the Jews, but was afterwards published to the Gentiles, and carried through the whole world; and, in ages since, has made a considerable progress, particularly at the Reformation; and will make a much greater one, towards the end of time: and of the grace of God in the heart, which gradually increases to a full assurance of understanding of hope, and of faith, and to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: and of the church of Christ, and his interest in the world; both as to the large numbers it did consist of in the times of the apostles, and since, and will more especially hereafter; for the church will fill the earth, and the kingdoms of the world will become the church, and all nations of the earth will flock unto it; the people of the Jews in general will be converted, and the fulness of the Gentiles will be brought in: as also with respect to the figure it will make through the great personages, the kings and princes of the earth, that will be in it; the great

⁷⁸³ T. Hieros. Peah, fol. 20. 2.

⁷⁸⁴ T. Bab. Cetubot, fol. 111. 2.

⁷⁸⁵ Misn. Kilaim, c. 2. sect. 8.

power and authority the saints will then have; the peace and prosperity that will be enjoyed by them; the spirituality, holiness, righteousness, love, and unity, there will be among them; as also the presence of God and of the Lamb, they will be favoured with; all which glory and happiness will be brought about by a plentiful effusion of the Spirit, and by the glorious appearance of Christ.

So that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof:

by “the birds of the air”, some think angels are meant, compared to “birds” for their harmlessness and innocence; for their readiness and swiftness to do the will of God; and for their warbling notes and tuneful songs of praise; and who may be called birds “of the air”, or heaven, because of their habitation: now these delight to be in the church, to be under the shadow of the Gospel ministry, and to look into the mysteries of it. Though rather, the saints and people of God are intended, who, in Scripture, are sometimes compared to particular birds; as to the eagle, the dove, and sparrow; and to birds in general, because timorous, weak, and defenceless, are exposed to danger, and wonderfully delivered, and are very subject to wander and go astray; and because of their chirpings, and singing songs of praise to their God and Redeemer; and to birds of the air or heaven, because they are heaven born souls, are partakers of the heavenly calling, and are pressing for, and soaring aloft towards the high calling of God in Christ: now the Gospel ministry, and the Gospel church state, are very useful to these; they “come” thereunto willingly, and cheerfully, deliberately, and with dependence on the grace and strength of Christ; humbly, under a sense of their own unworthiness, and yet with joy and thankfulness; heartily, and with their faces thitherwards, and they also “lodge” therein. This is what they desire, and their hearts are set upon; here they determine to be, and it is their happiness to be here; the shadow of Gospel ordinances is very delightful, very refreshing, and very fruitful to them, and under which saints dwell with great safety; and what a coming of these birds will there be hither, and a tabernacling of them herein, at the latter day! which are greatly designed in this part of the parable.

Matthew 13:33

Ver. 33. **Another parable spake he unto them,**

To the disciples and the multitude, and which was of the same kind, to the same purpose, and relating to the same subject as the former; the spread of the Gospel, and the increase of it in the world.

The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven.

The word “leaven” is every where else used in a bad sense; and either designs immorality, as malice and wickedness, or false doctrine, such as that of the Pharisees and Sadducees: but here it seems to be taken in a good sense, and the Gospel to be compared unto it; nor for its disagreeable qualities, but on account of its small quantity; it is a little leaven that leavens the whole lump, and may express, as the grain of mustard seed does, the small beginnings of the Gospel, and its meanness in the eyes of men; and on account of its piercing, penetrating, and spreading nature: so the Gospel reaches the conscience, pierces the heart, enlightens the understanding, informs the judgment, raises and sets the affections on right objects, subdues the will, and brings down all towering thoughts, to the obedience of Christ, in particular persons; and has penetrated and made its way, under divine influence, through towns, cities, kingdoms, and nations: also on account of its heating, swelling, and assimilating nature; so the Gospel, where it takes place, warms the affections, causes the heart to burn within, inspires with zeal for God, and Christ, and the Gospel; it swells and fills churches with such as shall be saved, and assimilates the several persons it operates in, makes them like one another, one bread, one body, having like precious faith, knowledge, and experience, though in a different degree.

Which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal.

By the “three measures of meal”, are meant the elect of God; who, because of their nature and quality, are compared to meal, or fine flour; and that because of that of which it is made, wheat, to a corn of which Christ is compared, Joh 12:24 and by whose grace the saints are what they are, justified, regenerated, and sanctified; and on account of the manner it becomes so, as by grinding the wheat, sifting it when ground, and separating it from the bran; all which may express the first convictions in the conscience of awakened sinners, the grace of God in conversion, and the separation of them from the rest of the world, in the effectual calling; as also by reason of its choiceness, purity, and goodness, the saints being chosen of God and precious, and being pure and spotless, through the grace and righteousness of Christ, and being highly valued, and had in great esteem by him; and because of their quantity, are compared to three measures of meal. The measure here designed, is the Hebrew seah, which held a gallon and an half, and three of these made an ephah; and which is often rendered by the ⁷⁸⁶

⁷⁸⁶ Targum Onketos & Jarchi, in Exod. xvi. 36. & Tar-

Targumists, תלת איני “three seahs”, or “measures”, the very phrase here used; and the reason why three are particularly mentioned is, because such a quantity used to be fermented and kneaded by women at one time; see Ge 18:6 and for the further illustration of this, take the following passage out of the Talmud ⁷⁸⁷.

”The wise men say, that three women may be employed in one lump of dough; one may knead it, another may make it into loaves, and another may bake it--and it is a tradition, בהשיני שלשה קבני, “that in wheat they use three kabs”, or “measures”, and in barley four “kabs”.

These measures, as here used parabolically, may design the small number of God’s elect; and, as some have thought, may have respect to the three then known parts of the world, where they were, or should be: by the woman that took and hid the leaven in these measures, is meant, either the church, sometimes compared to a woman in Scripture, Re 12:1 or the ministers of the Gospel, wisdom’s maidens; or rather, Jesus Christ, the wisdom of God; see Pr 9:1 and the reason why a woman is mentioned is, because it was, with the Jews, the work of women to ferment the flour, knead the dough, and make the bread: and this action of taking and covering the leaven in the meal, may denote the power of Christ, in opening the heart, and putting in the Gospel, which unless he takes in hand, and uses, is ineffectual; as also the passiveness of men, under the first workings of the Spirit of Christ upon their souls, by the Gospel; and likewise, the secret and invisible power of divine grace, operating by the ministry of the word, upon the heart.

Until the whole was leavened:

to be “leavened” by the Gospel, is to be evangelized by it, to be brought into the life and liberty of it, to a Gospel way of living by faith on Christ; to derive all peace, joy, and comfort from him, and not from any works of righteousness; and to have a man’s obedience influenced by the love of God, so as to do it cheerfully, and without dependence on it. Now the Gospel, where it has entrance and takes place, powerfully and effectually, continues to operate more or less, as the leaven in the meal, until the whole man, soul and body, all the faculties of the soul, and members of the body, are influenced by it; and will continue with power and efficacy in the world, and church, until all the elect of God are wrought upon by it, and are brought in. There is a late ingenious interpre-

gum Jon. in Ruth ii. 17.

⁷⁸⁷ T. Hieros. Pesachim, fol. 30. 2.

tation ⁷⁸⁸ of this parable, which, since the word “leaven” is elsewhere always used in a bad sense, deserves consideration; according to which, this parable expresses not the spread of truth, but of error; by “the woman” is thought to be meant, the Apocalyptic woman, the woman spoken of in the Revelations, the whore of Rome, the mother of harlots; and the “leaven” which she took, the leaven of false doctrine and discipline; by her “hiding” it, the private, secret, artful methods, false doctrines, and bad discipline were introduced, and the gradual progress thereof; and by the “three measures of meal”, the bishops and doctors of the church, among whom this leaven was spread, and who were fermented with it; particularly those three bishops of Rome at first, Sosymus, John the faster, and Boniface the third; which by degrees spread itself, until the whole Christian world was affected with it; and for a long time lay hid and undiscovered, till the Lord raised up Wyclif, John Huss, Jerom of Prague, Luther, and other reformers. The reader may choose which interpretation he likes best.

Matthew 13:34

Ver. 34. **All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude,**

In the hearing of his disciples, whilst in the ship, the multitude being on the shore,

in parables;

in the four foregoing ones;

and without a parable spake he not unto them:

not that he never had preached but in a parabolical way unto them, or that he never did afterwards use any other way of speaking; for it is certain, that both before and after, he delivered himself plainly, and without figures: but the meaning is, that in that sermon, and at that time, he thought fit to make use of no other method, as appears from the many other parables he afterwards delivered; and though he explained the meaning of some of them to his disciples, at their request, yet he dismissed the multitude without any explication of them.

Matthew 13:35

Ver. 35. **That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet,**

Not Isaiah, as some copies in the times of Jerom read, but Asaph, who is called Asaph the seer, 2Ch 29:30 which is all one as a prophet; vision is one sort of prophecy ⁷⁸⁹; and there was such a thing as prophesying with harps,

⁷⁸⁸ Vid. Teelman. Specimen Explic. Parabolarum, p. 64, 65, 66, 67, 68.

⁷⁸⁹ R. David Kimchi, Shorash. rad. hzx.

psalteries and cymbals, as well as in other ways, and with which Asaph and his sons are said to prophesy, 1Ch 25:1 so that he is very rightly called a prophet by the evangelist, who is cited, as

saying, Ps 78:2

I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world:

which Psalm, though a history of the dealings of God with the people of Israel, and of the many deliverances wrought for them, yet as the ⁷⁹⁰ Jewish writers observe, contain many things in it, expressed in a parabolical and enigmatical way; such as God’s furnishing a table in the wilderness, kindling a fire against Jacob, opening the doors of heaven, giving the corn of heaven, and angels’ food, and delivering his strength into captivity; and besides, the very historical facts recorded of the people of Israel, were types of things future under the Gospel dispensation: now as Asaph, by divine inspiration, delivered these parables and dark sayings, so Christ expressed the Gospel, and the mysteries of it, in a parabolical way, which were hid in God, and under the shadows of the law; and so were kept secret from the beginning of the world, and from the multitude, though now made known to the apostles, and by them to others, according to the will of God.

Matthew 13:36

Ver. 36. **Then Jesus sent the multitude away,**

That his disciples might have the opportunity of conversing with him alone, about the sense of the parables he had delivered; and that he might instruct them by some others hereafter mentioned.

And went into the house:

left the ship in which he had been preaching to the multitude, came on shore, and returned to the house he came out of, Mt 13:1

and his disciples came to him;

and being alone, make an humble request to him,

saying, declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field:

by which they mean, not a rehearsal of it, but an explication of the sense and meaning of it: they ask nothing about the parables of the mustard seed and leaven, either because they better understood them; or because there were some things very remarkable and striking in this, which made them very desirous to be particularly

⁷⁹⁰ Aben Ezra & Kirachi in loc.

informed of the several parts of it, and their meaning.

Matthew 13:37

Ver. 37. **He answered and said unto them,**

Being very ready to answer their request, and willing to communicate spiritual knowledge to them; thereby showing great condescension, and humility in himself, and great affection to them:

he that soweth the good seed, is the son of man;

he that is signified by the man that sowed good seed in his field, is “the son of man”; by whom he means himself, the seed of the woman; and the son of David; who being anointed with the Holy Ghost without measure, went about Judea and Galilee, preaching the everlasting Gospel, to the conversion of sinners, thereby making them good seed; though this may be understood of him, as including his apostles and ministers, whom he makes use of as instruments for the good of souls, by preaching the Gospel.

Matthew 13:38

Ver. 38. **The field is the world,**

That which is represented by “the field”, in which the good seed is sown, is not only the land of Judea, where Christ preached in person, but the whole world, into which the apostles were afterwards sent; or the church of Christ, in the several parts of the world:

the good seed are the children of the kingdom:

they which are designed by the good seed, are such, for whom the kingdom of heaven is prepared, to whom it is bequeathed, and who are appointed to it; who are possessed of the kingdom of grace here, and are heirs of the kingdom of glory; and have both a meetness for it, and a right unto it, being the children of God by adoption, and that appearing by regeneration:

but the tares are the children of the wicked one:

the persons intended by “the tares”, are such professors of religion, as both by their principles and practices, manifestly show that they are of their father the devil; they resemble and imitate him, and do his works; and plainly declare, that they were never born of God, and are in no better state, though under a profession, than openly profane and immoral persons; and are more hurtful and scandalous to the interest of Christ, than such are.

Matthew 13:39

Ver. 39. **The enemy that sowed them is the devil,**

He that is designed by the enemy, who sowed the tares in the field among the wheat, is no other than the devil; the enemy of Christ, of mankind in general, of God’s elect in particular, and the accuser of the brethren; and

his getting of hypocrites and heretics into churches, is no small proof of his implacable enmity to Christ and his interest; and shows what an adversary he is to the peace, comfort, and fruitfulness of the churches of Christ.

The harvest is the end of the world;

that which is meant by “the harvest”, until which time wheat and tares, good and bad men, under a profession of religion, are to be together, is “the end of the world”; meaning either the day of wrath and vengeance upon the Jewish nation; when those that truly believed in Christ were separated from the rest, and that hypocritical generation of men were utterly destroyed; or else the day of judgment, the great and last day, when the heavens and the earth, and all that is therein, shall be burnt up; when the righteous will enter into life, and the wicked go into everlasting punishment:

and the reapers are the angels;

the persons signified by “the reapers”, who shall put in the sickle, cut down the tares, bind them in bundles, and cast them into the fire, and who shall gather the wheat into the barn; that is, who shall be the executors of God’s wrath, upon wicked professors of religion, and who shall be the means of introducing the saints into the heavenly kingdom, are “the angels”; the holy and elect angels, who are the ministers of Christ, and ministering servants to them, who are the heirs of salvation; and are opposite to all secret and open enemies of Christ and his people; and will be employed in the end of time, against the wicked, and for the righteous.

Matthew 13:40

Ver. 40. **As therefore the tares are gathered,**

As it is represented in the parable, that in the time of harvest, the tares shall be gathered out from the wheat first; and being bound in bundles, shall be

burnt in the fire,

prepared for that purpose,

so shall it be in the end of this world;

hypocritical and heretical men, and all formal professors, shall be gathered out from among the saints, and the several churches, among whom they have been; and shall be together cast into everlasting burnings, prepared for the devil and his angels, whose children they are.

Matthew 13:41

Ver. 41. **The Son of man shall send forth his angels,**

Meaning himself, whose ministers the angels are; who wait upon him, and are at his beck and command; even the thousand thousands that minister unto him; these will be sent forth by his orders, into the several

parts of the world, where he has any churches, or an interest;

and they shall gather out of his kingdom:

the Gospel church, over which Christ is king, where he rules and governs in the hearts of his people; and who are cheerfully and willingly obedient to his laws, under the influence of his Spirit and grace: but all who are in the visible Gospel church state, are not such; some are wicked and rebellious, and though they are suffered to continue, yet not always; for if not removed by censures and excommunications, they will be at last by angels; who will separate them from the saints:

even all things that offend;

who are scandals to Christ, his church, and Gospel, by their wicked principles, or infamous practices; and who give offence, not only to God, and his righteous law, but lay stumbling blocks in the way of the children of God, and are the authors of divisions and offences among them:

and them that do iniquity;

that do nothing else but iniquity; and who, though they profess to be religious persons, are secretly, or openly, workers of iniquity; and are even doing iniquity, in and whilst they are professing religion.

Matthew 13:42

Ver. 42. **And shall cast them into a furnace of fire,**

Not a material, but a metaphorical one; denoting the wrath of God, which shall fall upon wicked men, and abide upon them to all eternity: which is sometimes called hell fire, sometimes a lake which burns with fire and brimstone; and here a furnace of fire, expressing the vehemency and intenseness of divine wrath, which will be intolerable; in allusion either to Nebuchadnezzar’s fiery furnace, or as some think, to the custom of burning persons alive in some countries; or rather, to the burning of chaff and stubble, and the stalks of any unprofitable things that grew in the field ⁷⁹¹, for the heating of furnaces, and is the very language of the Jews, who used to compare hell to a furnace; so Ge 15:17 is paraphrased by them ⁷⁹².

”And behold the sun set, and there was darkness; and lo! Abraham saw until the seats were set, and the thrones cast down; and lo! “hell”, which is prepared for the wicked in the world to come, כְּתוּרָא “as a furnace”, which sparks and flames of

⁷⁹¹ Misn. Sabbat. c. 3. sect. 1. & Maimon, & Bartenora in ib.

⁷⁹² Hieros. Targum in Gen. xv. 17.

fire surrounded; דְּבִנְיָה “in the midst of which”, the wicked fell, because they rebelled against the law, in their lifetime.”

Which is expressed in much the same language, and conveys the same ideas as here; and no wonder is it that it follows,

there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth;

declaring the remorse of conscience, the tortures of mind, the sense of inexpressible pain, and punishment, the wicked shall feel; also their furious rage and black despair.

Matthew 13:43

Ver. 43. **Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun,**

The time referred to is, when the tares shall be separated from the wheat: when they that offend and do iniquity, shall be gathered out of Christ’s kingdom; when the wicked shall be cast into hell: then the “righteous”, not who are so merely in their own apprehensions, and in the judgment of others; nor by their obedience, legal or evangelical; but who are made so, by the righteousness of Christ imputed to them: these, though they have been in this world loaded with reproaches, and attended with many afflictions and persecutions; and have been despised for their poverty and meanness, and want of outward glory, honour, riches, and prosperity; shall now “shine forth” in the robe of Christ’s righteousness, in perfect holiness of nature, in all felicity and prosperity of soul; and in the shining dazzling robes of glory, incorruption, and immortality, on their bodies; even

as the sun,

having no spot in them, or upon them, and without any clouds of darkness: they will be as Christ himself, the sun of righteousness, with whom, and in whose glory they shall appear, both in soul and body,

in the kingdom of their father; meaning either the same with the kingdom of Christ, the Father’s and his, being one and the same; or as distinct from Christ’s, see Mt 13:41 the church, and the government of it in this world, in all ages of time, and especially in the latter day, and during the thousand years, Christ and his saints shall reign together, may be peculiarly called the kingdom of Christ; when it will be delivered to the Father, and God shall be all in all: so that the ultimate glory may, though not to the exclusion of the Son, be styled the kingdom of the Father; of God, who is the Father of Christ and of his people; and which is observed, to assure the saints of

their interest in it, right unto it, and certain enjoyment of it. Some copies read, “the kingdom of heaven”. Much the same images, here made use of, to set forth the glory of the saints, both in soul and body, in the world to come, are expressed by the Jews.

”The faces of the “righteous”, they say, ⁷⁹³ in time to come, shall be hmxl twmwd, “like to the sun”, and moon, to the stars and planets, and lightnings, and lilies, and to the lamp of the sanctuary.”

And elsewhere ⁷⁹⁴ they observe, that

”God in time to come, will beautify the body of “the righteous”, as the beauty of the first man, when he entered into paradise, according to Isa 58:11 and that the soul, whilst in its dignity, shall be sustained with the superior light, and be clothed with it; and when it shall enter into the body hereafter, it shall enter with that light; and then shall the body shine, כְּזוֹהַר הַרְקִי, “as the brightness of the firmament”: as is said in Da 12:3.

And a little after ⁷⁹⁵ it is said, that when

”the soul goes out, the body is left, which shall be there built again, בְּנֵהרֵא דְשִׁמְשָׁא, “as the light of the sun”, and as the brightness of the firmament.

Who hath ears to hear, let him hear;

and seriously consider of the several things said in this parable, concerning the wheat and tares, the righteous and the wicked, as being matters of the greatest moment and importance.

Matthew 13:44

Ver. 44. **Again the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure,**

By which is meant, not eternal life, the incorruptible inheritance, riches of glory, treasure in heaven; nor Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and all the riches of grace and glory; but the Gospel, which is a treasure consisting of rich truths, comparable to gold, silver, and precious stones; of the most valuable blessings, and of exceeding great, and precious promises; and reveals the riches of God, of Christ, and of the other world; and is a treasure unsearchable, solid, satisfying, and lasting: this is said to be

hid in a field.

⁷⁹³ Vajikra Rabba, fol. 170. 1. Siphre apud. Ceseph. Misna in Maimon. Hilch. Teshuba, c. 9.

⁷⁹⁴ Midrash haunealam apud Zohar in Gen. fol. 69. 1.

⁷⁹⁵ lb. fol. 70. 1. Vid. Midrash Tillim. in Psal. xi. apud Galatin. de Arcan. Cathol. ver. 1. 12. c. 6. p. 712.

The Gospel was in some measure hid, under the former dispensation, from the Old Testament saints; and for a long time was hid from the Gentile world; and is entirely hid from them that are lost, who are blinded by the god of this world; and even from the elect of God themselves, before conversion: this is sometimes said to be hid in God, in his thoughts, counsels, and purposes, and in the covenant of his grace; and sometimes in Christ; who is the storehouse of truth, as well as of grace; and may be thought to be hid under the Mosaic economy, in the types and shadows of the ceremonial law: but here “the field” means the Scriptures, in which the Gospel lies hid; and therefore these are to be searched into for it, as men seek and search for silver and hid treasures, by digging into mines, and in the bowels of the earth:

the which when a man hath found;

either with or without the use of means, purposely attended to, in order to find it; such as reading, hearing, prayer, and meditation: for sometimes the Gospel, and the spiritual saving knowledge of it, are found, and attained to, by persons accidentally, with respect to themselves, though providentially, with respect to God; when they had no desire after it, or searched for it, and thought nothing about it; though by others it is come at, in a diligent use of the above means:

he hideth;

which is to be understood not in an ill sense, as the man hid his talent in a napkin, and in the earth; but in a good sense, and designs his care of it; his laying it up in his heart, that he might not lose it, and that it might not be taken away from him: and

for joy thereof;

for the Gospel, when rightly understood, brings good tidings of great joy, to sensible sinners;

goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth the field:

which is not to be interpreted literally and properly; though a man that knows the worth and value of the Bible, rather than be without one, would part with all his worldly substance for one; but figuratively, and denotes the willingness of such souls, who are led into the glory, fulness, and excellency of the word of God, the scriptures of truth, and of the immense treasure of the Gospel therein, to part with all that has been, or is dear unto them; with their sins, and self-righteousness; with their good names and characters; their worldly substance, and life itself, for the sake of the Gospel, and their profession of it: and may also design the use of all means, to gain a larger degree of light and knowledge in the Gospel. It

seems by this parable, according to the Jewish laws, that not the finder of a treasure in a field, but the owner of the field, had the propriety in it; when it should seem rather, that it ought to be divided. Such that have ability and leisure, may consult a controversy in Philostratus⁷⁹⁶, between two persons, the buyer and seller of a field; in which, after the purchase, a treasure was found, when the seller claimed it as his; urging, that had he known of it, he would never have sold him the field: the buyer, on the other hand, insisted on its being his property; alleging that all was his which was contained in the land bought by him.

Matthew 13:45

Ver. 45 & 46. **Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man,**

This parable may be understood of Christ’s seeking, finding, and purchasing his elect: for, certain it is, that he has sought after them; which implies, that they were lost and going astray; expresses his great love to them, value for them, and desire after them; in doing which, he took much pains, and used much diligence: and certain it also is, that he finds them in redemption, and in effectual calling; and that they are to him a pearl of great price; as very precious to God, so highly esteemed of by Christ, as his portion, his inheritance, and his jewels. He has also parted with all he had for the sake of these persons; he became poor, emptied himself of everything, even gave himself a ransom for them, and so made a purchase of them, with the price of his own blood: though to this sense it may be objected, that it does not seem so agreeable, that Christ should be compared to a merchant man, which better suits with those that deal with him, than as he is concerned with them; nor does he seek after any other than his elect: whereas this merchant man is said to be

seeking goodly pearls;

any pearls that were so: nor is Christ’s finding his elect a chance business; nor have they any intrinsic excellency in them, to denominate them pearls, but by his grace. The more common interpretation of it is, that it designs a sensible sinner, seeking after the true way of salvation, and finding Christ, and parting with all for him: such a man is a spiritual merchant, who trades in foreign parts, and in things of worth and value; and such an one seeks after a variety of things, which at first sight seem “goodly”, in order to obtain salvation by; as civility, morality, a legal righteousness, fasting, watchings, prayer, a profession of religion, and a submission to ex-

⁷⁹⁶ De Vita Apollonii, lib. 2. c. 15

ternal ordinances; but at length finds Christ,

the pearl of great price:

who is of an unspeakable brightness and glory, of intrinsic worth and value; who is enriching to those that possess him, and precious to them that believe; and of such a price, that no valuable consideration can be given for him: wherefore such a soul is willing to part with all for him; with sinful self, and righteous self; and with the honours, riches, and profits of this world; and buy him, his grace and righteousness, without money, and without price. Though I rather think, that in connection and agreement with the other parables, this is to be understood of such, who are seeking after knowledge in every branch of it, natural, moral, and spiritual; and so may be compared to a “merchant man, seeking goodly pearls”; and who find the Gospel, and prefer it to everything else.

Who when he had found one pearl of great price:

for such who seek after wisdom and knowledge in the use of proper means, are like merchant men, that trade abroad, and for things of value; and these, under divine direction, find in the Scriptures, and through the ministry of the word, and by prayer and study, the truth.

Matthew Chapter 14

Matthew 14:1

Ver. 1. **At that time Herod the tetrarch,**

Not Herod the Great, in whose reign Christ was born, and who slew the infants of Bethlehem, but his son; this was, as the Jewish chronologer⁷⁹⁷ rightly observes,

“Herod Antipater, whom they call טִיְתָרְקִי “the tetrarch”; the son of Herod the First, and brother of Archelaus, and the third king of the family of Herod.”

And though he is here called a “tetrarch”, he is in Mark 6:14 called a king: the reason of his being styled a “tetrarch” was this; his father Herod divided his large kingdom into four parts, and bequeathed them to his sons, which was confirmed by the Roman senate: Archelaus reigned in Judea in his stead; upon whose decease, that part was put under the care of a Roman governor; who, when John the Baptist began to preach, was Pontius Pilate; this same Herod here spoken of, being “tetrarch” of Galilee, which was the part assigned him; and his brother Philip “tetrarch” of Ituraea, and of the region of Trachonitis; and Lysanias, “tetrarch” of Abilene, Luke 3:1 the word “tetrarch”: signifying one that has the “fourth”

⁷⁹⁷ David Ganz. Tzemach David, par. 1. fol. 25. 2. and so in Juchasin, fol. 142. 2.

part of government: and in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel, he is called “one of the four princes”; and in the Arabic version, “a prince of the fourth part”; and in the Persic, a “governor of the fourth part of the kingdom”. The “time” referred to, was after the death of John the Baptist; and when Christ had been for a good while, and in many places, preaching and working miracles; the particular instant which respect is had unto, is the sending forth of the twelve disciples to preach and work miracles; and which might serve the more to spread the fame of Christ, and which reached the court of Herod; who, it is said here,

heard of the fame of Jesus:

what a wonderful preacher he was, and what mighty things were done by him.

Matthew 14:2

Ver. 2. **And said unto his servants,**

Those of his household, his courtiers, with whom he more familiarly conversed; to these he expressed his fears, that it might be true what was suggested by the people, and he was ready to believe it himself;

this is John the Baptist:

some copies add, “whom I have beheaded”, as in Mark 6:16 the guilt of which action rose in his mind, lay heavy on him, and filled him with horror and a thousand fears:

he is risen from the dead;

which if he was a Sadducee, as he is thought to be, by comparing Mt 16:6 with Mark 8:15 was directly contrary to his former sentiments, and was extorted from him by his guilty conscience; who now fears, what before he did not believe; and what he fears, he affirms; concluding that John was raised from the dead, to give proof of his innocence, and to revenge his death on him:

and therefore mighty works do show themselves in him,

or “are wrought by him”; for though he wrought no miracles in his lifetime, yet, according to a vulgar notion, that after death men are endued with a greater power, Herod thought this to be the case; or that he was possessed of greater power, on purpose to punish him for the murder of him; and that these miracles which were wrought by him, were convincing proofs of the truth of his resurrection, and of what he was able to do to him, and what he might righteously expect from him.

Matthew 14:3

Ver. 3. **For Herod had laid hold on John,**

By his servants, whom he sent to apprehend him:

and bound him; laid him in chains, as if he was a malefactor;

and put him in prison, in the castle of Machaerus ⁷⁹⁸, **for Herodias's sake;**

who was angry with him, had a bitter quarrel against him, and by whose instigation all this was done; who was **his brother Philip's wife.**

This Herodias was the daughter of Aristobulus, son to Herod the Great ⁷⁹⁹, and brother to Philip, and to this Herod; so that she was niece to them both; and first married the one, and then the other, whilst the former was living. Philip and this Herod were both sons of Herod the Great, but not by the same woman; Philip was born of Cleopatra of Jerusalem, and Herod Antipas of Malthace, a Samaritan ⁸⁰⁰; so that Philip was his brother by his father's side, but not by his mother's; the Evangelist Mark adds, "for he had married her": the case was this, Herod being sent for to Rome, called at his brother Philip's by the way, where he fell into an amorous intrigue with his wife, and agreed, upon his return, to take her with him and marry her; as he accordingly did, and divorced his own wife, who was daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia Petraea; which occasioned a war between Herod and his wife's father, in which the former was beaten ⁸⁰¹,

Matthew 14:4

Ver. 4. For **John said unto him,**

John having heard of this incestuous marriage, went to Herod, and reprov'd him to his face for it; and, as Luke says, "for all the evils he had done", Luke 3:19 for he was a very wicked man, and guilty of many flagitious crimes: John, in so doing, showed his zeal for holiness, his hatred of sin, his courage and faithfulness in reprov'ing thus freely so great a man; and made it manifest, that he came in the spirit of Elijah: what he said to him was, **it is not lawful for thee to have her,** being forbidden, Le 18:16 for though by another law it was right to marry a brother's wife, after his decease, when he left no issue, yet this was not the case here; Philip was now living, and, had he been dead, such a marriage would have been unlawful, because there was issue; she had a daughter, who afterwards is said to dance before Herod; and besides, he himself had another wife, whom he put away; so that his sin was a very aggravated and complicated one: lying

⁷⁹⁸ Joseph. Antiqu. 1. 18. c. 7.

⁷⁹⁹ Ib. c. 6.

⁸⁰⁰ Joseph. Antiqu. 1. 18. c. 6. de Bello Jud. l. 1. c. 28. sect. 7.

⁸⁰¹ Joseph. Antiqu. 1. 18. c. 6.

with a brother's wife, was one of those sins which, according to the Jewish ⁸⁰² canons, deserved cutting off, or death by the hand of God. Josephus ⁸⁰³ gives another reason of the imprisonment and death of John, that Herod feared that the people of the Jews, through his means, would be moved to sedition, and revolt from his government; which might be what Herodias suggested to him, or what he gave out himself, to cover the true cause of his proceedings: but the true reason is, what is here given, and is to be confirmed by the testimony of Jewish writers. One of their chronologers ⁸⁰⁴ delivers the account in these express words:

"Herod Antipater was a very wicked and pernicious man, many of the wise men of Israel he slew with the sword; and he took to wife, his brother Philip's wife, whilst he was living; and because John the high priest (for so through mistake they call him) hz le wxykwh "reprov'd him for this"; (see Luke 3:19) he slew him with the sword, with many of the wise men of Israel."

And, says their historian ⁸⁰⁵,

"also he, Herod, slew John, because he said unto him, it is forbidden thee to take the wife of Philip, and he slew him; this is that John that practised baptism."

Matthew 14:5

Ver. 5. **And when he would have put him to death,**

As soon as he apprehended him, and put him into prison; being provoked by his reprov'ing him, and being stirred up by Herodias, who was greatly incensed and enraged, and would have killed him herself, but could not, being hindered by Herod: who, though he had a good will and strong inclination to take away his life, yet what with fearing the terror of his own conscience, and the reverence and respect he had for John, as a good man; and especially for the reason here given, he did not do it, for

he feared the multitude:

not God, but the multitude; and these, not only the large number of people that attended on John's ministry, and were baptized by him, and became his disciples, but the generality of the people, the whole body of the Jewish nation. So God is pleased oftentimes to restrain the

⁸⁰² Misn. Ceritot, c. 1. sect. 1.

⁸⁰³ Antiqu. lss. 18. c. 6.

⁸⁰⁴ Ganz. Tzemach David, par. 1. fol. 25. 2.

⁸⁰⁵ Joseph. Gorionides, 1. 5. c. 45.

wickedness of princes, by the fear of their subjects:

because they counted him as a prophet;

a holy good man, and who was sent of God; they respected him as such, believing him to be a true and real prophet, and treated him with honour and reverence, suitable to his character; wherefore Herod was afraid, should he take away his life, that the people would mutiny, rise up against him, and revolt from him. In what esteem John was with the people of the Jews in general, may be learned from the character Josephus gives of him, as a good man; who stirred up the Jews to the practice of virtue, especially piety and justice; which made the common people fond of him and his doctrine; and who were of opinion, that the defeat of Herod's army, which followed the death of John, was a just judgment of God upon him for it ⁸⁰⁶.

Matthew 14:6

Ver. 6. **But when Herod's birthday was kept,**

The birthdays of princes, both of their coming into the world, and accession to the throne of government, were kept by the Gentiles; as by the Egyptians, Ge 40:20 and by the ⁸⁰⁷ Persians, and Romans ⁸⁰⁸, and other nations, but not by the Jews; who reckon these among the feasts of idolaters.

"These (say they ⁸⁰⁹ are the feasts of idolaters; the "Calends", and the "Saturnalia", the time kept in memory of subduing a kingdom (or when a king takes possession of it, the day of his accession), מלכיה ויום גנייא של מלכיה "and the birthday of kings" (when they are made and crowned, the day of coronation), and the day of birth, and the day of death."

And it is a question, whether this day, that was kept, was the day of Herod's natural birth, or of his civil government, being his accession, or coronation day: and it might also be a question, whether it was the then present Herod's birthday, or whether it was not his father Herod's, was it not that Mark says, Mark 6:21 it was his birthday; since it is the latter the poet ⁸¹⁰ refers to, as kept by Jews, when he says, "At cum Herodis venere dies"; and the old Scholiast upon him observes, that

"Herod reigned over the Jews in Syria, in the times of Augustus; therefore the Herodians kept

⁸⁰⁶ Antiqu. 1. 18. c. 6.

⁸⁰⁷ Herodot. l. 1. c. 133. & 9. c. 109.

⁸⁰⁸ Plin. Ep. 1. 10. ep. 61.

⁸⁰⁹ Misn. Avoda Zara, c. 1. sect. 3.

⁸¹⁰ Persius, Satyr. 5. prope finem.

Herod's birthday, as also the sabbath, on which day they set up candles in the windows lighted, and encircled with violets."

This they did, believing him to be the Messiah: and it is further to be observed, that the word here used, is said ⁸¹¹ to be proper to the dead, and not to the living; and that he that uses it of the living, speaks very inaccurately: but however, it was a festival, and a time of great mirth and jollity; and a proper opportunity offered to Herodias, to execute her malicious designs against John the Baptist; for at this time,

the daughter of Herodias danced before them:

in the original text it is, "in the midst", in the middle of the hall; or in the midst of the company, the lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee, for whom Herod made a supper, Mark 6:21 and the Syriac renders it מוכח קרב "before the guests". Music and dancing were usual at such entertainments, they were the common appendages of a feast ⁸¹²: the daughter of Herodias, who danced before the company for their diversion, whether alone, or with others, was very probably Salome ⁸¹³, whom she had by her former husband; and therefore is called, not the daughter of Herod, but of Herodias:

and pleased Herod;

and as Mark adds, "and them that sat with him"; so that the pleasure he had did not arise merely from the respect and honour shown to him and his birthday, by her appearing with so much cheerfulness on this occasion before him; who had taken her father's wife from him, and defiled her mother; but from the airs, gestures, and motions of the lady in dancing; which were so extremely fine and regular, that she gave wonderful satisfaction and delight to Herod, and the whole company.

Matthew 14:7

Ver. 7. **Whereupon he promised with an oath,**

On account of her fine dancing, and being extremely pleased with it himself; and the more, that it gave such pleasure to the whole court: he first promised her,

to give her whatsoever she would ask;

and then repeating it, he confirmed it with an oath, adding, as Mark says, that he would give it her, even "to the half of his kingdom": a way of speaking used by princes, when they give full power to persons to ask what they will of them; and to express their great munificence and liberality; signifying, let it be ever so great, or cost what it

⁸¹¹ Ammonius, peri omoiwn &c. in lit.

⁸¹² Alex. ab Alex. Genial. Dier. l. 2. c. 25.

⁸¹³ Joseph. Antiqu. l. 18. c. 6.

will, though as much as half a kingdom comes to, it shall be granted; see Es 5:3. A very foolish promise, and a rash oath these, which were made upon such a consideration, as only a fine dance. If she, as Theophylact observes, had asked for his head, would he have given it her? And if he swore by his head, which was a common form of swearing with the Jews ⁸¹⁴, she very appropriately, though unjustly, as Dr. Lightfoot observes, answers to him; as you have sworn by your head, give me John Baptist's head.

Matthew 14:8

Ver. 8. **And she being before instructed of her mother,**

What request to make; for as Mark says, "she went forth" to her mother immediately, as soon as she had received the king's promise, and took advice of her, what she should ask; who bid her ask for the head of John the Baptist; and accordingly she went in, "straightway with haste unto the king", as the same evangelist observes, to take him at his word, and whilst he was in the mood; being urged and hastened on by her mother, who was eager to satisfy her revenge on John; and said,

give me here John Baptist's head in a charger:

she desires his head, and this to be brought to her in a large dish, that her mother might be sure of his death; and have an opportunity of insulting that mouth and tongue, that had spoke against her incestuous marriage: and she desires to have it given "here", in that very place, at that very time, where, and while the company was together, who were witnesses of the king's promise and oath; and this she did, lest when the festival was over, and he was out of his cups, he should repent of his folly and rashness. The mother and daughter seem to be much alike, both for lasciviousness, revenge, and cruelty: and if what the historian says ⁸¹⁵ be true, that this same person Salome, the daughter of Herodias, as she walked over a river which was frozen in the winter season, the ice broke, and she fell in, and the pieces of ice cut off her head; the "lex talionis", the law of retaliation, was righteously executed on her.

Matthew 14:9

Ver. 9. **And the king was sorry,**

As he might be upon many accounts; partly on account of John, whom, notwithstanding his freedom in reproving him, he had a respect; and partly on his own account, his conscience dictating to him that it was an

⁸¹⁴ Misn. Sanhedrim, c. 3. sect 2. T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 3. 1. Derech Eretz, c. 6. fol. 18. 2.

⁸¹⁵ Nicephorus, Hist. l. 1. c. 20.

evil action, and would leave a brand of perpetual infamy upon him; as also on account of the people, who were so much affected to John, lest they should make an insurrection, and rebel against him; and likewise, because it was reckoned an ill omen with the Romans, to take away life on that day they received their own; and therefore carefully abstained, on such days, from executions.

Nevertheless for his oath's sake;

that he might not be guilty of perjury, chose rather to commit murder; though it would have been no iniquity in him, to have acted contrary to such a rash promise, and wicked oath; which would have been better to have been broke, than kept;

and them which sat with him at meat;

lest he should be thought by them fickle and inconstant, and not a man of his word, and who had no regard to an oath: or it may be, they, either to curry favour with Herodias, or out of ill will they might bear to John; or in great respect to the damsel, who had so well pleased them with her dancing; instead of dissuading him from it, pressed him much to perform his promise: and therefore,

he commanded it to be given her;

in the form and manner she requested it. Some have thought, that the whole of this affair was a concerted scheme; and that Herod himself was in it, though he pretended to be sorry and uneasy, having fixed on this season as a convenient time for it; and chose to have it done in this way, and in so public a manner, to lessen the odium of it; or otherwise, it is not easy to account for his extravagant promise, and his punctual performance of it.

Matthew 14:10

Ver. 10. **And he sent,.... "An executioner",**

as in Mark 6:27 where the Latin word "speculator", or as it is sometimes written "spiculator", is used; and is the name of an officer concerned in executions, and particularly in beheading of persons; and so is used by Latin writers.

"In a civil war (says ⁸¹⁶ Seneca), a servant hid his master that was proscribed; and when he had fitted his rings for himself, and put on his clothes, he met "speculatoribus", the "speculators"; he told them he desired nothing, but that they would perform their orders, and immediately stretched out his neck."

And the same writer elsewhere ⁸¹⁷ speaks of a soldier

⁸¹⁶ De beneficiis, l. 3. c. 25.

⁸¹⁷ De ira, l. 1. c. 16. Vid. Julium Firmicum, l. 8. c. 26.

that was condemned by Piso, on suspicion of murdering his fellow soldier;

"Who was had without the camp, and as soon as he stretched out his neck, he, who was thought to be killed, suddenly appeared; upon which the centurion that had the management of the execution, ordered "speculatorem", the "speculator", to put up his sword, and returned the condemned person to Piso."

The word is also used by the Jewish doctors, and in the same sense: take the following instance among many ⁸¹⁸.

"R. Ishmael said to R. Simeon ben Gamaliel (when they were both apprehended, in order to be executed), brother, there was a man ready to receive his blow, and they entreated לאפקלטור, "the speculator": one said, I am a priest, the son of an high priest, slay me first, that I may not see the death of my companion; and the other said to him, I am a prince, the son of a prince, slay me first, that I may not see the death of my companion: he replied unto them, cast lots; and they cast lots, and the lot fell on R. Simeon ben Gamaliel; immediately he took a sword, "and cut off his head"."

And as this word is often used by them ⁸¹⁹ for an executioner, so פקליא "specula" is often made mention of by them ⁸²⁰, as a sort of punishment by death: and such an officer was sent by Herod, to inflict this punishment upon John; who accordingly executed it, and beheaded John in the prison; that is, of Machoeras, where he lay, without giving him a hearing, or allowing him to speak for himself, or with his friends: and which was done in this private manner, partly for dispatch, and partly on account of the people; who it might have been feared, had the execution been public and known, would have rose and rescued him.

Matthew 14:11

Ver. 11 **And his head was brought in a charger,**

By the executioner that cut it off, to Herod, whilst

& Florum, l. 4. c. 7. & Suetonium in vit. Caligul. c. 52. Octav. August. c. 74. & Claud. c. 35. Tertullian. de Corona, c. 1.

⁸¹⁸ Abot R. Nathan, c. 38. fol. 9. 1.

⁸¹⁹ Vid Targum Jon. in Gen. xxxvii. 36. & xxxix. 1. & Targ. Sheni in Esth. v. 2. Jarchi in Exod. iv. 11. T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 108. 1. & Gloss. in ib.

⁸²⁰ Bereshit Rab. sect. 79. fol. 69. 3. Vajikra Rab. sect. 24. fol. 165. 2. & Bemidbar Rab. sect. 7. fol. 187. 4.

he and his guests were at table; by which it should seem, that the prison was very near; and it is not improbable, that it was the castle of Macheerus that Herod made this entertainment in:

and given to the damsel;

the daughter of Herodias, who, by her mother's instigation, had asked it, and who received it out of the hands of Herod himself; or however, it was delivered to her by his orders:

and she brought it to her mother;

who had put her upon it, than which, nothing could be a more agreeable dish to her; and who, as Jerome says ⁸²¹, because she could not bear truth, that tongue which spoke truth; she plucked out, and pierced it through and through with a needle, as Fulvia did Cicero's: but this triumph over the faithful reprover of her, and Herod's vices, did not last long; for quickly after this, they were stripped of their honours and riches, and deprived of the kingdom, and banished to Lyons in France, where they died ⁸²². A Jewish chronologer says ⁸²³, Herod was driven out of the land by Tiberius, and fled to Spain, and died there.

Matthew 14:12

Ver. 12. **And his disciples came,**

To the prison where his body was left, and to which they had liberty of recourse before; see

Mt 11:2 and very probably, upon hearing what was done, might apply to Herod, as Joseph of Arimathea did to Pilate, for the body of Jesus; who might, as he did, give them leave to take it: and

took up the body and buried it.

Theophylact says, his body was buried in Baste Caesarea, and that his head was first reposed in Emesesa. This was the last office of love to their master, and was done in respect and gratitude to him, and to show that they still abode by his doctrine; and was what decency and the belief of the resurrection of the dead, as well as the will of God, require should be done:

and went and told Jesus;

that their master was dead, what kind of death he suffered, and by what means it was brought about; and how that they had interred him; and what Herod also had said of Jesus, that he was John risen from the dead. Their coming to Christ, and informing him of all this, show, that they were taught by their master to respect him as the Messiah, and believe in him, and adhere to him; and it is very likely that they continued with him.

⁸²¹ Adv. Ruffin. Tom. 2. fol. 82. K.

⁸²² Joseph. Antiqu. l. 18. c. 8.

⁸²³ Ganz. Tzemach David, par. 1. fol. 25. 2.

Matthew 14:13

Ver. 13. **When Jesus heard of it,**

Of the death of John, and of the cruel usage he had met with; and particularly, that his fame had reached the court of Herod, and that he was talked of there, and said by Herod himself to be John the Baptist, that was risen from the dead;

he departed thence by ship, into a desert place apart;

to avoid Herod, though not through fear of death; but because his time was not yet come: which may teach us, that it is lawful to shun dangers, when there is an opportunity; which may be done, without betraying truth, or sacrificing a good conscience. The other evangelists, Mark and Luke, assign another reason of this departure of Christ's, that it was upon the return of his disciples to him from their embassy; when having given him an account of what they had done, and taught, he judged it proper they should retire, and get some refreshment and rest; and both may very well be thought to be the reasons of this recess. At the same time that John's disciples brought him the news of their master's death, Christ's disciples return to him, with the account of the success of their ministry; who might not only be weary, and want refreshment, but be discouraged in their minds, at this instance of cruelty; wherefore Christ thought it necessary to retire, partly for his own safety, and partly for their ease; and that he might have an opportunity of fortifying their minds against all trials and persecutions they were to meet with: the place from whence he departed, was either Capernaum, his own country and city, or Nazareth, where we have lately heard of him; or some other place in Galilee, where he was, when John's disciples came to him: the place whither he went, was "a desert place"; and, as Luke says, "belonging to the city called Bethsaida", the city of Andrew and Peter, which lay on the other side of the sea of Galilee, or Tiberias; over which he went by ship, Joh 6:1.

And when the people had heard thereof;

of his departure, and whither he went,

they followed him on foot out of their cities;

such as Nazareth, Capernaum, Tiberias, and others; and passing the bridge at Jordan, as Dr. Lightfoot observes, they outwent the ship, and got thither before them, as Mark relates. This showed their great affection and zeal for Christ, and their diligence in attending on him.

Matthew 14:14

Ver. 14. **And Jesus went forth,**

Either from the mountain where he sat with his disciples, Joh 6:3 or out of the desert, where he had retired for secrecy; or out of the ship, which seems best, the company having got thither before his landing:

and saw a great multitude;

for, there were about five thousand men, beside women and children, Mt 14:21

and was moved with compassion toward them:

partly on account of their bodily infirmities, which were very many and great; and partly on account of the bad situation they were in, through want of spiritual pastors to feed them with the bread of life; for Mark gives this as the reason, moving his compassion, "because they were as sheep, not having a shepherd": all which shows the truth of Christ's human nature; proves him to be a merciful high priest, and one truly concerned for both the bodies and souls of men:

and he healed their sick;

which they brought along with them, and that without the use of any medicine, by a word speaking: so that as the former phrase gives proof of his humanity, this attests his divinity: but this was not all he did, he not only healed their bodies, but he taught them the doctrines of the Gospel; and spake to them concerning the kingdom of God, for the good of their souls, as the other evangelists relate.

Matthew 14:15

Ver. 15. **And when it was evening,**

Mark says, "when the day was now far spent"; and Luke, "when the day began to wear away"; it was upon the decline of the day. The Jews, as Grotius rightly observes, had two evenings; the one began when the sun declined at noon, and the other at sun setting: now it was the former of these, and not the latter, that was now come; for after this, you read of another evening that was come, Mt 14:23 between which two evenings Christ made the multitude to sit down, and he fed them in a miraculous manner; and the disciples reason for the dismissal of the multitude, that might go into the neighbouring villages, and buy provisions, shows that it could not be the last, but the first of these evenings, that is here meant.

His disciples came to him;

the twelve, whom he had left in that part of the desert he retired to; or on the mount, where he had sat down with them for their rest and refreshment:

saying, this is a desert place;

where no food was to be had; where were no houses

of entertainment:

and the time is now past;

not the time of the day, but of dining: the usual dinner time was past, which, with the Jews, was the fifth hour of the day, and answers to eleven o'clock with us, or at furthest six; which, with us, is twelve at noon; concerning which, the Jewish doctors thus dispute ⁸²⁴.

"The first hour, is the time of eating for the Lydians, or Cannibals; the second for thieves, the third for heirs, the fourth for workmen, and the fifth for every man: but does not R. Papa say, that the fourth is the time of dining for every man? But if so, if the fourth is the time for every man, the fifth is for workmen, and the sixth for the disciples of the wise men."

Which is elsewhere ⁸²⁵ delivered with some little variation, thus;

"the first hour is the time of eating for Lydians; the second, for thieves; the third, for heirs; the fourth, for workmen; the fifth, for scholars; and the sixth, for every man: but does not R. Papa say, &c."

But supposing the usual time of dining to be, at the furthest, at the sixth hour, at twelve o'clock, this time must be elapsed, since the first evening was commenced; so that the reasoning of the disciples is very just,

send the multitude away.

Christ was preaching to them, the disciples move that he would break off his discourse, and dismiss them; in the synagogue the manner of dismissing the people was, by reading the

הפטרָה, or "dismission", which was some passage out of the prophetic writings.

That they may go into the villages and buy themselves victuals;

the little towns which lay nearest the desert, where they might be supplied with suitable provisions.

Matthew 14:16

Ver. 16. **But Jesus said unto them,**

the disciples,

they need not depart;

meaning so long as he was with them, who had power enough to provide a sufficient meal for them, as well as by a word speaking, to heal their diseases; however, to try their faith, and make way for the working of the

⁸²⁴ T. Bab. Sabbat. fol. 11. 1.

⁸²⁵ T. Bab. Pesachim, fol. 12. 2.

following miracle, he says to them,

give ye them to eat;

such provisions as you have along with you.

Matthew 14:17

Ver. 17. **And they say unto him,**

In order to excuse themselves, and to show the impossibility of feeding such a large number of people;

we have here but five loaves; and these barley ones, coarse bread;

and two fishes;

small ones, which were dried and salted, and fit for present eating; which they either brought along with them for their own refreshment, or rather, were brought thither by a boy to sell, as is usual where a great concourse of people are got together: these words seem to be spoken by Andrew, Simon Peter's brother; who added, "but what are they among so many?" see Joh 6:8 not thinking of the power of Christ, who was able to multiply, and make this provision a sufficiency for the whole company.

Matthew 14:18

Ver. 18. **He said, bring them hither to me.**

The loaves and the fishes, signifying that they were sufficient; or that he would make them so: this he said, to try their faith in him, their obedience to him, and their liberality to others: and indeed, the best way to have an increase of temporal supplies, is to bring what we have, and put it into Christ's hands; whereby not only good is done to others, but that with an overplus is returned to the giver.

Matthew 14:19

Ver. 19. **And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass,**

The other evangelists say, that he ordered the disciples to cause the people to sit down; both no doubt were done: the multitude were commanded to sit down by Christ, which, without his orders, they would never have done; and the disciples were enjoined to place them in form, by companies, in ranks, by hundreds and by fifties, that their number might be the better taken, and the food more orderly distributed by the apostles:

and took the five loaves and the two fishes:

into his hands, lifting them up, that they might be seen by the whole company; and they be fully convinced of the miracle going to be wrought by him:

and looking up to heaven;

to his Father in heaven, who is the Father of mercies; and from whom every mercy and blessing of life comes;

and giving thanks to him for the same, as was usually done by him,

he blessed

the five loaves and the two fishes; and brake the loaves, and divided the fishes;

and gave the loaves,

and fishes also,

to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitude;

who were the ministers and servants of Christ, employed by him in this manner, for the more orderly and quick dispatch of this business: and which was an emblem of their spiritual work and office: who received all their food from Christ, which they distributed to the churches, and fed them with.

Matthew 14:20

Ver. 20. **And they did all eat,**

Christ and his twelve disciples, and the five thousand men, with the women and children, of the five loaves and two fishes; everyone had their portion,

and were filled;

they were satisfied, they had a full meal, they had enough, and to spare; see 2Ch 31:10 which the Targumist paraphrases thus.

”And Azariah said unto him, who was appointed chief over the house of Zadok, and said, from the time that they began to separate the offering, to bring it into the sanctuary of the Lord, ושבנו אכלנו “we have eat and are filled”, and have “left much”; for “the word of the Lord” hath blessed his people, and what is left, lo! it is this plenty of good.”The Jews used not to reckon it a meal, unless a man was filled, and account it an ill sign, if nothing was left: but here was fulness, and more left than was first had; which was gathered up, either for the use of the poor, or reserved for after service; teaching us liberality to the needy, and frugality, not to waste that which is left.

And they took up of the fragments that remained, twelve baskets full;

according to the number of the disciples, every man had his basket full. It may be inquired, where they could have so many baskets in the wilderness? It is not likely, that everyone of the apostles had a basket with him; it is indeed not improbable, but that they might be furnished with them from some in the company, who might bring provisions with them, either for their own use, or to sell; see Joh 6:9 but perhaps the reason why they were so easily supplied with such a number of baskets in a desert

place, might be a custom which the Jews ⁸²⁶ had of carrying baskets with hay and straw, in commemoration of what they did in Egypt; when they were obliged to carry bricks in baskets, and to go about and pick up straw in baskets to make bricks; hence the ⁸²⁷ Epigrammatist calls a “Jew”, “cistifer”, a “basket bearer”, or “carrier”; and Juvenal ⁸²⁸ laughs at these people, as if all their household goods lay in a basket, and a little hay, or straw: it is said of R. Siraeon, that when he went to the school, שקיל “he carried a basket” on his shoulders ⁸²⁹; the gloss suggests, it was to sit upon; but a basket is not very proper for a seat; very likely it was for the above reason: such a custom will account for it, how such a number of baskets could be come at in the wilderness.

Matthew 14:21

Ver. 21. **And they that had eaten were about five thousand men,**

The word “about”, is omitted in the Vulgate Latin, in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel, and in the Syriac, Arabic, and Persic versions, which expressly say there were so many. A large number indeed, to be fed with five loaves and two fishes!

besides women and children;

who were not taken into the account, though they all ate, and were filled, it not being usual with the Jews to number their women; and who might be near as large a number as the men: for generally there is a very great concourse of the female sex, and of children, where anything extraordinary, or out of the way, is to be seen or heard; and of this sort was a large number of Christ’s audience, who only came out of curiosity, or for one sinister end or another.

Matthew 14:22

Ver. 22. **And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples,**

As soon as ever he had wrought the above miracle, and perceived that the people were so convinced by it, of his being the Messiah, that they were determined, whether he would or not, to set him up for a temporal king, to deliver them from the Roman yoke; which they doubted not he was able to do, who could feed so large a number, with such a small quantity of provision; see Joh

⁸²⁶ Nicholas de Lyra, in Psal. lxxx. 6.

⁸²⁷ Nubere: nupsisti Gellia Cistifero. Martial. Epigram. 1. 5. ep. 17.

⁸²⁸ Judaeis: quorum Cophinus foenumque supellex. Juvenal. Satyr. 3. cum dedit ille locum, Cophino, foenoque relicto. ib. Satyr. 6.

⁸²⁹ T. Bab. Nedarim, fol. 49. 2.

6:14 and knowing also, that his disciples had imbibed the same notion of a temporal kingdom, were very fond of it, and big with expectation thereof; and would have readily encouraged the populace, and joined with them in such an action: wherefore, in all haste, he hurried them away, obliged them to depart, lest any step should be taken, which might be of dangerous consequence to them, and the people: it looks as if the disciples were bent upon the same thing, and that it was with much difficulty and reluctance they were brought off of it. Christ was forced to use his power and authority; and order them directly

to get into a ship;

very likely, the same they came over in;

and to go before him unto the other side

of the lake of Tiberias or sea of Galilee, over against Bethsaida, to Capernaum, or the land of Gennesaret;

while he sent the multitudes away:

who would not so easily have been prevailed upon to have departed, if Christ had not first shipped off his disciples; for had he withdrawn himself, and left his disciples with them, they would have been in hopes of his return, and would have continued in a body with them, in expectation of it; and therefore, the better to disperse them, and prevent their designs, he sends away his disciples before him.

Matthew 14:23

Ver. 23. **And when he had sent the multitudes away,** Had ordered them at least to go away; for, it seems, according to Joh 6:22 that they did not in general disperse: there was a large body of them that continued upon the spot all night, expecting his return; in which being disappointed, they took shipping, and came to Capernaum.

He went up into a mountain apart to pray;

perhaps the same he went up to before, and from whence he came down, Joh 6:3. This he chose as a proper place for prayer, where he could be retired, and alone, have his thoughts free, and, as man, pour out his soul to his Father, on his own account, and on the behalf of others; and particularly, he might be concerned about this notion of a temporal kingdom, that his disciples and others were so fond of; and pray that his disciples might be convinced of their mistake, and that the people might be hindered from prosecuting their designs. His going up into a mountain and praying there, were quite contrary to the canons of the Jews; which forbid praying in places ever so little raised.

”Let not a man stand (say they ⁸³⁰ במוקמו נבזה “in

⁸³⁰ T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 10. 2. Piske Tosaph. in ib. art. 52,

an high place”, and pray, but in a low place and pray; as it is said, “Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord”, Ps 130:1. It is a tradition, that a man may not stand, neither upon a throne, nor upon a footstool, nor in any high place and pray, because there are no high places before God.”

This rule is delivered by Maimonides ⁸³¹, in this form:

”A man may not stand in a place that is three hands high, or more, and pray, neither upon a bed, nor upon a seat, nor upon a throne.”

But Christ did not look upon himself obliged, by these traditions of the elders; but chose such places, whether high or low, which were most private and retired.

And when evening was come;

when it was now dark, Joh 6:17 when the second evening was come and ended; see Mt 14:15 and it was properly night,

he was there alone;

in the mountain, where he continued the greatest part of the night, even until the fourth watch.

Matthew 14:24

Ver. 24. **But the ship was now in the midst of the sea,**

That is, the ship in which the disciples were put into, to go on the other side, had by this time got into the midst of the sea: the Syriac and Persic versions say, it was “many furlongs from land”; and the Arabic expressly says, “about twenty five furlongs”: which account seems to be taken from Joh 6:19 but this was not all, it was not only at such a distance from land, but was

tossed with waves:

up and down, and in danger of being overset, and the passengers lost:

for the wind was against them;

which beat the waves with such violence against them, that they were in the utmost danger of their lives, and not able to get forward; and what was worst of all, and most discouraging to the disciples, Christ was not with them. The ship in which the disciples were, was an emblem of the church of Christ, and of its state and condition in this world: this world is like a sea, for its largeness, and the abundance of nations and people in it, compared to many waters, Re 17:15 and for the multuousness of its inhabitants; the wicked being like a

T. Hieros. Beracot, fol. 4. 4. Kotsensis Mitzvot Tora precept. Affirm. 19. Midrash Kohelet, fol. 70. 3.

⁸³¹ Hilch. Tephillah. c. 5. sect. 7.

troubled sea, which cannot rest, continually casting up the mire and dirt of sin, to the dishonour of God, and the grief of his people; and for its fickleness and inconstancy, changes and war being continually in it: now the church of Christ is like a ship in this troublesome sea; where the true disciples and followers of Christ are selected together; and are preserved from the pollutions of the world, and from the danger to which the men of it are exposed, being in their sins, and liable to the wrath and curse of God, and eternal damnation; which, they that are in Christ, and members of his body, are secure from; the port or haven to which they are bound, is heaven and eternal happiness; their's and Christ's Father's house, where are many mansions provided for them; and where they long to be, and hope, and believe, ere long they shall arrive unto; and hope is as an anchor of their soul, sure and steadfast: but in the mean while, whilst they are sailing through the sea of this world, they are often, as the church of old, tossed with tempests, and not comforted, Isa 55:11 with the tempests of Satan's temptations, the storms of the world's persecutions, and with the winds of error and false doctrine; and then is it most uncomfortable to them, when Christ is not with them, which was the case of the disciples here.

Matthew 14:25

Ver. 25. **And in the fourth watch of the night,**

This is said, according to the division of the night into four watches, by the Jews; who⁸³² say, that

”there are four watches in the night, and four watches in the day.”

It is true indeed, that it is disputed among them, whether there were four watches, or only three in the night: some say there were four, others say there were but three⁸³³; not but that these made a division of the night into four parts, the three first of which, they thought were properly the watches of the night, and the fourth was the morning. The first watch began at six o'clock in the evening, and lasted till nine; the second began at nine, and ended at twelve, which was midnight; the third began at twelve, and closed at three; the fourth began at three, and ended at six in the morning. But since some⁸³⁴ Jewish writers are so positive for the division of the night into three watches only, and a watch is with them called⁸³⁵ the third part of the night; and it is dubious with some,

whether the Jewish division is here referred to; and since it is so clear a point, that the Romans⁸³⁶ divided their night into four watches, and their writers speak not only of the first, second, and third watches, but also of the fourth watch⁸³⁷; it is thought by some, that the evangelist speaks after the Roman manner: but however, certain it is, that within this period, probably at the beginning of it, after three o'clock in the morning, Christ came to his disciples, when they had been almost all the night at sea, tossed with waves, and in great danger.

Jesus went unto them;

from the mountain where he had been praying, the greatest part of the night, to the sea side, and so upon the waters to them; for it follows,

walking upon the sea;

as on dry land: though it was so stormy and boisterous, that the disciples, though in a ship, were in the utmost danger, yet he upon the waves, was in none at all; by which action he showed himself to be the Lord of the sea, and to be truly and properly God; whose character is, that he “treadeth upon the waves of the sea”, Job 9:8.

Matthew 14:26

Ver. 26. **And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea,**

It being now morning, and perhaps might have moon light; and besides, there is always more light upon the water than land; they were able to discern something like a man, walking upon the surface of the sea, but had not light enough to distinguish what, or who it was; and, moreover, had no thought of Christ, or expectation of seeing him; and the appearance of a man walking upon the waters being so unusual, and astonishing,

they were troubled, saying it is a spirit:

a nocturnal apparition, a demon in human form. The Jews, especially the sect of the Pharisees, had a notion, from whom the disciples might have their's, of spirits, apparitions, and demons, being to be seen in the night; hence that rule⁸³⁸,

”it is forbidden a man to salute his friend in the night, for we are careful, lest שָׂדֵה הוּא, “it should be a demon”.

”They say a great many things of one לילית, “Lilith”, that has its name from לילה, “the night”, a she demon, that used to appear in the night, with an human face,

832 T. Hieros. Beracot, fol. 2. 4. Echa Rabbati, fol. 54. 4.

833 T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 3. 1, 2.

834 Jaschi & Kimchi in Jud vii. 19. & in Psal. cxix. 147.

835 Gloss. in T. Bab. Betacot, fol. 2. 1.

836 Gloss. in T. Bab. Betacot, fol. 2. 1.

837 Liv. Hist. 1. 36, c. 24.

838 T. Bab. Megilla, fol. 3. 1. Sanhedrim, fol. 44. 1.

and carry off young children, and kill them. Some such frightful notions had possessed the minds of the disciples:

and they cried out for fear,

as persons in the utmost consternation, in the greatest danger, and in want of help: the fear of spirits arises from the uncommonness of their appearance; from their superiority to men in power and strength; from the enmity there is between men and evil spirits; and from a general notion of their doing hurt and mischief: hence, demons are, by the Jews, called מְזִיקִין “hurtful”, or “hurting”, all their study being to do hurt to men; and the same word is here used in Munster's Hebrew Gospel: add to all this, that the fear of the disciples might be increased, through a vulgar notion among seafaring men, that such sights are ominous, and portend evil to sailors; and they might the more easily be induced to give credit to this, and fear, since they were already in such imminent danger.

Matthew 14:27

Ver. 27. **But straightway Jesus spake unto them,**

Directly, the very moment, as soon as ever they cried out, and he perceived the consternation they were in, as one truly affected towards them, and concerned for their welfare; he called out aloud unto them, not coming with any intention to fright them, but to save them;

saying, be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid:

take heart, be of good courage, do not be affrighted at my appearance, from whom you have nothing to fear; nor be afraid of the storm and tempest in which you are, I will deliver you; for it is I, your Master, Saviour, and Redeemer, and not any hurtful spirit; who am able to save you, and am come for that purpose. Christ may be sometimes near his people, and they not know him; as the Lord was in the place where Jacob was, and he knew it not, Ge 28:16 and as Christ was standing by Mary Magdalene at the sepulchre, and she took him to be the gardener: and for want of a distinct knowledge of Christ in his person, offices, and grace, persons have wrong apprehensions of him, and are filled with dread and fears, concluding they have no interest in him; that he is a Saviour, but not of them; that their sins are so many, and of such a die, and attended with such aggravating circumstances, that though he is able to save them, he never can be willing to receive such vile sinners as they are: but when Christ makes himself known unto them, as the able and willing Saviour, and their Saviour and Redeemer, then, instead of dreading him as a judge, their fears vanish, their faith

increases, and they are ready to do anything he shall order them; as Peter says in the next verse, who was willing to come to Christ on the water, when he knew who he was, if he was but pleased to bid him come.

Matthew 14:28

Ver. 28. **And Peter answered him and said,**

Who knew his voice, and was ready to believe it might be Christ; and having more courage, and being more forward than the rest of the disciples, ventured to speak to him; saying,

Lord, if it be thou;

for he was not fully assured that it was he: he might consider that nocturnal apparitions are deceitful, and that Satan can transform himself into an angel of light, and could put on the appearance, and mimic the voice of Christ; wherefore, to try whether it was a spectre, or really Christ, he says,

bid me come unto thee on the water;

thereby expressing great love and affection to Christ, being willing to come to him, though through danger, through storms and tempests; and also his strong faith in him, supposing it to be he; who, he knew, was as able to support his body on the water, as his own; and yet much modesty, submission, and dependence; not willing to take a step without his order.

Matthew 14:29

Ver. 29. **And he said, come,**

This he said, partly to assure them who he was; for had he denied him, he and the rest might have concluded, it was none of Jesus; and partly to commend his love, and confirm his faith, by giving a further instance of his power, in enabling him to walk upon the water, as he did:

and when Peter was come down out of the ship;

as he immediately did, having orders from Christ; and being by this second speech fully convinced it was he

he walked on the water;

a little way, being supported and enabled by the power of Christ; for this was an extraordinary and miraculous action: for if it was so in Christ, it was much more so in Peter: Christ walked upon the water by his own power, as God; Peter walked upon the water, being held up by the power of Christ. The Jews⁸³⁹ indeed, call swimming לשוטל פני הַיָּם “walking upon the face of the waters”: hence we read of a swimmer's vessel, which is explained to be what men make to learn in it, how לשוטל פני הַיָּם “to go or walk upon the face of the waters”⁸⁴⁰; but then

839 R. David Kimchi, Sepher Shorash. rad. h xv.

840 R. Sol. Urbin. Ohel moed, fol. 78. 1.

this is not going upon them upright, but prone, or lying along upon the surface of the waters, which was not Peter's case; he did not, as at another time, cast himself into the sea, and swim to Christ; see Joh 21:7 but as soon as he came down from the ship, standing upright, he walked upon the waters,

to go to Jesus;

not merely for walking sake, but for the sake of Christ, he dearly loved; that he might be with him, and be still more confirmed of the truth of its being he, and not a spirit.

Matthew 14:30

Ver. 30. **But when he saw the wind boisterous,**

Or "strong", blowing hard against him, and raising up the waves, which beat with great violence upon him, **he was afraid;**

though Christ was so nigh him, and he had had such an instance of his power in bearing him up, causing him to walk upon the waters thus far; which shows, that his faith was imperfect:

and beginning to sink;

through fear, and the violence of the wind and waves, just ready to be immersed, and go down to the bottom of the sea,

he cried;

being in a great fright and much danger, and with great importunity and eagerness, saying,

Lord, save me:

I am just going, I shall certainly perish else; still having so much faith in Christ, that he was able to save him in the last extremity.

Matthew 14:31

Ver. 31. **And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand,**

The Syriac reads *וּבְרֵשִׁתָּהּ* "and in that very moment"; for his case requires immediate assistance, and Christ readily gave it; he reached out his hand at once, being just by him,

and caught him;

as he was sinking to the bottom, and lifted him up, and set him on his feet upon the water, and enabled him to walk with him to the ship; but not without reproving him for the weakness of his faith,

and said unto him, O thou of little faith:

he does not say, O thou unbeliever! or, O thou who hast no faith! for some faith he had, though but small; of this phrase, See Gill "Mt 6:30".

Wherefore didst thou doubt?

waver, fluctuate, or wast divided between faith and fear. He was worthy of reproof, since he had had the order of Christ to come to him upon the water; and an experience of his power in supporting him thus far; and was now so near unto him, that he had no room to doubt, whether it was he or not, nor of his power to preserve him.

Matthew 14:32

Ver. 32. **And when they were come into the ship,** Christ and Peter. The Arabic and Persic versions, and Munster's Hebrew Gospel read, "when he ascended", or "was come into the ship"; but there is no doubt but Peter went with him into it, though the following effect is only to be ascribed to Christ's coming into the ship, and not to Peter's:

the wind ceased:

from blowing with that fury and violence it did before, and there was a perfect calm; which gave equal proof of the divine power of Christ, as his walking upon the sea: he walked upon the sea whilst the wind was blowing hard, and the waves were tumultuous; he comes into the ship, and all is calm; both winds and sea obey him, who is Lord of both.

Matthew 14:33

Ver. 33. **Then they that were in the ship,**

Not only the rest of the disciples, who remained in it, whilst Peter came forth out of it, to walk upon the sea, to go to Christ: but the mariners also, the owners of the vessel, and their servants that managed it,

came and worshipped him:

not merely in a civil, but in a religious way; being convinced, by what they saw, that he must be truly and properly God, and worthy of adoration;

saying, of a truth, thou art the Son of God:

not by creation, as angels and men, nor by office, as magistrates, but by nature; being of the same essence, perfections, and power, with God, his Father: and which these actions of his now done, as well as many others, are full attestations of; as his walking upon the sea, causing Peter to do so too, saving him when sinking, and stilling the wind and waves upon his entrance into the vessel; all which being observed by the disciples and mariners, drew out this confession upon full conviction from them, that he was a divine person, and the proper object of worship.

Matthew 14:34

Ver. 34. **And when they were gone over,**

That is, "the sea", as Munster's Hebrew Gospel adds, the sea of Tiberias, or Galilee;

they came into the land of Gennesaret;

the same with Cinnereth, or Chinnereth, or Cinnerot, Nu 34:11 in all which places, the Chaldee paraphrase renders it by rownyg, "Ginusar", the same word that is used in Munster's Hebrew Gospel here: it was a country in Galilee, in the tribe of Naphtali ⁸⁴¹, bordering upon a lake, called the lake of Gennesaret; taking its name from the country, or the country from the lake: it was exceeding fruitful, full of gardens and orchards; hence we often read in the Talmud ⁸⁴², of פִּירוּחַ גִּנוּר, "the fruits of Genusar", or Gennesaret, which are said to be exceeding sweet: and it is said to ⁸⁴³ be a country in the land of Israel, in which were many gardens; and by others ⁸⁴⁴, a place in the land of Galilee (as it was) whose fruits were large and good; and was, as Josephus says ⁸⁴⁵, thirty furlongs long and twenty broad. And thus the saints, after a long and troublesome passage over the sea of this world, arrive, at last, safe at their desired haven, and enter upon a most delightful country, a paradise, a garden of pleasure; where all delicious fruits and desirable things are enjoyed, even pleasures for evermore; where they shall be led to fountains of living waters, into fulness of joy; where all troubles will cease, and tears will be wiped away; and when they will have leisure and capacity to reflect upon all they have met with in their dangerous, and difficult voyage; and will admire the wonderful grace of God, which has been with them; and his divine power, which has appeared for them, and supported them, and brought them safe to eternal glory; and they ascribe greatness to Christ, as the Son of God, and for ever worship him as the eternal Jehovah, who has done such great things for them, as none but God can do.

Matthew 14:35

Ver. 35. **And when the men of the place had knowledge of him,**

Not merely by report, but by face, having seen, and heard him before; see Luke 5:1.

They sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased;

which not only expresses their faith in him, that he

⁸⁴¹ Targum Jon. in Deut. xxxiii. 23

⁸⁴² T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 44. 1. Erubim, fol. 30. 1. & Pesachim, fol. 8. 2. Vid. Jarchi in Isa. xxviii. 1. & Kimchi in Josh. xi. & in 1 Kings xv. 20.

⁸⁴³ Maimon. in Misn. Maaserot, c. 3. sect. 7.

⁸⁴⁴ Bartenora, in ib.

⁸⁴⁵ De Bello Jud. 1. 3. c. 35.

was able to heal all their sick and diseased, were they ever so many; but also their affectionate regard to their fellow creatures and countrymen; and their care and diligence in sending messengers about to their respective cities, towns, and villages, and which must be attended with expense: for they neither spared cost nor pains, to do good to their country; in all which, they set an example worthy of imitation.

Matthew 14:36

Ver. 36. **And besought him that they might touch the hem of his garment,**

As the woman with the bloody issue did; Mt 9:20. This they desired, partly to show the strength of their faith in him, that they doubted not of a cure, could they be admitted so near his person; and partly, to signify the sense of their unworthiness, to be in another way taken notice of by him, either by speaking to them, or putting his hands on them:

and as many as touched, were made perfectly whole.

Christ condescended to this their request, and perfectly cured all such of their diseases, of whatever kind they were, who, in the exercise of faith, touched the hem of his garment, the fringe he wore, in compliance with the ceremonial law, Nu 15:38.

Matthew Chapter 15

Matthew 15:1

Ver. 1. **Then came to Jesus Scribes and Pharisees,**

After he had wrought so many miracles, particularly that of feeding five thousand men; besides women and children, with five loaves and two fishes: the fame of which had reached Jerusalem, and occasioned much talk there about him: the Scribes and Pharisees, who were his inveterate enemies, hearing thereof, came to him, where he was, in Galilee: to know the truth of these things, to converse with him, and to watch, and observe, what he said and did;

which were of Jerusalem, saying.

There were Scribes and Pharisees throughout the land, but those of Jerusalem were the chief; they were men of the greatest learning and abilities, and were more expert in their religion and customs: these were either sent by the sanhedrim at Jerusalem, or came of themselves; taking upon them a greater power, and authority of examining, correcting, directing, and advising.

Matthew 15:2

Ver. 2. **Why do thy disciples transgress the tradi-**

tion of the elders?.

Having observed, for some little time, the conduct of Christ and his disciples, they thought proper to take no notice of him as yet, but of them; and of them, not as transgressing any command of God, but of men; not being able to charge them with any breach of the law of God: and could they have done this with any show of truth, yet they might choose rather to accuse them of breaking the rules of the elders; by whom they mean, not the elders of the present sanhedrim, but Hillell and Shammai; the two heads of their famous schools, and other ancient doctors; from whom were delivered by one to another, certain rules and laws of their own devising, which had no foundation in the word of God; and of these the Scribes and Pharisees were more tenacious, than of the Scriptures; and indeed they preferred them before them: most extravagant are their praises and commendations of these unwritten traditions; thus they say ⁸⁴⁶,

“Know then, that “the words of the Scribes” are more lovely than the words of the law: for, says R. Tarphon, if a man does not read, he only transgresses an affirmative; but if he transgresses the words of the school of Hillell, he is guilty of death, because he hath broke down a hedge, and a serpent shall bite him. It is a tradition of R. Ishmael, the words of the law have in them both prohibition and permission; some of them are light, and some heavy, but “the words of the Scribes” are all of them heavy--זקנימ--

המוריימ דברי, “weightier are the words of the elders”, than the words of the prophets.”

And elsewhere ⁸⁴⁷, this advice is given;

“My son, attend to “the words of the Scribes”, more than to the words of the law; for in the words of the law, are affirmatives and negatives; but the words of the Scribes ופרימ דברי ל דברי ל דברי ל, “everyone that transgresses the words of the Scribes”, is guilty of death.”

This is what they charge the disciples with here, and could they have had their wills, would have put them to death for it: the particular tradition, they accuse them with the breach of, follows,

for they wash not their hands when they eat bread; common bread, an ordinary meal; for, for eating of holy things, more than bare washing was required, even an immersion of them in water; but the hands were to

⁸⁴⁶ T. Hieros. Beracot, fol. 3. 2.

⁸⁴⁷ T. Bab. Erubim, fol. 21. 2. T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 4. 2.

be washed before eating common food, whether they were known to be defiled or not: “bread” is particularly mentioned, as including all sorts of food, and as distinct from fruit; for, for eating of common fruit, there was no need of washing of hands; he that washed his hands for eating fruit, was reckoned an ostentatious man ⁸⁴⁸, who were the first authors of this tradition, it is not certain; it is said ⁸⁴⁹, that

“Hillell and Shammai decreed ל שיהיה ירימ “concerning the purification of the hands”; R. Jose ben R. Bon, in the name of R. Levi, says, so was the tradition before, but they forgot it; and these two stood up, and agreed with the minds of the former ones.”

“However, it is a certain point, that the washing of the hands, and the dipping of them, are Myrpto yrbdm, “from the words of the Scribes” ⁸⁵⁰.”

The breach of this rule was reckoned equal to the most flagitious crimes {i}: R. Jose says,

“whoever eats bread without washing of hands, is as if he lay with a whore: and, says R. Eleazer, whoever despiseth washing of hands, shall be rooted out of the world.”

And elsewhere it is said by them ⁸⁵¹, that

“he that blesseth (food) with defiled hands, is guilty of death.”

And again ⁸⁵²,

“whoever does not wash his hands as is fitting, although he is punished above, he shall be punished below.”

And to fright people into an observance of this tradition, they talk of Shibta, a sort of an evil spirit, that hurts such as eat without washing their hands: they say, he sits upon their hands, and upon their bread, and leaves something behind, which is very dangerous {m}; and it is recorded ⁸⁵³, to the praise of R. Akiba, that he chose rather to die, than to transgress this tradition; for being

⁸⁴⁸ Misn. Chagiga, c. 2. sect. 5, 6. Maimon. Praefat. ad Tract. Yadaim, & Hilch. Beracot, c. 6. sect. 3.

⁸⁴⁹ T. Hieros. Sabbat, fol. 3. 4. {h} Maimon Hilch. Mikvaot, c. 11. sect. 1.

⁸⁵⁰ T. Bab. Sota, fol. 4. 2.

⁸⁵¹ Zohar in Deut. fol. 107. 3.

⁸⁵² Gloss. in. T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 77. 2. Taanith, fol. 20. 2. & Cholin, fol. 107. 2.

⁸⁵³ T. B. Erubim, fol. 21. 2.

in prison, and in want of water, what little he had, he washed his hands with it, instead of drinking it. Eleazar ben Chanac was excommunicated for despising the tradition concerning washing of hands; and when he died, the sanhedrim sent and put a great stone upon his coffin, to show, that he that died in his excommunication, the sanhedrim stoned his coffin ⁸⁵⁴: but of this, See Gill “Mark 7:3”.

Matthew 15:3

Ver. 3. **But he answered and said unto them,....** Taking no notice of the tradition about eating bread without washing the hands, whether it was right or wrong; it being at most but an human tradition, of no moment and importance, whether it was broke or kept; he makes a very just recrimination, by putting another question to them,

why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?

suggesting, that, if his disciples were guilty, they were not so guilty as they themselves were; that his disciples, at most, were but guilty of the breach of an human precept, whereas they were guilty of the breach of a divine command; and that it was strange, that men who were so scrupulous of breaking, and bore so hard on such as did transgress the traditions of the elders, could allow themselves to transgress the commandments of God; yea, to do this by, and while they were observing their own traditions: and which observation carries a full acquittance of the disciples from blame; for, if by keeping the traditions of the elders, they broke the commands of God, it was a very good reason why they should not observe them.

Matthew 15:4

Ver. 4. **For God commanded, saying,....** That he might not be thought to suggest this without any foundation, he gives them an instance, wherein a command of God was transgressed, by the observance of their tradition: the command he refers to, stands in

Ex 20:12 and is this;

Honour thy father and mother. This was a plain command of God, written with his own hand, and delivered by Moses to them; it was of a moral nature, and of eternal obligation: and to be understood, not merely of that high esteem parents are to be had in by their children, and of the respectful language and gesture to be used towards them, and of the cheerful obedience to be yielded to them; but also of honouring them with their

⁸⁵⁴ T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 19. 1.

substance, feeding, clothing, and supplying them with the necessaries of life, when they stand in need thereof; which is but their reasonable service, for all the care, expense, and trouble they have been at, in bringing them up in the world: nor did the Jews deny this to be the duty of children to their parents, and own it to be the sense of the commandment: they say ⁸⁵⁵, that this is the weightiest commandment among the weighty ones, even this, the honouring of father and mother; and ask,

“What is this honour? To which is replied, he must give him food, drink, and clothing; buckle his shoes, and lead him in, and bring him out.”

They indeed laid down this as a rule, and it seems a very equitable one ⁸⁵⁶; that,

“when a man’s father has any money, or substance, he must be supported out of that; but if he has none, he must support him out of his own.”

But then, as will be seen hereafter, they made void this command of God, and their own explications of it, by some other tradition. Moreover, Christ observes, that it is said, Ex 21:17

And he that curseth father or mother, let him die the death; temporal and eternal: and which is a positive command of God, made as a fence for the former; and is to be understood, not only of giving abusive language to parents, but of slighting, as the Hebrew word signifies, and neglecting them, taking no notice of them, when needy and in distress, to supply their wants. Now these commands of God, Christ shows the Jews transgressed by their tradition, as appears from the following verses.

Matthew 15:5

Ver. 5 & 6. **But ye say, whosoever shall say to his father or mother,....** That is, it was a tradition of their’s, that if a man should say to his father and mother, when poor and in distress, and made application to him for sustenance,

it is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, and honour not his father, or his mother, he shall be free:

or, as Mark expresses it, “it is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, he shall be free, and ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or mother”. For the understanding of this tradition, let it be observed, that the word “Corban” signifies a gift, or offering, which was devoted to sacred use;

⁸⁵⁵ T. Hieros. Kiddushin, fol. 61. 2.

⁸⁵⁶ Piske Toseph. ad T. Bab. Kiddushin, art. 61.

and was unalienable, and could not be converted to any other use; and that this word was used among the Jews, from hence, as the form of an oath, or vow; and therefore, when anyone said “Corban”, it was all one, as if he swore by “Corban”; or as if he had said, let it be as “Corban”, as unalienable as “Corban”: by which oath, or vow, the use of that which was spoken of, whether it respected a man’s self, or others, was restrained and prohibited: the rule was ⁸⁵⁷ this קרבנ כאומר כקרבנ הוא אור, “if a man said Corban, it was as if he said as Corban, and it was forbidden”: and if he used the words “Conem”, “Conach”, and “Conas”, which they call ⁸⁵⁸ the surnames of Corban, and were no other than corruptions of it, it was all one as if he had said “Corban” itself. There are many instances of this kind of vows, and the form of them in their oral law ⁸⁵⁹, or book of traditions;

“If anyone should say, קונמ שאני נהנה “Conem (or “Corban”) whatsoever I might be profited by the” sons of Noah, it is free of an Israelite, and forbidden of a Gentile; if he should say, “whatsoever I might be profited” by the seed of Abraham, it is forbidden of an Israelite, and is free of a Gentile--if anyone should say, Mylrel hnhn ynav Mnwq, “Conem (or “Corban”) whatsoever I might be profited by the uncircumcised”, it is free of the uncircumcised of Israel, and forbidden of the circumcised of the Gentiles; if he says “Conem (or “Corban”) whatsoever I might be profited by the circumcised”, it is forbidden of the circumcised of Israel, and free of the circumcised, of the Gentiles.”

Again ⁸⁶⁰,

“if anyone says to his friend, קונמ שאני נהנה לב, “Conem (or “Corban”) whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me”, &c.”

which is exactly the same form as here, unless it should be rather rendered, “whatsoever I might be profited by thee”: once more ⁸⁶¹,

“if a married woman should say to her husband, Kybalw abal tynhn ynav Mnwq “Conem (or Corban) whatsoever I might be profited by my father, or thy father, &c.”

Let these instances suffice: the plain and evident sense of the tradition before us, is this; that when, upon

⁸⁵⁷ T. Hieros. Nedarim, fol. 37. 1. Misn. Nedarim, c. 1. sect. 4. Maimon. Hilch. Nedarim, c. 1. sect. 7.

⁸⁵⁸ Misn. Nedarim, c. 1. sect. 1, 2. Maimon. Hilch. Nedarim, c. 1. sect. 16.

⁸⁵⁹ Misn. Nedarim, c. 3. sect. 11.

⁸⁶⁰ lb. c. 8. sect. 7. Vid. c. 11. sect 3, 4.

⁸⁶¹ lb. c. 11. sect. 11.

application being made to a man by his parents, for support and sustenance, he makes a vow in such form as this, “Corban, whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me”; that is, whatsoever profit or advantage thou mightest have, or expect to have from me, let it be as “Corban”, as a gift devoted to God, that can never be revoked and converted to another use; or, in other words, I vow and protest thou shalt never have any profit from me, not a penny, nor a pennyworth of mine. Now, when a man had made such an impious vow as this, according to this tradition, it was to stand firm and good, and he was not to honour his father or mother, or do anything for them, by way of relief: so that our Lord might justly observe upon it as he does;

thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect, by your tradition: for if such a vow was valid, and a man was obliged to abide by it, according to the tradition of the elders, and not honour his father and mother, as the law of God requires; it is a plain case, that the command of God was made void by this tradition: nay they expressly say ⁸⁶² that hwum yrbd le twlx Myrdn, “vows fall upon things of a (divine) commandment”, as well as upon things in a man’s power, and that he is bound by them; so that without sin he cannot do what the law commands; insomuch, that if a man vows a vow, and that it may be ratified, a command must be made void, his vow must stand, and the command be abrogated. So truly and justly does Christ charge them with making the command of God of none effect, by their tradition. It is indeed disputed by the doctors, and at last allowed, that such a vow might be dissolved by a wise man, for the honour of parents ⁸⁶³.

“R. Eliezer says, they open to a man, (i.e. the door of repentance, and dissolve his vow,) for the honour of his father and his mother, but the wise men forbid “it”. Says R. Tzadok, if they open to him for the honour of his father and mother, they will open to him for the honour of God, and if so, there will be no vows: however, the wise men agreed with R. Eliezer in the affair between a man and his parents, that they should open to him for the honour of them.”

And this could be done only by a wise man; and very probably this last decree was made on account of this just reproof of Christ’s, being ashamed any longer to countenance so vile a practice; and even, according to this de-

⁸⁶² Maimon. Hilch. Nedarim, c. 3. sect. 1. 6, 7. 9.

⁸⁶³ Misn. Nedarim, c. 9. sect. 1. {z} lb. c. 5. sect. 6.

termination, the vow stood firm till dissolved by of their doctors: so that notwithstanding, Christ’s argument is good, and the instance full to prove that for which he brought it: for the above reason it may be, it is, that this tradition Christ refers to is not now extant; but that there was such an one in Christ’s time, is certain; he would never have asserted it else; and had it not been true, the Pharisees would have been able to have retired him, and forward enough to have done it: and that such vows were sometimes made, and which were not to be rescinded, is clear from the following fact {z}.

“It happened to one in Bethhoron, מורר הימנו הנאה, whose father was excluded, by a vow, from receiving any profit from him”: and he married his son, and said to his friend, a court and a dinner are given to thee by gift; but they are not to be made use of by thee, but with this condition, that my father may come and eat with us at dinner;”

which was a device to have his father at dinner, and yet secure his vow. Upon the whole, the sense of this passage is, not that a man excused himself to his parents, according to this tradition, by saying, that his substance, either in whole, or in part, was “Corban”, or devoted to the service of God, and therefore they could expect no profit, or relief, from him; but that he vowed that what he had should be as “Corban”, and they should be never the better for it: so that a man so vowing might give nothing to the service of God, but keep his whole substance to himself; which he might make use of for his own benefit, and for the benefit of others, but not for his father and mother; who, after such a vow made, were to receive no benefit by it, unless rescinded by a wise man; and which seems to be an explanation of it, made after the times of Christ.

Matthew 15:6

See note on Mt 15:5

Matthew 15:7

Ver. 7. **Ye hypocrites,**.... After our Lord had given so full a proof of their making void the commandments of God by their traditions, he might very justly, as he does, call them hypocrites; who pretended to so much religion and holiness, and yet scrupled not, upon occasion, to set aside a divine command; who affected so much sanctity, as to be displeased with the disciples, for not complying with an order of their elders, when they themselves made no account of a divine precept; and plainly showed they

had more regard to men than God, and to the precepts of men, than to the commands of God, and to approve themselves to men more than to God; and that they sought the praise and applause of men, and not the honour which comes from God; and that their religion lay in mere rituals and externals, and those of men’s devising, and not in the spiritual worship and service of God. Nor can it be thought that Christ, in calling them hypocrites, bears too hard upon them; when one of their own doctors, who lived not very distant from this age, says ⁸⁶⁴ of the men of Jerusalem, that

“if the hypocrites of the world were divided into ten parts, nine of them would belong to Jerusalem, and one to the rest of the world.”

Well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, in Isa 29:13 which prophecy, though it was directed to, and suited with many in that generation in which the prophet lived, yet had a further view to the Jews in after times: their own writers ⁸⁶⁵ acknowledge, that the whole prophecy is spoken of that nation; for by Ariel they understand the altar at Jerusalem, the city in which David dwelt,

Matthew 15:8

Ver. 8. **This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth,**.... The preface to these words, or the form in which they are introduced by the prophet; “wherefore the Lord said”, is left out in this citation, being unnecessary here, though of the greatest importance there; partly to show, that what was about to be said, was not the prophet’s own words, but the words of the Lord, of which the Jews in Christ’s time made no doubt; and partly to give a reason why that judicial blindness, threatened in the context, should be inflicted on them, which is no part of Christ’s design here; but which is only to show, that the description here given exactly agrees with them, and so proves, and confirms the character he gives of them as hypocrites. They approached the ordinances of God, and drew nigh to him, and attended him in outward worship; they prayed unto him publicly, and constantly, in the streets, in the synagogues, and temple, and with much seeming devotion and sanctity:

and honoureth me with their lips:

they owned him to be their creator and preserver; they made their boast of him, and of their knowledge of him, as the one only living, and true God, and as the God of Israel; they brought their sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, even the fruit of their lips, unto him, for

⁸⁶⁴ R. Nathan in Rabba, sect. 1.

⁸⁶⁵ Abarbinel, Jarchi, Kimchi, & Aben Ezra.

their many peculiar mercies, privileges, and favours, as a nation, church, and people, and with much seeming sincerity and affection.

But their heart is far from me; they had no true love to God, nor faith in him, nor fear of him; they were not at all concerned for his presence with them, or for communion with him, or for his honour and glory; their hearts were in the world, and after their covetousness; they made religion a tool to their secular purposes, supposing gain to be godliness; sought the applause of men, and contented themselves with bodily exercise; having no regard to internal religion, powerful godliness, or where their hearts were, so be it, their bodies were presented to God in public worship; and what they did it was to be seen and approved of men, not caring what the searcher of hearts knew concerning them, or what he required of them.

Matthew 15:9

Ver. 9. **But in vain do they worship me,**

In the Hebrew text it is, “their fear towards me”: which is rightly expressed here by “worship”; for the fear of God often intends the whole worship of God, both external and internal: here it only signifies external worship, which these men only attended to. They prayed in the synagogues, read, and, in their way, expounded the books of Moses, and the prophets, to the people, diligently observed the rituals of the ceremonial law, brought their offerings and sacrifices to the temple, and neglected nothing appertaining to the outward service of it; and yet it was all “in vain”, and to no purpose; since the heart was wanting, no grace there, they acted from wrong principles, and with wrong views; their worship was merely outward, formal, and customary; and besides, they added doctrines and traditions of their own inventing and devising. The phrase, “in vain”, is not in the text in Isaiah: some have thought that it was not originally in Matthew, but inserted by some other hand, to make the sense more complete. Grotius thinks there was a various reading, which is followed by the Septuagint, and the evangelist; and that instead of וְהָיָה “and is”, it was וְהָיָה the same with לְהָיָה, “in vain”: but there is no need to suppose either of these: Christ, who made this citation, either added it himself for the clearer illustration of the passage, and as being entirely agreeable to the sense of it, and which it required, for the true understanding of it; or he might have in his view another passage of the same prophet, speaking of the same people, and upon the same subject, Isa 1:11 and from thence take the phrase,

and, for explanation sake, join it to the passage here. It follows,

teaching for doctrines the commandments of men;

that is, teaching the people to observe the traditions of the elders, the decrees and determinations of the doctors, as if they were doctrines delivered by God himself; or, instead of the doctrines contained in the Bible, which lay neglected by them, they obtruded on them the orders, and injunctions of men. In the text in Isaiah, are only these words, “taught by the precept of men”: and which relate to their fear and worship of God; and which is here interpreted of their teachers teaching them it, and that explained of the commandments of men; as if, instead of hdmlm, “taught”, it had been read, Mydmlm, “teaching”. The Jews have no reason to quarrel with this construction and sense, since their Targum paraphrases it thus; “and their fear before me is, בְּחִפְקִידָה גְּבָרִין מְלַפְּיָן, according to the commandment of men that teach”: and a noted commentator⁸⁶⁶ of their’s has this remark on the text, “their fear towards me is” not with a perfect heart, but “by the commandment Mtwa Mydmlmh Myvnah, of the men that teach them”.

Matthew 15:10

Ver. 10. **And he called the multitude,**

Having silenced the Scribes and Pharisees, and judging it not worth his while to say any more to men so obstinate and perverse; who were not open to conviction, nor would attend to any argument or reason, though ever so clear and strong, against their darling notions; he leaves them, as both disliking them, and despairing of them, and calls to the common people; who, through their great veneration for these men, upon their coming withdrew, and stood at a distance; nor indeed would they admit them very near unto them, lest they should be polluted by them: Christ, I say, calls to these to come nearer to him, hoping better of them, and knowing that they were more tractable, and teachable; and that there were some among them, that were to be brought off of their former principles and prejudices, to embrace him, and the truths delivered by him:

and said unto them, hear and understand;

this he said, partly, by way of reflection upon the learned Scribes and Pharisees, who, with all their learning, could not hear him so as to understand him; and partly to excite the attention of the multitude to what he had to say; as also to show, that barely to hear with the outward hearing of the ear, will be of no service, unless

⁸⁶⁶ R. Sol. Jarchi in Isa. xxix. 13.

what is heard is understood; and that the way to understand, is to hear.

Matthew 15:11

Ver. 11. **Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth the man,**

No sorts of meats, or drinks, or whatever is proper food for men, or manner of eating and drinking them, when moderately used, defile a man, or render him loathsome and odious in the sight of God. This is directly opposite to the notions of the Jews, who say⁸⁶⁷, that

“forbidden meats are unclean themselves, וְהַנֶּפֶשׁ וְהַגִּבּוֹרִים מְטַמְּאִים גּוֹפִּי” “and defile both body and soul”.

The first food of man was herbs; after the flood he had an allowance of the flesh of beasts, without distinction; under the Levitical dispensation, a difference of meats was enjoined to be observed; the laws respecting that distinction are now abolished, and not binding on us under the Gospel dispensation. Some scruples, about some of these things, did arise among the first Christians; but in process of time these difficulties were got over: nor is there any religion in abstinence from any sort of food; men, indeed, on a “physical” account, ought to be careful what they eat and drink, but not on a religious one; moderation in all ought to be used; and whatever is ate or drank, should be received with thankfulness, and done to the glory of God, and then no defilement can arise from hence:

but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.

It is sin, and that only, which takes its rise from the heart, lies in thought, and is either expressed by the mouth, or performed by some outward action, which defiles the man, and renders him loathsome, abominable, and odious in the sight of God. The heart is the source of all evil; the pollution of it is very early, and very general, reaching to all the powers and faculties of the soul; which shows the ignorance of some, and folly of others, that talk of, and trust to the goodness of their hearts; and also the necessity of new hearts and right spirits being formed and created; and that the sinful thoughts of the heart, and the lusts thereof, are defiling to men; and that they are sinful in God’s account, and abominable in his sight; that they are loathsome to sensible sinners, and are to be repented of, and forsaken by them; and need the pardoning grace of God or otherwise will be brought into judgment. Sinful words, which, through the abundance of wickedness in the heart, come out of the mouth,

⁸⁶⁷ Tzeror Hammor, fol. 142. 1.

have the same influence and effect: words are of a defiling nature; with these men pollute both themselves and others: the tongue, though a little member, defiles the whole body; and evil and corrupt communication proceeding out of the mouth, corrupts the best of manners, and renders men loathsome to God, and liable to his awful judgment. And this is the nature of all sinful actions; they are what God can take no pleasure in; they are disagreeable, to a sensible mind; they leave a stain, which can never be removed by any thing the creature can do; nothing short of the blood of Christ can cleanse from it; and inasmuch as they are frequently committed, there is need of continual application to it. These are now the things men should be concerned about, as of a defiling nature; and not about meats and drinks, and the manner of using them, whether with hands washed, or unwashed.

Matthew 15:12

Ver. 12. **Then came his disciples, and said unto him,**

That is, after he had dismissed the people, and was come into a private house; see Mark 7:17 his disciples came to him, being alone, full of concern, for what he had said to the Pharisees, and before all the people; and not so well understanding it themselves.

Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended after they heard this saying?

that they set aside the commandments of God, by observing the traditions of the elders; or that they were hypocrites; and that the prophecy of Isaiah, which describes such persons, belonging to them; or that not what goes into, but what comes out of a man, defiles him: whichever it was they have respect unto, or it may be to the whole, they seem to wish Christ had not said it; because the Pharisees were, as they thought, grieved and troubled at it, as being contrary to true religion and piety; and lest they should be so stumbled, as no more to attend, and so all hopes of bringing them over to the faith of Christ be lost; and chiefly, because they perceived they were made exceeding angry, and were highly provoked; so that they might fear that both Christ, and they themselves, would feel the effects of their wrath and rage; and perhaps it was with some such view, that he would take some prudential step that he might not fall into their hands, that they acquaint him with it.

Matthew 15:13

Ver. 13. **But he answered, and said,**

As being unconcerned at their rage, and having nothing to fear from them; and being well satisfied, that what he had said was right, and would produce proper effects,

he gave his disciples this for answer:

every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up;

which may be understood either of things, or of persons: it may have regard to doctrines and ordinances; and the meaning be, that whatever doctrine is not delivered by God, or whatever ordinance is not instituted by him; whatever is not of heaven, but of man, of man's devising, and of human imposition, as the traditions of the elders, must be opposed and rejected; and sooner or later will be utterly rooted up, and destroyed; as will all the false notions, corrupt worship, and errors, and heresies of men, in God's own time: or it may respect persons. There are some plants, which are planted by Christ's Father, which is in heaven; these are the elect of God, who are trees of righteousness; the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified. These are planted by the river of God's love, in the person of Christ, in the likeness of his death and resurrection; they are transplanted out of a state of nature, are ingrafted into Christ, have the graces of the Spirit implanted in their souls, and are themselves planted in the courts of the Lord, in a Gospel church state; and being watered with the dews of grace, appear to be choice plants, plants of renown, pleasant ones, very fruitful, and which shall never perish, or be rooted, and plucked up, but there are others, like these Pharisees, hypocrites, formal professors, and heretics, who pretend to much religion and holiness, make a show of the leaves of profession, but have not the fruit of grace; these get into churches, and are outwardly and ministerially planted there; but being never rooted in Christ, nor partake of his grace, in time they wither, and die away; or persecution arising because of the Word, or truth being dispensed in so clear and glaring a light, that they cannot bear it; they are offended with it, and so are detected, discovered, and rooted up and it is necessary that truth should be freely spoken, as it was here by Christ, that such plants might be rooted out; for these words are said by Christ in justification of his conduct. So the Jews speak of God, as a planter, and of rooting up what he does not like.

“The holy, blessed God (say they ⁸⁶⁸), “plants” trees in this world; if they prosper, it is well; if they do not prosper, Nwl rqa, “he roots them up”, and plants them even many times.”

And elsewhere it is said ⁸⁶⁹,

“let the master of the vineyard come, and con-

⁸⁶⁸ Zohar in Gen. fol. 105. 3.

⁸⁶⁹ T. Bab. Bava Metzia, fol. 83. 2.

sume its thorns: the gloss on it is, the holy, blessed God; for the vineyard of the Lord of hosts, is the house of Israel, and he will consume, and take away the thorns of the vineyard.”

Matthew 15:14

Ver. 14. **Let them alone,**

Have nothing to say, or do with them; do not mind their anger and resentment, their reproaches and reflections, nor trouble yourselves at the offence they have taken; if they will go, let them go; they are a worthless generation of men, who are not to be regarded, hearkened to, nor to be pleased; it matters not what they say of me, and of my doctrine:

they be blind leaders of the blind;

the people that hearken to them, and are followers of them, are “blind”, as to any true sense of themselves, their state, and condition by nature; as to any spiritual, saving knowledge of God; as to any acquaintance with the Messiah, and the method of salvation by him; as to the Spirit of God, and the work of grace, regeneration, and sanctification upon the soul; as to the Scriptures of truth, and doctrines of the Gospel; and the “leaders” of them were as “blind” as they: by whom are meant the Scribes and Pharisees, the learned doctors and rabbins of the Jewish nation; who thought themselves very wise and knowing, yet they were blind also; and none more than they. It was an old tradition ⁸⁷⁰ among the Jews,

“that there should be “blind teachers” at the time when God should have his tabernacle among them.”

This was predicted, in Isa 42:19 and all such leaders and teachers are blind, who, notwithstanding their natural abilities, and acquired parts, are in a state of unregeneracy; and have nothing more than what they have from nature, or have attained to at school; and as apparently all such are, who lead men from Christ, to mere morality, and to a dependence upon their own righteousness for justification, which was the darling principle of the blind leaders in the text.

And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch;

of ignorance and error, immorality and profaneness, distress, if not despair, temporal ruin and destruction; which was notoriously verified in the Jewish people, and their guides: and of eternal damnation, the lake which **burns with fire** and brimstone; what else can be expect-

⁸⁷⁰ Midrash Tillim in Psal. cxlvi apud Grotium in loc.

ed?

Matthew 15:15

Ver. 15. **Then answered Peter,**

Mark says, “his disciples asked him concerning the parable”; which might be by the mouth of Peter; who, probably, being the eldest man, and very forward to speak, was generally their spokesman: and who, at this time, might be requested, by the rest, to ask the meaning of the parable, which had given offence to the Pharisees, and was not clearly understood by them; which he accordingly did:

and said unto him, declare unto us this parable;

that not what goes into the mouth, but what comes out of it, defiles the man; which, though expressed in very plain words, and easy to be understood, yet did not appear clear to their understandings; and seemed to be contrary, not only to the traditions of the elders, but to the laws of God, respecting the difference of clean and unclean meats; and therefore call it a “parable”, and desire an explanation of it.

Matthew 15:16

Ver. 16. **And Jesus said,**.... As wondering at, and as being displeased with, and as reproving them for their dulness and ignorance:

are ye also yet without understanding?

you, my disciples, as well as the Scribes and Pharisees; you, who have been with me so long, who have heard so many discourses from me, who for so long a time have been instructed by me, both in private, and in public; and yet do not understand what is so plain and easy, that has nothing of difficulty in it, but what might easily be accounted for.

Matthew 15:17

Ver. 17. **Do not ye understand,**

You must understand, you cannot be so ignorant, **that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth, goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught?**

that is, that whatsoever food a man takes in at his mouth, he swallows down, and it is received into his stomach; which, having performed its office, the grosser parts go down into the belly, and passing through the bowels, are evacuated into the vault, or privy, “purging all meats”, as Mark says; for that only receives the filth and excrementitious matter; so that what is left in the body is pure, wholesome, and nourishing; nor can any part of what goes into a man defile him, because it only enters into the body, and passes through it; and, as Mark says, “entereth not into the heart”, which is the seat of

moral impurity; so that no moral pollution can be contracted by eating any sort of food, even though it should not be clean itself, nor be eaten with clean hands.

Matthew 15:18

Ver. 18. **But those things which proceed out of the mouth,**

Meaning not material things, as spittle, vomit, &c. but, as it follows, which come forth from the heart: are first conceived and formed there, and then come forth from thence, and are expressed by the mouth; as all idle words, foolish talking, filthy jesting, unsavoury communication, and every word that is rotten and corrupt, or which is done in the life and conversation; and they defile the man: the heart is the corrupt fountain from whence all moral defilement flows; and sinful words and actions are the impure streams, which spring from thence, and increase the moral pollution of human nature.

Matthew 15:19

Ver. 19. **For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts,** Of God, of Christ, of the Spirit, of fellow creatures, and of all sorts of wickedness. The thoughts of sin are evil, are to be hated, forsaken, and for which men are accountable to God. All wicked imaginations, carnal reasonings, lustful desires, and malicious contrivances, are here included; which take their rise from, and are devised, and forged, in the corrupt heart of man.

Murders;

inveterate hatred of men's persons, malice prepense, schemes to take away life, all angry and wrathful words, and actual effusion of man's blood.

Adulteries;

uncleanness committed between married persons, both in thought, and deed:

fornications;

unlawful copulations of persons in a single state: thefts; taking away from others by force or fraud, what is their right and property: false witness: swearing falsely, or exhibiting a false testimony to the hurt of his neighbour, either his name, person, or estate:

blasphemies;

evil speakings of God or men. To which Mark adds “covetousness”; a greedy and insatiable desire after the things of the world, or the neighbour's goods: “wickedness”; doing hurt and mischief to fellow creatures: “deceit”; in words and actions, in trade and conversation: “lasciviousness”; all manner of uncleanness, and unnatural lusts: “an evil eye”; of envy and covetousness: the vi-

tiosity, or corruption of nature, is, by the Jews ⁸⁷¹, called Nyeer, “the evil eye”: “pride”; in heart and life, in dress and gesture; and “foolishness”; expressed in talk and conduct.

Matthew 15:20

Ver. 20. **These are the things which defile a man,**

These are filthy in themselves, and must pollute all in whom they are; they bring a defilement on the whole man, both body and soul, fasten guilt upon him, and expose him to everlasting punishment: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man: should a man neglect to wash his hands before eating a common meal, this need give him no uneasiness; he contracts no filth to his soul hereby, nor any guilt to his conscience; nor does he break any law of God; nor is he liable to any penalty for such an omission. This is a trifling matter, and merits no regard; but the things before mentioned are in their nature evil: they are contrary to the law of God; they are abominable in his sight; they render men loathsome and odious to the divine being; and expose them to shame and ruin; and it is only the blood of Christ can cleanse them from the pollution and guilt of them, and secure them from that punishment they deserve.

Matthew 15:21

Ver. 21. **Then Jesus went thence,**

From the land of Gennesaret, after he had silenced the Pharisees, as to the charge brought by them against his disciples; and when he had reproved them for their hypocrisy and wickedness, in making void the commands of God by their traditions; and had explained some difficult and parabolical sayings he had made use of to his disciples, he then left that country, and departed very privately: either to shun the multitude, for the sake of retirement; or to avoid any snares the Scribes and Pharisees might be laying for him, who must be greatly galled with his free discourse, and strong arguments: and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon; two principal cities of Phoenicia: not that he went into these places themselves, but into some places that bordered upon them; for as he ordered his disciples not to go in the way of the Gentiles, so neither did he himself.

Matthew 15:22

Ver. 22. **And behold a woman of Canaan,**

That is, of Phoenicia, which was called Canaan; so Shaul, the son of a Canaanitish woman, is, by the Septuagint in Ex 6:15 called the son of a Phoenician; and the kings of Canaan are, by the same interpreters in Jos 5:1

⁸⁷¹ Tzeror Hammor, fol. 141. 3.

called kings of Phoenicia: hence this woman is by Mark said to be a Greek, that is, a Gentile, as the Jews used to call all of another nation, and a Syrophenician, being a native of Phoenicia, called Syrophenician; because it bordered upon Syria, and had been formerly a part of it, by conquest: so Cadmus, who is reported to have first brought letters from Phoenicia to Greece, is called ⁸⁷² a Syrophenician merchant.

Came out of the same coasts;

being an inhabitant, it is very likely, either of Tyre or Sidon: this shows that Christ did not go into these places, but only to the borders of them, since she is said to come out of them to him; who, having heard of him, and the miraculous cures wrought by him, and being informed that he was near, at such a place, as the Persic version says, “suddenly came forth out of a corner”; and the Ethiopic reads it, “out of the mountains thereof”; and made to the house where he was privately retired, and would have hid himself, as Mark suggests,

and cried unto him;

with a loud voice, with much vehemency, being in great distress,

saying, have mercy on me;

meaning, by curing her daughter, with whose case she was so much affected, that she made it, as it were, her own:

O Lord, thou son of David.

The first of these characters expresses her faith in his power, dominion, and government, that all persons and things, and so all diseases were at his command, and control; and that being Lord of all, he could remove them at his pleasure: the other shows her knowledge and belief of him, as the Messiah, that being a name by which he was usually known by the Jews; See Gill “Mt 1:1” and which she, though a Gentile, might come at the knowledge of, either through being a proselyte to the Jewish religion, or through a general report which might reach, especially the neighbouring nations, that the Jews expected a wonderful deliverer to arise among them, under this character of the son of David; and from what she had heard of him, she concluded he must be the person.

My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil,

which had took possession of her, and most grievously afflicted her: and her request to him was, that he would cast him out of her: believing he had power so to do, without seeing or touching her, only by a word speaking: her faith was like that of the centurion's.

⁸⁷² Lucian. Dialog. Deor. Coneil. sect. 2,

Matthew 15:23

Ver. 23. **But he answered her not a word,**

Not that he did not hear her, or that he despised either her person or petition, or that he was not moved with it; but to continue her importunity, and try her faith, and make it manifest: for like reasons the Lord does not always, and immediately, answer the requests of his people. This giving her no answer, either that he would, or would not help her, carried in it a tacit repulse of her, and a denial of assistance to her; and it seems as if she did for a while desist from her application to him, and betook herself to his disciples to plead with him for her: and his disciples came; to the house where he was; who, it seems by this, had been elsewhere;

and besought him, saying, send her away;

not in any shape, with any sort of answer, without curing her daughter, or without a promise of a cure; no, they desired she might be dismissed, with a grant of her request, to her entire satisfaction, as appears from Christ's answer: the reason they give is,

for she crieth after us;

not only because she was troublesome to them, was importunate with them, and would take no denial from them: she followed them wherever they went; there was no getting rid of her: but also, because her case was so moving, was delivered in such an affecting manner, and her cries were piercing, that they could not bear them; and therefore entreat him, that he would relieve, and dismiss her.

Matthew 15:24

Ver. 24. **But he answered, and said,**

To his disciples, who knew how limited their commission was, that they were not to go into the way of the Gentiles, not to preach to them, nor perform miracles among them; and therefore could not reasonably expect that either the woman, or they, on her behalf, should succeed in this matter.

I am not sent, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel;

as a priest, or as a Saviour and Redeemer, he was sent to make satisfaction and atonement for the sins of all God's elect, and to obtain eternal redemption and salvation for all of them, whether Jews or Gentiles; but as a prophet, in the discharge of his own personal ministry, he was sent by his Father only to the Jews; he was the “minister of the circumcision”, Ro 15:8 that is, a minister to the circumcised Jews; he was sent only to preach the Gospel to them, and work miracles among them, in proof

of his Messiahship; and upon their rejection of him, then his apostles were to be sent among the Gentiles; but he himself was sent only to the Jews, here styled “the lost sheep of the house of Israel”: by “the house of Israel”, is meant the whole body of the Jewish nation, so called from Israel, the name of Jacob their father, from whom they sprung; and by the “lost sheep” of that house, are more especially designed the elect of God among them: for though all the individuals of that house were “lost” persons, considered in Adam, and in themselves, as the rest of mankind, and Christ, in the external ministry of the word, was sent to preach to them all; yet the elect of God are only “sheep”: they are the sheep of Christ, of his pasture, and of his hand, whom he has the particular care and charge of; and who, in their natural state, are lost and straying, and could never find their way, or recover themselves from their lost state in Adam, and by their own transgressions; but he came to seek, and to save them, and to these his ministry was powerful and efficacious.

Matthew 15:25

Ver. 25. **Then came she and worshipped him,**

She followed the disciples into the house; and perceiving another repulse by Christ's answer to them, she pushes on, through all discouragements; her faith grows stronger, and her importunity greater: she had called Christ Lord, and the son of David before, but now she worships him as God:

Saying, Lord help me;

a short petition, but what fully and fitly expressed her case: the object she prays unto is the Lord, by which she owns his sovereignty, dominion, and power: the request she makes is for “help”, signifying that her case required it; that it was such, that she could not help herself, nor any creature help her, only he, which she firmly believed; and though it was her daughter, and not she herself, that was so miserably afflicted; yet such was her sympathy, love, and affection to her, that she makes the case her own, and calls helping her daughter, helping herself; for her daughter being relieved, she would be made easy.

Matthew 15:26

Ver. 26. **But he answered, and said,**

To the woman, as the Persic version reads it, and the sense requires:

it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs;

which he said, to try her faith the more, and make it the more illustrious; and that not so much from his

own sense of things, as in the language of the Jewish people, and which she might not be a stranger to. By “the children”, are meant the Jews, to whom the adoption belonged; who, as a nation and people, were the children of God in a large sense; being distinguished by many blessings and favours, which others had not, and being under the more peculiar care and notice of God; not that all of them were the children of God by special grace: by “the bread”; which belonged to them, is meant the external ministry of the word, and the miracles of Christ wrought among them: and particularly such outward favours which related to the good of the bodies of men, by healing their diseases, and dispossessing them of devils: and by “the dogs” are designed the Gentiles, so called by the Jews in a way of contempt, because of their ignorance, idolatry, and impurity. Christ here speaks not his own mind, as if he reproached the Gentiles, and held them in scorn and contempt, but uses the common dialect of the people; and which, this woman, living upon the borders of the Israelitish nation, was acquainted with; so that it was not so shocking and surprising, or quite so discouraging, as it would otherwise have been. The Jewish doctors say ⁸⁷³, that the idolatrous Gentiles are not called men, that they are comparable to the beasts or the field ⁸⁷⁴, to oxen, rams, goats ⁸⁷⁵, and asses ⁸⁷⁶: the foetus in the bowels of a Canaanitish servant, they say ⁸⁷⁷”

“is like the foetus in the bowels of a beast”.

Take the following passage, as an illustration of this, and as a further proof of the Jews calling the Gentiles dogs ⁸⁷⁸.

”A king provides a dinner for the children of his house; whilst they do his will they eat their meat with the king, and he gives to the dogs the part of bones to gnaw; but when the children of the house do not do the king’s pleasure, he gives the dogs the dinner, and the bones to them: even so: while the Israelites do the will of their Lord, they eat at the king’s table, and the feast is provided for them, and they of their own will give the bones to the Gentiles; but when they do not do the will of their Lord, lo! the feast is לִכְלָבֵי, “for the dogs”, and the bones

⁸⁷³ T. Bab. Bava Metzia, fol. 114. 2. Zohar in Exod. fol.

35. 4. Tzeror Hammor, fol. 1. 4.

⁸⁷⁴ Zohar in Gen. fol. 31. 1. & 34. 1. 2.

⁸⁷⁵ Jarchi in Gen. 15. 10.

⁸⁷⁶ T. Bab. Kiddushin, fol. 68. 1.

⁸⁷⁷ lb. fol. 69. 1.

⁸⁷⁸ Zohar in Exod. fol. 63. 1, 2. Vid. Tzeror Hammor, fol. 147. 4.

are their’s.

”And a little after,”

thou preparest a table before me”; this is the feast of the king; “in the presence of mine enemies”; yblk Nwnya, “these are the dogs” that sit before the table, looking for their part of the bones.”

In which may be clearly discerned the distinction between children and dogs, and the application of the one to the Jews, and the other to the Gentiles, and the different food that belongs to each: and hence it is easy to see from whom Christ borrowed this expression, and with what view he made use of it.

Matthew 15:27

Ver. 27. **And she saith, truth, Lord,**

She owns all that he had said to be true, that he was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel: that she was indeed but a dog, a poor sinful creature, and unworthy of any favour; and that it was not right and fitting that all the children’s bread should be taken from them and given to dogs:

yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master’s table.

The Syriac and Persic versions add “and live”: thus she wisely lays hold upon and improves in a very beautiful manner, in her own favour, what seemed to be so much against her. It is observed ⁸⁷⁹ of the Syrophoenicians in general, that they have all, in their common talk, something hdu kai kecarismenon “pleasant and graceful”, as there is indeed in this smart reply of her’s, who was one of that people. She suggests that though the Gentiles were but dogs, and she one of them; yet their common Lord and Master had a propriety in them, and they in him; and were to be maintained and fed, and ought to live, though not in such fulness of favours and blessings, as the Jews, the children of God: nor did she desire their affluence, only that a crumb of mercy might be given her, that her poor daughter might be healed; which was but a small favour, in comparison of the numerous ones he heaped upon the children, the Jews: nor would this be any more detrimental to them, than it is to the children, for the dogs, under the table, to eat of the crumbs that fall.

Matthew 15:28

Ver. 28. **Then Jesus answered, and said unto her,**

As one surprised at the strength of her faith, and the clearness and justness of her pious reasoning; and not

⁸⁷⁹ Eunapius in Vita Libanii.

concealing himself, and the designs of grace, any longer from her, breaks out in great admiration of her, saying,

O woman, great is thy faith!

He seems surprised, that she, a woman, and a poor Gentile, should express such strong faith in him; calling him Lord, owning him to be the Messiah, worshipping him as God, believing him able to do what could not be done by human art; and though she met with such repulses, and even called a dog, yet still continued importunate with him, believing she should succeed:

be it unto thee even as thou wilt;

let thy daughter be healed, as thou desirest, and in the way, and at the very time thou wouldst have it:

and her daughter was made whole from that very hour:

power went forth from Christ, and dispossessed the devil; so that when she came home, as Mark observes, she found her daughter lying on the bed, quiet, and easy, and perfectly well. The conduct of our Lord towards this woman, and her behaviour under it, do, in a very lively manner, represent the methods which God sometimes takes with his people, when they apply to him in their distress; and the nature and actings of their faith upon him: as she, when she first applied to Christ for mercy and help, had not sword of answer given her; so sometimes they cry, and the Lord turns a deaf ear, or seems not to hear, and, in their apprehension of things, has covered himself with a cloud, that their prayer should not pass through; however, an immediate answer is not returned; yea, when others interpose on their behalf, and entreat for them, yet no favourable answer is returned, as was not by Christ to his disciples, when they besought him on this woman’s account: and yet, notwithstanding all this, as she, they are not discouraged, but ply the throne of grace with fresh suits, acknowledge that the worst of names and characters belong to them: that they are unworthy of the least of mercies, and should be content with the crumbs of divine favour, but cannot go away without a blessing; they lay hold on every word of God, and hastily catch at it, and improve everything in their own favour, that faith can come at, and so, in the issue, succeed in their requests: effectual, fervent, and importunate prayer, the prayer of faith availeth much with God.

Matthew 15:29

Ver. 29. **And Jesus departed from thence,**

From the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, where he would have been private and retired; but being discovered, and knowing that the fame of this last miracle would make

him more public in those parts, he removed, and passed through the midst of the coast of Decapolis, as Mark says, “and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee”: the same with the sea of Tiberias. Joh 6:1, that is, he came to those parts of Galilee, which lay near the sea side, and went into a mountain: which was very usual with him, either for solitude, or for prayer, and sometimes, for better convenience, to preach to the people: and sat down there: to take some rest, being weary with his journey, and as waiting for the multitude to come to him, both for instruction and healing.

Matthew 15:30

Ver. 30. **And great multitudes came unto him,**

From the adjacent places; having heard of his being where he was; and who had either attended on him before, or, however, the fame of him, and his miracles, had reached their ears: these flocked to him, having with them, in their hands, or arms, or upon their backs, or shoulders, leading some, and carrying others, in some form or another,

those that were lame;

either in their legs, or arms:

blind;

in one eye, or both, and that either from their birth, or since:

dumb:

the word signifies both deaf and dumb: these often meet in the same person: and if a man is born deaf, he is always dumb:

maimed:

having lost a limb, an arm, or a leg, or so enfeebled by some disease or another, as the palsy, that their limbs were useless to them. The Persic version reads it “leprous”: and many others; who were afflicted with various other diseases, too many to be mentioned particularly:

and cast them down at Jesus’ feet;

to ease themselves of their burdens, and with a view to move his compassion, believing he was able to cure them: nor do they say a word to him, or desire him to relieve these miserable objects; thinking it was enough to present them to him, and not doubting at all, but he would show favour to them:

and he healed them;

immediately, either by a word speaking, or by touching them, or by putting his hands on them, or without any such outward sign, through a divine power proceeding from him, which, at once, removed all their disorders and complaints.

Matthew 15:31

Ver. 31. **Insomuch that the multitude wondered,**

The multitude of the spectators, who, though they came in expectation of seeing miracles wrought, yet these were so much beyond what they could have imagined, that they were amazed and surprised to see cures so instantly performed, in such a miraculous manner: these were such glaring proofs and evidences of the wonderful power of God, that they were astonished

when they saw the dumb to speak;

that is, such who before were dumb, now spoke; and the same is to be observed in the other following instances: some copies have also, “the deaf to hear”, and so the Arabic version: “the maimed to be whole”. This is left out in some copies; nor is it in the Arabic, Ethiopic, and Vulgate Latin versions, nor in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel; but the Syriac has it, and most Greek copies, and seems necessary; since these are particularly mentioned among the persons brought to be cured; and a wonderful cure this was, that persons who had not only lost the use of their limbs, but such who had lost the limbs themselves, should have them restored perfect; for doubtless, the power of our Lord was able to do this, and which was amazing to behold: the lame to walk, and the blind to see; as was prophesied of the times of the Messiah, and as things to be effected by him, Isa 35:5

and they glorified the God of Israel.

The Ethiopic version adds, “which had given such power to the son of man”, or “unto men”, which seems to be taken out of Mt 9:8. This must be understood both of the multitude that saw these miraculous operations, and the persons on whom they were wrought; who were both affected with them, and gave God the praise and glory of them, by whose power alone such things could be done, who is the one only and true God: and therefore, to distinguish him from the fictitious deities of the Gentiles, he is here styled the God of Israel, of the people of Israel, so called from Jacob their ancestor, whose name was Israel; by whom God was known, and worshipped, and was their Covenant God, and Father.

Matthew 15:32

Ver. 32. **Then Jesus called his disciples unto him,**

Who were at some little distance from him, to impart his mind unto them, whom he had made, and used, as his familiar friends; and to try their faith, and raise their attention, and prepare them for the following miracle; as well as to teach them by his example, and accustom them to show bowels of mercy and compassion to persons in

any kind of want and distress:

and said, I have compassion on the multitude;

which must be understood of him as man, whose bowels yearned towards them, having been so long without any food for their bodies, or very little; as he had compassion on the sick, and diseased, and healed them, so on the sound and whole, and was willing to feed them. Christ, our high priest, is a merciful one, and is touched with the feeling of the infirmities of men, of every sort, both of soul and body:

because they continue now with me three days;

which time had been spent in healing their bodily disorders, and in preaching to them for the good of their souls; which shows the diligence and indefatigableness of Christ, as well as the attachment of the people to him; who were so struck with his miracles and ministry, that though they had been so long from their habitations and families, knew not how to leave him; nor did they talk, or show any signs of departing from him, and returning to their houses, and business of life;

and have nothing to eat;

not that they had been so long without eating anything, though very likely it was but little, and what they brought with them, and was now expended; nor could they provide themselves in a desert place, and many of them were a great way off from home:

and I will not send them away fasting; he might have done it, nor did the multitude ask any food of him; but he could not bear the thoughts of dismissing them in such a condition; having had but very little sustenance all this while, and so might be said to be in a manner fasting during this time, at least now:

lest they faint by the way;

to their own houses, not having strength and spirit enough to travel, and get home: for “divers of them”, as Mark says, “came from far”.

Matthew 15:33

Ver. 33. **And his disciples said unto him,**

The former miracle of feeding five thousand men, besides women and children, with five loaves and two fishes, being quite out of their thoughts, they reply,

whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?

The question is big with objections, and is put with some vehemency and astonishment: the people to be led were a multitude, a great multitude, a very great multitude, and these too had had but little, or no food, for a great while; and therefore would require the more to fill

and satisfy them; and besides, it was a wilderness where they were, and where no provisions were to be had; and if they could have been got for money, they had not stock enough to purchase such a large number of loaves, as were necessary to feed so great a company with.

Matthew 15:34

Ver. 34. **And Jesus saith unto them,**

In a very mild and gentle manner, taking no notice of their stupidity, nor upbraiding them with their forgetfulness of the late miracle, and willing to exercise their patience, and try their faith, asks,

how many loaves have ye?

meaning in the common stock, and which they brought along with them, for their own supply:

and they said seven, and a few little fishes;

which they mention as so small a provision, that it was as nothing for such multitudes; their loaves of bread were but seven, and their fishes, which were ready dressed, dried, or boiled, &c. were few in number, and small, as to quantity and size.

Matthew 15:35

Ver. 35. **And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.**

Not regarding the smallness of the provisions, nor any further consulting with his disciples; but knowing his own power to increase this food, and determining to feed the multitude before he dismissed them, in an authoritative way ordered them to sit down upon the ground in rows, that they might be the better seen, and served.

Matthew 15:36

Ver. 36. **And he took the seven loaves and the fishes,** Into his hands, and lifted them up, that it might be seen, and observed, that there were no other food than these, that so the miracle might appear in its true light:

and gave thanks;

to God for the provision, though it was so small, in the name of the whole company, according to the usage of the Jewish nation; who, if there were ten thousand⁸⁸⁰, one for the rest used to say,

”let us bless the Lord our God, the God of Israel, the God of hosts, that sitteth between the cherubim:”

teaching us to do so likewise, and to be thankful for, and content with our portion, be it more or less:

and brake them;

⁸⁸⁰ {r} Misn. Beracot, c. 7. sect. 3.

which also was the custom of the master of the family to do:

and gave to his disciples:

as a fresh trial of their faith, to reprove their unbelief, to put them in mind of the former miracle, and that they might be witnesses of this, and, in order to distribute to the people, which they accordingly did:

and the disciples to the multitude;

in doing which they obeyed their master’s orders, though before they could not persuade themselves, that such a multitude of people could be filled with so small a quantity.

Matthew 15:37

Ver. 37. **And they did all eat, and were filled,**

Every one had a share of the provision, and that to full satisfaction; no one was overlooked and neglected, and everyone had as much as he could eat:

and they took up of the broken meat that was left, seven baskets full.

The disciples, after they had distributed to everyone his portion, went round, and collected the remaining fragments, and filled seven baskets therewith, according to the number of the loaves which were broken; and so had a full return for the loaves and fishes they spared on this occasion.

Matthew 15:38

Ver. 38. **And they that did eat, were four thousand men,**

This number of men, as well as of the baskets of fragments, clearly shows this to be a distinct miracle from the former of this kind, recorded in Mt 14:15. There the number of men were five thousand, here four thousand; there the quantity of food was five loaves and two fishes, here seven loaves and a few fishes; there the number of the baskets of fragments was twelve, here seven; though the quantity might be as large; since the word here used for a basket is not the same as there, and designs one of a larger size:

besides women and children;

who were not taken into the account, though they ate as well as the men, and whose number might be very large.

Matthew 15:39

Ver. 39. **And he sent away the multitude,**

Dismissing them, either with a prayer for them, or with a suitable word of exhortation, to be thankful for the mercies, both spiritual and temporal, they had received, and behave agreeably in their lives and conversations:

and took ship;

being near the sea side, the sea of Galilee,

and came into the coasts of Magdala:

not far from Tiberias; for often mention is made of Magdala in the Talmud ⁸⁸¹, along with Tiberias, and Chammath, another place in the same neighbourhood; and was famous for some Rabbins, as R. Joden and R. Isaac ⁸⁸², who are said to be haldgm, “אל־הַיָּם”. Thus the Syriac version reads it Magedo, and the Vulgate Latin Magedan; and Beza says, in one Greek exemplar it is read Magadan; and some have thought it to be the same with Megiddo, where Josiah was slain by Pharaohnecho, and which Herodotus calls Magdolos ⁸⁸³. The Evangelist Mark says, that he came into the parts of Dalmanutha, which was a place within the coasts of Magdala. This was not the place, but another of the same name near Jerusalem, from whence Mary Magdalene may be thought to have her name. The Ethiopic version renders it, “they went into a ship, and departed into the mountains of Magdala”; that is, Christ, and his disciples.

Matthew Chapter 16**Matthew 16:1**

Ver. 1. **The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came,**

Not from Jerusalem, as in Mt 15:1 but from the neighbouring places: these were Galilean Sadducees and Pharisees, of whom mention is made in the Misna ⁸⁸⁴;

“says דְּוִקִי גַלִּילִי, “a Galilean Sadducee”, (i.e. one that was of the land of Galilee, as Bartenora on the place observes,) I complain of you Pharisees, because ye write the name of a ruler with the name of Moses, in a divorce; say the Pharisees, we complain of you Galilean Sadducees, that you write the name of a ruler with the name of God, in the same leaf:”

but though these two sects could not agree in this, and in many other things, yet they could unite against Christ, to whom they bore an implacable hatred.

And tempting, desired him that he would show them a sign from heaven:

they came with no sincere view to be taught by him, or learn anything from him; but if they could, to ensnare him, and get an opportunity of exposing him to

⁸⁸¹ T. Hieros. Sheviith, fol. 38. 4. Maaserot, fol. 50. 3. Erubin, fol. 21. 4.

⁸⁸² T. Hieros. Taanith, fol. 64. 3. T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 81. 2. & Nidda, fol. 33. 1. Bereshit Rabba, fol. 4. 4.

⁸⁸³ {u} I. 2. c. 159.

⁸⁸⁴ Yadaim, c. 4. sect. 8.

the people; and therefore pretending dissatisfaction with the miracles he wrought on the earth, they ask of him to produce a sign from heaven, of his coming from thence, of his being the Son of God, and the true Messiah. They wanted some such sign, as the standing still of the sun and moon, in the times of Joshua; and as raining manna, in the times of Moses; or some such appearances of thunder and lightning, as at the giving of the law. The appearance of the rainbow, in a very extraordinary manner, is looked upon by the Jews as a sign of the Messiah's coming ⁸⁸⁵.

“Says a certain Jew, when my father departed out of the world, he said thus to me; do not look for the Messiah until thou seest the bow in the world, adorned with light colours, and the world enlightened by it; then look for the Messiah, as it is written, Ge 9:16.”

Some very unusual and uncommon sight in the heavens, was what these men asked of Christ in proof of his mission from God.

Matthew 16:2

Ver. 2. **He answered and said unto them,**

Knowing full well their views, and having wrought sufficient miracles to confirm his Messiahship, he thought fit to give them no other answer than this:

when it is evening, ye say, it will be fair weather, for the sky is red;

when the sun is setting, it is a common thing for you to say, looking up to the heavens, and observing the face and colour of them, that it is like to be fair weather; no rain, that night, nor perhaps the next day, for the sky is red like fire, through the rays of the sun; which show the clouds to be very thin, and so will soon waste away, and consequently fine weather must follow.

Matthew 16:3

Ver. 3. **And in the morning, it will be foul weather today,**

When you rise in the morning, and take a survey of the heavens, it is a very usual thing with you to say, it is like to be windy or rainy weather today,

for the sky is red and lowring;

which shows, that the clouds are so thick that the sun cannot pierce through them, and its face is not seen; so that it may be reasonably concluded they will issue in rain, or wind, or both.

O ye hypocrites.

⁸⁸⁵ Zohar in Gen. fol. 53. 2.

The Vulgate Latin, and Munster's Hebrew Gospel, leave out this appellation; but all other versions, as well as copies, have it: and it is an usual epithet, bestowed very justly by Christ, on these men; who pretended to be the guides of the people, took upon them to teach and instruct them in divine things, and set up themselves as men of great holiness, piety and knowledge; and yet, instead of searching the Scriptures, and comparing the characters of the times of the Messiah therein fixed, with the present ones, spent their time in making such low and useless observations, and which fall within the compass of everyone's knowledge and reach.

Ye can discern the face of the sky;

very distinctly, and make some very probable guesses, if not certain conclusions, what will follow, good weather or bad:

but can ye not discern the signs of the times?

or, as the Syriac reads it, “the time”, the present time: if they had not been blind, they might easily have discerned, that the signs of the time of the Messiah's coming were upon them, and that Jesus was the Messiah; as the departure of the sceptre from Judah, the ending of Daniel's weeks, the various miracles wrought by Christ, the wickedness of the age in which they lived, the ministry of John the Baptist, and of Christ, the great flockings of the people, both to one and to the other, with divers other things which were easy to be observed by them: but they pretend this to be a very great secret.

“The secret of the day of death, they say ⁸⁸⁶, and the secret of the day when the king Messiah comes, who by his wisdom can find out?”

Matthew 16:4

Ver. 4. **A wicked and adulterous generation,**

He says the same things here, as he did to the Pharisees on a like occasion, in Mt 12:39.

And he left them;

as persons hardened, perverse, and incurable, and as unworthy to be conversed with:

and departed:

to the ship which brought him thither, and went in it to the other side of the sea of Galilee; see Mark 8:13.

Matthew 16:5

Ver. 5. **When his disciples were come to the other side,....** Of the sea, as Munster's Hebrew Gospel adds, to Bethsaida, Mark 8:22 as they were either in the ship, or going from the shore to the said place, they recollected

⁸⁸⁶ Targum in Eccl. vii. 24.

themselves,

that they had forgotten to take bread:

having but one loaf, as Mark says, in the ship; the seven baskets of fragments being either expended, or given away to the poor, of their own accord, or by Christ's orders. It seems, it was usual with the disciples to buy food at places most proper, and carry with them; since Christ often went into deserts and mountainous places, where provisions could not be had. This their forgetfulness to act according to their wonted method, might arise either from their being intent upon Christ's conversation with the Pharisees, and Sadducees, or from the suddenness of Christ's departure.

Matthew 16:6

Ver. 6. **Then Jesus said unto them,**

Either taking occasion from the disciples observing that they had forgot to take bread with them, or on account of what passed between him and the Pharisees and Sadducees, he gave the following advice to his disciples;

take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

Mark, instead “of the leaven of the Sadducees”, says, “the leaven of Herod”; either because Christ might caution against all three; or because the Sadducees were generally Herodians, taking Herod to be the Messiah; or were on his party, or for his government, which the Pharisees disliked; and the Herodians were generally Sadducees. By “the leaven” of these is meant their doctrine, as appears from Mt 16:12. The doctrines the Pharisees taught were the commandments and inventions of men, the traditions of the elders, free will, and justification by the works of the law: the doctrine of the Sadducees was, that there was no resurrection of the dead, nor angels, nor spirits: now because they sought secretly and artfully to infuse their notions into the minds of men; and which, when imbibed, spread their infection, and made men sour, morose, rigid, and ill natured, and swelled and puffed them up with pride and vanity, Christ compares them to leaven; and advises his disciples to look about them, to watch, and be on their guard, lest they should be infected with them.

Matthew 16:7

Ver. 7 **And they reasoned among themselves,**

Either what should be the meaning of this caution of Christ's, and upon what account he should say this to them; or they were anxiously concerned what they should do for provision:

saying, because we have taken no bread;

for the phrase, “it is”, is a supplement, and is not in the original text, which confines the sense to the first way of interpretation; the words may be read without it, and confirms the other sense, and which receives strength from what follows.

Matthew 16:8

Ver. 8. **Which when Jesus perceived,**

Without hearing any of their debates, but by his omniscience; for he knew the doubts and unbelief, and anxious solicitude of their minds, as well as their private reasonings one with another:

he said unto them, O ye of little faith;

a phrase used upon a like occasion, when he would dissuade his disciples from an anxious distressing care about a livelihood, Mt 6:30

See Gill “Mt 6:30”:

why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?

blaming one another for your negligence and forgetfulness in this matter; distressing your minds, as if you should be famished and starved, because ye have not brought a quantity of bread, as you used to do with you.

Matthew 16:9

Ver. 9. **Do ye not understand,**

Meaning either the sense of the advice he had now given; or rather his almighty power displayed in the two miracles of feeding five thousand at one time, and four thousand at another, with a very small quantity of provision; for to this the word “understand” refers, as well as the following:

neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?

Have you forgot what was so lately done, namely, the feeding five thousand men, besides women and children, with five loaves and two fishes, when ye took up, after all were filled and satisfied, no less than twelve baskets of fragments? And can you, after this, distrust my power in the care of you? Have I fed so many with so small a quantity of food? and am I not able to feed twelve of you, though you have but one loaf? Why all these anxious thoughts and carnal reasonings?

Matthew 16:10

Ver. 10. **Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand,**

Have you forgot the other miracle done but a very little while ago, when I fed four thousand men, beside women and children, with seven loaves and a few small fishes;

and how many baskets ye took up?

no less than seven large baskets; and am I not able to provide for you? distress not yourselves about this matter; give not way to unbelief, which must argue great stupidity and insensibility.

Matthew 16:11

Ver. 11. **How is it that ye do not understand,**

That you should be so senseless and void of thought, after such instances, as to imagine, that I concerned myself about what bread you brought with you; one would think you could not but know,

that I spake it not to you concerning bread,

taken in a literal sense; but must be thought to speak figuratively and mystically, and to have an higher sense and meaning, when I said to you,

that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the Sadducees;

how could you think that I had any regard to the leaven taken in a literal sense, the Pharisees and Sadducees approve or disapprove of?

Matthew 16:12

Ver. 12. **Then understood they,**

Without any further explication of his sense and meaning,

how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread:

which sense they first took him in; imagining, because the Pharisees were very particular and precise what sort of leaven they made use of⁸⁸⁷, that Christ forbid them buying bread that was made with leaven according to their directions: and since their rules in everything prevailed much in all places, they were concerned what bread they must, or could buy; but now they perceived that he did not speak of this, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. It was very common with the Jews⁸⁸⁸ to call the corruption and vitiosity of nature by the name of שְׂאִיר שְׂבִיבָה “leaven in the lump”: hence our Lord calls their doctrine so, because it proceeded from thence, and was agreeable thereunto; and uses the phrase on purpose to expose it, and bring it into neglect and contempt.

Matthew 16:13

Ver. 13. **When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesar-**

887 Misn. Pesach, c. 2. sect. 2, 3. T. Hieros. Sabbat, fol. 3. 3.

888 T. Hieros. Beracot, fol. 7. 4. T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 17. 1. Bereshit Rabba, fol. 29. 4. Caphtor, fol. 38. 2. Tzeror Hamor, fol. 73. 2.

ea Philippi,

The towns that were in the neighbourhood of this city; which city went by several names before, as Leshem, Jos 19:47 which being taken by the Danites, they called it Dan; hence we read of דָּן דְּקִרְיָוִי “Dan, which is Caesarea”⁸⁸⁹. It was also called Paneas, from the name of the fountain of Jordan, by which it was situated; and which Pliny says⁸⁹⁰ gave the surname to Caesarea; and hence it is called by Ptolomy⁸⁹¹ Caesarea Paniae; and by the name of Paneas it went, when Philip the⁸⁹² tetrarch rebuilt it, and called it Caesarea, in honour of Tiberius Caesar; and from his own name, Philippi, to distinguish it from another Caesarea, of which mention is made in the Acts of the Apostles, built by his father Herod, and so called in honour of Augustus Caesar; which before bore the name of Strato’s tower. The Misnic doctors speak of two Caesareas⁸⁹³, the one they call the eastern, the other the western Caesarea. Now, as Mark says, whilst Christ and his disciples were in the way to these parts; and, as Luke, when he had been praying alone with them,

he asked his disciples, saying, whom do men say that I the Son of man am?

He calls himself “the son of man”, because he was truly and really man; and because of his low estate, and the infirmities of human nature, with which he was encompassed: he may have some respect to the first intimation of him, as the seed of woman, and the rather make use of this phrase, because the Messiah was sometimes designed by it in the Old Testament, Ps 80:17 or Christ speaks here of himself, according to his outward appearance, and the prevailing opinion of men concerning him; that he looked to be only a mere man, born as other men were; was properly a son of man, and no more: and therefore the question is, not what sort of man he was, whether a holy, good man, or not, or whether the Messiah, or not; but the question is, what men in general, whether high or low, rich or poor, learned or unlearned, under the notion they had of him as a mere man, said of him; or since they took him to be but a man, what man they thought he was; and to this the answer is very appropriate. This question Christ put to his disciples, they being more conversant with the people than he, and heard the different opinions men had of him, and who were more free to speak their minds of him to them, than to himself;

889 Targum Hieros. in Gen. xiv. 17.

890 Hist. l. 5. c. 15, 18.

891 Geograph. l. 5. c. 15.

892 Joseph. Antiqu. l. 18. c. & de Bello Jud. l. 3. c. 13.

893 Misn. Oholot, c. 18. sect. 9.

not that he was ignorant of what passed among men, and the different sentiments they had of him, but he was willing to hear the account from his disciples; and his view in putting this question to them, was to make way for another, in order to bring them to an ingenuous confession of their faith in him.

Matthew 16:14

Ver. 14. **And they said, some say that thou art John the Baptist,**

It was the opinion of some of the Jews, that he was John the Baptist risen from the dead. This notion was spread, and prevailed in Herod’s court, and he himself, at last, gave into it.

Some Elias;

the Tishbite, because an extraordinary person was prophesied of by Malachi, under the name of Elias; and who was to come in his power and spirit before the great day of the Lord; and it being a prevailing notion with the Jews, that Elias was to come before the Messiah; See Gill “Mt 11:14” they concluded that he was now come:

and others Jeremias;

this is omitted both by Mark and Luke; the reason why he is mentioned, is not because of what is said of him, in Jer 1:5 but because the Jews thought he was that prophet spoken of, in De 18:15 that should be raised up from among them, like unto Moses: and this is the sense of some of their writers⁸⁹⁴: and in their very ancient writings a parallel is run between Moses and Jeremy⁸⁹⁵.

“R. Judah, the son of R. Simon, opened De 18:18 thus: “as thee”, this is Jeremiah, who was, as he, in reproofs; you will find all that is written of the one, is written of the other; one prophesied forty years, and the other prophesied forty years; the one prophesied concerning Judah and Israel, and the other prophesied concerning Judah and Israel; against the one those of his own tribe stood up, and against the other those of his own tribe stood up; the one was cast into a river, and the other into a dungeon; the one was delivered by means of an handmaid, and the other by the means of a servant; the one came with words of reproof, and the other came with words of reproof.”

Now they fancied, either that the soul of Jeremy was transmigrated into another body, or that he was risen

894 Baal Hatturim in Deut. xviii. 15. R. Abraham Seba; Tzeror Hammor, fol. 127. 4. & 143. 4.

895 Pesikta Rabbati apud R. Abarbinel, Praefat. ad Jer. fol. 96. 2.

from the dead.

Or one of the prophets;

one of the ancient ones, as Hosea, or Isaiah, or some other: they could not fix upon the particular person who they thought was risen from the dead, and did these wondrous works among them. From the whole it appears, that these persons, whose different sentiments of Christ are here delivered, were not his sworn enemies, as the Scribes and Pharisees, who could never speak respectfully of him; saying, that he was a gluttonous man, a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners, a very wicked man, and far from being one, or like one of the prophets: they sometimes represent him as beside himself, and mad, yea, as being a Samaritan, and having a devil, as familiar with the devil, and doing his miracles by his assistance; but these were the common people, the multitude that followed Christ from place to place, and had a great opinion of him on account of his ministry, and miracles: wherefore, though they could not agree in their notions concerning him, yet each of them fix upon some person of note and worth, whom they took him for; they all looked upon him as a great and good man, and as a prophet, as John the Baptist was accounted by all the people, and as one of the chief of the prophets, as Elias and Jeremiah; and they that could not fix on any particular person, yet put him into the class of the prophets: but still they came short of the true knowledge of him; they did not know him to be a divine person, which his works and miracles proved him to be: nor to be that prophet Moses had spoken of, who was alone to be hearkened unto, though his ministry was a demonstration of it: nor that he was the Messiah, so much spoken of in prophecy, and so long expected by the Jewish nation, though he had all the characters of the Messiah meeting in him. The chief reason why they could not entertain such a thought of him, seems to be the mean figure he made in the world, being of a low extract, in strait circumstances of life, regarded only by the poorer sort; and there appearing nothing in him promising, that he should deliver them from the Roman yoke, and set up a temporal kingdom, which should be prosperous and flourishing, which was the notion of the Messiah that then generally obtained: and since they could not, by any means, allow of this character as belonging to Jesus, though otherwise they had an high opinion of him; hence they could not agree about him, but formed different sentiments of him; which is usually the case in everything, where the truth is not hit upon and received.

Matthew 16:15

Ver. 15. **He saith unto them, but whom say ye that I am?**

Without taking any further notice, or making any reflections on the different sentiments of men concerning him, he put this question to his disciples, and which is what he had chiefly in view, that he might have their sense of him; and which he puts in a different form, and leaves out the phrase, the son of man, because they knew he was more than a man: nor was his mean appearance an offence to them; they had believed in him, became his disciples, and were followers of him: but it was not enough to believe in him, they must confess him; both are necessary: therefore he does not say, whom believe ye, but whom say ye that I am? You who have been with me so long from the beginning; you who have heard so many discourses from me, and have seen so many miracles wrought by me; and who are to be the teachers of others, to preach my Gospel, and publish my salvation to Jews and Gentiles, what have you to say of me? Whom do you say I am? as for those men, it is no great matter who they say I am; but of great moment and consequence are your sense and confession of me. Such who have long sat under a Gospel ministry, or who have been long in the church and school of Christ, it is expected of them, that they should know more of Christ than others; and should be come to a point about his person and office, and be ready to make a confession of their faith, and give a reason of their hope in him; and especially such who are, or are to be preachers of Christ to others: these ought to be well acquainted with him, who, and what he is; they should have no doubt, nor hesitation in their minds, about him, but be fully satisfied concerning him; and be free, and open, and ready to declare what they know and believe of him.

Matthew 16:16

Ver. 16. **And Simon Peter answered and said,**

Either of his own accord, and for himself, being a warm, zealous, and forward man; one that dearly loved Christ, truly believed in him, and was ready to make a confession of him; or, as the mouth of the rest, in their name, and with their consent; or, at least, as full well knowing the sentiments of their minds. Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God: a short, but a very full confession of faith, containing the following articles: as that there is a God, that there is but one God; that he is the living God, has life in himself, is the fountain of life to others, and by this is distinguishable from the idols of

the Gentiles: that Jesus is the Christ, the Christ of God, the true Messiah, that was promised by God, prophesied of by all the prophets, from the beginning of the world, and expected by the people of God: a character that includes all his offices, of prophet, priest, and king, to which he is anointed by God; and that this Messiah was not a mere man, but a divine person, the Son of God; not by creation, as angels and men are, nor by adoption, as saints, nor by office, as magistrates, but by nature, being his own Son, his proper Son, the only begotten of the Father, of the same nature with him, being one with him, and equal to him. This confession, as it is uniform, and all of a piece, and consistent with itself, and is what all the disciples of Christ agreed in, so it greatly exceeds the most that can be made of the different sentiments of the people put together. They took him, one and all, to be but a mere man; their most exalted thoughts of him rose no higher: but in this he is acknowledged to be the Son of God, a phrase expressive of his divine nature, and distinct personality: they thought him to be a dead man brought to life; but here he is called the Son of the living God, as having the same life in him the Father has: they indeed judged him to be a prophet, but not that prophet that was to come, superior to all prophets; but here he is owned to be the Christ, which not only takes in his prophetic office in a higher sense than they understood it, but all his other offices, and declares him to be the promised Messiah; which they who thought, and spoke the most honourably of him, could not allow of.

Matthew 16:17

Ver. 17. **And Jesus answered and said unto him,**

Not waiting for any other declaration from them; but taking this to be the sense of them all, he said,

blessed art thou Simon Bar Jona, or son of Jona,

or Jonas, as in Joh 1:42. His father's name was Jonah, whence he was so called: so we read ⁸⁹⁶ of R. Bo bar Jona, and of a Rabbi of this very name ⁸⁹⁷ ר' שמעון בר יונה, Rabbi Simeon bar Jona; for Simon and Simeon are one, and the same name. Some read it Bar Joanna, the same with John; but the common reading is best; Bar Jona signifies "the son of a dove", and Bar Joanna signifies "the son of one that is gracious". Our Lord, by this appellation, puts Peter in mind of his birth and parentage, but does not pronounce him blessed on that account: no true blessedness comes by natural descent; men are by nature children of wrath, being conceived in sin, and shapen

in iniquity: though he was Bar Jona, the son of a dove, and his father might be a good man, and answer to his name, and be of a dove like spirit; yet such a spirit was not conveyed from him to Peter by natural generation: and though he might be, according to the other reading, Bar Joanna, or the son of a gracious man, yet grace was not communicated to him thereby; for he was not "born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God", Joh 1:13. He was a blessed man, not by his first, but by his second birth; and the reason why our Lord makes mention of his father, is to observe to him, that he was the son of a mean man, and had had, but a mean education, and therefore his blessedness in general was not of nature, but of grace, and this branch of it in particular; the knowledge he had of the Messiah, was not owing to his earthly father, or to the advantage of an education, but to the revelation he had from Christ's Father which is in heaven, as is hereafter affirmed. He is pronounced "blessed", as having a true knowledge of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ, whom to know is life eternal; and all such as he are so, appear to be the favourites of God, to have an interest in Christ and in all the blessings of his grace; are justified by his righteousness, pardoned through his blood, are accepted in him, have communion with Father, Son, and Spirit, and shall live eternally with them hereafter.

For flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee:

nothing is more frequent to be met with in Jewish writings, than the phrase of "flesh and blood", as designing men in distinction from God: so the first man is said ⁸⁹⁸ to be

"the workmanship of the blessed God, and not the workmanship of רבשר ודמ, "of flesh and blood"

Again ⁸⁹⁹ בשר ודמ, "flesh and blood", who knows not the times and seasons, &c. but the holy, blessed God, who knows the times and seasons, &c. Instances of this way of speaking are almost without number: accordingly, the sense here is, that this excellent confession of faith, which Peter had delivered, was not revealed unto him, nor taught him by any mere man; he had not it from his immediate parents, nor from any of his relations, or countrymen; nor did he attain to the knowledge of what is expressed in it, by the dint of nature, by the strength of carnal reason, or the force of his own capacity and abilities:

but my Father which is in heaven;

⁸⁹⁸ Zohar in Gen. fol. 43. 3.

⁸⁹⁹ R. Simeon in Jarchi in Gen. ii. 2.

⁸⁹⁶ Juchasin, fol. 85. 1.

⁸⁹⁷ Ib. fol. 105. 1.

from whom both the external and internal revelation of such truths come; though not to the exclusion of the Son, by whose revelation the Gospel is taught, and received; nor of the Holy Ghost, who is a Spirit of wisdom and revelation, but in opposition to, and distinction from any mere creature whatever. Neither the Gospel, nor any part of it, is an human device or discovery; it is not after man, nor according to the carnal reason of man; it is above the most exalted and refined reason of men; it has in it what eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive of: its truths are the deep things of God, which the Spirit of God searches and reveals: and which men, left to the light of nature, and force of reason, must have been for ever ignorant of, and could never have discovered. The Gospel is a revelation, it consists of revealed truths; and which are to be received and believed upon the testimony and credit of the revealer, without entering into carnal reasonings, and disputes about them; and it is the highest reason, and the most noble use of reason, to embrace it at once, as coming from God; for this revelation is from heaven, and from Christ's Father; particularly the deity, sonship, and Messiahship of Christ, are doctrines of pure revelation: that there is a God, is discoverable by the light of nature; and that he is the living God, and gives being, and life, and breath, and all things, to his creatures; but that he has a Son of the same nature with him, and equal to him, who is the Messiah, and the Saviour of lost sinners, this could never have been found out by flesh and blood: no man knows the Son, but the Father, and he to whom he reveals him; he bears witness of him, and declares him to be his Son, in whom he is well pleased; and happy are those who are blessed with the outward revelation of Jesus Christ in the Gospel, but more especially such to whom the Father reveals Christ in them the hope of glory!

Matthew 16:18

Ver. 18. **And I say also unto thee,**

Either besides what he had already said concerning his happiness; or, as the father had revealed something great and valuable, so likewise would he; or inasmuch as he had freely said and declared who, and what he was, in like manner he also would say what Peter was, thou art Peter: intimating, that he was rightly called Peter, or Cephas, by him, when he first became a follower of him, Mt 4:18, which words signify the same thing, a rock, or stone; because of his firmness and solidity, and because he was laid upon the sure foundation, and built on the

rock Christ, and was a very fit stone to be laid in the spiritual building. The aptness of this name to him is easy to be seen in his full assurance of faith, as to the person of Christ, and his free, open, and undaunted confession of him.

And upon this rock will I build my church:

by the church, is meant, not an edifice of wood, stones, &c. but an assembly, and congregation of men; and that not of any sort; not a disorderly, tumultuous assembly, in which sense this word is sometimes taken; nor does it design the faithful of a family, which is sometimes the import of it; nor a particular congregated church, but the elect of God, the general assembly and church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven; and especially such of them as were to be gathered in, and built on Christ, from among the Jews and Gentiles. The materials of this building are such, as are by nature no better, or more fit for it, than others: these stones originally lie in the same quarry with others; they are singled out, and separated from the rest, according to the sovereign will of God, by powerful and efficacious grace; and are broken and hewn by the Spirit of God, generally speaking, under the ministry of the word, and are, by him, made living stones; and being holy and spiritual persons, are built up a spiritual house: and these are the only persons which make up the true and invisible church of Christ in the issue, and are only fit to be members of the visible church; and all such ought to be in a Gospel church state, and partake of the privileges of it: these materials are of different sorts, and have a different place, and have a different usefulness in this building; some are only as common stones, and timber; others are as pillars, beams, and rafters; and all are useful and serviceable; and being put, and knit together, grow up as an holy temple to the Lord: and are called, by Christ, "my" church, because given him by the Father; and he has purchased them with his own blood; are built by him, and on him; inhabited by him, and of whom he is the head, king, and governor; though not to the exclusion of the Father, whose house they also are; nor of the Spirit, who dwells in them, as in his temple. This church Christ promises to "build". Though his ministers are builders, they are but under builders; they are qualified, employed, directed, encouraged, and succeeded by him; he is the wise, able, and chief master builder. This act of building seems to have a special regard to the conversion of God's elect, both among Jews and Gentiles, particularly the latter; and to the daily conversions of them in all ages; and to the building up of saints in faith and holiness; each of which will more manifestly

appear in the latter day; and are both generally effected through the word, and ordinances, as means, the Spirit of Christ blessing them. By the rock on which Christ builds his church, is meant, not the person of Peter; for Christ does not say, upon thee Peter, but upon this rock, referring to something distinct from him: for though his name signifies a rock, or stone, and there may be some allusion to it; and he is so called because of his trust and confidence in the Lord, on whom he was built; but not because he was the foundation on which any others, and especially the whole church, were built: it is true, he may be called the foundation, as the rest of the twelve apostles of the Lamb are, Eph 2:20 without any distinction from them, and preference to them; they and he agreeing in laying doctrinally and ministerially Christ Jesus as the foundation of faith and hope, but not in such sense as he is; neither he, nor they, are the foundation on which the church is built, which is Christ, and him only. Moreover, what is said to Peter in these, and the following words, is not said to him personally and separately from the rest of the apostles, but is designed for them, as well as him, as appears by comparing them with Mt 18:18. As he spoke in the name of them all, to Christ; so Christ spake to him, including them all. Peter had no preeminence over the rest of the apostles, which he neither assumed, nor was it granted; nor would it ever have been connived at by Christ, who often showed his resentment at such a spirit and conduct, whenever there was any appearance of it in any of them; see Mt 18:1 and though Peter, with James, and John, had some particular favours bestowed on him by Christ; as to be at the raising of Jairus's daughter, and at the transfiguration of Christ on the mount, and with him in the garden; and he appeared to him alone after his resurrection, and before he was seen by the rest of the disciples; yet in some things he was inferior to them, being left to deny his Lord and master, they did not; and upon another account is called Satan by Christ, which they never were; not to mention other infirmities of his, which show he is not the rock: and, after all, what is this to the pope of Rome, who is no successor of Peter's? Peter, as an apostle, had no successor in his office; nor was he bishop of Rome; nor has the pope of Rome either his office, or his doctrine: but here, by the rock, is meant, either the confession of faith made by Peter; not the act, nor form, but the matter of it, it containing the prime articles of Christianity, and which are as immovable as a rock; or rather Christ himself, who points, as it were, with his finger to himself, and whom Peter had made such a glorious confession of; and who was prefigured

by the rock the Israelites drank water out of in the wilderness; and is comparable to any rock for height, shelter, strength, firmness, and duration; and is the one and only foundation of his church and people, and on whom their security, salvation, and happiness entirely depend. Christ is a rock that is higher than they, where they find safety in times of distress, and the shadow of which is refreshing to them; and therefore betake themselves to him for shelter, and where they are secure from the wrath of God, and rage of men: he is the rock of ages, in whom is everlasting strength; and is the sure, firm, and everlasting foundation on which the church, and all true believers, are laid: he is the foundation of their faith, and hope, and everlasting happiness, and will ever continue; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The Jews speak of the gates of hell: sometimes of the gate of hell, in the singular number⁹⁰⁰; and sometimes of the gates of hell, in the plural number. They say⁹⁰¹, that

שְׁלֹשָׁה פְּתוּחֵי יַם לְגִיהֵנּוּם, "hell has three gates", one in the wilderness, one in the sea, and one in Jerusalem."

They talk⁹⁰² of

לְ חַרְיֵן דְּגִיהֵנּוּם, "an angel that is appointed over the gates of hell", whose name is Samriel; who has three keys in his hands, and opens three doors."

And elsewhere⁹⁰³ they say, that

"he that is appointed over hell his name is Dumah, and many myriads of destroying angels are with him, and he stands דְּגִיהֵנּוּם לְ פִתְחוֹת "at the gate of hell"; and all those that keep the holy covenant in this world, he has no power to bring them in.

"Our Lord may allude to these notions of the Jews, and his sense be, that all the infernal principalities and powers, with all their united cunning and strength, will never be able to extirpate his Gospel, to destroy his interest, to demolish his church in general, or ruin anyone particular soul that is built upon him. Again, the gates of "Hades", or hell, sometimes seem to design no other than the gates of death, and the grave, and persons going into the state of death; see Job 38:17 where the Septuagint use the same phrase as here; and then the sense is,

900 T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 39. 1. Succa, fol. 32. 2. Bava Bathra, fol. 84. 1.

901 T. Bab. Erubin, fol. 19. 1. Menasseh ben Israel, Nishmat Chayim, fol. 33. 1, 2.

902 Zohar in Gen. fol. 47. 4.

903 Ib. fol. 7. 1.

that neither death, nor the grave, shall finally, and totally prevail over the people of God, and members of Christ; but they shall be raised out of such a state, and live gloriously with him for ever. By it here is not meant Peter himself; though it is true of him, that Satan, and his posse of devils that beset him, did not prevail against him, so as to destroy his grace, hurt his estate, and hinder his salvation: nor could death, in all its frightful appearances, deter him from holding, and preaching, and maintaining the doctrine of Christ; and though death, and the grave, have now power over him, yet they shall not always detain him: but rather, it designs the doctrine Peter made a confession of; which, though it may be opposed by hell and earth, by Satan, and his emissaries, by the open force of persecutors, and the secret fraud of heretics, it may be brought into contempt by the scandalous lives of professors; and though the true professors of it may die off, yet truth itself always lives, and defies the power of death, and the grave: or else the church in general is meant, and every true believer. These words do not ascertain the continuance of anyone particular congregated church, but secures the church universal, which will continue as long as the sun and moon endure, and the perseverance of everyone of God's elect; and assure that death, and the grave, shall not always have the dominion over the saints, but that they shall be rescued from them. Once more, this "it" may refer to Christ the rock, who, though he was brought to the dust of death, by the means of Satan, and the powers of darkness, yet to the ruin of him that had the power of death; and though death, and the grave, had power over him for a while, yet could not hold him; he rose victorious over them, and ever lives, having the keys of hell and death, to open the gates thereof, and let his people out when he thinks fit.

Matthew 16:19

Ver. 19. **And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven,**

By the kingdom of heaven is meant the Gospel, which comes from heaven, declares the king Messiah to be come, speaks of things concerning his kingdom, is the means of setting it up, and enlarging it, displays the riches of his grace, and gives an account of the kingdom of heaven, and of persons' right unto it, and meetness for it. "The keys" of it are abilities to open and explain the Gospel truths, and a mission and commission from Christ to make use of them; and being said to be given to Peter particularly, denotes his after qualifications, commis-

sion, work, and usefulness in opening the door of faith, or preaching the Gospel first to the Jews, Ac 2:1 and then to the Gentiles, Ac 10:1 and who was the first that made use of the keys of evangelical knowledge with respect to both, after he, with the rest of the apostles, had received an enlarged commission to preach the Gospel to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. Otherwise these keys belonged to them all alike; for to the same persons the keys, and the use of them, appertained, on whom the power of binding and loosing was bestowed; and this latter all the disciples had, as is manifest from Mt 18:18 wherefore this does not serve to establish the primacy and power of Peter over the rest of the apostles; nor do keys design any lordly domination or authority; nor did Christ allow of any such among his apostles; nor is it his will that the ministers of his word should lord it over his heritage: he only is king of saints, and head of his church; he has the key of David, with which he opens, and no man shuts, and shuts, and no man opens; and this he keeps in his own hand, and gives it to none. Peter is not the door-keeper of heaven to let in, nor keep out, whom he pleases; nor has his pretended successor the keys of hell and death; these also are only in Christ's hands: though it has been said of the pope of Rome, that if he sends millions of men to hell, none should say to him, what dost thou? but the keys here mentioned are the keys of the kingdom of heaven; or of the Gospel, which was shut up in the Jewish nation, through the ignorance, malice, and calumnies of the Scribes and Pharisees, who would neither embrace it, or enter into the kingdom of God themselves, nor suffer others that were going to enter into it; and through their taking away the key of knowledge, or the right interpretation of the word of God; and through a judicial blindness, which that nation in general was given up to: and this was shut up to the Gentiles through the natural darkness that was spread over them, and through want of a divine revelation, and persons sent of God to instruct them: but now Christ was about, and in a little time he would (for these words, with what follow, are in the future tense) give his apostles both a commission and gifts, qualifying them to open the sealed book of the Gospel, and unlock the mysteries of it, both to Jews and Gentiles, especially the latter. Keys are the ensigns of treasurers, and of stewards, and such the ministers of the Gospel are; they have the rich treasure of the word under their care, put into their earthen vessels to open and lay before others; and they are stewards of the mysteries and manifold grace of God, and of these things they have the keys. So that these words have nothing to do with church pow-

er and government in Peter, nor in the pope, nor in any other man, or set of men whatever; nor to be understood of church censures, excommunications, admissions, or exclusions of members: nor indeed are keys of any such similar use; they serve for locking and unlocking doors, and so for keeping out those that are without, and retaining those that are within, but not for the expulsion of any: but here they are used in a figurative sense, for the opening and explaining the truths of the Gospel, for which Peter had excellent gifts and abilities.

And whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.

This also is not to be understood of binding, or loosing men's sins, by laying on, or taking off censures, and excommunications; but only of doctrines, or declarations of what is lawful and unlawful, free, or prohibited to be received, or practised; in which sense the words, *וּמָהֵר אָרֶר*, "bound and loosed", are used in the Talmudic writings, times without number, for that which is forbidden and declared to be unlawful, and for that which is free of use, and pronounced to be so: in multitudes of places we read of one Rabbirowa, "binding", and of another *מְהֵר* "loosing"; thousands, and ten thousands of instances of this kind might be produced; a whole volume of extracts on this head might be compiled. Dr. Lightfoot has transcribed a great many, sufficient to satisfy any man, and give him the true sense of these phrases; and after him to mention any other is needless; yet give me leave to produce one, as it is short, and full, and explains these phrases, and points at the persons that had this power, explaining Ec 12:11 and that clause in it, "masters of the assemblies"

"these (say they ⁹⁰⁴) are the disciples of the wise men, who sit in different collections, and study in the law; these pronounce things or persons defiled, and these pronounce things or persons clean, *הַלְלִיאוּרֵי וְהַלְלֵנּוּ מִתּוֹרֵי*, "these bind, and these loose"; these reject, or pronounce persons or things profane, and these declare them right."

And a little after,

"get thyself an heart to hear the words of them that pronounce unclean, and the words of them that pronounce clean; the words of them *נִירוּ*, that "bind", and the words of them *מְהֵרֵי* that "loose"; the words of them that reject, and the words of them that declare it right"

904 T. Bab. Chagiga, fol. 3. 2.

But Christ gave a greater power of binding and loosing, to his disciples, than these men had, and which they used to better purpose. The sense of the words is this, that Peter, and so the rest of the apostles, should be empowered with authority from him, and so directed by his Holy Spirit, that whatever they bound, that is, declared to be forbidden, and unlawful, should be so: and that whatever they loosed, that is, declared to be lawful, and free of use, should be so; and accordingly they bound some things which before were loosed, and loosed some things which before were bound; for instance, they bound, that is, prohibited, or declared unlawful, the use of circumcision, which before, and until the death of Christ, was enjoined the natural seed of Abraham; but that, and all ceremonies, being abolished by the death of Christ, they declared it to be nothing, and of no avail, yea, hurtful and pernicious; that whoever was circumcised, Christ profited him nothing, and that he was a debtor to do the whole law: they affirmed, that the believing Gentiles were not to be troubled with it; that it was a yoke not fit to be put upon their necks, which they, and their fathers, were not able to bear, Ga 5:1. They bound, or forbid the observance of days, months, times, and years; the keeping holy days, new moons, and sabbaths, which had been used in the Jewish church for ages past; such as the first day of the new year, and of every month, the day of atonement, the feasts of the passover, pentecost, and tabernacles, the jubilee year, the sabbatical year, and seventh day sabbath, Ga 4:9. They loosed, or declared lawful and free, both civil and religious conversation between Jews and Gentiles; whereas, before, the Jews had no dealings with the Gentiles, nor would not enter into their houses, nor keep company with them, would have no conversation with them; neither eat, nor drink with them; but now it was determined and declared, that no man should be called common, or unclean; and that in Christ Jesus, and in his church, there is no distinction of Jew and Gentile, Ac 10:28. They also loosed, or pronounced lawful, the eating of any sort of food, without distinction, even that which was before counted common and unclean, being persuaded by the Lord Jesus Christ, by the words he said, Mt 15:11. They asserted, that there is nothing unclean of itself; and that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; or that true religion does not lie in the observance of those things; that every creature of God is good, and fit for food, and nothing to be refused, or abstained from, on a religious account, provided it be received with thanksgiving, Ro 14:14. And these things now being by them bound or loosed, pronounced unlawful or lawful,

are confirmed as such by the authority of God, and are so to be considered by us.

Matthew 16:20

Ver. 20. **Then charged he his disciples,**

When Peter had so freely and fully confessed him to be the Messiah, and which was the sense of all the disciples; and when Christ had expressed his approbation of his confession, and had promised such great and excellent things upon it, he gave a strict charge unto his disciples,

that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

The word Jesus is not in some copies; and is left out in the Syriac, Arabic, and Persic versions; nor does it seem absolutely necessary; it was enough to charge them to tell no man that he was the Messiah: his reasons for it might be, lest his enemies, the Scribes and Pharisees, should be the more provoked and incensed against him, and seek his death before his time; and lest the jealousy of the Romans should be stirred up, who might fear he would set up himself against Caesar, as king of the Jews, which might lead them to take measures obstructive of his further designs; and lest some persons, hearing of this, should rise and proclaim him king of the Jews, who were big with the notion of the Messiah being a temporal prince: and moreover, because the disciples were to attest the truth of this after his resurrection; and he chose, for the present, that the people should collect this from his own ministry and miracles, which were sufficient to lead them into the knowledge of it, without any declarations of their's: and though they were possessed of true faith in him, as such, for themselves, as yet they had not the gifts and abilities to defend those doctrines respecting his person, and his offices, they had after the Spirit was poured down upon them.

Matthew 16:21

Ver. 21. **From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples,**

From the time that Peter made the confession concerning Jesus, as that he was the Messiah, and Son of God, and which things were clear to all the apostles, he began to teach them more expressly, and to point out to them more clearly, and plainly, his sufferings and death, than he had done before: and this he chose to do now, partly because that their faith in him was well grounded and established, so that they were the better able to bear these things he told them, which before might have been more staggering and discouraging to them; and

partly, that being forewarned of them, they would not be so shocking when they came to pass: as also to destroy all their expectations of a temporal kingdom, which they might now be big with, he having so fully and freely owned himself to be the Messiah: and this also furnishes out some reasons why Jesus would not have his disciples, for the present, declare him to be the Messiah, that his death might not, by any means, be prevented, which was so necessary; since, should the princes of the world know him, they would not crucify him: and besides, seeing he was to suffer, and die, and rise again for the salvation of his people, it was proper that all this should be over before he was so publicly declared to be the Messiah, the Saviour, and Redeemer.

How that he must go to Jerusalem:

the metropolis of the nation, where the great sanhedrim sat, who only could take cognizance of him, under the imputation of a false prophet, and condemn him to death, and which therefore would be in the most public manner; and though it would add to his reproach, would leave no room to be doubted of. The word “must”, not only belongs to his going to Jerusalem, but to his sufferings, death, and resurrection; all which must be because of the immutable decree of God, the council, and covenant of grace, and peace, the prophecies of the Old Testament, and the redemption and salvation of God's elect; these required them, and made them absolutely necessary:

and suffer many things of the elders, chief priests, and Scribes:

who would lie in wait for him, send persons to apprehend him, insult, reproach, and despitefully use him; load him with false charges, accusations, and calumnies, and deliver him to the Gentiles, to be mocked, scourged, and crucified: and this is aggravated as what would be done to him, not by the common people, or the dregs of them, but by the principal men of the city, by the sanhedrim, which consisted of the “elders” of the people, their senators; for this is not a name of age, but of office and dignity; and of the “chief priests”, the principal of them, those of the greatest note among them, who were chosen members of the grand council; and of “the Scribes”, a set of men in high esteem for their learning and wisdom: and be killed; signifying, that he should not die a natural death, but that his life should be taken from him in a cruel and violent manner, without any regard to law or justice; indeed, that he should be properly murdered; but for the comfort of his disciples, and that they might not be overmuch pressed and cast down, at the hearing of

these things, he adds,

and be raised again the third day

according to the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and the type of Jonas.

Matthew 16:22

Ver. 22. **Then Peter took him,....** The Arabic version reads it, “called to him”: the Ethiopic, “answered him”; and the Syriac, “led him”; he took him aside, by himself; and as the Persic version, “privately said to him”, or he took him by the hand in a familiar way, to expostulate with him, and dissuade him from thinking and talking of any such things;

and began to rebuke him:

reprove and chide him, forgetting himself and his distance; though he did it not out of passion and ill will, but out of tenderness and respect; looking upon what Christ had said, unworthy of him, and as what was scarce probable or possible should ever befall him, who was the Son of the living God, and overlooking his resurrection from the dead, and being ignorant at present of the end of Christ's coming into the world, and redemption and salvation by his sufferings and death:

saying, far be it from thee, Lord, or “Lord,

be propitious to thyself”, or “spare thyself”: the phrase answers to *dl ox*, often used by the Targumists⁹⁰⁵ and stands in the Syriac version here. The Septuagint use it in a like sense, in Ge 43:23. Some think the word “God” is to be understood, and the words to be considered, either as a wish, “God be propitious to thee”: or “spare thee”, that no such thing may ever befall thee; or as an affirmation, “God is propitious to thee”, he is not angry and displeased with thee, as ever to suffer any such thing to be done to thee: but it may very well be rendered, by “God forbid”; or as we do, “far be it from thee”, as a note of aversion, and abhorrence of the thing spoken of: this shall not be done unto thee: expressing his full assurance of it, and his resolution to do all that in him lay to hinder it: he could not see how such an innocent person could be so used by the chief men of the nation; and that the Messiah, from whom so much happiness was expected, could be treated in such a manner, and especially that the Son of the living God should be killed.

Matthew 16:23

Ver. 23. **But he turned,**

Either to Peter, changing his countenance, and looking sternly upon him, or rather to the disciples; for Mark

⁹⁰⁵ Targum Hieros. in Gen. xlix. 22. & Targum Onkelos in 1 Sam. xx. 9.

says, “when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter”: Peter had took him aside, and was arguing the case privately with him; but what he said was so offensive to him, that he chose to reprove him publicly before the disciples; and therefore turned himself from him to them, in a way of resentment,

and said unto Peter;

in their hearing, and before them all,

get thee behind me, Satan.

The Persic version renders it, O infidel! as he was at present, with respect to the sufferings, death, and resurrection of Christ: some take the word Satan, to be a general name for an adversary, or enemy, as it is used in 2Sa 19:22 and think that Christ calls Peter by this name, because he was against him, and opposed him in this point; which sense abates the harshness of this expression. But it seems rather to mean the devil, who took the advantage of Peter's weakness and ignorance; and put him upon dissuading Christ from suffering, for the salvation of his people: though it should be known, that the word Satan, is used by the Jews⁹⁰⁶, to signify the vitiosity and corruption of nature; of which they say, שטן הוא, this is Satan; so the messenger, or angel Satan, 2Co 12:7 may be thought to be the same; See Gill on “2Co 12:7” And then our Lord's sense is, be gone from me, I cannot bear the sight of thee; thou art under the influence of the corruption of thy heart, and nature; thou talkest like a carnal, and not like a spiritual man; and therefore Christ denominates him from his carnality, Satan, one of the names of the vitiosity of nature, whom a little before he had pronounced blessed; being then under the influence of another spirit, as appeared from the noble confession of his faith in Christ: this change shows the weakness of human nature, the strength of corruption, the inconsistency and fickleness of frames, and the imperfection of grace in the best of saints.

Thou art an offence unto me;

or a stumbling block to me, a cause of stumbling and failing; not that he really was, but he endeavoured to be, and was as much as in him lay; and had he given heed unto him, would have been so. It may be observed, that nothing was more offensive to Christ, than to endeavour to divert him from the work his farther called him to; he had agreed to do; what he came into this world for, and his heart was so much set upon; namely, to suffer and die in the room of his people, in order to obtain salvation for them: never were such words uttered by him, and such

⁹⁰⁶ T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 16. 1. Tzeror Hammor, fol. 6. 2, 3. & passim.

resentment shown to any, but to the devil himself, when he tempted him to worship him.

For thou savourest not the things that be of God; meaning his sufferings and death, which were the appointment of God, the counsel of his will, the provision of his covenant; what he foretold in the prophecies of the Old Testament, and what he had an hand in, and in which the glory of his grace, power, and justice, was concerned, and were the end of the mission of his Son into this world; which things were out of sight and mind, and were not regarded by the apostle at this time;

but those that be of men:

he thought of nothing but worldly grandeur in the kingdom of the Messiah, as a temporal prince and Saviour; and of the continuance of Christ's natural life, for his own carnal and worldly advantage; which showed him to be, at this time, greatly under the influence of corrupt nature. So, though the blood, righteousness, sacrifice, and death of Christ, are savoury things, things to be savoured, minded, and regarded by believers, and accounted precious; and they do mind them, so the word signifies, Ro 8:5 when being blessed with a spiritual and experimental knowledge, and application of them to themselves, they exercise faith, hope, and love upon Christ, with respect unto them; when they remember them aright in the ordinance of the supper, the love from whence they spring, and the benefits that come hereby; and when they discern the Lord's body in it, a crucified Jesus, and the blessings of grace which come by him, and ascribe their whole salvation to his sufferings and death, and taste the sweetness there is in these things, eating his flesh and drinking his blood by faith; yet being left to themselves, they do not savour, mind, and regard these things, but carnal things, and human schemes; as when they are dilatory to profess a crucified Christ, and submit to those ordinances of his, which set forth his sufferings and death; or are negligent in their attendance on them, their place being often empty at supper time; or if they do attend, their hearts go after other things.

Matthew 16:24

Ver. 24. **Then said Jesus unto his disciples,**

Knowing that they had all imbibed the same notion of a temporal kingdom, and were in expectation of worldly riches, honour, and pleasure; he took this opportunity of preaching the doctrine of the cross to them, and of letting them know, that they must prepare for persecutions, sufferings, and death; which they must expect to endure, as well as he, if they would be his disciples:

if any man will come after me:

that is, be a disciple and follower of him, it being usual for the master to go before, and the disciple to follow after him: now let it be who it will, rich or poor, learned or unlearned, young or old, male or female, that have any inclination and desire, or have took up a resolution in the strength of grace, to be a disciple of Christ,

let him deny himself:

let him deny sinful self, ungodliness, and worldly lusts; and part with them, and his former sinful companions, which were as a part of himself: let him deny righteous self, and renounce all his own works of righteousness, in the business of justification and salvation; let him deny himself the pleasures and profits of this world, when in competition with Christ; let him drop and banish all his notions and expectations of an earthly kingdom, and worldly grandeur, and think of nothing but reproach, persecution, and death, for the sake of his Lord and Master: and

take up his cross;

cheerfully receive, and patiently bear, every affliction and evil, however shameful and painful it may be, which is appointed for him, and he is called unto; which is his peculiar cross, as every Christian has his own; to which he should quietly submit, and carry, with an entire resignation to the will of God, in imitation of his Lord:

and follow me;

in the exercise of grace, as humility, zeal, patience, and self-denial; and in the discharge of every duty, moral, or evangelical; and through sufferings and death, to his kingdom and glory. The allusion is, to Christ's bearing his own cross, and Simeon's carrying it after him, which afterwards came to pass.

Matthew 16:25

Ver. 25. **For whosoever will save his life,**

Whoever is desirous of preserving himself from troubles, reproaches, persecutions, and death; and takes such a method to do it, as by forsaking Christ, denying his Gospel, and dropping his profession of it; and by so doing, curries favour with men, in order to procure to himself worldly emoluments, honour, peace, pleasure, and life,

shall lose it;

he will expose himself to the wrath of God, to everlasting punishment, the destruction of soul and body in hell, which is the second death, and will be his portion:

and whosoever will lose his life for my sake:

that is, is willing to forego all the pleasures and com-

forts of life, and be subject to poverty and distress, and to lay down life itself, for the sake of Christ and the Gospel, rather than deny him, and part with truth,

shall find it;

in the other world, to great advantage; he shall enjoy an immortal and eternal life, free from all uneasiness and affliction, and full of endless joys and pleasures.

Matthew 16:26

Ver. 26. **For what is a man profited,**

Such persons, though they are only seeking their own profit, will find themselves most sadly mistaken; for of what advantage will it be to such a man,

if he shall gain the whole world;

all that is precious and valuable in it; all the power, pleasures, and riches of it; if with Alexander, he had the government of the whole world, and with Solomon, all the delights of it; and was possessed with the wealth of Croesus, and Crassus,

and lose his own soul?

If that should be consigned to everlasting torment and misery, be banished the divine presence, and continually feel the gnawings of the worm of conscience that never dies, and the fierceness of the fire of God's wrath, that shall never be quenched, he will have a miserable bargain of it.

Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Or, "for the redemption" of it, as the Ethiopic version renders it: see Ps 49:8. If he had the whole world to give, and would give it, it would not be a sufficient ransom for it; the redemption of an immortal soul requires a greater price than gold and silver, or any corruptible thing; nothing short of the blood and life of Christ, is a proper exchange, or ransom price for it. But in the other world there will be no redemption; the loss of a soul is irrecoverable: a soul once lost and damned, can never be retrieved. This passage is thought to be proverbial; what comes nearest to it, is the following⁹⁰⁷."

If a scholar dies, we never find an exchange for him; there are four things which are the ministry or service of the world, אַמ אַבְדוּ יֵשׁ חַלִּיפִינִי, if they are lost, they may be changed; and they are these, gold, silver, iron, and brass, Job 28:1 but if a scholar dies, wtrwmt wnlaybm ym, who will bring us his exchange? or an exchange for him: we lost R. Simon, "who will bring us his exchange?"

Matthew 16:27

907 Midrash Kohelet, fol. 72. 3, 4. T. Hieros. Beracot, fol. 5. 3.

Ver. 27. **For the son of man shall come in the glory of his Father,**

This is a reason, proving the truth of what is before asserted, that men's lives may be lost by saving them, and be found by losing them, whatever paradoxes they may seem to be; and that the loss of a soul is irrecoverable, and no compensation can be made for it; and points out the time, when all this will appear: for nothing is more certain, and to be depended upon, than that Christ, who, though he was then a mean and contemptible man, and attended with the sinless infirmities of human nature, wherefore he calls himself, "the son of man", should come; either a second time to judgment at the last day, in the same glory as his Father, as his Son, equal with him, and clothed, with power and authority from him, and as mediator, to execute judgment: with his angels; the Holy Ones, so the Syriac and Persic versions read, and so some copies; who will add to the glory of his appearance; and will be employed in gathering all nations before him, and in executing his will: or, in his power, to take vengeance on the Jewish nation; on those that crucified him, or did not believe in him, or deserted and apostatised from him. And then he shall reward every man according to his works, or work; either that particular action of putting him to death, or their unbelief in him, or desertion of him; or any, or all of their evil works, they had been guilty of: for though good works are not the cause of salvation, nor for which men will be rewarded; though they may be brought into judgment, as proofs and evidences of true faith, in the person, blood, and righteousness of Christ, by which good men will be acquitted and discharged; yet evil works will be the cause of condemnation, and the rule of judgment; and the reason of adjudging to temporal punishment here, and eternal destruction hereafter.

Matthew 16:28

Ver. 28. **Verily I say unto you**

This is a strong asseveration, Christ puts his "Amen" to it; declaring it to be a certain truth, which may firmly be believed:

there be some standing here;

meaning either his disciples, or some of the audience; for it is clear from Mark 8:34 that the people were called unto him with his disciples, when he said these words: which shall not taste of death: that is, shall not die; a phrase frequently used by the Jewish doctors: they say⁹⁰⁸,"All the children of the world, טַמְּיִן טַמְּא דְמוֹתָא, "taste the

908 Zohar in Gen. fol. 27. 4. & 37. 1. & in Exod. fol. 19.

taste of death.” That is, die: till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom; which is not to be understood of his personal coming in his kingdom in the last day, when he will judge quick and dead; for it cannot be thought, that any then present should live to that time, but all tasted of death long before, as they have done; for the story of John’s being alive, and to live till then, is fabulous, and grounded on a mistake which John himself has rectified at the close of his Gospel: nor of the glorious transfiguration of Christ, the account of which immediately follows; when he was seen by Peter, James, and John, persons now present; for that, at most, was but an emblem and a pledge of his future glory: rather, of the appearance of his kingdom, in greater glory and power, upon his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension to heaven; when the Spirit was poured down in an extraordinary manner, and the Gospel was preached all over the world; was confirmed by signs and wonders, and made effectual to the conversion and salvation of many souls; which many then present lived to see, and were concerned in: though it seems chiefly to have regard to his coming, to show his regal power and authority in the destruction of the Jews; when those his enemies that would not he should reign over them, were ordered to be brought and slain before him; and this the Apostle John, for one, lived to be a witness of.

Matthew Chapter 17

Matthew 17:1

Ver. 1 **And after six days,**

That is, so long after Christ’s conversation with his disciples at Caesarea Philippi, Peter’s confession of him, and the reproof he gave him, upon his intimating that he should suffer and die, and Christ’s resentment of it; after he had discoursed about his disciples taking up their cross, and following him; and of men’s losing and finding their lives; and after the promise, or prophecy, that he had given out, that some then present should not die, until he came into his kingdom. Mark says the same as here, Mark 9:2 but Luke 9:28 says, it was about an eight days after, which may be reconciled in this manner; Matthew and Mark leave out the day in which Christ delivered the above sayings, and that in which he was transfigured, and so reckon but six days; and Luke takes them both into the account, and makes it eight days, so that they all agree; and it appears, in short, to be that day seven night.

2. & in Num. fol. 50. 4. & 51. 2. 4. Vid. Bereshit Rabba, sect. 9. fol. 7. 3, 4. Midrash Kohelet, fol. 83. 2.

Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother:

Peter is taken, though he had so lately offended his master; Christ did not bear the offence in mind, but freely forgave him, and still loved him: James was not the brother of our Lord, who was of that name, but the Son of Zebedee; as appears from John being his brother, who was the beloved disciple; these three were all favourite disciples, and were at other times admitted to be with him, when others were not, Mt 26:37. Such a number was taken, as being proper and sufficient to bear witness of the truth of the following account of Christ’s transfiguration;

and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart.

Luke says, to pray; as he was wont to do, in such places. This mountain is generally said to be Tabor; but for what reason does not appear. Christ was going to Caesarea Philippi, when he had that discourse with his disciples, which this account is connected with; and though it was a week after, yet we have no intimation of his removing from these parts, with his disciples; only of his leading them up into a mountain: and quickly after this, we hear of him at Capernaum, which was ten miles from Mount Tabor. Dr. Lightfoot {z} thinks, that this was the mountain, which Caesarea was at the foot of; where formerly, the first idolatry was set up, one of Jeroboam’s calves; and now the eternal Son of God is shown, in the confession of Peter, and in the illustrious demonstration of the Messiah. Since the goodly mountain Lebanon, and which was a very high one, was in those parts which Moses had a sight of before he died; why may it not be that, which he now descended upon, to be one of the witnesses from heaven, of Christ’s transfiguration?

Matthew 17:2

Ver. 2. **And was transfigured before them,**

Peter, James, and John, before whom he was metamorphosed, or changed into another form; for not the substance of his body was changed, nor even the shape of it altered, only it received a more glorious form; that whereas before he appeared in the form of a servant, and looked mean and despicable, now he appeared in the form and majesty of God; or there was a divine glory; which from his deity showed itself in a visible manner through his flesh:

and his face did shine as the sun

it had still the same appearance of an human face, but had such a dazzling glory upon it, as equalled the sun shining in its full strength:

and his raiment was white as the light: he did not

put off his clothes, nor were the nature and substance, and fashion of them changed; but such rays of glory darted through his flesh, and through his clothes, as made them as bright and shining, as the light of the sun at noon day. Mark says, they became “exceeding white as snow, so as no fuller on earth can white them”. The Vulgate Latin reads, “as snow”, here; and so do the Ethiopic version, and Munster’s Hebrew Gospel. Snow has a peculiar whiteness in it, and is therefore made use of, to express the glittering brightness of Christ’s raiment; and the fuller is mentioned, who by the Jews⁹⁰⁹ is called obwk, and means one that whitens wool, or raiment, and such an one is here designed: not that any fuller makes garments of another colour white; for though this may be done, it is not the work of fullers, but dyers: but fullers, whatever colour garments are of, if sullied and spotted, can restore them to their native colour; and if white, can bring them to their former whiteness: now Christ’s garments were as white, yea, whiter, than any such men could possibly make garments, that were white at first: what colour Christ’s garments were of before, is not certain; now they appeared white, to the greatest degree of whiteness. Dr. Hammond⁹¹⁰ has a conjecture, that in the phrase “on earth”, reference is had to the earth fullers make use of in cleaning, and which is called “fullers’ earth”; and that the words are to be rendered, “as no fuller, by or with earth can white them”; but if this will not bear, the sense is, that there is no fuller, nor ever was, or ever will be upon earth, that can make raiment so white as Christ’s was.

Matthew 17:3

Ver. 3. **And behold there appeared unto them,**

The disciples:

Moses and Elias;

Moses the giver of the law, and Elias one of the chief of the prophets: one of them had been dead near a thousand and five hundred years, and the other had been caught up to heaven, about nine hundred years before this. The Jews sometimes speak of these two as together. They say⁹¹¹,

“that the Shekinah never descends below, but whylaw hvm, “Moses and Elias” ascend above.”

Yea, they expect that these two will come together in future time; for so they represent⁹¹² a God saying to Moses;

909 Maimon. in Misn. Bava Kama, c. 10. sect. 10,

910 In Mark ix. 3.

911 T. Bab. Succab, fol. 5. 1.

912 Debarim Rabba, sect. 3. fol. 239. 2.

“Moses, as thou hast given thy life for them (the Israelites) in this world, so in time to come (the days of the Messiah) when I shall bring Elias the prophet, שניכם באיני כאחיה, “you two shall come together”.

Now they came. Luke says, they appeared “in glory”: in glorious bodies, in a glory upon their bodies; like, though inferior, to the glorious body of Christ, now transfigured: that they appeared in their own real bodies, no doubt need be made; about the body of Elijah, or Elias, there is no difficulty; since he was carried soul and body to heaven, he died not, but was changed; and has ever since remained in a glorious body, in which he doubtless now appeared: and why this should not be the case of Moses, or why he should appear in another body, and not his own, I see not; for though he died, yet he was buried by the Lord, and no man ever knew the place of his sepulchre; and there was a dispute about his body, between Michael and the devil, all which are uncommon circumstances: so that it might be, that his body was, quickly after his death, raised and restored to him; or at this time, as a pledge of the resurrection of the dead, as Christ’s transfiguration was of his glory. The Jews have a notion that Moses is not dead, but is ascended, and stands and ministers to God, in the highest heavens⁹¹³: the appearance of these two with Christ, was to show, that Christ is the end of the law and prophets; that there is an entire agreement between him and them, and that they have their full accomplishment in him; and also shows, that he was neither Elias, nor any of the prophets, as some took him to be; since he was distinct from them, and the chief and more glorious than any of them. If it should be asked; how came the disciples to know these two to be Moses and Elias, since they never saw them before, nor could have any statues or pictures of them, these being not allowed among the Jews; nor do the accounts of them in Scripture seem to be sufficient to direct them to such a thought; especially, since by their glorification, they must be greatly altered: it may be replied, they knew them, either by immediate divine revelation, or by the discourse that passed between them and Christ; for it follows,

talking with him.

The Jews often speak of the appearance of Elias to their doctors, and of his conversing with them, and teaching them. Whether this is done with design to less-

913 T. Bab. Sota, fol. 13. 2. Maimon. praefat. ad Seder Zeraim in Talmud. fol. 86. 4. {

en the glory of this appearance, I will not say; however, they cannot reasonably object to the probability of this account, since they make it to be so frequent among themselves; though they look upon it as an high favour, and that such are holy good men, that are indulged with it, take an instance or two: thus they say ⁹¹⁴ of a certain person,

“Lo! the pious man, whom Elias used hydhb yet-vm, “to converse with.”

And elsewhere it is said ⁹¹⁵,

“R. Phineas and R. Mari, the sons of R. Chasda, were godly men, Mhme rbdm whylaw, “and Elias was talking with them”, and they were priests.”

What Moses and Elias were talking with our Lord about, is expressed by Luke, See Gill on “Luke 9:31”.

Matthew 17:4

Ver. 4. **Then answered Peter and said unto Jesus**

Which was, as Luke informs us, after he, and James, and John, awoke out of sleep; for it being night when Christ was transfigured, and they weary, were overpressed, and fell asleep on the mount, as they afterwards did in the garden with him: but when they were awaked, either by the talk of the men with Christ, or by the rays of brightness and glory, which darted from them, and especially from Christ, to their great surprise; they saw the glory that was upon him, and observed the two men that were with him, who appeared also in glorious forms; whom either by revelation, or the sequel of their discourse, they knew to be Moses and Elias: and just as these were taking their leave of Christ, Peter, charmed with such objects, and with such delightful company, and pleasant conversation, he had the happiness of hearing part of, addresses himself to Christ and says,

Lord, it is good for us to be here;

in this mountain, with thyself and such company; better than to be below among the throng and multitude, where nothing but misery and distress are to be seen, and noise and tumult heard; or it is better to be here, than to go to Jerusalem, and there suffer and die; the horror of which, is thought by some, still to abide on Peter’s mind.

If thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles:

tents, or booths, such as were made, at the feast of tabernacles, of boughs and branches of trees, to keep off heat, cold, and rains:

one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias; Luke adds, “not knowing what he said”; and Mark, “for he wist not what to say”: the one representing him, as with the rapture and surprise, not himself; and the other, under the awe and dread of such majesty, as at the utmost loss what to say, agreeably to such a situation of things: not but that he knew what words he did deliver, and with what view; but he spake as a mistaken man, being ignorant of the design of this appearance; which was, not that this glory should continue, only that he should be an emblem and pledge of what was future; and besides, he was wrong in putting these two men upon an equal foot with Christ, each of them being to have a separate tabernacle as he; and he appeared to be quite out of the way, in proposing earthly tabernacles for glorified persons to dwell in, who had an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens: moreover, as to the mystical sense, Moses and Elias, the law and the prophets, were not to be considered as in distinct apartments, and separate from Christ, but as agreeing with him, and fulfilled and swallowed up in him; who only, according to the voice that followed, was to be heard and attended to, and not they, as distinct from him.

Matthew 17:5

Ver. 5. **While he yet spake,**

That is, while Peter was proposing the above to Christ, before an answer could be given by him, and which was unworthy of one, another scene of things presents, and a full answer is returned him by a voice from the Father; directing him and his fellow disciples, to attend to Jesus only, and not to Moses and Elias;

and behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them;

that is, Jesus, Moses, and Elias; the two last of which were seen no more; and which cloud covered them, as the cloud of glory covered the Israelites in the wilderness: and which, as it ceased at the death of Moses, the first prophet; one like unto it appeared at the declaration of Christ, as the greater prophet, spoken of, and typified by Moses. The disciples at its first appearance were not under it, and overshadowed by it; for Luke adds, “and they feared as they entered into the cloud”; there was such a solemnity and glory in it, as struck their minds with awe and fear, as they gradually came into it, and under it. This cloud, which is said to be a “bright” one, was a symbol of the divine presence, and a token of the love, grace, and favour of God; and expressive of the brightness and clearness of the Gospel dispensation, in distinction from the obscurity of the legal one, signified

⁹¹⁴ T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 7. 2.

⁹¹⁵ Juchasin, fol. 101. 1. Vid. fol. 79. 1. & 118. 2. & 132. 1. & T. Bab. Cetubot, fol. 106. 1.

by the thick, dark, and black cloud, God descended in on Mount Sinai, when he gave the law;

and behold, a voice out of the cloud.

The word “behold”, is prefixed both to the cloud and to the voice out of it, which were both wonderful and surprising; and which voice came from heaven, and from the excellent glory, from God the Father in heaven: as says Peter, who was now present, 2Pe 1:17. Which said,

this is my beloved Son;

not a servant, as Moses, Elias, and the rest of the prophets were: though as Mediator, and as considered in his office capacity, he was a servant; but in this clause, he is considered in his personal character and relation to the Father, as a divine person, who was the Son of God: not by creation, as angels and men are the sons of God; nor by adoption, as saints are; or on account of his miraculous incarnation, and resurrection from the dead; whereby indeed, he was manifested and declared to be the Son of God, which he was before; but on account of his natural relation to God, as his Father; he being the eternal, essential, and only begotten Son of God, in a way of filiation no creature is, and which, is ineffable by us. And as such he is dearly beloved of God his Father, being his image and the brightness of his glory; of the same nature and perfections with him, and equal to him. So he ever was, and will be, and that even in the meanest form and lowest condition, in which he has appeared: he was his beloved Son, when he was made flesh and dwelt among men, while submitting to ordinances, as to baptism, and obeying his Father’s will, when covered with reproach, and full of sorrows; when he hung upon the cross, and laid down his life for his people; which he showed, by concealing nothing from him; by putting all things into his hands, and by appointing him the head of the church, the Saviour of the body, and the judge of quick and dead.

In whom I am well pleased:

Mark and Luke have not this clause, but Peter, who was present, and heard the words spoken, mentions it, 2Pe 1:17 which confirms Matthew’s relation. This regards, not so much the well pleasedness of God with the person of Christ, which is expressed in the former clause; but signifies that he was in him, as Mediator, well pleased with all his people; he was well pleased with his righteousness he was working out, whereby the law was magnified, and made honourable; and with the sacrifice he was about to offer up, which would be of a sweet smelling savour to him, his justice being entirely satisfied with it; and with all he did and suffered in human nature; which were things that always pleased the Father, being

according to his will, his counsel and covenant: and so he graciously accepted of, and was infinitely well pleased with all his elect, as considered in him, and represented by him, on account of his righteousness, sacrifice, and satisfaction:

hear ye him;

as the former clause chiefly respects that part of his mediatorial office, the priestly, this regards his prophetic office principally, and also his kingly office; so that in this divine testimony, first his sonship is bore witness to, and then his several offices; which his sonship is the foundation of, and qualifies him to bear and execute. This clause has the very words which Moses delivered, when he spoke of the Messiah, the great prophet like unto himself, that should be raised up among the Jews; saying, “unto him ye shall hearken”, De 18:15. So that these words, “hear ye him”, most clearly point to Christ, as being this prophet, who is to be heard, and he only; not Moses, but he, the prophet Moses prophesied of; nor Elias, or any of the other prophets, but one greater than them all: hear and believe his prophecies, concerning his sufferings, death, and resurrection, lately delivered by him; listen to, and embrace his doctrines, as coming from God, and as having a divine impress upon them, and being confirmed by miraculous works; submit to his ordinances, and obey his commands, as king of saints; hear him always, and in all things.

Matthew 17:6

Ver. 6. **And when the disciples heard it,**

The voice out of the cloud, and which they apprehended came from God, and was uttered with so much majesty:

they fell on their face:

not so much out of reverence, or for the sake of adoration, but as persons struck with astonishment and fear, and were as half dead; and so fell with their faces fiat to the ground, not being able to stand before God, to behold his majesty, and hear his voice:

and were sore afraid:

they were filled with fear, when, awaking out of their sleep, they saw the surprising glory of Christ, and of the two men that were with him, insomuch that they knew not what to think, or say; and so they were when they entered into the cloud, and still more upon hearing the voice of God himself, even though it was a voice of love, grace, and mercy; see De 5:24. But yet they were not struck with so much amazement and surprise, as not to know what was said; for they distinctly heard the words,

rightly understood, and faithfully related them; from whom the evangelists had them, and which Peter perfectly remembered, and recorded many years after.

Matthew 17:7

Ver. 7. **And Jesus came and touched them,**

The disciples were at some little distance from Christ, but he observing the fear and surprise they were in, came to their relief and assistance; which he did not disdain to give, notwithstanding the glory he was covered with; but acts the part of a mediator between God and them, and lays hold on them to raise them up, whom the majesty of God's voice had cast down: the Persic version renders it, "he came and brought them to themselves"; who were just fainting and swooning away, at the awfulness of the voice:

and said, arise, and be not afraid:

it is not the voice of an angry God, but of God well pleased with me, and in me with you; it is the voice of my God, and your God, of my Father, and your Father; arise, stand on your feet, take heart, and be of good courage, no hurt will come to you.

Matthew 17:8

Ver. 8. **And when they had lift up their eyes,**

And "looked round about", as Mark says, to see whether the same objects still continued, as Moses and Elias; and the bright cloud:

they saw no man;

neither Moses nor Elias, who were both gone: signifying, that though the law and the prophets were till this time, they were now finished and completed, and the Mosaic economy was to be no more; as these men appeared no more after, nor will they till the second coming of Christ. And Mark has it, "they saw no man any more"; that is, these men any more, neither then, nor afterwards, "save Jesus only". Mark adds, "with themselves"; in the same form as before his transfiguration. Christ is the only Mediator, Saviour, and Redeemer; the only Prophet, Priest, and King; and who only is to be, and can be beheld as such; and who does, and will abide with his people; and helps, comforts, and saves them, when none else can. Luke observes, that "when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone"; which was so ordered, that it might be a clear case, that this voice was only concerning Christ, and not either Moses or Elias.

Matthew 17:9

Ver. 9. **And as they came down from the mountain,** Where all these things had been transacted, **Jesus charged them, saying, tell the vision to no**

man:

by the "vision" is meant, as it is explained in Mark, "what things they had seen"; as Moses and Elias, and the bright cloud that overshadowed them, and Christ transfigured before them, in a surprising, glorious manner. These Christ strictly ordered Peter, James, and John, to speak of to no man whatever; no, not their fellow disciples; who either would be apt to disbelieve them, on account of the greatness of them, as Thomas did the resurrection of Christ afterwards; or lest they should be troubled and displeased, that they were not admitted to the same sight; and especially not to the multitude, or to any other person,

until the son of man be risen again from the dead; meaning himself and his resurrection, when such proof would be given of his mission, authority, and glory, which would make this account more easy to be believed: besides, he had told the Jews, that no sign, that is, from heaven, as this voice was, should be given, but the sign of the Prophet Jonas; referring to his resurrection, which would be a sure testimony of the truth of his Messiahship. This order of Christ was strictly observed by the disciples; for Luke, says, "they kept it close"; to themselves, in their own breasts; it lay concealed between these three; "and told no man in those days, any of those things which they had seen": and Mark says, "they kept that saying within themselves"; only as he adds, they were "questioning one with another, what the rising from the dead should mean": for they were not yet reconciled to the Messiah's dying, which was contrary to their expectation of a temporal kingdom; and therefore could not tell what to make of his rising again, whether this had not some secret, mystical meaning; for of his resurrection from the dead, in a literal sense, they had no notion; though it was foretold in the writings of the Old Testament, and had been so lately affirmed by Christ himself.

Matthew 17:10

Ver. 10. **And his disciples asked him, saying,**

That is, these three, Peter, James, and John, before they came to the rest; whilst they were going down the mountain, or from it, to the place where the others were; for the rest knew nothing of the appearance of Elias, and so cannot be thought to join in a question concerning him.

Why then say the Scribes, that Elias must first come?

That is, come before the Messiah comes; for certain

it is, that this was the sense of the Scribes, as it was of the ancient Jews, and is still the opinion of the modern ones. They say ⁹¹⁶,

"that in the second year of Ahaziah, Elias was hid; nor will he appear, till the Messiah comes; then he will appear, and will be hid a second time; and then will not appear, till Gog and Magog come."

And they expressly affirm ⁹¹⁷, that

"before the coming of the son of David, rvbl whyla aby, "Elias will come to bring the good news" of it."

And this, they say ⁹¹⁸, will be one day before the coming of the Messiah. And Maimonides ⁹¹⁹ observes,

"that there are of their wise men that say, יבא אליהו יבא אלהים שְׁקוּרָם בִּיאַת הַמְּשִׁיחַ "that before the coming of the Messiah, Elias shall come."

So Trypho the Jew, the same with R. Tarphon, so often mentioned in Talmudic writings, disputing with Justin Martyr, tells him ⁹²⁰, that the Messiah,

"shall not know himself, nor have any power, mecri an elywn Hliav, "till Elias comes", and anoints him, and makes him known to all."

And hence the Targumist ⁹²¹ often speaks of Messiah and Elias as together, and of things done by them; and in their prayers, petitions are put for them, as to come together ⁹²²: this is founded upon a mistaken sense of Mal 4:5 and which is the general sense of their commentators ⁹²³. Now the Scribes made use of this popular sense, to disprove Jesus being the Messiah: they argued, that if he was the Messiah, Elias would be come; but whereas he was not come, therefore he could not be the Messiah. The disciples having just now seen Elias, are put in mind of this tenet of the Scribes, and of their use of it; and inquire of Christ, not so much about the truth of it, and the reason of their imbibing it, as why they were suffered to make use of it, to his disadvantage; and especially why they, the disciples, should be forbid publishing what they had seen; whereas, were they allowed to divulge this vision, and bear their testimony to this truth, that Elias had

⁹¹⁶ Seder Olam Rabba, p. 45, 46.

⁹¹⁷ Gloss. in T. Bab. Erubin, fol. 43. 2.

⁹¹⁸ R. Abraham ben David in Misn. Ediot, c. 8. sect. 7.

⁹¹⁹ Hilch. Melacim, c. 12. sect. 2.

⁹²⁰ Dialog. cum Tryph. p. 226.

⁹²¹ In Exod. xl. 10. Deut. xxx. 4. & Lam. iv. 22.

⁹²² Seder Tephillot, fol. 56. 2. & 128. 2.

⁹²³ Aben Ezra, Kimchi, & Abarbinel in loc.

appeared, and they had seen him, it might be a means of stopping the mouths of these Scribes; and of convicting men of the truth of the Messiahship of Jesus, upon their own principles, and of confirming them that believed it: or else the sense is, whereas they had seen Elias, and he was gone again, without making any public appearance in the nation, their question is, how came the Scribes to say, that he should come first? and if there was any truth in this, how came it to pass, that he did not come sooner, even before Christ came in the flesh; and inasmuch as he did now appear, why he did not appear more publicly, as the person that was to come, at least, before the setting up of the kingdom and glory of the Messiah; which they might hope were at hand, and that Elias was come to usher it in: but that he did not appear publicly, and they were not allowed to speak of it, they wanted to know Christ's sense of these things; and took this opportunity as they came from the mountain, to converse with him about it.

Matthew 17:11

Ver. 11. **And Jesus answered and said unto them,**

By way of concession,

Elias truly shall first come: this is indeed a tenet of the Scribes, and it is also certain, that there is a prophecy in Mal 4:5 of the coming of Elias; of one that goes under that name, not of Elias the Tishbite, in person, but of one that was to come in his power and spirit,

and restore all things.

The Syriac and Persic versions render it, "shall perfect, or complete all things", that are prophesied of him; and shall put a period to the law and the prophets, and close the Mosaic economy, and direct persons to Christ; in whom are the perfection of the law, and the fulfilling of the prophets. The Arabic version reads it, "he shall teach you all things"; the whole of the Gospel being to be reduced to these two heads, repentance towards God, and faith in Christ; both which were taught by the true Elias: but the truest sense of the phrase is to be learned out of Mal 4:6. "He shall restore, byvh, he shall turn all things, the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers"; and as this is explained in Luke 1:17 "he shall turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, and make ready a people prepared for the Lord": which is other, and better sort of work, than what the Jews assign to their Elias, whom they expect, and whom they make to be a restorer of all things, in their way: they often speak of his purifying ⁹²⁴ of things, or pronouncing

⁹²⁴ T. Bab. Chagiga, fol. 25. 1. & Becorot, fol. 33. 2. & 34.

things pure, that were defiled; and among others, that he will purify bastards, and **ישיבם**, “restore them” to the congregation of the Lord ⁹²⁵. Though Maimonides ⁹²⁶ denies, that when he comes he will pronounce defiled that which is pure, or pronounce pure, that which is defiled. They pretend ⁹²⁷, that he is now employed, and very busy, in writing everything that is done in every age; so that when he comes, he will be able to give an account of everything: and nothing is more common with them, than to say concerning any matter, that there is any doubt or difficulty about it ⁹²⁸, **יהא מונה ד שיבא אליהו**, “let it be left till Elias comes”.

Matthew 17:12

Ver. 12. **But I say unto you,**

A way of speaking used by Christ, when he opposes and contradicts any of the tenets of the Scribes and Pharisees; see Mt 5:22 “that Elias is come already”; the person that was signified by, and prophesied of, under the name of Elias: for Christ refers not to the late appearance of Elias on the mount, but to the coming of a certain person some time ago; who came in the power and spirit of Elias, and was the forerunner and harbinger of him, the Messiah; as was said of him he should, “and they knew him not”; that is, the Scribes and Pharisees, who believed that Elias would come before the Messiah; and yet when he who was designed by him was come, they knew him not, they did not know him to be the Elias; they knew him under the name of John the Baptist, and seemed pleased with his ministry for a while, but afterwards rejected his doctrine and baptism, which is referred to in the next clause:

but have done unto him whatsoever they listed;

they did not believe what he said, nor repent upon his preaching to them; they rejected the counsel of God he declared, not being baptized of him; they treated him with indignity and contempt, charging him with having a devil, and were well pleased when Herod put him to death; some of whom were doubtless among those that sat at meat with him; for whose sake, as well as for his oath's sake, he ordered the execrable murder to be com-

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⁹²⁵ Kimchi in Zech. ix. 6.

⁹²⁶ Hilchot Melacim, c. 12. sect. 2. Vid. Misn. Ediot, c. 8. sect. 7. & Maimon & Bartenora in ib.

⁹²⁷ Seder Olam Rabba, p. 46. {u} Misn. Bava Metzia, c. 1. sect. 8. T. Bab. Bava Metzia, fol. 3. 1. & 37. 1. & Bava Bathra, fol. 94. 1.

⁹²⁸ Misn. Bava Metzia, c. 1. sect. 8. T. Bab. Bava Metzia, fol. 3. 1. & 37. 1. & Bava Bathra, fol. 94. 1.

mited:

likewise also shall the son of man suffer of them.

Christ takes this opportunity to confirm what he had said in the preceding chapter, concerning his sufferings and death; and his meaning is, that as sure as John the Baptist had suffered indignities, and death itself, so sure should the son of man suffer like things; if not from the same individual persons, yet from that generation of men.

Matthew 17:13

Ver. 13. **Then the disciples understood,**

By his saying that Elias was come, and by the account he gave of his ill usage, it was clear to them,

that he spake unto them of John the Baptist;

and that he was the Elias that was to come, and was come: so that this observation, that according to prophecy Elias was to come before the Messiah, was no objection to Jesus being the Messiah; but on the contrary, since he that was intended by Elias was come, and had done his work and office, it was a confirmation of the truth of his Messiahship.

Matthew 17:14

Ver. 14. **And when they were come to the multitude,**

Which was on the next day, as in Luke 9:37 when Christ and his three disciples, Peter, James, and John, came down from the mount to the other nine, with whom the multitude of the people were; during their stay on the mountain,

there came to him a certain man;

who was, as Mark says, “one of the multitude”; and as Luke, “a man of the company”: who had applied to the nine disciples on the behalf of his son, but without success, and was waiting till Christ came from the mount; who when he saw him, made up to him, and

knelling down to him

in the manner of a supplicant, doing him homage and worship; hereby showing his great esteem of him, and veneration for him,

and saying

the following words:

Matthew 17:15

Ver. 15. **Lord, have mercy on my son,**

He addressed him with great marks of honour and respect, not only by gesture, but by words; he craves mercy, pity, and compassion; for the case he had to present, was a miserable one; and his earnestness and importunity he hoped might be excused, since it was for a child of his own. Luke adds “for he is mine only child”; and therefore

his affection for him must be thought to be very strong, and he greatly concerned for its grievous affliction, and earnestly desirous of its health and life.

For he is lunatic:

not a mad man, but troubled with the epileptic disease; upon which, as on madness or lunacy, the changes and full of the moon have an influence: hence the next clause,

and sore vexed,

is rendered in the Arabic version, “and sore vexed at the beginning of full moons”; at which times, he had very grievous and frequent fits of his disorder:

for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water:

which shows it to be the “epilepsy”, or “falling sickness”, he was afflicted with; which, whenever it seized him, whether by the fireside, or by the side of a river or brook, or any place of water, or in any other dangerous situation, he fell into it, not being able to help himself, or avoid any danger to which he was exposed. A larger account of this child's disorder, and of the circumstances of his cure, are related by Mark 9:17 where this case will be more fully considered. See Gill on “Mark 9:17”. See Gill on “Mark 9:18”.

Matthew 17:16

Ver. 16. **And I brought him to thy disciples,**

To the nine, whilst Christ was with the other three upon the mountain: no doubt but his design was to bring him to Christ first; but he being absent, he applied to his disciples, and, desired them to make use of their power to heal him; and which they attempted, but without success:

and they could not cure him.

This he said, partly to show the malignity and stubbornness of the disease, and partly to accuse the disciples of weakness; when he himself was as much in fault as they, as the following words show. Here the Jew ⁹²⁹ insults, and charges with contradiction, that in one place it should be said, that Jesus gave his disciples power to cast out unclean spirits, and here all the disciples could not cast a spirit out of one little child: but without any reason; let it be observed, that “all” the disciples were not present, the three principal ones were with Christ; besides, this was not owing to want of power in them, which Christ had conferred on them, and which they often made use of with success: but partly to their own unbelief, and partly to the unbelief of the father of this

⁹²⁹ .Vet. Nizzachon, p. 219, 220.

child, and others with him, as appears from what follows: and it is clear from Mark, that when he came to Christ, he had but little faith; he says to him, “if thou canst do anything, help us”; and after Christ had talked with him about his faith, he could only say, “Lord, I believe, help mine unbelief”.

Matthew 17:17

Ver. 17. **Then Jesus answered and said,**

Not to the disciples, but to the father of the child; see Mark 9:19 and those that were with him, and the Scribes that were present, disputing with the disciples, upbraiding them with their weakness, and triumphing over them: “O faithless and perverse generation”; a way of speaking, which is never used of the disciples, and indeed could not be properly said of them; for though they often appeared to be men of little faith, yet not faithless; nor were they so rebellious, stubborn, and perverse, as here represented, though there was a great deal of perverseness in them: but the characters better suit the body of the Jewish nation, who, on account of the incredulity of this man, and those that were present, being of the same temper with them, are exclaimed against in words, which were long ago spoken of their ancestors, De 32:5 and from whence they seem to be taken.

How long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?

Upbraiding them with the length of time he had been with them, in which so many wonderful works had been done among them, and yet they remained unbelieving and incorrigible; and intimating, that his patience and longsuffering would not always continue; and that in a short time, he should be gone from them, and they should no longer enjoy the benefit of his ministry and miracles, but wrath should come upon them to the uttermost: but however, whilst he was with them, notwithstanding all their unbelief and obstinacy, he should go on to do good; and therefore says,

bring him hither to me,

meaning the lunatic child. These words also are directed, not unto the disciples, but to the father of the child; for so it is said in Luke 9:41 “bring thy son hither”; and so the Syriac renders it here whyta, “bring thou him”; though, as expressed in the plural number, may very well be thought to intend him, and his friends.

Matthew 17:18

Ver. 18. **And Jesus rebuked the devil,**

The words may indeed be rendered, “and Jesus rebuked him, and the devil departed out of him”; so the

Vulgate Latin, and the Oriental versions; but the sense our version gives is certainly right; for it was not the father of the child Christ rebuked for his unbelief; this he had done already; nor the lunatic himself, as some have thought, either for his unbelief, or because he was possessed by the devil, for some sins of his own; which is not likely, since he was so from a child, and perhaps not now in his right mind, and capable of any rebuke: besides, the Evangelists Mark, and Luke expressly say, that he “rebuked the foul”, or “unclean spirit”: for though it was a natural disease which attended this child, yet he was afflicted with it in a preternatural way, by the means of Satan; who, by divine permission; had a power of inflicting bodily diseases: and that this disease was effected by him, is clear from the manner of curing, by the dispossession of him; for when

he departed out of him;

at the command of Christ, whose power he could not withstand, but was obliged, whether he would or not, to obey;

the child was cured from that very hour;

directly, immediately, and continued well, and in good health. Hence the word rendered lunatic, in Mt 17:15 is in several Oriental versions, translated in the sense of “demoniac”, or one possessed with a devil. The Arabic version renders it, “he is with a demon”: the Persic thus, “on whom a demon hath power”; and the Ethiopic after this manner, “an evil demon takes hold on him”. And it is usual with the Jews, to ascribe diseases to evil spirits; and perhaps this uncommon dispensation in the times of Christ, may give rise to such a notion; particularly, they ascribe this very same disease of the “epileptic”, or “falling sickness”, to the same cause, which they call ⁹³⁰ “Kordicus”, or “Cardiacus”, the “Cardiac” passion, which one of their commentators ⁹³¹ explains thus.

”It is a disease which proceeds from the repletion of the vessels of the brain, whereby the understanding is confounded; wherefore it is one of the sorts לְפֻנְחַיִלְוָה , “of the falling sickness”.

Says another ⁹³² of them,

”It is שֵׁם דֵּימֹן, “the name of a demon”, that rules over such, that drink much wine out of the vat.

”To which others agree, saying ⁹³³, that one attended

⁹³⁰ Misn. Gittin, c. 7. sect. 1.

⁹³¹ Maimon. in ib.

⁹³² Gloss. in T. Bab. Gittin, fol. 67. 2.

⁹³³ Bartenora & Yom Tob. in Misn. Gittin, c. 8. sect. 1.

with this disorder, is one,

”whose understanding is confounded, מְחֻמָּת שָׂדֵה “by means of a demon”, who rules over such, that drink new wine; and lo! the spirit’s name is “Cardiacus”.

From whence it is clear, that with them, the disease and the demon go by the same name; and that the former is from the latter.

Matthew 17:19

Ver. 19. **Then came the disciples to Jesus apart,**

Or “secretly”, as the Vulgate Latin, and Munster’s Hebrew Gospel read; that is, privately, and when alone; and as Mark says, “when he was come into the house”; and was by himself, then came the nine disciples to him, to converse with him about this matter,

and said unto him, why could not we cast him out?

That is, the devil, and so cure the lunatic; the Syriac and Persic versions render it, “why could not we heal him?” The lunatic; which only could be done by casting out the demon: they were concerned, fearing they had lost the power which Christ had bestowed on them, and wanted to know what they had done, which had deprived them of it; and what should be the cause of their late unsuccessful attempt, when they had so frequently triumphed over the unclean spirits, that were subject to them. Though they might have learned from the answer Christ gave to the father of the lunatic, and the general character of the Jewish nations in that answer, the true reason of their own inability; but this they took no notice of, imagining it belonged entirely to others, and not to them.

Matthew 17:20

Ver. 20. **And Jesus said unto them, because of your unbelief,**

The Arabic and Ethiopic versions read, “because of your little faith”, or “the smallness of your faith”; and so does one Greek manuscript; and which is what is doubtless meant by their unbelief; for they were not altogether destitute of faith, but their faith was very low, and their unbelief very great. Christ says, not because of the unbelief of the parent of the child, and those that were with him, though that also was a reason; but because of their unbelief, being willing to convince them of their unbelief, as he had done the father of the child, who had confessed it, and desired it might be removed from him: but lest they should think they had lost their power of doing miracles, Christ adds;

for verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed;

which was a very small seed, the least of all seeds, and is used very often proverbially by the Jews, to signify anything of a small quantity or weight ⁹³⁴, and is sometimes used of faith, as here; so speaking of the congregation of Edom, meaning the Christians, they ⁹³⁵ say,

”they have not אִמּוֹנָה כְּמוֹ גֵרִינָה שֶׁל חֲרָדִיל “faith as a grain of mustard seed”.

And it is used in like sense in other eastern nations; and by Mahomet in his Alcoran ⁹³⁶, who says,

”We will appoint just balances in the day of resurrection, neither shall any soul be injured at all, although the merit or guilt of an action be of the weight of “a grain of mustard seed”.

So that it has no reference to the quality of mustard seed, being hot and acrimonious; which has led some interpreters wrong, to compare faith unto it, for its liveliness and fervency: when our Lord only means, that if his apostles had ever so small a degree of faith in exercise, which might be compared for its smallness to this least of seeds, such an effect as he after mentions would follow; and which therefore is to be understood, not of an historical faith, by which men assent to all that is in the Bible as true; nor of a special, spiritual faith, by which souls believe in Christ, as their Saviour and Redeemer; for of neither of these can the following things in common be said; but of a faith of miracles, peculiar to certain persons in those early times, for certain reasons; which such as had but ever so small a degree of, as the apostles here spoken to might say, as Christ observes to them,

ye shall say to this mountain;

pointing perhaps to that he was just come down from, which might be in sight of the house where he was,

remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove:

meaning, not that it would be ordinarily or ever done in a literal sense by the apostles, that they should remove mountains; but that they should be able to do things equally difficult, and as seemingly impossible, if they had but faith, when the glory of God, and the good of men, required it. So that it does not follow, because the apostles did not do it in a literal sense, therefore they could

⁹³⁴ T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 3l. 1. Megilla, fol. 28. 2. Nidda, fol. 66. 1. Maimon. Issure Biah, c. 11. sect. 4. Maacolot Asurot, c. 2. sect. 21. &c. 14. sect. 8. Tumaot Okelim, c. 4. sect. 2. & 7. 6.

⁹³⁵ Vet. Nizzachon, p. 148.

⁹³⁶ C. 21. p. 268. & c. 31. p. 336. Ed. Sale.

not, as the Jew insultingly says ⁹³⁷; since it was meant that they should, and besides, have done, things equally as great as this, and which is the sense of the words. So the apostle expresses the faith of miracles, by “removing mountains”, 1Co 13:2 i.e. by doing things which are difficult, seem impossible to be done: wherefore Christ adds,

and nothing shall be impossible to you;

you shall not only be able to perform such a wonderful action as this, were it necessary, but any, and everything else, that will make for the glory of God, the enlargement of my kingdom and interest, the confirmation of truth, and the good of mankind.

Matthew 17:21

Ver. 21. **Howbeit, this kind goeth not out,**

The Vulgate Latin renders it, “is not cast out”; and so do the Arabic version, and Munster’s Hebrew Gospel; and which confirm the more commonly received sense of these words, that they are to be understood of that kind of devils, one of which was cast out of the lunatic, and was of the worst sort, of a fierce and obstinate kind; and having had long possession, was not easily ejected: and that there is a difference in devils, some are worse and more wicked than others, is clear from Mt 12:45 and not of that kind of miracles, or kind of faith to the working of such miracles. Moreover, the above versions, as they fitly express the word עֲקוֹרֵיטַי , here used; see Mark 9:17 compared with Mt 15:17. So they pertinently set forth the dispossession of devils, who do not go out voluntarily, but by force; and this sort could not be ejected,

but by fasting and prayer:

that is, in the exercise of a miraculous faith, expressed in solemn prayer to God, joined with fasting. It seems that Christ not only suggests, that faith was greatly wanting in his disciples; for which reason they could not cast out the devil, and heal the lunatic; but they had been wanting in prayer to God, to assist them in the exercise of their miraculous gifts; and that whilst Christ, and the other three disciples were on the mount, they had been feasting and indulging themselves with the people, and so were in a very undue disposition of mind, for such extraordinary service, for which our Lord tacitly rebukes them. This agrees with the notions of the Jews, who think that, by fasting, a divine soul ⁹³⁸ $\text{חַשְׁוִי אֵת מְבוֹקֵשָׁה}$, “may obtain that which is sought for”; and that among other things, for which a private person may afflict himself

⁹³⁷ Vet. Nizzachon, p. 237.

⁹³⁸ Jacchiades in Dan. x. 3.

with fasting, this is one, her גופני רוח, “because of an evil spirit”⁹³⁹; which they think may be got rid of this way.

Matthew 17:22

Ver. 22. **And while they abode in Galilee,**

Munster’s Hebrew Gospel reads it וכשהלכו, “and while they were walking in Galilee”, for they passed through it, when they departed from hence; see Mark 9:30 and as they were going to Capernaum, and so onward, to the coasts of Judea, in order to be at Jerusalem at the feast of the passover; where, and when, Christ was to suffer: and observing that the time of his death drew nigh, he inculcates it again to his disciples a third time, that they might be prepared for it, and not be discouraged and terrified by it;

Jesus said unto them, the son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men:

some copies read, “sinful men”; and so the angels report the words, in Luke 24:7 by whom may be meant the Gentiles, who, by the Jews, were reckoned very wicked men, and called sinners of the Gentiles. Now Christ intimates, that the son of man, meaning himself, should be betrayed by the Jews, into the hands of the Gentiles; than which, with the Jews, nothing was reckoned a fouler action, or a viler crime; their canons run thus⁹⁴⁰:

“It is forbidden to betray an Israelite into the hands of the Gentiles, whether in his body or in his substance; and though he may be a wicked man, and a ringleader in sin, and though he may have oppressed and afflicted him; and everyone that betrays an Israelite into the hands of the Gentiles, whether in his body, or in his substance, has no part in the world to come.

“They forgot this rule, when they delivered Christ to Pontius Pilate. They go on to observe, that

“it is lawful to kill a betrayer in any place, even at this time, in which they do not judge capital crimes; and it is lawful to kill him before he betrays; but when he says, lo! I am about to betray such an one in his body, or in his substance, though his substance is small, he exposes himself to death; and they admonish him and say to him, do not betray: if he is obstinate, and says I will betray him, it is commanded to kill him; and he that is first to kill him, is a worthy man,”

939 T. Bab. Taanith, fol. 22. 2. Maimon. Hilch. Taaniot, c. 1. sect. 6.

940 Maimon. Hilch. Chobel Umazzik, c. 8. sect. 9, 10.

Matthew 17:23

Ver. 23. **And they shall kill him,**.... Put him to death, with the death of the cross; for the angels in rehearsing these words, affirm, that Christ told his disciples at this time, and in this place, whilst they were in Galilee, that he should be crucified, Luke 24:7. And the third day he shall be raised again: this he said for their comfort; and it is observable, that when Christ speaks of his rising again, he makes mention of the exact time, the third day, on which he should rise, according to the types and prophecies of the Old Testament: and they were exceeding sorry: that he should be betrayed into the hands of the Gentiles, fearing that another nation would come, and take away, and possess the worldly kingdom and grandeur they were dreaming of; and that he should die at all; and much more that he should die such a cruel and ignominious death, as that of the cross. They seem to have overlooked, and to have taken no notice of his rising again from the dead; which might have administered comfort to them, and have relieved them under their melancholy apprehensions of things; but this they understood not, nor indeed truly any part of what he had said; so Mark and Luke intimate: but then it may be said, how came they to be so very sorrowful, if they did not know what was said? To which may be replied, that this might be the reason of their sorrow, because they did not understand what he said, and they were afraid to ask; they could not tell how to reconcile the betraying of him into the hands of men, and his sufferings and death, with their notions, that the Messiah should abide for ever, and should set up a temporal kingdom, in great splendour and magnificence; and what he meant by rising again from the dead, they could not devise; they could not tell whether all this was to be understood in a literal, or mystical sense.

Matthew 17:24

Ver. 24. **And when they were come to Capernaum**

Called Christ’s own city, Mt 9:1 where he dwelt some time Mt 4:13 and Peter had an house, Mt 8:14 “they that received tribute money”, or the “didrachms”; in Talmudic language, it would be גובני השקלים⁹⁴¹, “they that collect the shekels”: for not the publicans, or Roman tax gatherers are meant; nor is this to be understood of any such tribute: there was a tribute that was paid to Caesar, by the Jews; see Mt 22:17 but that is expressed by another word, and was paid in other money, in Roman money, which bore Caesar’s image and superscription; and was exacted of them, whether they would or not: but this designs the

941 Maimon. Hilch. Shekalim, c. 2. sect. 4.

collection of the half shekel, paid yearly for the service of the temple: the original of this custom, was an order of the Lord to Moses, upon numbering the people; that everyone that was twenty years of age and upwards, should give half a shekel as atonement money, or as a ransom for his soul; which was to be disposed of for the service of the tabernacle, Ex 30:12. This does not appear to have been designed for a perpetual law, or to be paid yearly; nor even whenever the number of the people was taken, but only for that present time: in the time of Joash king of Judah, a collection was set on foot for the repair of the temple; and the collection of Moses in the wilderness, was urged as an argument, and by way of example; nor is any mention made of the half shekel, nor was any sum of money fixed they should pay; but, according to the account, it was entirely free and voluntary. In the time of Nehemiah, there was a yearly charge of the “third” part of a “shekel”, for the service of the temple; but this was not done by virtue of a divine order, or any law of Moses, with which it did not agree; but by an ordinance the Jews then made for themselves, as their necessity required. Aben Ezra⁹⁴² indeed says, that this was an addition to the half shekel. Now in process of time, from these instances and examples, it became a fixed thing, that every year an half shekel should be paid by every Israelite, excepting women, children, and servants, towards defraying the necessary charges of the temple service, and this obtained in Christ’s time. There is a whole tract in the Jewish Misna, called Shekalim; in which an account is given of the persons who are obliged to pay this money, the time and manner of collecting it, and for what uses it is put: and so it continued till the times of Titus Vespasian, who, as Josephus says⁹⁴³, laid a tax of two drachms, the same with the half shekel, upon the Jews; and ordered it to be brought yearly into the capitol at Rome, as it used to have been paid into the temple at Jerusalem. We need not wonder that we hear of receivers of the half shekel at Capernaum; since once a year, on the “fifteenth” of the month Adar, tables were placed, and collectors sat in every city in Judea, as they did on the “twenty fifth” of the same month, in the sanctuary⁹⁴⁴. The value of the half shekel, was about “fifteen pence” of our money. The Syriac version renders the word here used, “two zuzim of head money”: now a “zuz” with the Jews, answered to a

942 In Neh. x. 32.

943 De Bello Jud. l. 7. c. 20.

944 Misn. Shekalim, c. 1. sect. 3. Maimon. Hilch. Shekalim, c. 1. sect. 9.

Roman penny, four of which made a “shekel”⁹⁴⁵; so that two of them were the value of an half “shekel”; it is further to be observed, that shekels in Judea, were double the value of those in Galilee, where Christ now was: five “shekels” in Judea, went for ten in Galilee, and so ten for twenty⁹⁴⁶. The receivers of this money

came to Peter;

not caring to go to Christ himself; but observing Peter a forward and active man among his disciples, they applied to him; or rather, because he had an house in this place, at which Christ might be:

and said, doth not your master pay tribute?

or the “didrachms”, the half “shekel” money. Had this been the Roman tribute, the reason of such a question might have been either to have ensnared him, and to have known whether he was of the same mind with Judas, of Galilee, that refused to pay tribute to Caesar; or because they could not tell whether he was reckoned as an inhabitant, or citizen of that city; for, according to the Jewish canons⁹⁴⁷, a man must be twelve months in a place, before he is liable to tribute and taxes; or because they might suspect him to be exempted, as a doctor, or teacher for the Jewish doctors, wise men, and scholars, were freed from all tribute and taxes⁹⁴⁸ even from the “head money”, the Syriac version here mentions; and which was a civil tax paid to kings⁹⁴⁹; to which sense that version seems to incline: the rule concerning wise men or scholars, is this⁹⁵⁰.

”They do not collect of them for the building a wall, or setting up gates, or for the hire of watchmen, and such like things; nor for the king’s treasury; nor do they oblige them to give tribute, whether it is fixed upon citizens, or whether it is fixed on every man.”

“But this was not the Roman tax, nor tribute, on any civil account, but the half shekel for religious service: and it may seem strange that such a question should be

945 T. Bab. Kiddushin, fol. 11. 2. Vid. Targum & Kimchi in 1 Sam. ix. 3. Maimon. in Misn. Shekalim, c. 2. 4. & Hilch. Shekalim, c. 1. sect. 3.

946 Misn. Trumot, c. 10. sect. 8. & Cetubot, c. 5. sect. 9. T. Bab. Cetubot, fol. 59. 1.

947 T. Hieros. Bava Bathra, fol. 12. 4. T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 8. 1.

948 Maimon. & Bartenora in Pirke Abot, c. 4. sect. 5.

949 Gloss. in T. Bab. Cetubot, fol. 100. 2. & Nedarim, fol. 62. 2. & Bava Metzia, fol. 73. 2.

950 Maimon Talmud Tora, c. 6. 10.

en; not only because Christ often used this phrase, but because the times of the Messiah, and his reign, were frequently so called by the Jews;

See Gill “Mt 3:2”. Now, what they wanted to be satisfied in was, who should be advanced to the post highest in that kingdom next to the Messiah; and, as they doubted not but it would fall on one of them, to have the most honourable post, and the place of the greatest trust, they were desirous of knowing who it should be.

Matthew 18:2

Ver. 2. **And Jesus called a little child unto him,**

One, very likely, that was in the house, and might belong to the master of it, and which was big enough to come to him at his call. Some have thought that this was Ignatius the martyr, but without any foundation. His own words, in his epistle to the church at Smyrna ⁹⁵⁵, can give no countenance to it; where he says, “for I also know, that after his resurrection he was in the flesh, and I believe that he is.” The Latin version indeed renders it thus; “for I also saw him in the flesh after the resurrection, and believe that he exists.” But it does not follow from hence that he must be this child, but rather the contrary; since it cannot be thought, that a child so young as this, in half a year after, had it seen Christ, when risen from the dead, could have took so much notice of him, as this version represents Ignatius to do; but it matters not who it was; Christ designed, by this emblem, to give them his sense of the question, and convey some proper instruction to the minds of his disciples:

and set him in the midst of them;

that everyone might see him; and upon the very sight of him, had he said no more to them, they might easily have perceived what was his opinion; that he that was but a child, the most humble, and least in his own eyes, would be the greatest: but besides setting the child in such a situation, he pointed to him, saying what follows.

Matthew 18:3

Ver. 3. **And said, verily I say unto you,**

You may take it for a certain truth, and what may be depended upon, that

except ye be converted or turned;

from that gross notion of a temporal kingdom, and of enjoying great grandeur, and outward felicity in this world; and from all your vain views of honour, wealth, and riches,

and become as little children:

the Arabic renders it, “as this child”; that is, unless

ye learn to entertain an humble, and modest opinion of yourselves, are not envious at one another, and drop all contentions about primacy and pre-eminence, and all your ambitious views of one being greater than another, in a vainly expected temporal kingdom; things which are not to be found in little children, though not free from sin in other respects,

ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven:

ye shall be so far from being one greater than another in it, that you shall not enter into it at all; meaning his visible, spiritual kingdom, which should take place, and appear after his resurrection, upon his ascension to heaven, and pouring forth of the Spirit: and it is to be observed, that the apostles carried these carnal views, contentions, and sentiments, till that time, and then were turned from them, and dropped them; for, upon the extraordinary effusion of the Holy Spirit, they were cleared of these worldly principles, and understood the spiritual nature of Christ’s kingdom; which they then entered into, and took their place in, and filled it up with great success, without envying one another; having received the same commission from their Lord, and Master: so that these words are a sort of prophecy of what should be, as well as designed as a rebuke to them for their present ambition and contentions.

Matthew 18:4

Ver. 4. **Whosoever therefore shall humble himself,**

Whoever shall entertain mean thoughts of himself, and prefer others to himself, shall behave in a modest humble manner, not affecting dominion over others, or treating his brethren and Christians in a haughty and supercilious manner, with scorn and contempt; but condescend to those of the lowest state, and place himself in the lowest form, conversing with his friends freely and familiarly, without distinction,

as this little child;

or any other of the like age; for there is no reason to suppose, that there was anything peculiar in this child, which was not in another, it being common to children to behave towards one another, as on a level; not to envy one another, or to set up one above another, or be vainly elated with the distinctions of birth and fortune.

The same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven;

in the Gospel church state; which was verified in the Apostle Paul, though not one of the twelve: nor are these words limited to them; at least, this passage may be illustrated in his case: he thought himself to be the chief of sinners, and less than the least of all saints, and unworthy

⁹⁵⁵ p. 3. Ed. Voss.

to be called an apostle; yet had the largest measures of grace, the greatest gifts and abilities; and was honoured with the greatest usefulness and success in the preaching of the Gospel to the conversion of sinners, and planting of churches; labouring more abundantly than they all.

Matthew 18:5

Ver. 5. **And whoso shall receive one such little child** Which is to be understood, not literally but metaphorically; meaning not such an one in age, but one, as the Syriac renders it, and איב טליא, “that is as this child”: like unto it for modesty and humility; one, that is as that, free from pride, ambition, and envy. Christ’s sense is, that whoever receives his disciples, that are meek and lowly, into their houses, or into their hearts and affections; that receives their ministry and message, embraces the Gospel preached by them with readiness and cheerfulness, with faith and love,

in my name;

on his account, because they are his disciples, believe in him, preach his Gospel, and, as being sent by, and representing him,

receiveth me:

it is so taken by Christ, as if he was personally present, and personally received, and had all the favours shown to his, done to himself in person; yea, such receive Christ in the ministry of the word, he being the sum and substance of it. This is said to encourage modesty and humility; and intimates, that proud and haughty persons will not be received as the disciples and followers of the meek and lowly Jesus; and to encourage persons to receive such that are modest and humble, since the respect shown to them, is all one as if shown to him.

Matthew 18:6

Ver. 6. **But whoso shall offend one of these little ones,**

Not in age, but are little and mean in their own eyes, and contemptible in the esteem of the world; though otherwise men of great grace, gifts, and usefulness; who may be said to be offended, when they are not received; their persons despised, their ministry rejected, and they reproached and persecuted; and everything done to them to discourage, and cause them to stumble and fall, to drop their profession of Christ, to quit his service, and desert his cause: and that such persons are designed, appears by the following descriptive character of them,

which believe in me;

which cannot be said of infants, or little ones in age, and who also are not capable of offence; but must be

understood of adult persons, of such who by faith look unto, lay hold on, and receive the Lord Jesus Christ, as their Saviour and Redeemer, and who make a profession of their faith in him; and chiefly of such who preach the doctrine of faith, who having believed, therefore speak; and who are generally the butt of the contempt, reproach, and persecution of men.

It were better for him, that a mill stone be hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

The word translated “depth”, is sometimes used for the Sea itself, Isa 51:10 and signifies the middle, or deeper path, and answers to the Hebrew phrase, “the heart of the sea”; פילנו דימא רבא, used by the Targum, in Ps 46:3 and by Jonathan ben Uzziel, in Ex 15:8. Jerom thinks, that this was a sort of punishment in use among the Jews, that is here referred to; but this does not appear. The four capital punishments inflicted by them were stoning, burning, slaying with the sword, and strangling ⁹⁵⁶: they had indeed other sorts of punishment, which they borrowed from other nations; and so they might this, either from the Romans, or Greeks, or their neighbours the Syrians. The mill stone, in the original, is called *μυλῶσ ονικοσ*, which may be rendered “the ass mill stone”, being either the nether mill stone, as some think, which was called “the ass”, because, like an ass, it bears the chief of the weight and burden; or else respects such mill stones as were turned about by an ass, in distinction from those that were turned by the hand; for that it was usual with the Jews to make use of asses in grinding, as well as other nations, is certain: hence we read ⁹⁵⁷ of חמורא ריהיא “the ass of mills”, that were employed in grinding in the mills, and of one that turned his mill with wild asses ⁹⁵⁸: but it is further to be observed, that mention is made ⁹⁵⁹ of יד חמור של רחימו של יד, “the ass of a handmill”: which the commentators say ⁹⁶⁰, was a beam on which an handmill was fixed, and was called “the ass.” Now, I should rather think that this is meant than the other. It does not seem likely that a nether mill stone, or one that required an ass to turn it, should be tied to a man’s neck, in order to drown him, when cast into the sea; for our Lord must

⁹⁵⁶ Misn. Sanhedrim. c. 7. sect. 1. {a} T. Bab. Moed Katon, fol. 1. 10. 2. Maimon. Hileh. Yom Tob, c. 8. sect. 15.

⁹⁵⁷ T. Bab. Moed Katon, fol. 1. 10. 2. Maimon. Hileh. Yom Tob, c. 8. sect. 15.

⁹⁵⁸ T. Bab. Avoda Zara, fol. 16. 2.

⁹⁵⁹ Mish. Zabim. c. 4. sect. 2..

⁹⁶⁰ R. Maimon. R. Sampson. & R. Obadiah Bartenora, in. ib.

be thought to refer to a practice somewhere in use: but rather, that such a beam, or log, of an handmill, so called, were wont to be put about the necks of malefactors, in drowning them. Our Lord's sense is, that it was much better for a man to endure the severest temporal punishment, rather than by offending, and evil treating any of his disciples, expose himself to everlasting destruction. The phrase of having a mill stone about the neck, I find, is sometimes used to denote anything very troublesome and burdensome ⁹⁶¹.

“The tradition is, a man that marries a wife, and after that learns the law, R. Jochanan says, *רַיָּהוּמֵי בְּנֵי אֵרֶר* “though a mill stone is about his neck”, yet he must study in the law: that is, though his worldly circumstances are narrow, and his wife and family are as burdensome as if he had a mill stone about his neck, he must continue his studies.”

Matthew 18:7

Ver. 7. **Woe unto the world because of offences!** By which are meant, not sins, as sometimes, but rather temptations to sin; and so the Ethiopic version renders this word by “temptation” in every clause, as the Arabic does in the next; and may design all the contempt and reproach cast upon the doctrines, ordinances, and people of Christ, and all those afflictions, distresses, and persecutions exercised on them, on purpose to cause them to stumble and fall; to tempt them to deny the truth, drop their profession of religion, and relinquish the service of Christ; things which are displeasing to God, discouraging to his people, and often attended with bad consequences to formal professors; and bring down the judgments of God upon the men of the world; who sooner or later will vindicate his own cause, avenge his own elect, and render tribulation to them that trouble them.

For it must needs be that offences come;

considering the implacable malice of Satan, his unwearied and indefatigable pains, the malignity of the men of the world, their aversion and enmity to the Gospel of Christ, and all good men; it cannot be thought, God suffering such things for the trial of such as are truly gracious, and for the discovery of hypocrites, and for the manifestation of his grace, power, and faithfulness in the preservation of his dear children, that it should be otherwise, but that such offences should be:

but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh; for though God, for wise ends and reasons, as above, voluntarily permits such things to be in the world; and though they do not succeed, as to cause the true follow-

⁹⁶¹ T. Bab. Kiddusbin, fol. 29. 2.

ers of Christ so to stumble and fall, as to perish, yet this does not excuse their sin and wickedness, in doing all that in them lay to effect it. For though God will, and does overrule all their base designs against his ministers, church, and people, for his glory, and their good, this is no thanks to them; and as it does not in the least extenuate their crime, it will not abate the severity of their punishment.

Matthew 18:8

Ver. 8, 9. **Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot,**

The same words are repeated here on occasion of offences, as are spoken by Christ, Mt 5:29 on account of unchaste looks, desires and lusts: giving offence to Christ's disciples, or endeavouring, by any means whatever, to cause them to stumble and fall, is equally gratifying the flesh, and no more to be indulged, than the other, on pain of eternal damnation. See Gill “Mt 5:29” See Gill “Mt 5:30”

Matthew 18:9

Ver. 9. See Gill on “Mt 18:8”.

Matthew 18:10

Ver. 10. **Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones,**

That is, one of those little ones that believed in Christ; for he is not speaking of infants in age, but of those who might be compared to such, for their humility and modesty; who were little in their own eyes, and mean and despicable in the eyes of the world, as well as appeared but little in the eyes of their fellow disciples and brethren; for our Lord returns and addresses himself to his disciples, who had been contending among themselves who should be greatest in the kingdom of heaven; and so were striving to lessen one another, each looking upon himself as the greater, and every other as little. Wherefore Christ cautions them against such a spirit, and bids them beware of despising their fellow disciples, as little, and below them; especially since so much notice and care were taken of them, both in heaven, and in earth:

for I say unto you, that in heaven:

the phrase, “in heaven”, is omitted in the Syriac and Persic versions, perhaps because it might be looked upon as unnecessary, since it afterwards appears; but is very proper, or pertinent, whether it be considered as descriptive of the angels, who have their habitation there, in distinction from the evil angels, who are cast down from thence; or as pointing out the place where the angels behold the face of God, and who are styled “their angels”; the angels of the little ones, that believe in Christ, who

are ministering spirits unto them, the guardians of them, who encamp about them, and do many good offices for them. Some have thought from hence, that every good man has his peculiar angel that waits upon him, and cares for him; but this does not necessarily follow from, these words, only that they all have an interest in angels, and in their good services. This seems indeed to have been a notion that prevailed among the Jews, not only that there were angels which presided over particular nations, but who also had the care of particular persons; so they speak of an angel that was particularly appointed for Abraham ⁹⁶². Nor will they allow, that one angel does two messages, nor two angels one ⁹⁶³ message: but that everyone has his particular place, person, and work; of whom it is further said, that they

do always behold the face of my father which is in heaven:

which is not so much to be understood of their intellectual knowledge, and apprehension of the divine being, of their beholding the glory of his nature, and essence, and of their contemplating and applauding his perfections; as of their ministering before him, waiting, as servants, upon him, watching to receive his orders, and ready to obey his commands. And our Lord's argument is, that if such excellent creatures as the angels in heaven, who are continually favoured with being in the presence of Christ's heavenly father, honoured with so high a station, as always to stand before him, as ministers of his; if these are the guardians of these little ones, if they are committed to their care, and they have the oversight of them, then they ought not to be despised: and besides, since the angels that have the care of them are so near the throne, it should deter everyone from having their charge in contempt, or doing any injury to them; since they are capable of lodging accusations and complaints against them; and, when leave is given, have power of executing the sorest judgments upon men. This description of angels agrees with what the Jews say of them, especially of the chief of them. Michael, they say ⁹⁶⁴, is the first and principal of the chief princes, *רוּאֵי פְּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ* “that behold the face of the king”; that is, the King of kings, the Lord of hosts. Suriel, which, with them, is another name of an angel, is called ⁹⁶⁵, *שַׂר הַפְּנִימָה*, “the prince of faces”, who is always in the presence of God; and, as the gloss says, is “an angel that is counted worthy to come before

⁹⁶² T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 96. 1.

⁹⁶³ Bereshit Rabba, sect. 50. fol. 44. 4.

⁹⁶⁴ Jacchiades in Dan. x. 13.

⁹⁶⁵ T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 51. 1.

the king.”

Matthew 18:11

Ver. 11. **For the Son of man is come to seek that which was lost.**

This is another, and stronger reason, why these little ones should not be despised; because Christ, who is here meant by the Son of man, came into this world to save these persons; who were lost in Adam, and had destroyed themselves by their transgressions, and carries great force in it: for if God had so great a regard to these little ones, as to send his Son to obtain eternal salvation for them, when they were in a miserable and perishing condition; and Christ had so much love for them, as to come into this world, and endure the sorrows, sufferings, and death itself for them, who were not only little, but lost; and that to obtain righteousness and life for them, and save them with an everlasting salvation; then they must, and ought to be, far above the contempt of all mortals; and the utmost care should be taken not to despise, grieve, offend, and injure them in any form or shape whatever; see Ro 14:15. Beza observes, that this whole verse is left out in some Greek copies, but it stands in others, and in all the Oriental versions, and in Munster's Hebrew Gospel; nor can it be omitted; the following parable, which is an exemplification of it, requires it.

Matthew 18:12

Ver. 12. **How think ye,**

Or, as the Arabic, “what do you think?” what is your opinion of this matter? what is your sense of it? how does it appear to you? It is a Talmudic way of speaking, the same with *מָה אַתָּם בּוֹרֵי* “what do you think?” what is your judgment? So the Rabbins, after they have discussed a point among themselves, ask ⁹⁶⁶, *מָאי בִירָא לָנִי*, “what is our opinion?” or what do we think upon the whole? Christ here appeals to his disciples, makes them judges themselves in this matter, and illustrates it by a familiar instance of a man's seeking and finding his lost sheep, and rejoicing at it.

If a man have an hundred sheep;

who is the proprietor of them; not the hireling, who has them under his care, and whose the sheep are not; but the owner of them, to whom they belong, and who must be thought to be most concerned for anyone of them that should go astray: a hundred sheep seem to be the number of a flock; at least flocks of sheep used to be divided into hundreds. In a Maronite's will, a field is thus

⁹⁶⁶ T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 88. 2..

bequeathed ⁹⁶⁷;

“the north part of it to such an one, and with it Nau ham, “a hundred sheep”, and a hundred vessels; and the south part of it to such an one, and with it Nau ham, “a hundred sheep”, and a hundred vessels; and he died, and the wise men confirmed his words, or his will.”

Such a supposition, or putting such a case as this, is very proper and pertinent.

And one of them be gone astray;

which sheep are very prone to; see Ps 119:176;

doth he not leave the ninety and nine,

which are not gone astray, in the place where they are; it is usual so to do:

and goeth into the mountains;

alluding to the mountains of Israel, where were pastures for sheep, Eze 34:13 and whither sheep are apt to wander, and go from mountain to mountain, Jer 50:6, and therefore these were proper places to go after them, and seek for them in: but the Vulgate Latin version joins the words “in” or “on the mountains”, to the preceding clause, and reads,

doth he not leave the ninety and nine in the mountains;

and so read all the Oriental versions, Syriac, Arabic, Ethiopic, and Persic; and in the same manner Theophylact;

and seeketh that which is gone astray?

This is usual with men: no man that has a flock of sheep, and though but one strays from it, but takes this method. This parable now may be considered, either as an illustration of the Son of man’s coming into this world, to seek, and to save his lost sheep, mentioned in the preceding verse; even the lost sheep of the house of Israel, the little ones that believed in him, who were despised by the Jews. And then by the “ninety and nine”, we are not to understand the angels; who never went astray, never sinned, but kept their first estate, whom Christ left in the highest heavens, on the holy mountains of eternity, when he became incarnate, and came down on earth to redeem mankind: for these never go by the name of sheep; nor are they of the same nature and kind with the one that strays, and is sought out; nor is their number, with respect to men, as ninety nine to one; at least it cannot be ascertained; nor were they left by Christ, when he came on earth; for a multitude descended at his birth, and sung glory to God. Nor are the saints in heaven intend-

ed, whose state is safe; since it cannot be said of them, as in the following verse, that they went not astray; for they went astray like lost sheep, as others, and were looked up, sought out, and saved by Christ as others; but rather, by them, are meant the body of the Jewish nation, the far greater part of them, the Scribes and Pharisees, who rejected the Messiah, and despised those that believed in him: these were in sheep’s clothing, of the flock of the house of Israel, of the Jewish fold; and with respect to the remnant among them, according to the election of grace, were as ninety nine to one: these were left by Christ, and taken no notice of by him, in comparison of the little ones, the lost sheep of the house of Israel he came to save: these he left on the mountains, on the barren pastures of Mount Sinai, feeding on their own works and services; or rather, he went into the mountains, or came leaping and skipping over them, So 2:8, encountering with, and surmounting all difficulties that lay in the way of the salvation of his people; such as appearing in the likeness of sinful flesh, bearing, and carrying the griefs and sorrows of his people, obeying the law, satisfying justice, bearing their sins, and undergoing an accursed death, in order to obtain the salvation of his chosen ones, designed by the one sheep “that was gone astray”; who strayed from God, from his law, the rule of their walk, out of his way, into the ways of sin, which are of their own choosing and approving: or, the intention of this parable is, to set forth the great regard God has to persons ever so mean, that believe in Christ, whom he would not have stumbled and offended, and takes special care of them, that they shall not perish; even as the proprietor of a flock of sheep is more concerned for one straying one, than for the other ninety nine that remain.

Matthew 18:13

Ver. 13. **And if so be that he find it,**

Which is a casual and uncertain thing with the shepherd, but not so with Christ, who certainly finds all those he goes after, and seeks: for,

verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep;

at the finding of it, whose loss greatly affected him,

than of the ninety and nine which went not astray;

who seemed not to go astray, were outwardly righteous before men, and, in their own opinion, being the same with the ninety and nine just persons who needed no repentance in their own apprehension, Luke 15:7. This same parable is related in Luke 15:3, and it being there more largely expressed, and along with other par-

ables of the same kind, I shall refer the more particular consideration of it to that place; only observe, that it seems to me that this parable was twice delivered by our Lord, and that on two different occasions; once, as here, in his discourse on offences, and upon mention of his coming into this world to save lost sinners; at another time, as there, upon the Pharisees murmuring at his receiving sinners, and eating with them.

Matthew 18:14

Ver. 14. **Even so it is not the will of your father which is in heaven,**

This is the accommodation, or application of the parable of the lost sheep to the present purpose, and is the top of the climax or gradation here made use of. First, Christ observes, in order to deter any from despising and offending any of his disciples, even the meanest, that they have angels to be their guardians, who are continually in the presence of God; and next, that he himself in human nature came to be the author of salvation to these persons; and then rises up to the sovereign will of his Father, and their’s, the source and security of their everlasting happiness; which will is, not

that one of these little ones,

that believe in Christ,

should perish. It is his will of command that no stumbling block should be laid in their way to cause them to stumble and fall, to the grieving of their souls, the wounding of their consciences, and the perishing, or loss of their peace and comfort; and it is his unalterable will of purpose, or his unchangeable decree, that not one of them, even the meanest, shall perish eternally: in pursuance of which will, he has chosen them in his Son, he has put them into his hands, and secured them in his covenant; and having redeemed them by Christ, and called them by grace, he keeps them by his power, through faith unto salvation. Nor shall anyone of them finally and totally fall away and perish, through the power of their own corruptions, the temptations of Satan, the reproaches and persecutions of men, the frowns or flatteries of the world, or through the errors and heresies of false teachers, or any other way. It is to be observed, that when our Lord, in Mt 18:10, is speaking of the happiness of the angels, and the honour done to the little ones by having such guardians; then the more to aggrandize this matter, he represents those as in the presence of his “Father which is in heaven”; but here, when he would express the wonderful love and grace of God, in the resolutions of his heart, and purposes of his will, to save them,

then it is “your Father which is in heaven”; and this, the rather to engage them to the belief of it, since they stood in such a near relation to him, as children to a father: and therefore must be infinitely more concerned for their welfare, than a proprietor of sheep can be, for one that is lost. The Arabic and Ethiopic versions indeed read, “my father”, but without any authority; for the phraseology, “the will before your Father”, as in the original text, See Gill “Mt 11:26”

Matthew 18:15

Ver. 15. **Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee,**

This is said to show, that as on the one hand, if any of those that believe in Christ, should commit a trespass against his fellow Christian, his sin is not to be connived at, for fear of offending him; for what Christ has before said, is not to be taken in such sense, as to prevent private reproof, or public censures, when there is occasion for them; so on the other hand, he is not to be despised and ill used, and treated in the same injurious manner; but gentle reproofs are to be made use of, for his good. This is spoken not to the apostles as such, but as believers in Christ; and concerns everyone that stands in the relation of a brother, or church member to each other, and only such; for they that are without, do not fall under their notice, nor are they obliged to take, nor can they take altogether, the same methods with them. This rule respects sins committed by one brother against another, either in word or deed; or such as are of a private nature, and which one only, or at least but few, are acquainted with: in such cases the advice is,

go and tell him his fault between thee, and him alone;

do not wait for his coming to thee, as being the aggressor, to acknowledge his fault, testify his repentance, express his sorrow for his sin, and ask pardon: but go to him, and freely and faithfully lay his sin before him; but do not aggravate it, and reproach him with it, and bear hard on him for it, but gently rebuke and reprove him: let this be done in the most private manner; let none be present, nor any know of it, even the most intimate friend and acquaintance:

if he shall hear thee; patiently,

take your reproof kindly, acknowledge his offence, declare his hearty sorrow for it, and desire it might be overlooked, and reconciliation made:

thou hast gained thy brother;

recovered him from the error of his ways, restored

⁹⁶⁷ T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 156. 2.

him to his duty, and secured his friendship, and interest in his favour; nor should any mention be made of this ever after, either to him, or any other, or to the church.

Matthew 18:16

Ver. 16. **But if he will not hear thee,**

But will either deny the fact, or extenuate and excuse it, or defend it, or at least is obstinate and incorrigible, shows no signs of repentance, but is angry, gives hard words, and ill language:

then take with thee one or two more;

members of the church, and perhaps of weight, reputation, and character, who either know some thing of the matter, and so can confirm, by their testimony, what has been alleged, in order to bring the person to conviction and acknowledgment; or if they do not, and which seems rather to be the sense, they may, by hearing what is said on both sides, judge where the truth lies, and join with the offended person in the admonition, that it may fall with the greater weight, and become more effectual:

that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established,

referring to De 19:15. So that should the matter be brought before the whole church, these witnesses would be able to testify the truth of the case, and report the steps that had been taken, and what effect they had had; so that things being thus prepared, the case would appear plain and easy, and without difficulty. The whole of this is very agreeable to the rules and customs of the Jews, and is founded on the law, in Le 19:17, upon which they form rules very much like to these. They represent God himself taking such a method as this, with the sons of men ⁹⁶⁸:

”When the holy blessed God reproves a man, he reproves him in love, privately: if he receives it, it is well; if not, he reproves him among his friends: if he receives it, it is well; if not he reproves him openly before the eyes of all; if he receives it is well; if not, he leaves him, and reproves him no more.”

And this is an instruction to men, how they should reprove their friends. They say ⁹⁶⁹, “he that sees anything in his friend that is not becoming, he ought to reprove him.” And which is elsewhere more ⁹⁷⁰ largely expressed:

”he that seeth his friend walking in a way that is not good, he is bound to reprove him, even a dis-

⁹⁶⁸ Raya Mehimna in Zohar, in Lev. fol. 35. 4.

⁹⁶⁹ T. Bab. Betacot, fol. 31. 1, 2.

⁹⁷⁰ Moses Kotsensis Mitzvot Tora pr. Affirm. 11.

ciple his master; and this he shall do for his good, and in order to bring him to the life of the world to come, or eternal life; and “if he takes it of him, it is well”: but if not, he must reprove again, “a second and a third time”; and so he must reprove him many times, if, or until he hears him.’

And this they require to be done, in the most private manner:”

”reproof out of love (they ⁹⁷¹ say) is secret from the children of men; whoever reproves his friend in love, seeks to secrete his words from the sons of men, that he may not expose him thereby to shame and reproach.”

That is, as the gloss ⁹⁷² on it observes,

”he seeks to reprove him in secret, so that he may not be put to shame before many.

”If this way does not succeed, they allow of a public reproof, for so it is said ⁹⁷³;”thou mayest not reprove him with hard words, till his countenance changes; for whoever causes the face of his friend to turn pale publicly, has no portion in the world to come; but thou mayest reprove in the words of heaven, or God; and if he does not return privately, thou mayest make him ashamed publicly, and expose his sin before him; and reproach and curse him, until he returns to do well; so did all the prophets to Israel.”

They plead also for a second reproof, from the text in Le 19:17 ⁹⁷⁴

”From whence does it appear, that he that sees anything in his friend unbecoming, ought to reprove him? As it is said, “thou shalt in any wise rebuke”, &c. if he reproves him וְלֹא קִבַּל “and he does not receive it”, (he does not take it kindly, or, as here, he does not hear him,) from whence is it manifest, that he must return and reprove him (or repeat the reproof)? from what is said, reproving thou shall reprove.”

The whole of this is very fully expressed in a few words, by one ⁹⁷⁵ of their best writers, and in great agreement with these rules of Christ:

⁹⁷¹ Zohar. in Lev. fol. 19. 3.

⁹⁷² Imre Binah in ib.

⁹⁷³ Milzvot Tora, pr. neg. 6.

⁹⁷⁴ T. Bab. Erachin, fol. 16. 2.

⁹⁷⁵ Maimon. Hilch. Deyot. c. 6. sect. 7.

”He that sees his friend sinning, or going in a way not good, he is commanded to cause him to return to that which is good; and to let him know, that he sins against himself by his evil works; as it is said, “thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour”: he that reproveth his friend, whether for things between him and himself, or whether for things between him and God, “ought to reprove him”, בֵּינוּ לְבֵינֵינוּ, “between him and himself”; and should speak to him mildly, and in tender language; and let him know that he does not speak to, him, but for his good, and to bring him to everlasting life; “and if he receives it of him, it is well, and if not, he must reprove him”, וְשָׁלִישִׁית פַּעַם שְׁנִייה “a second and a third time”; and so a man must continually reprove, until the sinner strikes him and says”, I will not hear.”

Buxtorf has produced a passage out of one of their writers ⁹⁷⁶, in the very language in which Christ here delivers himself:

”The wise man says, if thy friend does thee an injury, reprove him between him and thee alone: if he hears thee, thou hast already gained; if he does not hear thee, speak to him before one or two, who may hear the matter, and if he will not hear reckon him a “worthless friend”.

One would almost be ready to think, that this writer should mean Christ by the wise man, were it not for the implacable enmity they bear unto him. The above author has cited also the following passage out of the same ⁹⁷⁷ writer, pertinent to the present purpose:

”A friend that declares to thee thy faults, “between him and thee”, whenever he meets thee, is better to thee than a friend, that whenever he meets thee, gives thee a golden penny.”

Matthew 18:17

Ver. 17. **And if he shall neglect to hear them,**

The one or two, in conjunction with the offended person that shall hear the ease, and admonish and reprove; if he takes no notice of what they say to him, but remains stiff and impenitent, tell it unto the church: which some understand, of the רְבִיבוֹ or “multitude”, before whom it was lawful to reprove, after such private methods had been taken: others, the political magistrates, or sanhedrim; who took cognizance of cases between one person

⁹⁷⁶ Mischar happeninim apud Buxtorf. Florileg. Heb. p. 297.

⁹⁷⁷ Ibid.

and other, either by themselves, or messengers; and gave admonitions and reproofs, as to parents, when they did not provide for their families ⁹⁷⁸, and to wives that were perverse, and provoked their husbands ⁹⁷⁹, &c. others, of the presbyters and governors of the Christian church; others, of the church itself, and so the Ethiopic version renders it, “the house of Christians”; to which it is objected, that as yet a Christian church was not formed: but what were the twelve apostles of the Lamb? They were the great congregation and church, in the midst of which Christ sung praise to his Father: and since the whole of this advice, and these excellent rules are given to them, and they are spoken of in the next verse, as having the power of binding and loosing, they may well be thought to be meant here; and that the design of Christ is, to instruct them how to behave, in case of offence to one another; that the reproof should be first private, and if it did not succeed, to be made before one or two more; and if that did not do, the whole body was to be acquainted with it; and which rules hold good, and are to be observed by all Christian men and churches, in all ages: though no doubt but allusion is made to the Jewish customs, in rebuking before the multitude, or carrying of a private case, after all other means used were ineffectual, to the sanhedrim.

But if he neglect to hear the church:

the advice they should give unto him, the reproof they should think proper for him, or the censure they should pass upon him,

let him be unto thee as an heathen man, and a publican.

This is not a form of excommunication to be used among Christians, nor was there ever any such form among the Jews; nor could Heathens or publicans, especially such publicans as were Gentiles, be excommunicated, when they never were of the Jewish church.

”A religious person indeed, that becomes a collector of taxes, they first said, is to be driven from the society; but they afterwards said, all the time that he is a tax gatherer, they drive him from the society; but when he goes out of his office, lo! he is as a religious person ⁹⁸⁰.

”But one that never was of a religious society, could not be driven out of it. And besides, this is given, not as

⁹⁷⁸ Maimon Hilehot Ishot, c. 12. sect. 14.

⁹⁷⁹ Ib. c. 14. sect. 9. & Moses Kotsensis Mitzvot Tora, pr. neg. 81.

⁹⁸⁰ T. Hieros. Demai, fol. 23. 1.

a rule to the church, but as advice to the offended person, how to behave towards the offender: after he has come under the cognizance, reproof, and censure of the church, he is to look upon him as the Jews did one that disregarded both private reproof by a man's self, and that which was in the presence of one or two more, חֵבֵר פְּחוּחַ "a worthless friend", or neighbour; as a Gentile, with whom the Jews had neither religious nor civil conversation; and a "publican", or as Munster's Hebrew Gospel reads it, בְּרֵה בֶל "a notorious sinner", as a publican was accounted: hence such are often joined together, and with whom the Jews might not eat, nor keep any friendly and familiar acquaintance: and so such that have been privately admonished and publicly rebuked, without success, their company is to be shunned, and intimate friendship with them to be avoided.

Matthew 18:18

Ver. 18. **Verily I say unto you,**

To them all, what he had said before to Peter; See Gill "Mt 16:19": what is said here, refers to things and not persons, as there also.

Matthew 18:19

Ver. 19. **Again, I say unto you,**

As the words in the former verse seem to regard the whole body of the disciples, whose decisions in cases brought before them, declaring them just or unjust, are determinate and unalterable; these seem to respect the one or two, that should join the offended person in the reproof of the offender, and are spoken for their encouragement; who might think proper either to premise, or follow their engaging in such a work with prayer:

that if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching anything that they shall ask;

both in the case before mentioned, and in any other thing: whether it be for themselves or others; to assist them in the ministry of the word, and give success to it, for the conversion of sinners; and in the performance of any miracle, for the confirmation of the Gospel; in the administration of ordinances, for the comfort of saints; and in laying on of censures, for the reclaiming of backsliders; or be it what it will that may be done, consistent with the glory of God, the purposes of his mind, and the declarations of his will, and the good of men, provided they agree in their requests; though they are here on earth, and at such a distance from heaven, from whence their help and assistance come:

it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven;

with whom nothing is impossible; and who, as he regards the effectual fervent prayer of any righteous man, so more, of two agreed together in anyone thing; and still more, of a church and community of saints in their united requests: a great encouragement this to social prayer, though ever so few are engaged in it.

Matthew 18:20

Ver. 20. **For where two or three are gathered together,**

This seems to be said in opposition to a Jewish notion, that a number less than ten, is not a congregation⁹⁸¹; whereas, though the number is ever so few that are met together to pray to God; or to hear his word, attend on his ordinances, or do the business of his house, or transact any affair that is for the glory of God, and the good of souls, in my name, says Christ; that is, by his authority, depending on his assistance, calling upon his name, and making use of it, and seeking the glory of it:

there am I in the midst of them;

presiding over them, ruling in their hearts, directing their counsels, assisting them in all they are concerned, confirming what they do, and giving a blessing and success to all they are engaged in. The Jews, though they say there is no congregation less than ten, yet own that the divine presence may be with a lesser number, even as small an one as here mentioned⁹⁸².

"Ten that sit and study in the law, the Shechaniah dwells among them, as it is said, Ps 82:1. From whence does this appear, if but five? from Am 9:6, from whence, if but three? from Ps 82:1, from whence, if but two? from Mal 3:16, from whence, if but one? from Ex 20:24."

'And again⁹⁸³, two that sit together, and the words of the law are between them, the Shechaniah dwells among them, according to Mal 3:16, from whence does it appear, that if but one sits and studies in the law, the holy blessed God hath fixed a reward for him? from La 3:28."

Matthew 18:21

Ver. 21. Then came Peter unto him,.... Having heard and observed the rules Christ gave concerning offences and brotherly reproofs, he drew near to Christ, and put this question to him: and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? He instances in a brother, because it was such an one Christ had been

⁹⁸¹ Misn. Sanhedrim, c. 1. sect. 6. T. Bab. Megilia, fol.

23. 2. Gloss. in ib.

⁹⁸² Pirke Abot, c. 3. sect. 6. {c} Ib. sect. 2.

⁹⁸³ Ib. sect. 2.

speaking of; he makes no doubt of its being his duty to forgive him upon his repentance, and acknowledgment, but wanted to be reformed, how often this was to be done, and asks, whether until seven times? Which was, as he might think, a large number; and especially, since it was double the number of times, that the Jewish doctors set for forgiveness: for thus they say⁹⁸⁴, "A man that commits a sin, the "first" time they pardon him; the "second" time they pardon him; the "third" time they pardon him: the "fourth" time they do not pardon, according to Am 2:6." Again, he that says I have sinned, and I repent, they forgive him "unto three times", and no more⁹⁸⁵."

Matthew 18:22

Ver. 22. **Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee,**

Which is as if he had said, observe what I am about to say, I do not agree to what thou sayest to fix the number, "until seven times only", but

until seventy times seven;

a certain number for an uncertain, see Ge 4:24. Christ's meaning is, that a man should be all the days, and every day of his life, forgiving those that sin against him, as often as they repent and acknowledge their fault; and that no time is to be set for the exercise of the grace of forgiveness; but as often as there are objects and occasions, though ever so many and frequent, it should be used; and which he illustrates by the following parable.

Matthew 18:23

Ver. 23. **Therefore is the kingdom of heaven,**

The Gospel church state, or the church of Christ under the Gospel dispensation, and the methods of God's dealings in it; likened unto a certain king: or "a man", "a king", pointing either to Christ, the king Messiah, who is King of kings, and Lord of lords, the King of saints and churches; who, as God, has a natural kingdom of providence, and as man and Mediator, a kingdom of grace; and will have a more visibly glorious one, both in this world and in the other; or rather, the Father of Christ, as appears from the application of the parable, in Mt 18:35, who is the living God, and everlasting King: whose is the kingdom of nature, grace, and glory:

which would take account of his servants;

not all mankind, though these are all in a sense his servants, and accountable to him; nor only ministers of the Gospel, who are so in an eminent and peculiar sense, and must give an account to God of their time and tal-

⁹⁸⁴ T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 36. 2. Mainion. Hilch. Teshuba. c. 3. sect. 5.

⁹⁸⁵ Abot. R. Nathan, c. 40. fol. 9. 3.

ents, and souls committed to them; but all that bear the Christian name, that are professors of religion, that are either really or nominally the subjects and servants of God. These, it is sometimes the will and pleasure of God, to "take account of": not of their persons, or number, but of their conduct and behaviour; which, as it will be more fully done at death, or at judgment, so sometimes is taken in this life: God sometimes calls, and brings, professors of religion to an account, and reckons with them by afflictive dispensations of providence; when he puts them upon reflecting how they have spent their time, made use of their talents and gifts, and have behaved in their families, and in the world, and church; or by dealing roundly with men's consciences, awakening and convincing them of their sins, of omission and commission, which seems to be intended here.

Matthew 18:24

Ver. 24. **And when he had begun to reckon,**

To open the book of conscience, and to bring to account by some awakening providence, and strong conviction: one was brought unto him; whether he would or no, through the force of an awakened conscience, under guilt and terror;

which owed him ten thousand talents;

which must be understood, either of gold, or silver: a talent of silver contained 3,000 shekels, as appears from Ex 38:25, and was in value of our money £375. but a talent of gold was equal to £4,500. of our⁹⁸⁶ money. According to Dr. Prideaux⁹⁸⁷, a talent of silver was £450. and a talent of gold, the proportion of gold to silver being reckoned as sixteen to one, was £7,200. and according to Bishop Cumberland, a talent of silver was £353. 11s. 10d. ob. and a talent of gold of the same weight, was £5,075. 15s. 7d. ob. The whole, according to Dr. Hammond, was a thousand eight hundred seventy five thousand pounds, reckoning them silver talents; but if talents of gold are meant, what an immense sum must ten thousand of them be! According to some, seventy two millions sterling. The design of the phrase, is to set forth the exceeding greatness of the debt. Munster's Hebrew Gospel reads it, "ten thousand manehs", or pounds; and so the Persic version: now the value of a maneh of gold, was 75l. and of silver, £7 10s. ⁹⁸⁸ take the sum in the least quantity and value, it was exceeding large. The Arabic version renders it a "sum of talents", without mentioning the number, and may mean an innumerable one. Mention is made of

⁹⁸⁶ Brerewood de Nummis Heb. c. 4.

⁹⁸⁷ Connection, Vol. 1. Preface, p. 20.

⁹⁸⁸ Brerewood de Nummis. Heb. c. 4.

such a number of talents of silver, in Es 3:9, which Aben Ezra says is defective, and signifies ten thousand thousand talents. The “second” Targum on the place says, that the sum of six hundred thousand zuzim, drachms, or pence (i.e. Roman ones) is ten thousand talents of silver. These “ten thousand talents” intend sins, which are called debts, in Scripture; not that they are properly so, or owing to God, for then it would be right to pay them, but because they bind over to punishment. All men owe a debt of thankfulness to God, for their beings, the preservation of them, and all the mercies of life; and a debt of obedience to the whole law, in failure of which, they are obliged to punishment: hence every sin becomes a debt, and these are numerous; indwelling sin, and the lusts thereof, are innumerable; as are actual sins and transgressions, they are more than the hairs of a man’s head, and are fitly expressed, both for the weight and quantity of them, by “ten thousand talents.” In this light they appear to the conscience of an awakened sinner, who sees that he has been doing nothing but sin, all the days of his life; and that he has been continually breaking the law, one precept or another of it, in thought, word, or deed: which violations of the law, even in word and deed, are risen up to so great a sum, that he is not able to give it to any nearness, and with any exactness; he cannot understand all his errors, nor express the full number of them, or declare all their aggravated circumstances; besides the swarms of corruption of internal lusts and sins, which he observes dwelling in his heart, and are as innumerable as the motes and atoms in a sunbeam. The sins of God’s people, which have been all made to meet upon Christ, have been laid upon him by his Father’s imputation of them to him, with his own consent, are represented in this manner; see Ps 40:12. And indeed, if the debts of one of them amount to ten thousand talents, what must the sum of all be, put together! and how great must be the strength and power of Christ, to bear the weight of these sins, and not be broken or discouraged, and fail, as he did not! and what a rich virtue and efficacy must there be in his blood, to pay off all these debts, and make satisfaction for them, which could never have been done, if he had not done it! for, it is impossible that a person in such circumstances as here described, should ever be able to recover himself, or pay his debts, as follows.

Matthew 18:25

Ver. 25. **But forasmuch as he had not to pay,**

Every sinner is insolvent; sinful man has run out the whole stock of nature, and is become a bankrupt, and has

nothing to offer by way of composition; nor has he any righteousness to answer for him, nor any works of righteousness which deserve that name: and if he had, these are nothing in point of payment: for a debt of sin cannot be discharged by a debt of obedience; since God has a prior right to the latter; and in paying it, a man does but what is his duty. Sin being committed against an infinite God, contracts the nature of an infinite debt, which cannot be paid off by a finite creature. Christ only was able to pay this debt, and he has done it for his people; and without an interest in his blood, righteousness, and satisfaction, every debtor is liable to be cast, and will be cast into the prison of hell, there to lie till the uttermost farthing of the ten thousand talents is paid, which will be to all eternity. We see what a sad condition sin has brought men into; it has stripped them of their estates and possessions; it has reduced them to want and beggary; it exposes them to a prison; to the just resentments of their creditor; to the wrath of God, and the curses of the law; and what little reason there is to think, yea, how impossible it is, that a man should be able to merit anything at the hands of God, to whom he is so greatly indebted: he must first pay his debts, which is a thing impracticable, before he can pretend to do anything deserving the notice of God; and even was he set free, and clear of all his debts, and entered upon a new life of obedience, and this strictly attended to, without contracting any debts for the future, yet all this would be but what is due to God, and could merit nothing of him; see Luke 17:10. We see also from hence, how much the saints are obliged to Christ Jesus, and how thankful they should be to him, who became a surety for such insolvent creatures; has paid all their debts for them, and procured for them every blessing of grace they stand in need of: but think, O sinner, what thou wilt be able to say and do, when God comes to reckon with thee, and thou hast nothing to pay, nor any to pay for thee, or be thy surety; a prison must be thy portion ever.

His Lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had;

according to the Jewish laws, in such a case: of a man’s being sold, or selling himself when poor, see Le 25:47, for the law in Ex 22:3, referred to by some as an instance of this, respects the selling of a man for theft, and not for debt. Of the selling of a man’s wife for the payment of his debts, I do not remember to have read any law concerning it, or instances of it; but of children being taken for bondmen by the creditor, for their father’s debts, mention is made, 2Ki 4:1. These children, by the

Jewish writers⁹⁸⁹, are said to be the children of Obadiah, who contracted the debt to feed the prophets in a cave, when they were persecuted by Jezebel; and the creditor, according to them, was Jehoram, the son of Ahab, who lent him money on usury for this purpose, in his father’s time; and now Obadiah being dead, he takes his children for the debt, and makes them bondmen; see also Ne 5:5. There seems to be an allusion to this practice, in Isa 50:1, and it was not only the custom of the Jews to come upon children for the debts of parents, but of other nations: with the Athenians, if a father could not pay his debts, the son was obliged to pay, and in the mean while to be kept in bonds till he did⁹⁹⁰: and as Grotius, in 2Ki 4:1 proves from Plutarch and Dionysius Halicarnassensis, children were sold by the creditors of their parents, as in Asia, at Athens, and at Rome. Now this expresses the state of bondage, sin, as a debt, brings men into; they become slaves to their own lusts, vassals of Satan, and in bondage to the law; and also the ruin and destruction it exposes them to; as, the curse and condemnation of the law, the wrath of God, eternal death, even the destruction of body and soul in hell:

and payment to be made

by punishment, which will always be making, and never finished. This order of the king was not intended to be executed, as the sequel shows; but declares the will of God, that the sad and woeful condition of man should be set before him by the ministers of the word; signifying what his state is, how deserving of vengeance, and what must be his portion, if grace prevent not: the view of which is to vindicate the rights of law and justice, to express the sinner’s deserts, and move him to apply to the Lord for grace and mercy, which effect it had.

Matthew 18:26

Ver. 26. **The servant therefore fell down,**

At his feet, upon his knees, or on his face, to the ground; not being able to stand before him, or look him in the face, and much less to answer the demands of his law and justice; but owned the debt, and his present inability to pay,

and worshipped him:

the Vulgate Latin reads it, “prayed”, or entreated him, **saying, Lord have patience with me;**

give me but time, spare me a little longer, send me not to prison, and I will pay thee all: a very weak and

⁹⁸⁹ Targum Jon. in loc. Tanchuma in Abarbinel in loc.

Jarchi, Kimchi & Laniado in ib.

⁹⁹⁰ Alex. ab Alex. Genial. Dier. l. 6. c. 10.

foolish promise, but what is usual for men in such circumstances to make. Thus men, under guilt, and dreadful apprehensions of wrath and ruin, frequently promise, that if their lives are but spared, what they will do for God, and in a religious way; and very foolishly and ignorantly imagine, that by their humiliation and tears, their prayers and other services by their good lives and conversations, for the future, they shall be able to make compensation to God for all the iniquities they have been guilty of: which shows them to be exceeding ignorant of the nature of sin, which is committed against an infinite being, and therefore reconciliation for it cannot be made by finite creature; as also of the nature of their duties and services, which, when performed, in ever so good a manner, can never make satisfaction for past offences, these being duties they are obliged to perform; and would have been equally obliged thereunto if they had never offended; and likewise betrays great vanity, pride, boasting, and conceit of themselves, and abilities, as that they shall be able, in a little time to pay all, when they have nothing at all to pay with: and was patience to be exercised towards them ever so long, they would still be in the same condition, and in no better capacity to make payment; but, on the contrary, would still run a larger score, and be more and more in debt. Indeed, the patience and longsuffering of God to his people is salvation; not that by giving them time, and bearing with them, they discharge their debts, and work out their salvation; but waiting upon them to be gracious to them, he brings them to repentance, to a sense of themselves and sins, and to an acknowledgment of them, and leads them, by faith, to his Son for righteousness, forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life; but as for others, his patience towards them, and forbearance of them, issue in their everlasting destruction, which, by their iniquities, they are fitted for.

Matthew 18:27

Ver. 27. **Then the Lord of that servant was moved with compassion,**

Or had compassion on him, showed pity to him, and extended mercy towards him; not that he was moved hereunto by any actions of his, as his prostrating himself before him, and his worshipping him, nor by his cries and entreaties, nor by his promises, which were not at all to be depended on, but by his own goodness, and will; for not to anything that this man said, or did, nor to any deserts of his, but to the pure mercy, and free grace of God, is to be ascribed what is after related: and loosed him; from obligation to punishment, and from a spir-

it of bondage, through the guilt of sin, and work of the law upon his conscience: and forgave him the debt; the whole debt of ten thousand talents: for when God forgives sin, he forgives all sin, original and actual, secret and open, sins of omission and commission, of heart, lip, and life, of thought, word, and deed, past, present, and to come; and that freely, according to his abundant mercy, and the riches of his grace; without any regard to any merits, motives and conditions in the creature; though not without respect to the satisfaction of Christ, which no ways detracts from the grace and mercy of God, since this is owing to his gracious provision and acceptance. It was grace in God that provided, sent, and parted with his Son to be the propitiatory sacrifice for sin, and accepted the satisfaction when made, in the room, and stead of sinners: it was grace in Christ to become a surety for them, to assume their nature, to shed his precious blood, and give himself an offering, and a sacrifice for them; and it is distinguishing grace that this satisfaction should be provided, made, and accepted, not for angels, but for men; and though it is at the expense of Christ's blood and life that this satisfaction is made, and remission of sins obtained, yet the whole is entirely free to those who are partakers of it; they have it without money; and without price. So, that though the satisfaction of Christ is not expressly mentioned in this parable, and forgiveness of sin, which lies in a non-remembrance, and non-imputation of it, in a covering, and blotting it out, and in remitting the obligation to punishment for it, is ascribed to the compassion and mercy of God, yet it is implied; since these two involve each other: the special mercy of God, in the forgiveness of sins, streams only through the blood, righteousness, and sacrifice of Christ; and the sacrifice and satisfaction of Christ largely display the grace and mercy of God.

Matthew 18:28

Ver. 28. **But the same servant went out,**

From his Lord's palace and presence, immediately, directly, after he had got his pardon and liberty:

and found one of his fellow servants;

a fellow creature and Christian; not only one of the same nature and species; but of the same profession of religion, and in the service of the same kind and generous master:

which owed an hundred pence;

which, if understood of Roman pence, each penny being seven pence halfpenny of our money, amounted to no more than three pounds and half-a-crown; a small

sum, in comparison of the ten thousand talents which had been just now forgiven him: for so sins committed against men, against fellow creatures, or fellow Christians; are but small, when compared with those which are committed against God. All which circumstances, as that it was immediately after he had been forgiven himself; that it was a fellow servant he found: and the sum he owed him so inconsiderable, greatly aggravate his inhuman carriage, next related:

and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, pay me that thou owest;

he laid hold on him in a violent manner, and used him with great inhumanity: he took him by the collar, and shook him, and griped him so hard about the neck, that he almost throttled, and strangled, or choked him, as the word signifies, and is so rendered in most versions. It answers to the Hebrew word qnh, which is used by the Jews⁹⁹¹ in the same sense:

”החניק, he that throttles anyone (who is indebted to him) in the streets, and his friend comes up and says, let him go, and I will pay thee, he is free, &c.

”This man insisted on payment of the whole debt; which expresses the rigour and severity used by some professors of religion to their fellow Christians; who, having offended them, in ever so small a matter, will not put up with the affront, nor forgive the injury, without having the most ample satisfaction, and avenging themselves upon them to the uttermost.

Matthew 18:29

Ver. 29. **And his fellow servant fell down at his feet,**

In the most humble and submissive manner, just as he himself had done a little before at the feet of his Lord:

and besought him, saying, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all;

using the very same words, in which he had expressed himself to his Lord, and had succeeded.

Matthew 18:30

Ver. 30. **And he would not,**

Have patience with him, give him time for payment, and forbear severity at present, as he requested:

but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt;

had him before a proper officer, and proved his debt, and got him sent to jail, there to lie till the whole debt was paid; which, as it discovered ill nature, severe usage,

⁹⁹¹ Apud Castell. Lexic. Polyglott. col. 1314.

so, great ignorance and stupidity; for a prison will pay no debt: which sets forth the rigorous proceedings of some church members against their brethren, that have displeased them; who immediately bring the matter before the church, and will not be easy unless some censure is laid upon them, or they are cast out, until full satisfaction is given them, whereby oftentimes an useful member of a church is lost. Matthew 18:31 Ver. 31. So when his fellow servants saw what was done,.... What hard usage, and ill treatment, their fellow servant met with; the Syriac reads, “their fellow servants”, being the fellow servants both of the creditor and the debtor: they were very sorry; they were greatly grieved and troubled at the cruelty of the one, and the unhappiness of the other; being more tenderhearted, and of a more forgiving spirit than he: and came and told unto their Lord all that was done; to their fellow servant, by one that had so lately received such favours from him: this may be expressive of the concern of some members of churches at such conduct: who, though they may not have strength and number sufficient to oppose such measures, yet being secretly grieved at such cruel methods, go to the throne of grace, and spread the case before the Lord, tell him all that is done by way of complaint; which, is no impeachment of his omniscience, only shows their trouble for such malpractices, and the sense they have, by whom only such grievances can be redressed.

Matthew 18:32

Ver. 32. **Then his Lord, after that he had called him,**

Or ordered him to be called, and brought before him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant! Munster's Hebrew Gospel reads, “thou servant of Belial”; thou cruel and hard hearted man to thy fellow servant, and ungrateful creature to me, on whom my goodness to thee has not made any impression, nor taken any effect:

I forgave thee all that debt:

all that vast debt of ten thousand talents, and that freely:

because thou desiredst me:

not to forgive the debt, but to have patience, and give time, and therefore unasked forgave the whole sum, every farthing of it; which was such an instance of pure goodness, as was enough to have wrought upon an heart of stone, and engaged the most tender concern and pity for a fellow creature, as well as filled with thankfulness to the kind benefactor. The favour so lately bestowed on him is justly observed as an aggravation of his wickedness.

Matthew 18:33

Ver. 33. **Shouldest not thou also have had compassion....** It is but reasonable, what ought to be, and may be expected, that such who have received mercy, should show mercy; and as the Lord had compassion on this man, and had forgiven him such an immense sum, and saved him, his wife and children, from being sold for bondslaves, the least he could have done after this, would have been to have followed such an example, and have had mercy, as his Lord says to him, on thy fellow servant; between whom, and him, there was not so great a distance, as between him, and his Lord; and the sum so small that was owing to him, as not to be mentioned with his: even as, I had pity on thee; such an instance of pity and compassion did not only set him an example, worthy of his imitation, but laid him under an obligation to have acted such a part.

Matthew 18:34

Ver. 34. **And his Lord was wroth,**

Very angry, greatly incensed, and justly provoked at such inhuman treatment:

and delivered him to the tormentors,

or jail keepers. The Ethiopic version renders it, “to them that judge”, or the judges; Munster's Hebrew Gospel, “to the punishers”, or such that inflicted punishment according to the decree of the judge: from both, the sense may be, that he was delivered over to proper judges of his case, to be treated as the nature of it required, to be cast into prison, and there endure all the severities of law and justice:

till he should pay all that was due unto him;

which being so vast a sum, and he but a servant, could never be done: but inasmuch as this man was fully and freely pardoned before, how comes it to pass, that full payment of debt is yet insisted on? It is certain, that sin, once pardoned by God, he never punishes for it; for pardon with him is of all sin; he forgives all trespasses, though ever so many, and remits the whole debt, be it ever so large; which act of his grace will never be revoked: it is one of his gifts which are without repentance; it proceeds upon, and comes through a plenary satisfaction for sin made by his own Son, and therefore it would be unjust to punish for it: by this act, sin is covered out of sight; it is blotted out, and entirely done away, and that for ever. Hence some think this man had only the offer of a pardon, and not that itself; but it is not an offer of pardon, that Christ, by his blood, has procured, and is exalted to give, but that itself; and this man had his debt,

his whole debt forgiven him: others think, that this was a church forgiveness, who looked upon him, judged him, and received him as one forgiven; but for his cruel usage of a fellow member, delivered him to the tormentors, passed censures on him, and excommunicated him, till he should give full satisfaction, which is more likely: others, this forgiveness was only in his own apprehensions: he presumed, and hoped he was forgiven, when he was not; but then his crime could not have been so aggravated as is: rather, this forgiveness is to be understood of averting calamities and judgments, likely to fall for his iniquities, which is sometimes the sense of this phrase: see 1Ki 8:34 and so his being delivered to the tormentors may mean, his being distressed with an accusing guilty conscience, an harassing, vexing devil, many misfortunes of life, and temporal calamities. Though after all, this is not strictly to be applied to any particular case or person, but the scope of the parable is to be attended to; which is to enforce mutual forgiveness among men, from having received full and free pardon at the hands of God; and that without the former, there is little reason to expect the latter, as appears from what follows.

Matthew 18:35

Ver. 35. **So likewise shall my heavenly Father,**

This is the accommodation and application of the parable, and opens the design and intent of it; showing that God, who is Christ's Father, that is in heaven, will act in like manner towards all such persons, who are cruel and hard hearted to their brethren, and are of merciless and unforgiving spirits; for so it is said,

he will do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

The phrase, "their trespasses," is omitted by the Vulgate Latin, the Arabic, and the Ethiopic versions, but is in all the Greek copies; and designs not pecuniary debts, though these are to be forgiven, and not rigorously exacted in some cases, and circumstances; but all injuries by word or deed, all offences, though ever so justly taken, or unjustly given; these should be forgiven fully, freely, and from the heart, forgetting, as well as forgiving, not upbraiding with them, or with former offences, and aggravating them; and should also pray to God that he would forgive also. It is certainly the will of God, that we should forgive one another all trespasses and offences. The examples of God and Christ should lead and engage unto it; the pardon of sin received by ourselves from the hands of God strongly enforces it; the peace and comfort of communion in public ordinances require it; the re-

verse is contrary to the spirit and character of Christians, is very displeasing to our heavenly Father, greatly unlike to Christ, and grieving to the Spirit of God.

Matthew Chapter 19

Matthew 19:1

Ver 1. **And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings,**

Concerning humility, avoiding offences, the methods to be taken in reproofing offenders, and the forgiveness that is to be exercised towards them:

he departed from Galilee;

where he had chiefly preached and wrought his miracles, no more to return thither till after his resurrection:

and came into the coasts of Judea beyond Jordan;

that is, to that country which was called "beyond Jordan", and bordered on Judea; coming still nearer and nearer to Jerusalem, where he had told his disciples, a little while ago, he must come, and suffer, and die. Rather, it should be rendered, "on this side Jordan", as also in Joh 1:28 for the coasts of Judea were on this side; so בְּרֵית הַיַּרְדֵּן is rendered in De 4:49

Matthew 19:2

Ver. 2. **And great multitudes followed him,**

The Persic version adds, "of the sick and diseased"; but all that followed him were not such, though some were: these came not only from Galilee, but from the adjacent parts, from the country beyond Jordan, and the coasts of Judea, where he had been formerly; and who resort to him again, as Mark observes; and whom, according to his usual manner, he taught and instructed in the knowledge of divine things, and confirmed his doctrines by miracles:

and he healed them there;

in the above mentioned places, even as many of them as were sick and diseased.

Matthew 19:3

Ver. 3. **The Pharisees also came unto him,**.... Either from the places round about, or from Jerusalem: these came unto him, not for the sake of learning, or to be instructed by him; but as spies upon him, to observe what he said and did, and watch every opportunity to expose him to the contempt and hatred of the people;

tempting him

with a question about divorces, in order to ensnare him:

and saying to him, is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?

be it ever so trivial, as said the school of Hillell: for there was a difference between the school of Shammai and the school of Hillell about this matter; the former insisted that a man might not put away his wife but in case of uncleanness; but the latter allowed putting away for very trifling things; as if she spoiled her husband's food by over roasting, or over salting it; and, as one of the doctors say, if he found another woman that was more beautiful than her; see Gill "Mt 5:32". This question being now agitated in the schools, they artfully put to Christ; not for information, but with a view to reproach him in some way or other; and that he might incur the resentment of one party or another, as he should answer. They might argue thus with themselves, and hope to succeed in this manner; should he be on the side of the school of Shammai, which was the weakest side, and less popular, as they had reason to believe he would, he would then expose himself to the resentment of the school of Hillell, and all on that side the question; should he take the part of Hillell, he would make the school of Shammai his enemies; should he forbid putting away of wives, which Moses allowed, they would then traduce him as contrary to Moses, and his law, which could not fail of setting the people against him; and should he consent to it, they would charge him with contradicting himself, or with inconstancy in his doctrine, since he had before asserted the unlawfulness of it, but in case of adultery; and should he abide by this, they might hope to irritate the men against him, who would think their liberty granted by Moses was entrenched on; as, on the other hand, should he, according to the question, admit of putting away for every cause, the women would be provoked at him, who would be left to the uncertain humour and caprice of their husbands; so that either way they hoped to get an advantage of him.

Matthew 19:4

Ver. 4. **And he answered and said unto them,**

Not by replying directly to the question, but by referring them to the original creation of man, and to the first institution of marriage, previous to the law of Moses;

have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning, made them male and female?

This may be read in Ge 1:27 and from thence this sense of things collected; that God, who in the beginning of time, or of the creation, as Mark expresses it, made all things, the heavens, and the earth, and all that is therein, and particularly "man", as the Vulgate Latin, and Munster's Hebrew Gospel supply it here, made the first par-

ents of mankind, male and female; not male and females, but one male, and one female; first, one male, and then, of him one female, who, upon her creation, was brought and married to him; so that in this original constitution, no provision was made for divorce, or polygamy. Adam could not marry more wives than one, nor could he put away Eve for every cause, and marry another: now either the Pharisees had read this account, or they had not; if they had not, they were guilty of great negligence and sloth; if they had, they either understood it or not; if they did not understand it, it was greatly to their reproach, who pretended to great knowledge of the Scriptures, and to be able to explain them to others; and if they did understand it, there was no need for this question, which therefore must be put with an evil design.

Matthew 19:5

Ver. 5. **And said,**

Ge 2:24 where they seem to be the words of Adam, though here they are ascribed to God, who made Adam and Eve; and as if they were spoken by him, when he brought them together; and which is easily reconciled by observing, that these words were spoken by Adam, under the direction of a divine revelation; showing, that there would be fathers, and mothers, and children; and that the latter, when grown up, would enter into a marriage state, and leave their parents, and cleave to their proper yoke fellows, which relations then were not in being: this therefore being the effect of a pure revelation from God, may be truly affirmed to be said by him. Some think they are the words of Moses the historian; and if they were, as they were delivered by divine inspiration, they may be rightly called the word of God. A note by Jarchi on this text exactly agrees herewith, which is כִּן אָמַר הַקֹּדֶשׁ "the holy Spirit says thus: for this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife"; and not wives: and the phrase denotes that close union between a man and his wife, which is not to be dissolved for every cause, it being stricter than that which is between parents and children; for the wife must be cleaved unto, and father and mother forsaken: not that upon this new relation between man and wife, the former relation between parents and children ceases; nor does this phrase denote an entire separation from them, so as to have the affection alienated from them, or to be disengaged from all duty and obedience to them, and care and regard for them, for the future; but a relinquishing the "house of his father and the bed of his mother", as all the three Targums on the place explain it: that is, he shall quit the

house of his father, and not bed and board there, and live with him as before; but having taken a wife to himself, shall live and cohabit with her:

and they twain shall be one flesh;

the word “twain” is: not in the Hebrew text in Genesis, but in the Septuagint version compiled by Jews, in the Samaritan Pentateuch, and version, and in the Targum of Jonathan ben Uzziel, who renders, it as here, ויהיו תרוויחון לבשרא, “and they two shall be one flesh”. This is the true sense, for neither more nor less can possibly be meant; and denotes that near conjunction, and strict union, between a man and his wife, the wife being a part of himself, and both as one flesh, and one body, and therefore not to be parted on every slight occasion; and has a particular respect to the act of carnal copulation, which only ought to be between one man and one woman, lawfully married to each other;

See Gill on “1Co 6:16”.

Matthew 19:6

Ver. 6. **Wherefore they are no more twain,**

They were two before marriage, but now no more so; not but that they remain two distinct persons,

but one flesh;

or, as the Syriac, Arabic, Persic, and Ethiopic versions read, “one body”: hence the wife is to be loved by the husband as his own body, as himself, as his own flesh, Eph 5:28.

what therefore God hath joined together;

or, by the first institution of marriage, has declared to be so closely united together, as to be, as it were, one flesh, and one body, as husband and wife are;

let no man put asunder;

break the bond of union, dissolve the relation, and separate them from each other, for every trivial thing, upon any slight occasion, or for anything; but what is hereafter mentioned. The sense is, that the bond of marriage being made by God himself, is so sacred and inviolable, as that it ought not to be dissolved by any man; not by the husband himself, or any other for him; nor by any state or government, by any prince or potentate, by any legislator whatever; no, not by Moses himself, who is, at least, included, if not chiefly designed here, though not named, to avoid offence: and God and man being opposed in this passage, shows, that marriage is an institution and appointment of God, and therefore not to be changed and altered by man at his pleasure; this not merely a civil, but a sacred affair, in which God is concerned.

Matthew 19:7

Ver. 7. **They say unto him,**

That is the Pharisees, who object the law of Moses to him, hoping hereby to ensnare him, and expose him to the resentment of the people, should he reject that, as they supposed he would;

why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and put her away?

referring to De 24:1 which they thought to be a contradiction, and what they knew not how to reconcile to the doctrine Christ had delivered, concerning the original institution of marriage, and the close union there is between a man and his wife, by virtue of it, and which is not to be dissolved by men. Concerning a writing of divorcement and the form, and manner of it,

see Gill “Mt 5:31”

Matthew 19:8

Ver. 8. **He saith unto them,**.... In answer to their objection;

Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives:

in which may be observed, that, though it was by direction that Moses, in his system of laws, allowed of divorces; yet not God, but he is said to do it, because it was a branch of the political and judicial laws, by which the people of the Jews were governed under Moses, and whilst the Mosaic economy continued, and did not concern other people, and other times; and therefore it is said “you” and “your” wives, you Jews, and you only, and not the Gentiles. And so the Jews say⁹⁹², that the Gentiles have no divorces: for thus they represent God, saying;

“in Israel I have granted divorces, I have not granted divorces among the nations of the world. R. Chananiah, in the name of R. Phineas, observed, that in every other section it is written, the Lord of hosts, but here it is written, the God of Israel; to teach thee, that the holy, blessed God does not join his name to divorces, but in Israel only. R. Chayah Rabbah says, נְיֻמַּי אֵינִי לְהֵנּוּ גֵירוּשֵׁינִי “the Gentiles have no divorces.”

Besides, this was a direct positive command to the Jews, as the Pharisees suggest in their objection; it was only a sufferance, a permission in some cases, and not in everyone; and that because of the hardness of their hearts; they being such a stubborn and inflexible people, that when they were once displeased there was no reconciling them; and so malicious and revengeful, that if this

992 T. Hieros. Kiddushin, fol. 58. 3.

had not been granted, would have used their wives, that displeased them, in a most cruel, and barbarous manner, if not have murdered them: so that this grant was made, not to indulge their lusts, but to prevent greater evils; and not so much as a privilege and liberty to the men, as in favour of the women; who, when they could not live peaceably and comfortably with a man, might be dismissed and marry another:

but from the beginning it was not so;

from the beginning of time, or of the creation, or of the world, or at the first institution of marriage, and in the first ages of the world, there was no such permission, nor any such practice. This was not the declared will of God at first, nor was it ever done by any good men before the times of Moses; we never read that Adam, or Seth, or Noah, or Abraham, put away their wives, upon any consideration; though in the latter there might have been some appearance of reason for so doing, on account of sterility, but this he did not; nor Isaac, nor Jacob, nor any of the “patriarchs”.

Matthew 19:9

Ver. 9. **And I say unto you,**.... To his disciples, when they were with him alone in the house, and asked him more particularly about the subject, concerning which he had been discoursing with the Pharisees, as Mark observes, Mark 10:10 when he said to them much the same things, he had delivered before in Mt 5:32

whosoever shall put away in his wife;

separate her from his person, house and bed, and dismiss her as his wife, no more to be considered in that relation to him,

except it be for fornication;

or whoredom, for defiling his bed: for this is not to be understood of fornication committed before, but of uncleanness after marriage, which destroys their being one flesh:

and shall marry another woman, committeth adultery;

Marks adds, “against her”; which may be understood either of the woman he marries, which not being lawfully done, she lives in adultery with the husband of another woman; or of his former wife, and who is still his wife, and to whose injury he has married another; and he not only commits adultery himself, but, as in Mt 5:32 “causeth her to commit adultery also”, by being the occasion of marrying another man, when she is still his lawful wife:

and whoso marrieth her which is put away,

for any other cause than adultery,

doth commit adultery

also; since he cohabits with the wife of another man; see Gill “Mt 5:32”

Matthew 19:10

Ver. 10. **His disciples say unto him,**

Being surprised at this account of things, it being quite contrary to what they had been taught, and very different from the general practice and usage of their nation:

if the case of a man be so with his wife;

if they are so closely joined together in marriage; if they are, as it were, one flesh, or one body, that a man's wife is himself: that the bond between them is so inviolable, that it is not to be dissolved, but in case of adultery; that if a separation be made by a bill of divorce, in any other case, and either party marry again, they are guilty of adultery; if a man cannot part with his wife lawfully, provided she be chaste, and is faithful to his bed, let her be what she will otherwise, though ever so disagreeable in her person, and troublesome in her behaviour; though she may be passionate, and a brawler; though she may be drunken, luxurious, and extravagant, and mind not the affairs of her family, yet if she is not an adulteress, must not be put away:

it is not good to marry;

it would be more expedient and advisable for a man to live always a single life, than to run the risk of marrying a woman, that may prove very disagreeable and uncomfortable; to whom he must be bound all the days of his or her life, and, in such a case, not to be able to relieve and extricate himself. This they said under the prejudice of a national law and custom, which greatly prevailed, and under the influence of a carnal heart.

Matthew 19:11

Ver. 11. **But he said unto them,**

With respect to the inference or conclusion, the disciples formed from what he had asserted:

all men cannot receive this saying;

of their's, that it is not good to marry, but it is more proper and expedient to live a single life! every man, as the Syriac version renders it, is not hl qpo, “sufficient”, or “fit”, for this thing; everyone has not the gift of continency, and indeed very few; and therefore it is expedient for such to marry; for what the disciples said, though it might be true in part, yet not in the whole; and though the saying might be proper and pertinent enough to some persons, yet not to all, and indeed to none,

save them to whom it is given;

to receive such a saying, to live unmarried with content, having the gift of chastity; for this is not of nature, but of grace: it is the gift of God.

Matthew 19:12

Ver. 12. **For there are some eunuchs,**

Our Lord here distinguishes the various sorts of persons, that can and do live in a single state with content: some by nature, and others by violence offered to them, are rendered incapable of entering into a marriage state; and others, through the gift of God, and under the influence of his grace, abstain from marriage cheerfully and contentedly, in order to be more useful in the interest of religion; but the number of either of these is but few, in comparison of such who choose a conjugal state, and with whom it is right to enter into it, notwithstanding all the difficulties that may attend it. Some men are eunuchs, and of these there are different sorts; there are some,

which were so born from their mother's womb;

meaning, not such who, through a natural temper and inclination of mind, could easily abstain from marriage, and chose to live single; but such who had such defects in nature that they were impotent, unfit for, and unable to perform the duties of a marriage state; who, as some are born without hands or feet, these were born without proper and perfect organs of generation; and such an one was, by the Jews, frequently called, hmh oyro, "an eunuch of the sun"⁹⁹³: that is, as their doctors⁹⁹⁴ explain it, one that from his mother's womb never saw the sun but as an eunuch; that is, one that is born so; and that such an one is here intended, ought not to be doubted. The signs of such an eunuch, are given by the Jewish⁹⁹⁵ writers, which may be consulted by those, that have ability and leisure. This sort is sometimes⁹⁹⁶ called Mymv ydyb oyro "an eunuch by the hands of heaven", or God, in distinction from those who are so by the hands, or means of men, and are next mentioned:

and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men:

as among the Romans formerly, and which Domitian the emperor forbid by a law⁹⁹⁷; and more especially in the eastern countries, and to this day among the Turks, that they may the more safely be entrusted with the cus-

993 T. Bab. Yebamot, fol. 75. 1. 79. 2. & 80. 1. Maimon. Hilch. Ishot, c. 2. sect. 14.

994 Maimon & Bartenora in Misn. Yebamot, c. 8. sect. 4.

995 Bartenora, ibid. & Maimon. Hilch. Ishot, ut supra.

996 T. Bab. Yebamot, fol. 80. 2.

997 Philostrat. vit. Apollon. l. 6. c. 17.

tody of their women; and this sort the Jews call רִי אֲדָמָה, "an eunuch of men", or בְּיַד אֲדָמָה "by the hands of men". The distinction between an "eunuch of the sun", and an "eunuch of men", is so frequent with the Jews⁹⁹⁸, and so well known to them, that a question need not be made of our Lord's referring to it:

and there be eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs;

not in a literal sense, in which the words are not to be taken, as they were by Origen; who though otherwise too much pursued the allegorical way of interpreting Scripture, here took it literally, and castrated himself⁹⁹⁹; as did also a sort of heretics, called Valesians¹⁰⁰⁰, from one Valens an Arabian; and which practice is recommended by Philo the Jew¹⁰⁰¹, and by Heathen philosophers¹⁰⁰², for the sake of chastity. But here it means such, who having the gift of continency without mutilating their bodies, or indulging any unnatural lusts, can live chastely without the use of women, and choose celibacy:

for the kingdom of heaven's sake;

not in order, by their chaste and single life, to merit and obtain the kingdom of glory; but that they might be more at leisure, being free from the incumbrances of a marriage state, to attend the worship and service of God, the ordinances of the Gospel church state, to minister in, and preach the Gospel of Christ, and be a means of spreading it in the world, and of enlarging his kingdom and interest.

He that is able to receive it, let him receive it:

whoever is able to receive cordially, and embrace heartily, the above saying concerning the expediency and goodness of a single life, and having the gift of continency, can live according to it; let him take it, and hold it fast, and act up to it; he may have less of worldly trouble, and be more useful for God in the Gospel of Christ, and to the interest of religion; but this should be a voluntary thing: no man should be forced into it; and he that goes into it, ought to consider well whether he is able to contain, or not.

Matthew 19:13

Ver. 13. **Then were there brought unto him little**

998 Misn. Yebamot, c. 8. sect. 4. Zabim, c. 2. sect. 1. T. Hieros. Yebamot, fol. 9. 4. Maimon. Hilch. Ishot, c. 2. sect. 26. & 4. 18. Mechosre Caphara, c. 3. sect. 6. Mishcabu-moshab, c. l. sect. 5.

999 Euseb. Ecel. Hist. l. 6. c. 8.

1000 Augustin de Haeres. c. 37. & Danaeus in ib.

1001 Lib. quod deterius, p. 186.

1002 Sexti Pythag. Sent. p. 8.

children,

It does not appear that they were new born babes; the words used by either of the evangelists do not always signify such, but are sometimes used of such as are capable of going alone; yea, of receiving instructions, of understanding the Scriptures, and even of one of twelve years of age, Mt 18:2 nor is it probable that infants just born, or within a month, should be had abroad. Moreover, these were such as Christ called unto him,

Luke 18:16 and were capable of coming to him of themselves, as his words following suppose; nor does their being brought to him, or his taking them in his arms, contradict this; since the same things are said of such as could walk of themselves, Mt 12:22 Mark 9:36. Nor is it known whose children they were, whether their parents were believers or unbelievers, nor by whom they were brought: but the end for which they were brought is expressed,

that he should put his hands on them, and pray;

not that he should baptize them, nor did he; which may be concluded from the entire silence of all the evangelists; and from an express declaration that Christ baptized none; and from the mention of other ends for which they were brought, as that Christ should "touch" them,

Mark 10:13 as he sometimes used to do persons, when he healed them of diseases; and probably some of those infants, if not all of them, were diseased, and brought to be cured; otherwise, it is not easy to conceive what they should be touched by him for: or as here, that he might put his hands on them, and pray over them, and bless them, as was usual with the Jews to do; see Ge 48:14 and it was common with them to bring their children to venerable persons, men of note for religion and piety, to have their blessing and prayers¹⁰⁰³:

and the disciples rebuked them;

not the children, as the Persic version reads, but those that brought them, Mark observes; either because they came in a rude and disorderly manner, and were very noisy and clamorous; or they might think it would be too troublesome to Christ, to go through such a ceremony with so many of them; or that it was too mean for him, and below him to take notice of them; or for fear he should take fresh occasion, on the sight of these children, to rebuke them again for their pride and ambition. However, from this rebuke and prohibition of the disciples, it looks plainly as if it had never been the practice of the Jews, nor of John the Baptist, nor of Christ and

1003 Massechet Sopherim, c. 18. sect. 5. see the note on Luke ii. 42.

his disciples, to baptize infants; for had this been then in use, they would scarcely have forbid and rebuked those that brought them, since they might have thought they brought them to be baptized; but knowing of no such usage that ever obtained in that nation, neither among those that did, or did not believe in Christ, they forbid them.

Matthew 19:14

Ver. 14. **But Jesus said, suffer little children.**

This he said to show his humility, that he was not above taking notice of any; and to teach his disciples to regard the weakest believers, and such as were but children in knowledge; and to inform them what all ought to be, who expect the kingdom of heaven; for it follows;

and forbid them not to come unto me,

now, or at any other time;

for of such is the kingdom of heaven;

that is, as the Syriac renders it, "who are as these" or as the Persic version, rather paraphrasing than translating, renders it, "who have been humble as these little children": and it is as if our Lord should say, do not drive away these children from my person and presence; they are lively emblems of the proper subjects of a Gospel church state, and of such that shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: by these I may instruct and point out to you, what converted persons should be, who have a place in my church below, and expect to enter into my kingdom and glory above; that they are, or ought to be, like such children, harmless and inoffensive; free from rancour and malice, meek, modest, and humble; without pride, self-conceit, and ambitious views, and desires of grandeur and superiority. Christ's entire silence about the baptism of infants at this time, when he had such an opportunity of speaking of it to his disciples, had it been his will, has no favourable aspect on such a practice. It is not denied that little children, whether born of believers or unbelievers, which matters not, may be chosen of God, redeemed by the blood of Christ, and have the passive work of the Spirit on their souls, and so enter into heaven; but this is not the sense of this text. It was indeed a controversy among the Jews, whether the little children of the wicked of Israel, abh Mlwel Nyab, "go into the world to come": some affirmed, and others denied; but all agreed, that the little children of the wicked of the nations of the world, do not. They dispute about the time of entrance of a child into the world to come; some say, as soon as it is born, according to Ps 22:31 others, as soon as it can speak, or count, according to Ps 22:30

others as soon as it is sown, as the gloss says, as soon as the seed is received in its mother's womb, though it becomes an abortion; according to the same words, "a seed shall serve thee": others, as soon as he is circumcised, according to Ps 88:15 others, as soon as he can say "Amen", according¹⁰⁰⁴ to Isa 26:2 All weak, frivolous, and impertinent **Matthew 19:15**

Ver. 15. And he laid his hands on them,.... "And blessed them", as Mark says; he put his hands upon them, according to the custom of the country, and wished all kind of prosperity to them: and departed thence, out of the house where he had been, and his disciples with him: the Ethiopic version renders it, "and they went from thence", from those parts, towards Jerusalem.

Matthew 19:16

Ver. 16. **And behold, one came,**

The Persic version reads, "a rich man"; and so he was, as appears from what follows: Luke calls him, "a certain ruler"; not of a synagogue, an ecclesiastical ruler, but a civil magistrate: perhaps he might be one of the sanhedrim, which consisted of "twenty one" persons; or of that which consisted only of "three", as in some small towns and villages Mark represents him as "running"; for Christ was departed out of the house, and was gone into the way, the high road, and was on his journey to some other place, when this man ran after him with great eagerness; and, as the same evangelist adds, "kneeling to him"; thereby paying him civil respect, and honour; believing him to be a worthy good man, and deserving of esteem and veneration:

and said unto him, good master:

some say, that this was a title which the Jewish doctors were fond of, and gave to each other, but I have not observed it; he seems by this to intimate, that he thought him not only to be a good man, but a good teacher; that he was one that came from God, and taught good doctrine, which induced him to run after him, and put the following question to him:

what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?

Or, as in the other evangelists, "inherit eternal life"; a phrase much in use with the Jewish Rabbins¹⁰⁰⁵:

"Judah confessed, and was not ashamed, and what is his end? הַבָּא חַי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא, "he inherits the life of the world to come" (i.e. eternal life); Reuben confessed, and was not ashamed, and what

is his end? "he inherits the life of the world to come".

This man was no Sadducee, he believed a future state; was a serious man, thoughtful about another world, and concerned how he should enjoy everlasting life; but was entirely upon a legal bottom, and under a covenant of works; and speaks in the language and strain of the nation of Israel, who were seeking for righteousness and life by the works of the law: he expected eternal life by doing some good thing, or things; and hoped, as the sequel shows, that he had done every good thing necessary to the obtaining it.

Matthew 19:17

Ver. 17. **And he said unto him,**

By way of reply, first taking notice of, and questioning him about, the epithet he gave him:

why callest thou me good?

not that he denied that he was so; for he was good, both as God and man, in his divine and human natures; in all his offices, and the execution of them; he was goodness itself, and did good, and nothing else but good. But the reason of the question is, because this young man considered him only as a mere man, and gave him this character as such; and which, in comparison of God, the fountain of all goodness, agrees with no mere man: wherefore our Lord's view is, by his own language; and from his own words, to instruct him in the knowledge of his proper deity. Some copies read, "why dost thou ask me concerning good". And so the Vulgate Latin, and the Ethiopic versions, and Munster's Hebrew Gospel read; but the Syriac, Arabic, and Persic versions, read as we do, and this the answer of Christ requires.

There is none good but one, that is God;

who is originally, essentially, independently, infinitely, and immutably good, and the author and source of all goodness; which cannot be said of any mere creature. This is to be understood of God considered essentially, and not personally; or it is to be understood, not of the person of the Father, to the exclusion of the Son, or Spirit: who are one God with the Father, and equally good in nature as he. Nor does this contradict and deny that there are good angels, who have continued in that goodness in which they were created; or that there are good men, made so by the grace of God; but that none are absolutely and perfectly good, but God. What Christ here says of God, the¹⁰⁰⁶ Jews say of the law of Moses, whose praise

¹⁰⁰⁶ T. Hieroa. Roshhashanah, fol. 59. 1. Tzeror Hammor, fol. 151. 2.

they can never enough extol; אין טוב אלא תורה "there is nothing good but the law". The law is good indeed; but the author of it must be allowed to be infinitely more so. Christ next directly answers to the question,

but if thou wilt enter into life:

eternal life, which is in the question, and which being sometimes expressed by a house, a city, and kingdom, by mansions, and everlasting habitations, enjoyment of it is fitly signified by entering into it; which, if our Lord suggests, he had a desire of having a right to by doing any good thing himself, he must

keep the commandments;

that is, perfectly: he must do not only one good thing, but all the good things the law requires; he must not be deficient in any single action, in anyone work of the law, either as to matter, or manner of performance; everything must be done, and that just as the Lord in his law has commanded it. Our Lord answers according to the tenor of the covenant of works, under which this man was; and according to the law of God, which requires perfect obedience to it, as a righteousness, and a title to life; and in case of the least failure, curses and condemns to everlasting death; see De 6:25. This Christ said, in order to show, that it is impossible to enter into, or obtain eternal life by the works of the law, since no man can perfectly keep it; and to unhinge this man from off the legal foundation on which he was, that he might drop all his dependencies on doing good things, and come to him for righteousness and life.

Matthew 19:18

Ver. 18. **He saith unto him, which?**

Whether those commandments of a moral, or of a ceremonial kind; whether the commands of the written, or of the oral law; of God, or of the elders, or both; or whether he did not mean some new commandments of his own, which he delivered as a teacher sent from God:

Jesus said;

according to the other evangelists, "thou knowest the commandments"; not the true nature, spirituality, and use of them, but the letter and number of them; being trained up from a child by his parents, in the reading them, committing them to memory, and the outward observance of them, particularly those of the second table:

thou shalt do no murder, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness.

Christ takes no notice of the ceremonial law, nor of the traditions of the elders, only moral precepts; and

these only such as refer to the second, and not the first table of the law, which respect duty to the neighbour, and not to God: and this he does, because these commandments were more known, and were in common use; and he chose to instance in these, partly to show, that if men are under obligation to regard these, much more such as concern God more immediately; and partly, to observe, that if men are deficient in their duty to one another, they are much more so in their worship of God; and consequently, eternal life is never to be got and enjoyed by the performance of these things.

Matthew 19:19

Ver. 19. **Honour thy father and thy mother:**

This, as it is the first commandment with promise, so the first of the second table, and yet is here mentioned last; which inversion of order is of no consequence: so the "seventh" command is put before the "sixth", and the "fifth" omitted, in Ro 13:9 and with the Jews it is a common¹⁰⁰⁷ saying, אין מוקדם ומאוחר בתורה, "there is neither first nor last in the law": that is, it is of no consequence which commandment is recited first, or which last. Moreover, it looks as if it was usual to recite these commands in this order, since they are placed exactly in the same method, by a very noted Jewish¹⁰⁰⁸ writer. And thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself; which is not a particular distinct command from the rest, or an explication of the tenth and last, not mentioned; but a recapitulation, or compendium, and abridgment of the whole, and is said to be a complement and fulfilling of the law; see Ro 13:9.

Matthew 19:20

Ver. 20. **The young man saith unto him,**

For though he was so very rich and in such an exalted station in life, as to be a ruler, it seems he was but a young man; and to be so early serious and religious, amidst so much riches and grandeur, though it was but externally, was both remarkable and commendable: upon hearing the answer of Christ, with which he was highly pleased and greatly elated, he very pertly replies, all these things have I kept from my youth up: as soon as he was capable of learning, his parents taught him these precepts; and ever since he had the use of his reason, and understood the letter, and outward meaning of them, he had been careful to observe them; nor could he charge himself with any open and flagrant transgression of them; not understanding the internal sense, extensive compass,

¹⁰⁰⁷ T. Bab. Pesach. fol. 6. 2. Zohar in Num. fol. 61. 4.

¹⁰⁰⁸ R. Sangari, Sepher Cosri, par. 3. sect. 11, fol. 146. 2.

¹⁰⁰⁴ T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 110. 2.

¹⁰⁰⁵ T. Bab. Sota, fol. 7. 2.

and spirituality of them; and therefore asks, what lack I yet? In what am I deficient hitherto? in what have I come short of doing these things? what remains at last to be performed? what other precepts are to be obeyed? if there are any other commands, I am ready to observe them, which may be thought necessary to obtain eternal life.

Matthew 19:21

Ver. 21. **Jesus said unto him, if thou wilt be perfect,**

Wanting nothing, completely righteous, according to the tenor of the covenant of works, having no evil, concupiscence, or worldly lusts: our Lord signifies it was not enough to be possessed of negative holiness, and do no hurt to his neighbour, to his person, property, and estate, but he must love him, and do him good; and therefore, though so far as he had complied with the law, it was right and commendable; wherefore it is said by Mark, “that Jesus beholding him loved him”; had an affectionate regard to him as man, and approved of his intentions, seriousness, and actions, so far as agreeable; yet tells him, **one thing thou lackest:**

not but that he lacked many more, but he was only willing to observe one thing to him, as a trial of his love to his neighbour, which is the fulfilling of the law:

go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven:

not that either the law of God, or Gospel of Christ, require this to be done of all men, and at all times; for though it is a duty binding upon all, and always, to relieve the poor and the needy, yet a man is not obliged to give all that he has to them; see 2Co 8:11 nor does either legal or Christian perfection lie in doing this: a man may give all his goods to the poor and yet be destitute of the grace of God, 1Co 13:3 much less can such an action merit the heavenly treasure of eternal life. Nevertheless of some persons, and in some cases, it has been required, that they part with all their worldly substance, for the sake of Christ and his Gospel; as the apostles were called to leave all and follow Christ, as this man was also; for it is added,

and come and follow me:

between these two, Mark puts, “take up the cross”; all which to do, was much more than to sell what he had, and give to the poor; and indeed, in this branch lies Gospel perfection, or to be really and truly a Christian: for to “come” to Christ, is to believe in him, lay hold on him, receive and embrace him as a Saviour and Redeemer; and to “follow” him, is to be obedient to his will, to be

observant of his commands, to submit to his ordinances, and to imitate him in the exercise of grace, and discharge of duty; neither of which can be done, without “taking up the cross”; bearing reproach and persecution with patience; undergoing hardships and difficulties, of one sort or another, which attend faith in Christ, a profession of his name, and following him the Lamb, whithersoever he goes. The consequence of this now, not by way of merit, but by way of grace, is the enjoyment of the rich treasures of eternal glory: but this man was so far from complying with the latter, with coming to Christ, taking up the cross, and following him, that he could by no means agree to the former, parting with his worldly substance; and which is mentioned, as a test of his love to God and his neighbour, and to discover his sinful love of the world, and the things of it; and consequently, that he was far from being in a state of perfection. Moreover, it should be observed, that Christ is here speaking, not the pure language of the law, or according to the principles of the Gospel, when he seems to place perfection in alms deeds, and as if they were meritorious of eternal life; but according to the doctrine of the Pharisees, and which was of this man; and so upon the plan of his own notions, moves him to seek for perfection, and convicts him of the want of it, in a way he knew would be disagreeable to him; and yet he would not be able to disprove the method, on the foot of his own tenets: for this is their doctrine ¹⁰⁰⁹;

”It is a tradition, he that says this “sela”, or shekel, is for alms, that my son may live, or I may be a son of the world to come, לו! זה דיק נומר! “this man is a perfect righteous man”.

The gloss adds,

“In this thing; and he does not say that he does not do it for the sake of it, but he fulfils the command of his Creator, who has commanded him to do alms; and he also intends profit to himself, that thereby he may be worthy of the world to come, or that his children may live.”

And so in answer to a question much like this, the young man put to Christ ¹⁰¹⁰; “How shall we come at the life of the world to come?”

It is replied,

“take thy riches, and give to the fatherless and the

¹⁰⁰⁹ T. Bab. Pesach. fol. 8. 1, 2. & Roshhashanah, fol. 4. 1.

¹⁰¹⁰ Zohar in Gen. fol. 60. 4.

poor, and I will give thee a better portion in the law.”

Matthew 19:22

Ver. 22. **But when the young man heard that saying**

That he must sell his estates, and all his worldly substance, and the money made of them, give away to the poor; and become a follower of Christ, deny himself, and submit to hardships very disagreeable to the flesh:

he went away sorrowful;

not with a godly sorrow for his sin and imperfections, but with the sorrow of the world, which worketh death: he was ashamed and confounded, that he could not perform what he had just now so briskly promised, at least tacitly, that whatever else was proper he would do; as also grieved, that he had not arrived to perfection, which he had hoped he had, but now began to despair of, and of obtaining eternal life; and most of all troubled, that he must part with his worldly substance, his heart was so much set upon, or not enjoy it:

סנסססספ תארנ דאה ה רש

which were very dear to him; and he chose rather to turn his back on Christ, and drop his pursuits of the happiness of the other world, than part with the present enjoyments of this.

Matthew 19:23

Ver. 23. **Then said Jesus unto his disciples.**

When the young man was gone; taking this opportunity to make some proper observations for the use and instruction of his disciples, after, as Mark observes, he had “looked round about”; with concern, and in order to affect their minds with this incident, and to raise their attention to what he was about to say:

verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven:

either into the Gospel dispensation, and receive the truths, and submit to the ordinances of it, or into the kingdom of glory hereafter; not but that there have been, are, and will be, some that are rich, called by grace, brought into a Gospel church state, and are heirs of the kingdom of heaven; though these are but comparatively few: nor is it riches themselves that make the entrance so difficult, and clog the way, either into grace or glory, but putting trust and confidence in them; and therefore in Mark, they “that have riches”, are by Christ explained of such, that “trust in riches”; and which rich men in common are very apt to do, as this young man did, against which the apostle cautions, 1Ti 6:17

Matthew 19:24

Ver. 24. **And again I say unto you,**

After the apostles had discovered their astonishment at the above expression, about the difficulty of a rich man entering into the kingdom of heaven; when they expected that, in a short time, all the rich and great men of the nation would espouse the interest of the Messiah, and acknowledge him as a temporal king, and add to the grandeur of his state and kingdom; and after he had in a mild and gentle manner, calling them “children”, explained himself of such, that trusted in uncertain riches, served mammon, made these their gods, and placed their hope and happiness in them; in order to strengthen and confirm what he had before asserted, and to assure, in the strongest manner, the very great difficulty, and seeming impossibility, of rich men becoming followers of Christ here, or companions with him hereafter, he expresses himself in this proverbial way:

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:

thus, when the Jews would express anything that was rare and unusual, difficult and impossible, they used a like saying with this. So speaking of showing persons the interpretation of their dreams ¹⁰¹¹.

”Says Rabba, you know they do not show to a man a golden palm tree i.e. the interpretation of a dream about one, which, as the gloss says, is a thing he is not used to see, and of which he never thought, דמחטא בקופא פילאדייל ולא פילאדייל “nor an elephant going through the eye of a needle”.

Again, to one that had delivered something as was thought very absurd, it is said ¹⁰¹²;

”perhaps thou art one of Pumbeditha (a school of the Jews in Babylon) דמילי פילא בקופא דמחטא “who make an elephant pass through the eye of a needle”.

That is, who teach such things as are equally as monstrous and absurd, and difficult of belief. So the authors of an edition of the book of Zohar, to set forth the difficulty of the work they engaged in, express themselves in this manner ¹⁰¹³:

In the name of our God, we have seen fit, דמחטא פילא בקופא “to bring an elephant through the

¹⁰¹¹ T. Bab. Beracot fol. 55. 2.

¹⁰¹² T. Bab. Bava Metzia, fol. 38. 2.

¹⁰¹³ Prefat. ad Zohar, Ed. Sultzbach.

eye of a needle”

And not only among the Jews, but in other eastern nations, this proverbial way of speaking was used, to signify difficulties or impossibilities. Mahomet has it in his Alcoran ¹⁰¹⁴;

”Verily, says he, they who shall charge our signs with falsehood, and shall proudly reject them, the gates of heaven shall not be opened to them, neither shall they enter into paradise, “until a camel pass through the eye of a needle”

All which show, that there is no need to suppose, that by a camel is meant, not the creature so called, but a cable rope, as some have thought; since these common proverbs manifestly make it appear, that a creature is intended, and which aggravates the difficulty: the reason why instead of an elephant, as used in most of the above sayings, Christ makes mention of a camel, may be, because that might be more known in Judea, than the other; and because the hump on its back would serve to make the thing still more impracticable.

Matthew 19:25

Ver. 25. **When his disciples heard it.**

That is, the difficulty of a rich man’s entering into the kingdom of heaven, aggravated by the above proverbial expression,

they were exceedingly amazed.

They were surprised at his first words; but when he confirmed them by the proverb of a camel’s passing through the eye of a needle, they were, as Mark says, “astonished out of measure”: they did not imagine there was any difficulty of rich men coming into the kingdom of the Messiah, which they took to be a worldly one, and would be filled with rich men; for so they understood Christ; though he meant by the kingdom of heaven a spiritual kingdom, a Gospel church state here, or the heavenly glory, or both; but when he expressed, by the proverb, the impracticableness of such men becoming the subjects thereof, their amazement increased;

saying,

as in Mark, “among themselves”, privately to one another,

who then can be saved?

meaning, not with a spiritual and everlasting salvation, but a temporal one: for upon Christ’s so saying, they might reason with themselves, that if rich men did

not come into the kingdom of the Messiah, they would oppose him and his kingdom, with all their force and strength; and then what would become of such poor men as themselves, who would not be able to stand against them? nor could they hope to be safe long, or enjoy any continued happiness in the expected kingdom, should this be the case.

Matthew 19:26

Ver. 26. **But Jesus beheld them,**

Looking wishfully and earnestly at them; signifying thereby, that he knew their reasonings among themselves, though they did not speak out so as to be heard by him; and that there was no reason why they should be in so much concern, as their countenances showed, or possess themselves with such fears:

and said unto them, with men this is impossible.

Mark adds, “but not with God; for with God all things are possible”; to be done by him, if he will, which are consistent with the glory and perfections of his nature: for as he could, by his almighty power, if he would, reduce a camel to so small a size, as to be able to go through the eye of a needle, which, with men, is an impossible thing; so by the mighty power of his grace he can work upon a rich man’s heart, in such a manner, as to take off his affections from his worldly substance, and cause him to drop his trust and confidence in it: he can so influence and dispose his mind, as to distribute his riches cheerfully among the poor, and largely, and liberally supply their wants, and even part with all, when necessity requires it: he can change his heart, and cause the desires of his soul to be after true riches of grace and glory; and bring him to see his own spiritual poverty, his need of Christ, and salvation by him; and to deny himself, take up the cross, and follow him, by submitting to his most despised ordinances, and by suffering the loss of all things for his sake; and he can carry him through a thousand snares safe to his kingdom and glory, which is Christ’s sense; though the thing is impossible upon the foot of human nature, and strength, which can never effect anything of this kind: and as to what the apostles suggested concerning the safety of persons in the Messiah’s kingdom, if no rich man could enter there, but should be in opposition to it; our Lord’s answer implies, that though, humanly speaking, it was not possible and practicable that they, a company of poor, mean, and despicable men, should be able to stand against the united force of the great and mighty men of the earth; yet God was able to support, and uphold them, succeed, and keep them, and make

them both useful and comfortable, amidst all the opposition and persecution they should meet with, until he had finished his whole will and work by them.

Matthew 19:27

Ver. 27. **Then answered Peter and said unto him,**

Peter observing what Christ said to the young man, bidding him sell all that he had, and give to the poor, and he should have treasure in heaven, and come and follow him, lays hold on it, and addresses him in the following manner,

behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee.

Though their worldly substance was not so large as the young man’s, they had not such estates to sell, nor that to give to the poor, he had; yet all that they had they left for Christ’s sake, their parents, wives, children, houses, and worldly employments, by which they supported themselves and families; and became the disciples and followers of Christ, embraced his doctrines, submitted to his commands, imitated him in the exercise of grace, and discharge of duty, denying themselves, and suffering many hardships on his account: wherefore it is asked, what shall we have therefore? what reward for all this? what part in the Messiah’s kingdom? or what treasure in heaven?

Matthew 19:28

Ver. 28. **And Jesus said unto them,**

To all the disciples whom Peter represented;

verily I say unto you:

the thing being something very considerable, and of great moment, Christ uses the asseveration he sometimes does in such cases:

that ye which have followed me.

Christ does not deny that they had forsaken all for his sake, nor does he despise it, because it was but little they left, though he does not repeat it; but only takes notice of their following him, which, including their faith in him, their profession of him, and subjection to him, was a much greater action, and of more importance than the other, and therefore is only mentioned, and which our Lord confirms:

in the regeneration.

This clause is so placed, that it may be read in connection with the preceding words, and be understood of the disciples following Christ in the regeneration; meaning, not the grace of regeneration, in which they could not be said, with propriety, to follow Christ; and one of them was never a partaker of it: but the new state of things, in the church of God, which was foretold, and is

called the time of reformation, or setting all things right, which began upon the sealing up the law, and the prophets, and the ministry of John the Baptist, and of Christ; who both, when they began to preach, declared, that this time, which they call the kingdom of heaven, was at hand, just ushering in. Now the twelve apostles followed Christ herein: they believed, and professed him to be the Messiah; they received, what the Jews called, his new doctrine, and preached it to others; they submitted to the new ordinance of baptism, and followed Christ, and attended him wherever he went, working miracles, preaching the Gospel, and reforming the minds and manners of men. Now this new dispensation is called the regeneration, and which more manifestly took place after our Lord’s resurrection, and ascension, and the pouring down of the Spirit; wherefore the phrase may be connected with the following words,

when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory in the regeneration;

not in the resurrection of the dead, or at the last judgment, but in this new state of things, which now began to appear with another face: for the apostles having a new commission to preach the Gospel to all the world; and being endued with power from on high for such service, in a short time went every where preaching the word, with great success. Gentiles were converted, as well as Jews, and both brought into a Gospel church state; the ceremonies of the old law being abolished, were disused; and the ordinances of baptism, and the Lord’s supper, every where practised; old things passed away, and all things became new: agreeably to this the Syriac version renders the phrase, בְּלִמְתָּא הַדְּרִיזָא, “in the new world”; and so the Persic. The Arabic reads it, “in the generation”, or “age to come”; which the Jews so often call the world, or age to come, the kingdom of the Messiah, the Gospel dispensation.

When the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory,

or glorious throne; as he did when he ascended into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God; and was then exalted as a prince, and made, or declared to be Lord and Christ; and was crowned in human nature, with honour, and glory, and angels, principalities, and powers, made subject to him:

ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones:

for though Judas fell from his apostleship, yet Matthias was chosen in his room, and took his place, and made up the number twelve; a metaphorical phrase, setting forth the honour, dignity, and authority of their office

and ministry, by which they should be judging the twelve tribes of Israel; doctrinally and practically; by charging them with the sin of crucifying Christ, condemning them for their unbelief, and rejection of him, denouncing the wrath of God, and the heaviest judgments that should fall upon them, as a nation, for their sin; and by turning from them to the Gentiles, under which judgment they continue to this day. So the doctors among the Jews are represented as sitting and judging others: of “the potters”, in 1Ch 4:23 they say ¹⁰¹⁵,

”these are the disciples of the law, or the lawyers, for whose sake the world is created, דִּיתְבִּינֵי לִי דִינָא “who sit in judgment”, and establish the world; and build, and perfect the ruins of the house of Israel.”

Matthew 19:29

Ver. 29. **And everyone that hath forsaken houses,**

Not only the then disciples of Christ, but any other believer in him, whether at that time, or in any age, that should be called to quit their habitations, or leave their dearest relations, friends, and substance: as

brethren or sisters, or father or mother, or wife or children, lands, for my name’s sake;

or, as in Luke, “for the kingdom of God’s sake”; that is, for the sake of the Gospel, and a profession of it. Not that believing in Christ, and professing his name, do necessarily require a parting with all worldly substance, and natural relations, but when these things stand in competition with Christ, he is to be loved and preferred before them; and believers are always to be ready to part with them for his sake, when persecution arises, because of the word. All these things are to be relinquished, rather than Christ, and his Gospel; and such who shall be enabled, through divine grace, to do so,

shall receive an hundred fold:

Mark adds, “now in this time”; and Luke likewise, “in this present time”, in this world; which may be understood either in spiritual things, the love of God, the presence of Christ, the comforts of the Holy Ghost, the communion of saints, and the joys and pleasures felt in the enjoyment of these things, being an hundred times more and better to them, than all they have left or lost for Christ’s sake; or in temporal things, so in Mark it seems to be explained, that such shall now receive an hundred fold,

even houses and brethren, and sisters and moth-

¹⁰¹⁵ Targuru in 1 Chron. iv. 23.

ers, and children and lands;

not that they should receive, for the leaving of one house, an hundred houses; or for forsaking one brother, an hundred brethren, &c. which last indeed might be true, as to a spiritual relation; but that the small pittance of this world’s goods, and the few friends they should have “with persecutions” along with them, and amidst them, should be so sweetened to them, with the love and presence of God, that these should be more and better to them than an hundred houses, fields, and friends, without them:

and shall inherit everlasting life.

The other evangelists add, “in the world to come”, which is infinitely best of all; for this is an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, which fades not away, reserved in the heavens, when all other inheritances are corruptible, defiled, fading and perishing; houses fall, relations die, friends fail, and lands and estates do not continue for ever: they then have the best of it, who being called, in providence, to quit all terrene enjoyments for Christ’s sake, are favoured with his presence here, and shall enjoy eternal glory and happiness with him in another world.

Matthew 19:30

Ver. 30. **But many that are first shall be last,**

This may refer unto, or be occasioned by, either the young ruler; signifying that he, and others like him, who were superior in riches and honour, were first in this world, of the first rank and figure, should be the last in the world to come:

and the last shall be first;

the apostles, who were last in this world, being poor, mean, and abject, should be the first in the other: or to the Scribes and Pharisees, who were in the chief place, and highest esteem, in the Jewish church, and yet least in the kingdom of heaven; when, on the other hand, the publicans and sinners, who were in the lowest class, and in least esteem, went first into it: or to the case of persecution, when some, who seem most forward to endure it at a distance, when it comes nearer, are most backward to it; whilst others, who were most fearful of it, and ready to shrink at the thoughts of it, most cheerfully bear it: or to the apostles themselves, one of which, who was now first, Judas, should be last; and the apostle Paul, who was last of all, as one born out of due time, should be first: or to Jews and Gentiles, intimating, that the Jews, who were first in outward privileges, would be rejected of God for their unbelief, and contempt of the Messiah; and the Gentiles, who were last called, should be first, or chief,

in embracing the Messiah, professing his Gospel, and supporting his interest. This sentence is confirmed, and illustrated, by a parable, in the following chapter.

Matthew Chapter 20

Matthew 20:1

Ver. 1. **For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man,**

That is, the Gospel dispensation, or times of the Messiah, may fitly be represented by a man

that is an householder,

or master of a family, as Christ is; See Gill “Mt 10:25” He is master of the whole family of God, in heaven, and in earth, of all the children of God, and household of faith; his house they are, he is Father and master, son and firstborn, priest and prophet there.

Which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard:

by “the vineyard” may be meant the church, which, like a vineyard, is separated by electing, redeeming, and calling grace, and by the order and ordinances of the Gospel, from the rest of the world; is set with various vines, with trees of righteousness, with pleasant plants, both fruitful and profitable; and which are dear and valuable to Christ; and about which much care is used to preserve, keep, and improve them. This may be called “his”, Christ’s, being what he has chosen for himself, his Father has given him, and he is heir of; which he has purchased with his blood, and which he plants, waters, takes care of, and enjoys. The “labourers” design either the ministers of the Gospel, who labour in the word and doctrine, who are, or at least ought to be, labourers in Christ’s vineyard, and not loiterers; whose work in study, meditation, and prayer, in the ministration of the word and ordinances, and in performing other services they are called unto, is very laborious; and made more so, through the wickedness of some, and weakness of others: the employment of these labourers in the vineyard is various; the business of some is to plant; they are chiefly made use of in conversion: the work of others is to water; these are instruments in edification, and means of the growth of grace: others have a good hand at pruning, giving reproofs and corrections, in a suitable manner, with success, to the checking of sin, and bringing forth more fruit: others are useful in propping and supporting the vines, comforting and strengthening weak believers; and others in protecting and defending the outworks of the church, the doctrines and ordinances of it: or else private Christians in general may be intended, who all are, or should be labourers,

both in the exercise of grace; for there is the work of faith, and the labour of love, to God, Christ, and his people, in which they should be continually employed; and in the discharge of duty, with regard to themselves; and in the care of their own vineyard, with respect to their families, which are their charge, and also to the church of Christ, of which they are members. These labourers are said to be “hired” by the householder, or owner of the vineyard, Christ, not strictly and properly speaking; nor does it mean that he had no prior right to their obedience, or that there is any merit in their labour, or that that is the condition of their salvation; but it signifies the influence of his grace, in making them willing to serve him cheerfully, and labour in his vineyard freely; to encourage them in which, he makes them many gracious, and exceeding great and precious promises, and particularly that of eternal life: for which purpose, it is said, that he “went out”, either from his Father as mediator, being sent by him; or from heaven into this world, by the assumption of human nature; or by his Spirit, and the influence of his grace, in the calls of his people, to their several services, in his church; and that “early in the morning”: some of them being very early called to labour there; meaning either in the morning of the world, as Adam, Abel, Seth, Enoch, and others; or in the morning of the Jewish church state, as Abraham, Moses, Joshua, and the like; or in the morning of the Gospel dispensation, as the apostles of Christ, which seems most likely; or in the morning of youth, as Timothy and others. Several things, in this first part of the parable, might be illustrated from the Jewish writings. They have a parable indeed, which, in the several parts of it, greatly resembles this, and begins thus ¹⁰¹⁶;

“to what is R. Bon like? to a king that hath a vineyard,

וְשָׂכַר לֵיזוּ פּוֹלְיִים “and hires labourers into it”, &c.”

Out of which some other things will be remarked, in the following parts of this parable: of a son’s being sent, and going out to hire labourers into the vineyard, take the following instance ¹⁰¹⁷:

“it happened to R. Jochanan ben Matthia, that said to his son, וָאֵשְׂכַר, “go out, and hire labourers” for us: “he went out”, and agreed with them for their food.”

The time of hiring labourers, here mentioned, exact-

¹⁰¹⁶ Shirhashirim Rabba, fol. 21. 3. Vid. Midrash Kohelet, fol. 72. 4. & Talmud Hicros. Beracot, fol 5. 3.

¹⁰¹⁷ Misua Bava Metzia, c. 7. sect. 1.

ly agrees with the Jewish accounts ¹⁰¹⁸.

“Says R. Juda ben Bethira, when the face of all the east is light unto Hebron, all the people go out, every man to his work; and when it is so light, it is good “to hire labourers we say”.

Upon which the gloss says,

“every man goes out to his work, not for labourers, but the “householder”, who מוֹשֵׁב בְּבֵיתוֹ יוֹתֵר, “rises earlier to find labourers to hire”.”

Perhaps it may not be worth while to observe, how large a spot of ground, set with vines, was, by them, called a vineyard: it is frequently said by them ¹⁰¹⁹,

“that a vineyard planted by less than four cubits, is no vineyard; but R. Simeon, and the wise men, say it is a vineyard.”

Matthew 20:2

Ver. 2. **And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day,**

These labourers were of that sort that were called יוֹמֵי שְׂכִיר, “hired for a day”; concerning whom is the following rule ¹⁰²⁰:

“he that is hired for a day, may demand it all the night; and he that is hired for a night may demand it all the day: he that is hired for hours, may demand it all the night, and all the day; he that is hired for a week, he that is hired for a month, he that is hired for a year, he that is hired for seven, if he goes out in the day, may demand all the day; and if he goes out in the night, he may demand it all the night, and all the day.”

And the wages of a day were usually rnyd “a penny”; which, if understood of a Roman penny, was seven pence halfpenny of our money. One of their canons runs thus ¹⁰²¹:

“he that hires a labourer in the winter, to work with him in the summer, כָּכֵל יוֹם “for a penny every day”, and he gives him his hire; and, lo! his hire is alike to that in the winter, a “sela” every day, this is forbidden; because it looks as if he chose that time to lessen his wages; but

if he says to him, work with me from this day, to such a time, “for a penny every day”, though his hire is the same, a “sela” every day, this is lawful.”

By the penny a day agreed for with the labourers, may be meant external privileges; or the free promise made, whether to ministers, or private believers, of a sufficient supply of grace daily, that as their day is, their strength shall be; together with that of eternal life and happiness at last.

He sent them into his vineyard; to labour there: for none have any business there, but such who are called and sent by the owner of it; and where sons are sent, and work, as well as servants; see Mt 21:28.

Matthew 20:3

Ver. 3. **And he went out about the third hour,**

About nine o'clock in the morning,

and saw others standing idle in the market place:

the place where labourers used to be hired: and may design the world, because a place full of people, and of great wickedness, for the whole world lies in it; a place of trade and traffic in worldly things, and likewise of worldly and carnal pleasure, and also of idleness. Now God's elect before calling, are in this place: they are natives of it, have their conversation according to it: here Christ came in person, and here he sends his ministers, his Gospel, to find them out, and by his Spirit and grace he calls them from hence; so that afterwards they are no more of it, though they are in it: but before conversion they belong to it, and their posture then is standing idle; being sluggish, and slothful in business, unwilling to work, and afraid of a little danger and trouble, sauntering away their time in carnal pleasures, and so clothed with rags, and in a starving, famishing condition: but Christ's eye is upon them; he observes, and takes notice of them in this disagreeable position and situation, and speaks of them in the following manner.

Matthew 20:4

Ver. 4. **And said unto them, go ye also into the vineyard,**

Expressive of a call of divine grace out of the world, into the church; and which arises from mere grace, and good will, without any merit in, or motive from man, as the case here shows: for the householder went out to these men, not they to him; he puts the question to them, and calls them, and bids them go into his vineyard; they do not ask him to hire them, nor desire to be in his service. Moreover, the persons called were a parcel of idle, mean, vulgar people, as market folks commonly are; the

weak, base, and foolish things of the world. The encouragement given them follows,

and whatsoever is right I will give you

which is to be understood, not of strict justice; for in this sense nothing could be given to sinful mortals, for their services; but of grace, for what is had on this score, whether in this, or in the other world, is in a way of giving and receiving, which are the phrases used here, and in the context. It properly signifies what is meet and convenient, and will be satisfying; and since it is not expressed what he would give them, and they should receive, it calls for faith and dependence on divine goodness: for it does not yet appear, what the faithful labourers in Christ's vineyard will want, and shall receive in this life, nor what will be their happiness in the world to come: the glories and joys of heaven are unseen things; and eternal life is a hidden one at present, and must be trusted for:

and they went their way:

into the vineyard, the church, to labour there; which shows, that the call was powerful and efficacious; they were powerfully wrought upon by it; were at once inclined, and made willing to, and did go cheerfully, without standing to dispute about their work or wages.

Matthew 20:5

Ver. 5. **Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour,**

About twelve o'clock, or at noon, and three o'clock in the afternoon. These three last mentioned seasons of the day, were the hours of prayer; see Ac 2:15 and did likewise: seeing others in the same place, and posture, he called them, and sent them into his vineyard, to labour there, giving them the same promise he did to others.

Matthew 20:6

Ver. 6. **And about the eleventh hour he went out,**

About five o'clock in the afternoon. The Persic version reads it, “the twelfth hour”, which was six o'clock in the afternoon, the last hour of the day. The Jews divided their day into twelve hours,

Joh 11:9 and these twelve hours into four parts; Ne 9:3 each part containing three hours, to which division there is a manifest respect in this parable. These different seasons of the husbandman's going out to hire labourers, may have regard either to the several periods of time, and ages of the world, as before the law, under the law, the times of the Messiah, and the last days; or the various dispensations of the Gospel, first by Christ, and John the Baptist to the Jews, then by the apostles to the same in their first mission, afterwards when their commission

was renewed, first to the Jews in Judea, and then to the same among the nations of the world, and last of all to the Gentiles; or to the several stages of human life, and may regard Christ's call of persons in childhood, youth, manhood, and old age; which last may be signified by the eleventh hour, as also the Gentiles, and the remainder of God's elect in the last day:

and found others standing idle;

in the same place and position as before: for the state and condition of God's elect, by nature, as it is the same with others, it is the same with them all. The word “idle” is omitted here by the Vulgate Latin, the Arabic, and Ethiopic versions, and in Munster's Hebrew Gospel; but is retained in the Syriac and Persic versions; and stands in the Greek copies:

and saith unto them, why stand ye here all the day idle?

for being about the eleventh hour, the day was far spent, it was almost gone, a small portion of it remained, but one hour, as appears from Mt 20:12.

Matthew 20:7

Ver. 7. **They say unto him, because no man hath hired us,**

This may be fitly applied to the Gentiles, who hundreds of years were neglected by God; he overlooked the times of their ignorance, took no notice of them in their state of stupidity, blindness, and irreligion; but suffered them to walk in their own ways, sent no prophets to instruct them, nor messages, nor messengers to them; till at length the Jews, having rejected and crucified the Messiah, and persecuted his apostles, and contradicted, and blasphemed the Gospel, they were ordered to go to the Gentiles, and preach it to them:

he saith unto them, go ye also into the vineyard:

the Gospel was made the power of God unto salvation to them; they were called by grace, became of the same body the church, were fellow heirs with the believing Jews, partakers of the same promises and privileges, in a Gospel church state, and were equally labourers in the Lord's vineyard:

and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive;

with the rest of the labourers in it. This clause is left out in the Vulgate Latin, and in Munster's Hebrew Gospel; nor is it in Beza's most ancient Greek copy, though in all the rest; nor is it in the Persic version, which has added, “and they went”, as they were bidden, into the vineyard, the call being effectual; but is retained in the Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions.

¹⁰¹⁸ T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 28. 2.

¹⁰¹⁹ T. Hieros. Sheviith, fol. 33. 2. T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 37. 2. & 33. 1.

¹⁰²⁰ Misna Bava Metzia, c. 9. sect. 11. Maimon Hilch. Shericut, c. 11. sect. 2.

¹⁰²¹ Maimon. Hilch. Milvah Ulavah, c. 7. sect. 12. Vid. T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 86. 2. & 87. 1. & Gloss. in ib.

Matthew 20:8

Ver. 8. **So when even was come,**

At six o'clock, or when the sun was set, which was the time of paying labourers their wages: thus in the parable of the Jews, before referred to, which bears some resemblance to this, it is said,

לָתָּהּ רַב־¹⁰²² that “at evening time” the labourers came to take their wages.”

Sooner than this, one that was hired for a day, could not demand it; nor was the master of the vineyard, who hired him, obliged to pay him till the sun was set¹⁰²³, which was the time of his going forth from his labour¹⁰²⁴. This even may be understood, either of the evening of the Jewish state, upon the calling of the Gentiles; or of the end of the world, the close of the Gospel dispensation; when the work of it will be over, when all the elect of God, Jews and Gentiles, shall be called and gathered in, and all brought to repentance towards God, and faith in Christ.

The lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward:

by the lord of the vineyard may be meant God the Father, who has chosen and separated the vineyard of the church for himself; and has made it the care and charge of his Son Jesus Christ; who, as mediator, may be designed by “his steward”; who has not only all the stores of grace in his hand, to distribute to his people, in this life, as their cases require; but has also eternal life and happiness in his possession for them; not only the promise of it, but that itself; and has a power of giving it to as many as the Father hath given him; and which he, the righteous judge, and faithful steward, will give at the day of judgment, to all that love his appearing.

Call the labourers, and give them their hire;

the proper time being come: for the Jews say¹⁰²⁵

“it is an affirmative precept to give the wages of an hired person in its time; as it is said, De 24:15 at “his day thou shalt give him his hire”; and if it is prolonged after its time, it is transgressing a negative precept, as it is said, (in the same place,) “neither shall the sun go down upon it.””

So Jews and Gentiles were called to partake of the same Gospel privileges; and so will all the faithful la-

1022 Shirashirim Rabba, fol. 21. 3. Midrash Kohelet, fol. 72. 4. T. Hicros. Beracot, fol. 5. 3.

1023 Bartenora in Misn. Bava Metzia, c. 9. sect. 11.

1024 Jarchi in Lev. xix. 13.

1025 Maimen, Helch. Secirut, c. 11. sect. 1.

bourers in the Lord's vineyard be called together, and have the reward of eternal life bestowed upon them, and be bid to enter into the joy of their Lord, and inherit the kingdom prepared for them, as they before were ordered to go into the vineyard, and work. And though eternal life may be called hire or reward, because as hire is given to labourers, so is eternal life; and as that is given at the even and close of the day, and when the labourer has done his work, so everlasting glory will be given to the saints at the end of life, and when they have done the will and work of God: yet it will not be bestowed by way of merit, or, as if there was a just proportion between the work, labour, and services of the saints, and the glory that shall be revealed in them. Their purest services, even their sufferings for Christ, are not worthy to be compared with that; nor are there any that are done by them, but what are due to God, what he has a right unto, and are their duty to perform; so that when they are done by them in the best and most perfect manner, they are but unprofitable servants: nor can they, by anything they do, be profitable to God, or give anything to him, which can be obligatory upon him, to do anything for them, or be a valuable consideration for anything they should receive from him; and therefore they cannot merit anything at his hand, and much less eternal life: besides, their services are impure and imperfect, and whenever anything is well done by them, it is done not by their own strength and might, but by the assistance and grace of God; and therefore they can have no demand upon him for what they do: eternal life, though a reward, is not a reward of debt, but of grace; it is the free gift of God through Christ; God has graciously promised it in the covenant of his grace, before the world began; he has given it into the hands of his Son for his people, with whom it is sure; and he gives it freely to all the sheep the Father has given him.

Beginning from the last unto the first;

beginning with the last that was called and sent into the vineyard, and so proceeding on to the next to them; giving them their wages as he went along, till he came to the first, who were early in the morning hired into this service; intimating, that some such method will be taken in the introducing of the saints into the kingdom of the Messiah here, and into his everlasting kingdom hereafter; whereby that saying of our Lord's which occasioned this parable, will be also fulfilled, “the first shall be last, and last first”.

Matthew 20:9

Ver. 9. **And when they came that were hired about**

the eleventh hour,

Who were the last that were hired; and signify either such, as are called in their last days, in old age; or Gentile sinners; or the last of God's elect, that will be called by grace, in the end of the world:

they received every man a penny:

the same they first agreed for, that were hired early into the vineyard; and all, and every man alike, not one more and another less. So the same church privileges and immunities are common to all believers, Jews or Gentiles, sooner or later called; and equal title give to the same eternal life and happiness, which will be enjoyed alike, by one saint as another: they are all loved with the same everlasting love by God; they are chosen alike by him in his Son, at the same time, in the same way and manner, and to the same grace and glory; they are interested in the same covenant, in all the promises and blessings of it; they are bought with the same price of a Redeemer's blood, are justified by the same righteousness, and are called in one hope of their calling; they are equally the sons of God, and their glory and happiness are always expressed by the same thing, as a kingdom, a crown, and inheritance, &c. They are all equally heirs of the same kingdom and glory, and are born again to the same incorruptible inheritance, of which they will all be partakers; they will all be called to inherit the same kingdom, they will sit on the same throne of glory, and wear the same crown of righteousness, and enjoy the same uninterrupted communion with Father, Son, and Spirit. Now, indeed, they have not the same measures of grace; some have more, others less; but in heaven, it will be alike, complete and perfect in all; and even now, they have the same grace for nature and kind, only it is not in all in the same exercise; now the saints are distinguished by the several stations and places in which they are; though they are members of the same body, they have not the same office, and have gifts differing from one another; but in the other state, all such offices and gifts will cease, and all will be upon an equal foot; be where Christ is, and behold his glory, and will stand in no need of each other's instruction and help. Now the capacities of man are different, according to the different temperament of their bodies, their different education, opportunities, advantages, and stations in life, but in the other world, where this difference will be no more, every vessel of mercy being prepared for glory, will be equally capable of receiving it: and though there will be degrees of punishment in hell, proportionate to the sins of men, which the justice of God requires, yet it follows not, that there

will be degrees in glory; since that is not proportioned to the works of men, but springs from the grace of God, and yet in a way of justice too, through the blood, righteousness, and sacrifice of Christ: and since the saints have an equal interest in these things, it seems that upon the foot of justice, they should equally enjoy all that happiness which these entitle them to.

Matthew 20:10

Ver. 10. **But when the first came,**

Who were early hired into the vineyard; and design either the first saints that were in the world; or the Jews that first believed in Christ, either really or nominally; or such, who were called by grace in their early days:

they supposed,

or “hoped”, as the Syriac version renders it,

that they should have received more;

than a penny, a greater reward: not that they could expect it on the foot of their agreement, or on account of their work; but because they observed, that they that came last into the vineyard, had as much as they agreed for; and therefore hoped, from the goodness of their Lord to them, that they should receive more:

and they likewise received every man a penny; the selfsame privileges of the Gospel, and a title to the selfsame reward of free grace, the selfsame glory and happiness.

Matthew 20:11

Ver. 11. **And when they had received it,**

The external privileges of the Gospel dispensation, an inheritance among them that are sanctified, and a right unto it, on the foot of free grace,

they murmured against the good man of the house; who had been so kind and liberal, to those who came last into the vineyard, and had done no injury to them, but gave them a full reward. So the Jews that first believed in Christ, were at first uneasy at the Gospel being preached to the Gentiles, at the calling of them, and their partaking of the same privileges in a Gospel church state with them, without submitting to the ceremonies of the law, as they had done; just as the Pharisees, in Christ's time, murmured against him; for receiving sinners, and eating with them: though in the latter day, the envy of Ephraim shall depart, and in the ultimate glory there will be no murmuring at each other's happiness.

Matthew 20:12

Ver. 12. **Saying, these last have wrought but one hour,**

Thinking it hard, that they should have the same re-

ward for the service of one hour, others had for the service of many. This is grudged by the Jews ¹⁰²⁶;

“Bath Kol”, a voice from heaven, went out and said, “Ketiah bar Shallum”, is prepared for the life of the world to come; Rabbi wept, and said, there is that obtains his world (or the world to come for himself) אָחַד שָׁעָה אֶחָד “in one hour”; and there is that obtains it in many years.”

The same observation is also made by the same person, on account of R. Eleazar ben Durdia ¹⁰²⁷. So in the parable of the Jews above mentioned, which is the broken remains of a common proverb among them like ¹⁰²⁸ this; it is observed, that there being one labourer among those that were hired, who did his work better than all the rest, and who was taken notice of by the king; that when

“at even the labourers came to take their wages, this labourer also came to take his; and the king gave him his wages equal with them, (or, as in another place, a perfect one,) the labourers began to press him with difficulty, (or as elsewhere ¹⁰²⁹ אָחַד שָׁעָה “they murmured”), and said, Oh! our Lord, the king, “we have laboured all the day”; but this man has not laboured but two or three hours in the day, and he takes his wages, even as ours, or a perfect reward.”

And so it follows here,

and thou hast made them equal to us, who have borne the burden and heat of the day;

of all the Jewish rites and ceremonies, which were burdensome and intolerable. The ceremonial law was a burden to the Jewish people; the multitude of sacrifices enjoined them, and the frequent repetition of them, together with the great number of other ordinances and institutions, produced a weariness in them; especially in the carnal part of them, who saw not the things typified by them, the use and end of them, and so did not enjoy spiritual pleasure in them, Mal 1:13. It was a yoke, and a yoke of bondage to them, which brought on them a spirit of bondage, through the fear of death, which was the penalty annexed to it; and it was an insupportable one, which neither they, nor their forefathers, were able to bear, because it made them debtors to keep the

¹⁰²⁶ T. Bab. Avoda Zara, fol. 10. 2.

¹⁰²⁷ **Ib. fol. 17. 1.**

¹⁰²⁸ Shirhashirim Rabba, fol 21. 4. Midrash Kohelet, fol. 72. 4.

¹⁰²⁹ T. Hieros. Beracot, fol. 5. 3.

whole law: and this was made still more burdensome, by the traditions of the elders, which were added to it, and which the Scribes and Pharisees obliged to the observance of; to which they themselves still added, and bound heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and laid them on men's shoulders. The law was a fiery law, and the dispensation of it was a hot and scorching one; it was uncomfortable working under the flashes of a mount, that burned with fire: the law worked wrath, and possessed the minds of men with a fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation. This may also be applied to such Christians, who are called to more severe service or sufferings for Christ, than others are; who are almost pressed down without measure, and endure fiery trials, are scorched, and made black, with the sun of persecution beating upon them; as the saints under the ten persecutions of the Roman emperors, and as the confessors and martyrs in the times of papal power and cruelty; and who, it might be thought, will have a greater degree of glory and happiness hereafter; and so some have been of opinion, that these are they that shall live and reign with Christ a thousand years, Re 20:4 But it rather seems, that others will be made equal with them, who have not endured what they have done; for all the dead in Christ, all that have part in the first resurrection, when Christ comes, as all the saints will then rise, will share in that glory; even the innumerable company, chosen, redeemed, and called, out of every nation, tongue, and people, and will be admitted to the same honour and happiness, Re 7:9 And this character will also agree with many other servants of Christ, who are called to harder and more laborious service than others are, and labour more abundantly in the Lord's vineyard than others do, and are longer employed in it; as for instance, the Apostle Paul; and yet the same crown of righteousness that is laid up for him, and given to him, will be given to all that love the appearance of Christ, though they have not laboured for his name's sake, as he has done.

Matthew 20:13

Ver. 13. **But he answered one of them,**

Who was the forwardest and loudest in his complaints, and represented the rest;

and said, friend, I do thee no wrong;

by giving all alike, the same privileges and blessings to the last, as to the first, since nothing was withheld from him. And indeed the Lord does no wrong to any, by the distinction which he makes among his creatures:

he is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works: he does no injury to the evil angels, by choosing the good angels, and confirming them in the estate in which they were created; when the others are reserved in chains of darkness, to the judgment of the great day; or by choosing fallen men, in Christ, and making provisions of grace for them, and not devils: and so there is no unrighteousness in him, nor does he do any wrong to any, when, like the potter, out of the same clay, he makes one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour; any more than when, in a providential way, he gives riches and wealth to some, and withholds them from others; or sends his Gospel, the means of grace to one, and not to another: and still less can he be thought to do wrong to the sons of men, by giving to them alike the same grace and privileges here, and the same happiness and glory hereafter; since neither have any right to what they have, or shall enjoy, and no one has the less for what is given to the other.

Didst thou not agree with me for a penny?

That is, to labour in the vineyard all the day for a penny; yea, this agreement was made personally with him, not with a servant, or messenger of his; though if it had, it ought, according to the Jewish canons, to have been abode by, which run thus ¹⁰³⁰:

“A man says to his messenger, or servant, go and hire workmen for me for three pence; he goes and hires them for four pence: if the messenger says to them, your wages be upon me, he gives them four pence, and takes three pence of the master of the house; he looses one out of his own purse: if he says to them, your hire be upon the master of the house, the master of the house gives them according to the custom of the province: if there are one in the province that hired for three pence, and others that are hired for four pence, he gives them but three pence, “and the murmuring” is against the messenger; in what things? When the work is not known, but when the work is known, and it is worth four pence, the master of the house gives them four pence; but if his messenger does not say to them four pence, they do not labour and do what deserves four pence. The householder says to him, hire me for four pence, and the messenger goes and hires for three pence, though the work deserves four pence, they have but three pence; because that אָחַד שָׁעָה “they took it upon themselves”, (i.e.

¹⁰³⁰ {b} Maimon. Hilch, Shecirut, c. 9. sect. 3.

they agreed for so much,) and their murmuring is against the messenger.”

Thus the argument in the parable proceeds upon the agreement, which ought to be abode by.

Matthew 20:14

Ver. 14. **Take that thine is,**

By agreement, and go thy way; out of my sight, give me no more trouble on this head; which looks like a dismissal from his service, and after privileges; and was true of many among the Jews, who were only nominal professors, and from whom the Gospel and ordinances of it were taken:

I will give unto this last

man that was called, and sent into the vineyard,

even as unto thee;

the same outward privileges, besides special grace, and eternal glory, which it looks as if the other had not.

Matthew 20:15

Ver. 15. **Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?**

External gifts and outward privileges, such as enjoying the word and ordinances, are God's own; and he may, as he does, bestow them on whom he will, and when and where he pleases; as he gave them to the Jews, and continued them many hundred years, when the Gentiles were utterly with them destitute of them; and as he has bestowed them in a more abundant manner for a long time on the Gentiles, whilst the Jews despise and reject them. Special grace is his own, which he gives to whom he pleases; it is by his own grace, and not the merits of men, that any are chosen, adopted, justified, pardoned, regenerated, and called; that they have faith, hope, love, repentance, or perform new obedience from a new heart, and new principles. Heaven and glory is his own, of his own preparing and giving; and both grace and glory are disposed of, and that very rightly and lawfully, according to his sovereign good will and pleasure: he chooses, adopts, justifies, pardons, regenerates, calls, and sanctifies whom he pleases; and brings what sons to glory he thinks fit, and bestows it equally upon them: and in so doing, does no wrong, or any injustice to any of his creatures; not to the fallen angels, by choosing some of their species, and confirming them in their original constitution; and by leaving them, the fallen angels, in their apostasy; nor by making provision for fallen man, and not them, nor by punishing them with everlasting destruction; nor do they ever complain of any wrong being done them: nor to non-elect men; for none of Adam's

race have any right to grace or glory, and therefore no wrong is done to any of them, by withholding them from them, whereby nothing is taken from them, and given to others; and by punishing them for sin; nor to any elect men, by making others partners with them; since they are all alike by nature, unworthy of grace and glory, and deserving of wrath: what is enjoyed by any of them, is of mere grace, and not through merit; and one has not a whit the less, for what the other is possessed of; so that there is no room for envy, murmuring, and complaint:

is thine eye evil because I am good?

An “evil eye”, is opposed to a good eye, frequently in Jewish writings, as a “good eye” signifies beneficence and liberality; hence it is said ¹⁰³¹

“He that gives a gift, let him give it hpy Nyeb “with a good eye”; bountifully and generously; and he that devoteth anything, let him devote it with a “good eye”;

cheerfully and freely: so an “evil eye” intends envy and covetousness, as it does here: and the sense is, art thou envious at the good of others, and covetous and greedy to monopolize all to thyself, because I am liberal, kind, and beneficent? Men are apt to complain of God, and charge his procedures in providence and grace, with inequality and injustice; whereas he does, as he may, all things according to his sovereign will, and never contrary to justice, truth, and goodness; though he is not to be brought to man’s bar, and men should submit to his sovereignty.

Matthew 20:16

Ver. 16. **So the last shall be first, and the first last,**

As he had asserted in Mt 19:30 and which is clearly illustrated by this parable, as it may be applied to Jews or Gentiles, or to nominal and real Christians:

for many be called;

externally, under the ministration of the Gospel, as the Jews in general were, by Christ and his apostles; but **few chosen;**

in Christ from all eternity, both to grace and glory; and in consequence, and as an evidence of it, but few among the Jews; as also in the Gentile world, comparatively speaking: and even but a few of those that are outwardly called, are inwardly and effectually called by the powerful grace of God, out of darkness into marvellous light, into the grace and liberty of the Gospel, into communion with Christ, and to the obtaining his kingdom

¹⁰³¹ T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 65. 1. & 71. 1. & 72.

and glory, according to the eternal purpose of God. It is a saying of R. Simeon ben Jochai ¹⁰³²

“I have seen the children of the world to come (elsewhere {e} it is, of the chamber), וְהֵם מְעַטִּים “and they are few”.

Though he vainly thought, that if those few were but two, they were himself and his son.

Matthew 20:17

Ver. 17. **And Jesus going up to Jerusalem,**

Which was situated ¹⁰³³ in the highest part of the land of Israel: the land of Israel, is said to be higher than any other land whatever; and the temple at Jerusalem, higher than any part of the land of Israel; wherefore Christ’s going to Jerusalem, is expressed by going up to it. Whither he came either from the coasts of Judea, from beyond Jordan, Mt 19:1 where he had been some time healing diseases, disputing with the Pharisees, discoursing with the young ruler, and instructing his disciples; or from a country near to the wilderness, from a city called Ephraim, Joh 11:54 where he continued some time with his disciples, after the sanhedrim had took counsel to put him to death; for this was his last journey to Jerusalem.

Took the twelve disciples apart in the way: into some private place, which lay near the road; for it seems that there were others that followed him, besides the twelve; when he was not willing they should hear what he had to say to them, concerning the issue of this, journey; lest either they should be discouraged and desert him, or it should be made public, and methods be used to prevent it: and said unto them; the disciples, whom he thought fit once more to remind of his sufferings and death, and to prepare them for the same; and though they would not so thoroughly understand all that he should say, yet when it was come to pass, they would remember it, and which would be of service to confirm their faith in him, as the true Messiah. See Gill “Mk 10:32”.

Matthew 20:18

Ver. 18. **Behold, we go up to Jerusalem,**

This is the last time of our going thither; observe, and take notice of what I am about to say; some extraordinary things will come to pass, and, as Luke relates that he said,

all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man, shall be accomplished; everything

¹⁰³² T. Hieros. Beracot, fol. 13. 4. {e} T. Bab. Succa, fol. 45. 2. & Sanhedrim, fol. 97. 2.

¹⁰³³ T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 87. 1.

that is recorded in Ps 22:1, and in Isa 53:1, or in any other prophecies of the Old Testament, relating to the ill treatment the Messiah should meet with, to his sufferings and death, and all the circumstances attending them, shall be exactly fulfilled in every point: and that they might not be at a loss about what he meant, he gives an account of various particular things, which should befall him;

and the Son of man shall be betrayed:

he does not say by whom, though he knew from the beginning who should betray him, that it would be one of his disciples, and that it would be Judas; but the proper time was not yet come to make this discovery: the persons into whose hands he was to be betrayed, are mentioned;

unto the chief priests, and unto the Scribes;

who were his most inveterate and implacable enemies; and who were the persons that had already taken counsel to put him to death, and were seeking all advantages and opportunities to execute their design:

and they shall condemn him to death;

which is to be understood not of their declaring it as their opinion, that he was guilty of death, and ought to die by a law of their’s, which declaration they made before Pilate; nor of their procuring the sentence of death to be pronounced by him, upon him; but of their adjudging him to death among themselves, in the palace of the high priest; which was done by them, as the sanhedrim and great council of the nation; though either they could not, or did not, choose to execute it themselves, and therefore delivered him up to the Romans; for this act of condemning him to death, was to be, and was, before the delivery of him up to the Gentiles, as is clear from what follows.

Matthew 20:19

Ver. 19. **And shall deliver him to the Gentiles,**

To Pilate, an Heathen governor, and to the Roman officers and soldiers under him; see Joh 18:35.

To mock him,

as they did, by putting on him a scarlet robe, plating a crown of thorns, and placing it on his head, and a reed in his hand; and then bowed the knee to him, and cried, hail, king of the Jews!

and to scourge him:

as he was by Pilate, at least by his orders: Mark adds, “and spit upon him”; as not only did the Jews in the palace of the high priest, but also the Gentiles, the Roman soldiers, after they had mocked him in the manner before described:

and to crucify him:

which, as it was a cruel and shameful death, such as slaves and the worst of malefactors were put to, so it was a Roman one; for which reason, the Jews choose to deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. The Persic version here adds, “and put him into the grave”: which though it followed his crucifixion, was not done by the Gentiles, but by Joseph of Arimathea, a Jew, and a disciple of Jesus; and that not in a contemptuous, but honourable manner

and the third day he shall rise again:

this he said for the comfort of his disciples; but now, though these things were so clearly and distinctly expressed by Christ, and which show his omniscience, and give proof both of his deity and Messiahship, yet Luke observes of the disciples, “that they understood none of these things, and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken”: the words were plain, the grammatical sense of them was easy, but they could not imagine that they were to be taken literally; which was such a glaring contradiction to their received and rooted principles of the temporal kingdom of the Messiah, and the grandeur of it, that they fancied these expressions carried a mystical, secret meaning in them, which they were not masters of: and certain it is, that what our Lord now said, was so far from destroying, or weakening these prejudices of theirs, that it rather confirmed them in them; particularly, what he said about rising again, which seemed to have put them afresh in mind, and to excite their hopes of this external felicity, as appears from the following case.

Matthew 20:20

Ver. 20. **Then came to him the mother of Zebedee’s children,**

Whose name was Salome, as may be concluded from Mt 27:56 compared with Mark 15:40. She is not called the wife of Zebedee, who might be now dead, but the mother of his children, his two sons, as the Arabic version renders it: James and John, and who were the disciples of Christ: it is not certain, that Zebedee was ever a follower of him; and therefore the woman is described by her relation to her children, and not her husband; and the rather, because it was in their name, and on their account, that she came to Jesus. She is said to be the sister of Joseph, the husband of Mary, the mother of our Lord; and if so, might hope to succeed in her request, on the foot of relation; as also, since she herself had been a constant follower of, and attendant on him; and especially, inasmuch as her sons were his favourite disciples;

with her sons;

her two sons, James and John, whom Mark mentions by name:

worshipping

him,

and desiring a certain thing of him;

that is, she came in a very submissive manner to him, either bowed unto him, or kneeled down before him, or threw herself at his feet, and signified that she had a single favour, and a very considerable one, to ask of him. Mark represents the case thus, that her two sons, James and John, came to Christ, and that they themselves spoke to him, and addressed him in this manner: "Master, we would that thou shouldst do for us, whatsoever we shall desire": which was a very odd request, both as to the matter and manner of it; that they should ask; and insist upon everything to be done for them, they desired; and suggest, that they expected that he would promise them this, before they declared the particular favour they had to ask of him. The matter may be reconciled thus. These two disciples, having observed what Christ had said concerning the twelve disciples sitting on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel, and what he had just related, concerning his rising again the third day, which they might understand of some display of his glory; and concluding from all this, that the setting up of his temporal monarchy was at hand, inform their mother of it, and move to her, to use her interest with Christ, in their favour: and which they did, partly to shun the envy and ill will of the rest of the disciples; and partly, to conceal their own pride and vanity; as also, they might think a request from her, on their behalf, would be more easily granted: accordingly, she agreeing to the motion, they all three came, as Matthew relates, and the mother is the mouth, and speaks for her sons; so that they may be said to make such a request by her, she representing them; or they joined in the petition with her; or as soon as she had made it, they seconded it, and made it their own.

Matthew 20:21

Ver. 21. **And he said unto her, what wilt thou?**

Mark says, "he said unto them"; her two sons, James and John, "what would you that I should do for you?" Both is true; what is this singular favour? what business of moment and importance is it, you would have me do for you, you are so eager and pressing for, and so solicitous of? This he said, not as being ignorant of the matter; he knew the corruption of their hearts, the vanity of their minds, their carnal, worldly, and ambitious views;

but to lead them on to say all they had to say upon this head; in which may be observed the goodness, humanity, and patience of Christ, in not upbraiding them with their pride and insolence, in bearing with their rashness and folly, and in giving them room to believe, that he should answer their request in every thing that was right and reasonable to be done,

She saith unto him, grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on the right hand, and the other the left in thy kingdom:

or, as in Mark, "in thy glory" that is, in thy glorious kingdom; meaning a temporal one, which would outdo all the kingdoms of the world, in external glory, pomp, and splendour, as they imagined: to sit one on the right hand and the other on the left hand of Christ, when he should be seated, literally, on the throne of his father David, signifies to be nearest to his person; to be next to him in power and authority; to have the highest posts of honour, and places of trust and profit; to be his prime ministers; and, in a word, to have the greatest share next to him of worldly honour, riches, and power. To sit at the right hand, was, with the Jews, reckoned a great mark of honour and affection; see 1Ki 2:19 and so with other nations: with the Egyptians especially, it was accounted a great honour to be placed on the right hand, but the greatest to be in the middle: which was equally observed among the Romans, and the same with the Africans and Numidians; though Xenophon relates, that Cyrus, with a singular prudence, that he might receive his guests the more honourably, used to place them at the left hand, accounting that part, as nearest the heart, to be the more worthy.¹⁰³⁴ These two, the best and most honourable places, this woman was for engrossing for her two sons, who joined with her in the request; for Mark says, that "they said unto him, grant unto us that we may sit, &c." and Christ's answer here, which follows, implies as much.

Matthew 20:22

Ver. 22. **But Jesus answered, and said,**

To her two sons,

ye know not what ye ask.

They were ignorant of the nature of Christ's kingdom, which is spiritual, and not of this world: or they would never have asked such a question, or sued for that which will never be enjoyed by any and supposing that Christ's kingdom had been such as they imagined, yet in asking for honours and riches, they might not know what they asked for; they might promise themselves

¹⁰³⁴ Alex. ab. Alex. Genial. Dier. l. 2. c. 19.

much pleasure and happiness in the enjoyment of them, and yet, if indulged with them, might be disappointed, and find unexpected troubles and uneasiness. It would have been much more proper and seasonable, on hearing of Christ's being mocked, scourged, spit upon, and crucified, if they had put such a question to themselves, Christ here directs to,

are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with

the baptism I am baptized with? meaning his reproaches, sorrows, sufferings, and death; which because of the disagreeableness of them, he compares to a bitter cup of vengeance, wrath, fury, and indignation; and because they were appointed to him, and allotted for him, they were his portion, therefore he expresses them by a "cup"; and because they were so many and great, of such an overwhelming nature, that he seemed to be plunged into them, and covered with them, therefore he likens them to a "baptism" and which the ordinance of water baptism, performed by immersion, is a lively representation of. Now Christ suggests to these disciples, that instead of indulging their ambitious desires of worldly grandeur, that they would do well to consider what a bitter cup he had to drink of, and what a sea of sorrows and sufferings he was about to be plunged into, and drenched in; and whether they could think of enduring anything of the like kind, for his sake, which was most likely to be in a short time, what they would be called unto, and not to honours, ease, and pleasure; and what they must be sure, more or less, to undergo, before they entered the everlasting kingdom of glory:

they say unto him, we are able;

not considering the nature of these sufferings, and their own weakness; but partly through ignorance of themselves, and a vain confidence which possessed them; and chiefly through a vehement desire of the places in his kingdom, they asked for, and which they thought drinking his cup, and being baptized with his baptism, were the condition, and the means of enjoying; and so rashly affirm their ability, and which includes their willingness to comply herewith.

Matthew 20:23

Ver. 23. **And he saith unto them, ye shall drink indeed of my cup,**

Not of the selfsame, but of what was like unto it; meaning, that they should endure much persecution for his name's sake, as all that will live godly in Christ Jesus must expect in one shape or another. Thus James, who

was one of these persons, was slain with the sword by Herod; John, the other, was imprisoned, and beaten by the order of the Jewish sanhedrim, was banished into the isle of Patmos by Domitian; and, some say, was cast into a cauldron of boiling oil, though saved in it: so that these words seem to be a prophecy of what they should suffer for Christ, instead of enjoying places of worldly honour and profit under him, they were seeking for.

And be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with:

this clause is here, and in the former verse, omitted by the Vulgate Latin, and Ethiopic versions, and in some Greek copies, and is thought to be transcribed hither out of Mark's Gospel; but the Syriac, Arabic, and Persic versions have it, and so has Munster's Hebrew Gospel, and it appears in many Greek copies. James, being bathed in his own blood, when killed with the sword, and John being cast into a vessel of scalding oil, these are fitly expressed by a baptism.

But to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine, to give;

in the sense in which they asked it, since he was no temporal prince; nor was his kingdom of this world; nor had he any such external favours, or worldly honours: and as to the true and spiritual sense of such a phrase, it was not a point to be fixed now by him, as man, and according to his own will; as who should reign with him in the kingdom of heaven, who should sit down on the same throne with him, and enjoy all the glories and happiness of the world to come; and though, as mediator, all this glory was given to him, and he had it in his hands to give to others, yet to none

but

those **for whom,**

says he, **it is prepared of my Father:**

for this is the true reading and sense of the last clause; signifying, that eternal life, or the heavenly glory, is a kingdom prepared by his Father, from the foundation of the world, and not for anybody, and every person, but for some only, according to his Father's sovereign will and pleasure; and that this is an affair that was fixed by him, in his eternal counsels and purposes, and in the covenant of his grace, and not to be adjusted now; nor was the designation of it to be, nor will the distribution of it be according to the merits of men, but the free grace of God; and though he, as mediator, was appointed to bestow both grace and glory on men, yet only on those the Father had given to him, for whom grace was laid up in him, and glory prepared.

Matthew 20:24

Ver. 24. **And when they ten heard it,**

The other ten apostles, who either were within hearing the request made, and Christ's answer, or had by some means information of it:

they were moved with indignation against the two brethren;

the two sons of Zebedee, James and John: they were not so much displeased with the mother of them, who asked the favour for them, as with her sons, knowing that they have put her upon making this motion to Christ; nor were they so much moved with indignation at the action, detesting all notions of superiority and pre-eminence; for they were all tintured with the same carnal principle, and each was desirous of the chief place for himself; but they were angry, and out of all temper, that these two brethren should move for that, which they thought they had as good a right unto, as any of them: wherefore, as Mark says, "they began to be much displeased with" them, and to show their resentment, not only by their looks and gestures, but by words; and very probably they would have rose to very high words, and a downright quarrel, had not Christ interposed; as, from the following verse, it appears he did.

Matthew 20:25

Ver. 25. **But Jesus called them unto him,**

All his twelve disciples, perceiving that the same ambitious views prevailed in them all: to discourage which, and to prevent their quarrelling one with another, he called them to him, and made use of the following reasonings: and said, ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them; appealing to them in a case that was well known by them, what the princes of the Gentiles did; or, as Mark expresses it, "they which are accounted", or "seem to rule over the Gentiles": who know not God, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who neither serve and obey him, or have any dependence on him, but assume a power of governing others, take upon them to rule the nations of the world, and are acknowledged as such by them: these claim a superiority over others, and exercise lordly power over them; and they that are their great ones, their lords, and nobles under them; these also assert a pre-eminence, and exercise authority on those that are below them; which they have received from those that are above them: this is the usual way and method of the governments of the kingdoms of this world: wherefore, for the apostles to affect and desire

a superiority to each other, in the kingdom of Christ, was to imitate the Gentiles, and to act according to worldly forms of government; which is very unsuitable to the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus, whose kingdom is spiritual, and not of this world.

Matthew 20:26

Ver. 26. **But it shall not be so among you,**

This is not to be extended to Christian nations, as if there were to be no order of magistracy subsisting in them; but that all must be on a level, and no distinction of princes and subjects, of governors and governed; nor to Christian churches, as if there was no ecclesiastical authority to be used, or any church government and power to be exercised; none to rule, whom others are to obey and submit themselves to; but is to be restrained to the apostles as such, among whom there was an entire equality; being all apostles of Christ, being equally qualified and sent, and put into the selfsame office by him: the same holds good of all pastors of churches, who have no superintendency and pre-eminence over one another, or can, or ought to exercise any lordly power and authority, one, or more, over the rest; being equally invested with the same office power, one as another: for otherwise Christ's kingdom would appear like the nations of the world, and to be of a worldly nature; whereas it is spiritual, and does not lie in worldly pomp and grandeur, and in external superiority and pre-eminence of one another; but in the spiritual administration of the word and ordinances; which every pastor of a church has an equal right to exercise, and obedience to them lies in a submission to these things:

but whosoever will be great among you, let him be,

or, as in Mark,
shall be your minister:

whoever would be reckoned a great man in the kingdom of Christ, or under the Gospel dispensation, must be a minister to others if he is desirous of being truly great in the esteem of God, and of men, he must do great service for Christ, and to the souls of men; and seek to bring great glory to God, by faithfully ministering the word and ordinances, and by denying himself worldly honour and glory, and by serving others, through much reproach, difficulty, and opposition.

Matthew 20:27

Ver. 27. **And whosoever will be chief among you,**

Or first, or have the pre-eminence, the first place in the kingdom of the Messiah, let him be your servant; or, as in Mark, shall be servant of all: not only a minister,

but a servant; not a servant of some only, but of all. This was verified in the Apostle Paul, who became a servant to all men, though he was free, that he might gain some to Christ; and by so doing was the chief, though he reckoned himself the least of the apostles, yea, less than the least of all saints. The Jews have a saying somewhat like this, that ¹⁰³⁵everyone that makes himself dbek, as a servant, for the words of the law in this world, shall be made free in the world to come."

Matthew 20:28

Ver. 28. **Even as the son of man,**

Meaning himself, the seed of the woman, the son of Abraham, and of David, according to the flesh; and whom he proposes as an example of humility, and as an argument to draw them off from their ambitious views of worldly grandeur, and from all thoughts of the Messiah's setting up a temporal kingdom; since he

came not to be ministered unto

by others; to be attended on in pomp and state, to have a numerous retinue about him, waiting upon him, and ministering to him; as is the case of the princes, and great men of the world; though he is Lord of all, and King of kings;

but to minister;

in the form of a servant unto others, going about from place to place to do good, both to the bodies and souls of men: he "came" forth from his Father, down from heaven, into this world, by his assumption of human nature, to "minister" in the prophetic office, by preaching the Gospel, and working miracles, in confirmation of it; and in the priestly office, one branch of which is expressed in the next clause,

and to give his life a ransom for many:

what he came to give was his life, which was his own, and than which nothing is more dear and precious: besides, his life was an uncommon one, being not only so useful to men, and entirely free from sin in itself, but was the life of the man Jesus, who is in union with the Son of God: this he came to "give", and did give into the hands of men, to the justice of God, and death itself; which giving, supposes it to be his own, and at his own disposal; was not forfeited by any act of his, nor was it forced from him, but freely laid down by him; and that as a "ransom", or redemption price for his people, to deliver them from the evil of sin, the bondage of Satan, the curses of a righteous law, from eternal death, and future wrath, and, in

1035

T. Bab. Bava Metzia, fol. 35. 2.

short, from all their enemies: which ransom price was paid "for" them in their room and stead, by Christ, as their substitute; who put himself in their legal place, and laid himself under obligation to pay their debts, and clear their scores, and redeem them from all their iniquities, and the evil consequences of them: and this he did "for many"; for as many as were ordained to eternal life; for as many as the Father gave unto him; for many out of every kindred, tongue, and people, and nation; but not for every individual of human nature; for many are not all.

Matthew 20:29

Ver. 29. **And as they departed from Jericho,**

Which, was distant about ten parasas, or miles, from Jerusalem ¹⁰³⁶, through which Christ just passed, and had met with Zacchaeus, and called him, and delivered the parable concerning a nobleman's going into a far country. The Syriac and Persic versions render the words, "when Jesus departed from Jericho"; and the Arabic, "when he went out of Jericho"; not alone, but "with his disciples", as Mark says; and not with them only, for a great multitude followed him out of the city; either to hear him, or be healed by him, or to see him, or behold his miracles, or to accompany him to Jerusalem; whither he was going to keep the feast of the passover, and where they might be in some expectation he would set up his kingdom. The Ethiopic version reads it, "as they went out from Jerusalem", contrary to all copies and versions.

Matthew 20:30

Ver. 30. **And behold, two blind men,**

Mark and Luke make mention but of one; which is no contradiction to Matthew; for they neither of them say that there was but one. A greater difficulty occurs in Luke's account; for whereas Matthew and Mark both agree, that it was when Jesus came out of Jericho, that this cure was wrought, Luke says it was "when he came nigh unto it"; which some reconcile by observing, that that phrase may be rendered, "while he was near Jericho"; and so only signifies his distance from it, and not motion to it; but this will not solve the difficulty, because we after read of his entrance into it, and passing through it. Some therefore have thought, that Christ met with, and cured one blind man before he entered the city, and another when he came out of it and that Matthew has put the history of both together: but to me it seems, that there were three blind men cured; one before he went into Jericho, which Luke only relates, and two as he came

1036 Bartenora in Misn. Taraid, c. 3. sect. 8.

out of Jericho, which Matthew here speaks of; and one of which, according to Mark, was by name Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus; for so Bartimaeus signifies. Tima, or Timaeus, was a name in use among the Jews: we often read of R. Judah amynt Nb, Ben Tima¹⁰³⁷, the son of Tima, or Timaeus. Origen¹⁰³⁸ thinks, he had his name from the Greek word timh, which signifies “honour”; and so תִּימָי “Time”, with the Jews, is used for honour and profit¹⁰³⁹. This man’s father might have been a very honourable and useful man, though the son was fallen into poverty and distress, through blindness; for which reason he may be mentioned, as being a person well known to the Jews.

Sitting by the wayside;

Mark says, “begging”, where such were wont to sit, in order to ask alms of persons, as they passed by;

when they heard that Jesus passed by;

who, upon perceiving that there was an unusual concourse of people, might ask the reason of it, when it was told them that Jesus of Nazareth was coming that way: or, without asking, they might hear the people speak of him; and inasmuch as they had heard many things concerning him, and the miracles he wrought, applied to him for help, and

cried out, saying, have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David:

in which may be observed the titles of honour they give him, which declare their faith in him; calling him Lord, expressing their sense of his deity, dominion, and power; and “Son of David”, thereby owning and professing him to be the Messiah, that being a common name of him, well known among the Jews; See Gill on “Mt 1:1”, the petition they make is, that he would “have mercy on them”, who, through blindness, were in a poor, helpless, and miserable condition; and this was made with great vehemency: they “cried” out aloud, that he might hear them, and take pity on them; being eagerly desirous of having their sight, and firmly believing that he was able to restore it to them.

Matthew 20:31

Ver. 31. **And the multitude rebuked them,**

Who were either the friends or enemies of Christ: if his friends, they might rebuke them, that they might not be so troublesome to him, and judging it unworthy

¹⁰³⁷ T. Hieros. Nazir, fol. 52. 1. Erubin, fol. 19. 4. T. Bab. Gittin, fol. 84. 1. Bava Metziz, fol. 94. 1. Massech. Semachot, c. 9. Juchasin, fol. 159. 2.

¹⁰³⁸ Comment. in Matt. vol. 1. p. 428. Ed. Huet.

¹⁰³⁹ Targum in Esth. iii. 8. & v. 13. T. Hicros. Peah, fol. 15. 4.

of him to have anything to do with such mean persons, and supposing that their business was only to ask alms of him; or if they were his enemies, or not so well affected to him, they might chide them for giving him such high characters, as Lord, and Son of David; and therefore being displeased with such encomiums, reproved them,

because they should hold their peace;

be silent, and say no more of that kind, lest others should take up the same notion of him, and it should prevail among the people.

But they cried the more, saying, have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.

They lifted up their voice higher, and cried the more loudly, that their voice might be above the noise of the people, and be heard by Christ; and renewed their request with more eagerness and importunity, repeating the characters they before gave him, being not in the least intimidated by the rebukes of the people: their faith in Jesus, as the Messiah, being more increased, and their desires of his pity and compassion being more enlarged, they grew bolder, and more resolute, as faith often does by opposition, and trials.

Matthew 20:32

Ver. 32. **And Jesus stood still,**

Made a full stop, when he was near, or right against where these blind men sat; which shows the strength of faith, the force of prayer, and the great regard Christ has to both:

and called them:

himself, being near unto them, and within the reach of his voice; or he commanded them to be brought to him, as Mark says: he ordered others to call them, or let them know, that it was his will they should come to him; upon which they threw away their garments, their long upper garments, which were some hindrance to a quick motion, at least Bartimaeus did; that they might be the sooner with him: and when they were come to him, he said,

what will ye that I shall do unto you?

is it alms you want? or would you have your sight restored? This question he put, not as being ignorant of their desires, but to show both his power and willingness to do anything for them they should ask; and that their faith in him might be made manifest, and the people have their expectations raised, and they prepared to attend the miracle now to be wrought.

Matthew 20:33

Ver. 33. **They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may**

be opened.

That is, that their sight might be restored to them; for being deprived of that, it was all one as if their eyes were so closed, that they could not open them; and so the recovery of it is expressed by an opening of them. The opening of the eyes of the blind was prophesied of, as what should be done in the days of the Messiah, and by him, as an evidence of his being that person, Isa 35:5 which prophecy these blind men might be acquainted with, and be an encouragement to their faith to expect a cure from him. They do not ask for alms, but for the recovery of their sight; which being granted, they would be able to get their bread in another way; for they were not like some idle persons that choose rather to be under such a calamity, or any other, that they might not be obliged to work with their hands for a livelihood. Their request shows, that they made no doubt of it, but firmly believed that Christ was able to do this for them, though the thing was impossible to be done by man; who therefore must conclude that he was not a mere man, but the Son of the living God.

Matthew 20:34

Ver. 34. **So Jesus had compassion on them,**

His bowels moved towards them as a man; he pitied their miserable and distressed condition, and discovered the tenderness of his heart towards them by some outward sign, by his looks, or by some gesture or another: and touched their eyes; with his bare hand, without the use of any instrument or medicine. The Ethiopic version adds; “and said unto them, according to your faith shall it be unto you”; which seems to be taken out of Mt 9:29. The Evangelist Mark relates, that “Jesus said unto him (Bartimaeus) go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole”: not that the virtue of healing came from the act of faith, but from the object of it; his faith was not the cause of, nor the reason why, but the way and means in and by which he received the cure:

and immediately their eyes received sight;

or, as the Syriac and Persic versions render the words, “that moment their eyes were opened”: the cure was wrought at once, directly; a clear proof of the omnipotence of Christ, and of his true and proper deity: the words, “their eyes”, are not in some copies: and are omitted by the Vulgate Latin, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions, which read thus, “they immediately saw”. The Persic version adds, and they saw the world; the men and things of it, which they either had never seen before, or, at least, for a considerable time; which must be a very surprising

and agreeable sight to them.

And they followed him;

in a corporal sense they joined the multitude, and went after him to Jerusalem; partly to express their gratitude for such a wonderful favour bestowed upon them; and partly that they might be witnesses of the power of his deity, and the truth of his Messiahship, as they went along, and at Jerusalem: and in a spiritual sense; they became his disciples, they embraced his doctrines, believed in him as the Messiah, submitted to his ordinances, imitated him in the exercise of grace, and in the performance of duty: for, at the same time he restored their bodily sight, he gave them a spiritual one to look to him, and follow him, the light of the world, that they might enjoy the light of life in another world.

Matthew Chapter 21

Matthew 21:1

Ver. 1. **And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem,....**

The Syriac, Persic, and Ethiopic versions read, “when he drew nigh, or was near”; but not alone, his disciples were with him, and a multitude of people also; as is evident from the following account. They might well be said to be near to Jerusalem, since it is added,

and were come to Bethphage;

which the Jews say¹⁰⁴⁰ was within the walls of the city of Jerusalem, and was in all respects as the city itself, and was the outermost part of it¹⁰⁴¹; and that all within the outward circumference of the city of Jerusalem was called Bethphage¹⁰⁴²: it seems to me to be part of it within the city, and part of it without, in the suburbs of it, which reached to Bethany, and that to the Mount of Olives. Various are the derivations and etymologies of this place: some say it signifies “the house”, or “place of a fountain”, from a fountain that was in it; as if it was a compound of “Beth”, an house, and phgh, “pege”, a fountain: others, “the house of the mouth of a valley”; as if it was made up of those three words, בֵּית פִּי גֵיא because the outward boundary of it was at the foot of the Mount of Olives, at the entrance of the valley of Jehoshaphat: others say, that the ancient reading was “Bethphage, the house of slaughter”; and Jerom says¹⁰⁴³, it was a village of the priests, and he renders it, “the house of jaw bones”: here indeed they might bake the showbread, and eat the

¹⁰⁴⁰ Gloss. in T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 14. 2. & Pesach. fol. 91. 1.

¹⁰⁴¹ Gloss. in T. Bab. Pesach. fol. 63. 2. & 91. 1.

¹⁰⁴² Gloss. in T. Bab. Sota, fol. 45. 1. & Bava Metzia fol. 90. 1.

¹⁰⁴³ In loc. & ad Eustoch, fol. 59. 3. Tom. 1.

holy things, as in Jerusalem¹⁰⁴⁴; but the true reading and signification of it is, בַּיִת פְּאֵי “the house of figs”; so called from the fig trees which grew in the outward limits of it, near Bethany, and the Mount of Olives; hence we read of¹⁰⁴⁵ פְּנֵי בֵית הַיְיִ, “the figs of Bethany”; which place is mentioned along with, Bethphage, both by Mark and Luke, where Christ, and those with him, were now come: the latter says, they were come nigh to these places, for they were come

to the Mount of Olives;

near to which were the furthestmost limits of Bethany, and Bethphage, from Jerusalem. This mount was so called from the abundance of olive trees which grew upon it, and was on the east side of Jerusalem¹⁰⁴⁶; and it was distant from it a sabbath day’s journey, Ac 1:12 which was two, thousand cubits, or eight furlongs, and which made one mile: then sent Jesus two disciples; who they were is not certain, perhaps Peter and John, who were afterwards sent by him to prepare the passover, Luke 22:8.

Matthew 21:2

Ver. 2. **Saying unto them, go into the village over against you,**

Munster’s Hebrew Gospel reads, “before you”; not Jerusalem, as some have thought, for that would never be called a village; though the Ethiopic version reads it, “the city”; but rather Bethany, which was near to Bethphage, and is mentioned with it; though the Jews say¹⁰⁴⁷, the name of the village was Nob, and was near to Jerusalem, and own, that Christ had an ass from hence, on which he rode to Jerusalem, and applied to himself the prophecy in Zec 9:9. And it is very likely this was the village; for Nob was very near to Jerusalem; it was over against it, within sight of it, and from thence might be taken a view of the whole city, according to the Jews; who say¹⁰⁴⁸, that Sennacherib stood in Nob, a city of the priests, over against the walls of Jerusalem, and saw the whole city, and it was little in his eyes; and he said; is not this the city of Jerusalem, &c.

1044 Misn. Menachot, c. 11. sect. 2. T. Bab. Menachot fol. 63. 1. & 78. 2. Maimon. Hilch. Pesul. Hamukdash, c. 12. sect. 16. Gloss. in Pesach. fol. 63. 2.

1045 T. Bab. Pesach. fol. 53. 1. & Erubin, fol. 28. 2.

1046 Zech. xiv 4. Targum in Ezek. xi. 23. & Bartenora in Misn. Mid. dot. c. 1. sect. 3.

1047 Toldos Jesu, p. 9.

1048 T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 95. 1. Targum, Jarchi, & Kimchi in Isa. x. 32.

and straightway,

or, as in Mark, “as soon as ye be entered into it”; and in Luke, “at your entering”; at the town’s end, at one of the first houses in it, at the door thereof,

ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her.

The other evangelists only make mention of the colt, or young ass; but, no doubt, both were spoken of by Christ, and both were found by the disciples, the ass, and the colt by her, and both were brought away by them; and on both of them, very probably, Christ rode; first on one, and then on the other, as the prophecy hereby fulfilled seems to require, and as the sequel of the account shows. The ancient allegorical sense of the ass and colt is not to be despised: that the ass may signify the Jews, who had been used to bear the burdensome rites and ceremonies of the law; and the colt, the wild and untamed Gentiles, and the coming of Christ, first to the one, and then to the other:

loose them, and bring them unto me,

both ass and colt. So the Arabic version reads it, “loose both, and bring them, both to me”.

Matthew 21:3

Ver. 3. And if any man say ought unto you,

As, what business have you with the ass and colt? why do you loose them? as certain persons, the owners of them did, as Mark and Luke relate; ye shall say, the Lord hath need of them: he that is our Lord, and your Lord, and the Lord of these creatures, and of all things else, wants them for his present service; and straightway he will send them: which is either a continuation of what the disciples should say to any that should ask them the reason of their loosing the ass and colt, in order to make them easy: that the Lord who had need of them, as soon as he had done with them, would send them back to their proper owners, safe and well: or they are spoken for the encouragement of the disciples to go, and not be disheartened, though they should be thus examined; for immediately upon saying, that the Lord stood in need of them, and had an use for them at that time, the owner thereof, without any more words, would immediately send them along with them; which latter rather seems to be the sense of the clause; and which is confirmed by Mark: a very clear proof is this of the omniscience of Christ. He knew, that there were an ass, and a colt, in such a village, fastened to such a door, just at the entrance into the town: he knew the owners of it would examine the disciples about loosing and taking them away, and prepares them to give an answer; and he knew that the

minds of these owners would be immediately wrought upon, and inclined to let them go directly and quietly.

Matthew 21:4

Ver. 4. **All this was done,**

The disciples were sent to the neighbouring village for the ass and colt, and they brought them, and Christ rode upon them; not because of the distance of the place from Jerusalem, for he was just at it; or because he was weary, or it would be very fatiguing to him to walk thither on foot; for he had been used to travelling, and had gone through most parts of Galilee and Judea; but that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet: the Ethiopic version adds, Isaiah; for the former part of the following citation stands in Isa 62:11 as the latter does in Zec 9:9. It was usual with the Jews to cite Scripture in this manner, by taking a part from one writer, and another from another, and joining them together: saying, the following words.

Matthew 21:5

Ver. 5. **Tell ye the daughter of Zion,**

These words seem to be taken out of Isa 62:11 where it is said, “say ye to the daughter of Zion, behold thy salvation cometh”, or “thy Saviour cometh”; meaning, without doubt, the Messiah: by the daughter of Zion is meant, not the city of Jerusalem, but the inhabitants thereof, the Jewish synagogue; or as the Targum renders it, כְּנִישְׁתָּא דְּיִזְרְיָה, “the congregation of Zion”, the people of the Jews; particularly the elect of God among them, those that embraced the true Messiah, and believed in him:

behold, thy king cometh unto thee:

this, and what follow, are cited from Zec 9:9 and to be understood of the king Messiah, who, in a little time after this prophecy was given out, was to come to Zion, and redeem Jacob from all his iniquities, and was now come. One of the Jewish commentators says¹⁰⁴⁹, that interpreters are divided about the sense of this prophecy; but observes, that there are some that say this is the Messiah: and another¹⁰⁵⁰ of them affirms, that it is impossible to explain it of any other than the king Messiah; and that it can be understood of no other, I have elsewhere¹⁰⁵¹ shown. “Meek”; in the prophecy of Zechariah it is, yne, “poor”, as the Messiah Jesus was, in a temporal sense; but the word, both by the Septuagint, and our evangelist, is rendered

1049 Aben Ezra in Zech. ix. 9.

1050 Jarchi in ib.

1051 {z} Prophecies of the Messiah literally fulfilled in Jesus, c. 9. p. 151, &c.

meek;

as it is by the Targum, Jarchi, and Kimchi, who all explain it by נִיחָה, “lowly, humble, or meek”: and a character it is, that well agrees with Jesus, who, in the whole of his deportment, both in life and in death, was a pattern of meekness and lowliness of mind: and

sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass.

This is applied to the Messiah by the Jews, both ancient¹⁰⁵² and modern¹⁰⁵³, who consider this as an instance and evidence of his humility: they suppose, this ass to be a very uncommon one, having an hundred spots on it; and say, that it was the foal of that which was created on the eve of the sabbath¹⁰⁵⁴; and is the same that Abraham and Moses rode upon: and they own, as before observed, that Jesus of Nazareth rode on one to Jerusalem, as is here related. Their ancient governors, patriarchs, princes, and judges, used to ride on asses, before the introduction and multiplication of horses in Solomon’s time, forbidden by the law of God: wherefore, though this might seem mean and despicable at this present time, yet was suitable enough to Christ’s character as a king, and as the son of David, and king of Israel; strictly observing the law given to the kings of Israel, and riding in such manner as they formerly did.

Matthew 21:6

And the disciples went,

The two disciples, as the Arabic version reads, to the village over against them; and, as Mark says, “found the colt tied to the door without, in a place where two ways met”: the house was just at the entrance of the village, at the door of which, on the outside in the street, was the colt fastened, where were two ways of going into, and coming out of the town; so that it was a public place; the colt was easily seen, nor could it well be taken away without being observed, as it was by the owners of it: and

did as Jesus commanded them;

they loosed the colt; and whereas whilst they were loosing it, the owners of it asked them, what they meant by so doing? they returned for answer what Christ had directed them to say; upon which they were satisfied, and

1052 T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 98. 1. & 99. 1. Bereshit Rabba, fol. 66. 2. & 85. 3. Midrash Kohelet, fol. 63. 2. Zohar in Gen. fol. 127. 3. & in Num. fol. 83. 4. & in Deut. fol. 117. 1. & 118. 3. Raya Mehimna in Zohar. in Lev. fol. 38. 3. & in Num. fol. 97. 2.

1053 Jarchi in Isa. xxvi 6. Baal Hatturim in Exod. fol. 88. 2. Abarbimel, Mashmia Jeshua, fol. 15. 4.

1054 {w} Pirke Eliezer, c. 31. Caphtor, fol. 81. 2.

Matthew 21:6

let them go with it; see Mark 11:4. This is a very considerable instance of the faith of the disciples in Christ, and their ready and cheerful obedience to him; who might have objected the appearance of theft, the scandal that might be brought upon them, and the trouble they might be exposed to hereby; but they make no hesitation, but go and do as he had ordered them; and in which, they are worthy of the imitation of all the followers of Jesus.

Matthew 21:7

Ver. 7. **And brought the ass and the colt,**

To Jesus, as Mark and Luke add, and who only make mention of the colt: both were undoubtedly brought; the colt being unloosed and taken away, the ass, its dam, followed after: and put on them their clothes; their loose upper garments, to be instead of saddles and trappings, and that Christ might sit thereon with ease and decency: the other evangelists say, that they cast their garments on the colt; and the Syriac version here reads,

“they put their garments on the colt,

and Jesus rode upon it”: but as both were brought, it is clear from hence, that their clothes were put upon both; not knowing which Christ would choose to ride on. And it should seem, that it was not unusual to put garments on asses to ride on; for the Targumist on Jud 5:10 represents the princes of Israel as riding upon asses, strewed or saddled with all kind יִרְרִי, of “painted garments”. The Persic version, without the least colour of authority from the original text, renders it, “and Jesus put his own garment on the colt, and sat thereon”; which is ridiculous, as well as contrary to truth:

and they sat him thereon,

or “on them”: meaning either on the ass and colt, that is, on one of them, or both successively, or on the clothes they put upon them.

Matthew 21:8

Ver. 8. **And a very great multitude,**

Which consisted partly of the great multitude which followed Christ from Jericho, and partly of the much people that were come up to the feast of the passover from divers parts, and met him from Jerusalem; see Joh 12:12. These, many of them, for it cannot be thought to be done by them all,

spread their garments in the way;

either in the middle of the road, instead of carpets, to ride upon; the Persic version adds, “that he might pass over them”: this they did, in honour to him as a king. So when Jehu declared to the princes of Israel, that he was anointed king of Israel, they hastened, and took every

man his garment, and put it under him, 2Ki 9:13 that is, to tread upon; though the Jewish writers¹⁰⁵⁵ say, it was done that he might be higher than them all, suitable to the dignity of a king: and it is reported¹⁰⁵⁶ of Cato Uticensis, the emperor, that his soldiers strewed their garments for him to walk upon: or these garments were spread by the way side. Dr. Lightfoot conjectures, that little tents might be raised by them along the road, upon which they spread their garments to make a show, in imitation of the feast of tabernacles, to which there is a very great resemblance in many things which occur in this account; when they used to spread linen cloth, garments, and fruits, over their booths, for decoration and ornament; as appears from their traditions about these things:

“פִּיר לַיָּה דִּינִי, “if a man spreads a linen cloth over it”, (his booth,) because of the sun, or under it, because of the falling of leaves, &c. or spreads it over a canopy, it is not right; but he may spread it over the bedposts¹⁰⁵⁷.”

That is, for ornament, as the commentators observe¹⁰⁵⁸. Again,

“פִּרְשׁ לַיָּה בְּנֹר, if a man spreads a garment over it, (his booth,) or if he spreads it under it, because of what falls it is not right; but if he spreads it so as that it is, htwanl, “for ornament”, it is right; and so if he covers it according to the tradition of it, and encompasses it with various kinds of fruits, and precious things, and vessels which hang upon it, whether on its walls, or on its covering, so they be for ornament, it is right¹⁰⁵⁹.”

In like manner, the multitude might hang their garments, to make the show the greater, either on such booths, or on the houses and trees, that were upon the road, as they went along.

Others cut down branches from the trees;

from the olive trees, as the Persic version expresses it, which grew in great plenty hereabout; and also from the palm trees, the branches of which, with the boughs of other trees, were what the Jews used to carry in their hands on the feast of tabernacles; see Le 23:40 and the Evangelist John expressly says, that the people which met Christ from Jerusalem at this time, did take branches of

1055 {x} R. Levi ben Gersom, & R. Samuel Laniado in loc.

1056 Plutarch in Aleibiade.

1057 Misn. Succa, c. 1. sect. 3.

1058 Maimon. & Bartenora in ib.

1059 Maimon. Hilch. Succa, c. 5. sect. 17.

palm trees in their hands,

Joh 12:13. And though this was not the time of the feast of tabernacles, but of the passover, yet it was common with the Jews to signify their joy upon any occasion, by such ways and methods they used at that least: so upon the cleansing of the tower of Jerusalem, by Simon Maccabeus, the Jews entered into it with thanksgiving, and branches of palm trees:

“And entered into it the three and twentieth day of the second month in the hundred seventy and first year, with thanksgiving, and branches of palm trees, and with harps, and cymbals, and with viols, and hymns, and songs: because there was destroyed a great enemy out of Israel.” (1 Maccabees 13:51)

Likewise upon purifying the temple, which had been polluted by Antiochus, they kept eight days with gladness as in the feast of tabernacles, and bare branches and fair boughs, and palms also, as in the Apocrypha: 6 And they kept the eight days with gladness, as in the feast of the tabernacles, remembering that not long afore they had held the feast of the tabernacles, when as they wandered in the mountains and dens like beasts. 7 Therefore they bare branches, and fair boughs, and palms also, and sang psalms unto him that had given them good success in cleansing his place. (2 Maccabees 10) But here it is said,

and they strowed them in the way:

not in the middle of the road, which would have been an hindrance to riding; but by the way side, upon, the booths, or houses in the road, in honour of him; just as the Jews¹⁰⁶⁰ say,

“the streets were strewed with myrtles, and the courts with purple, when Mordecai went out of the king’s gate.”

Matthew 21:9

Ver. 9. **And the multitudes that went before,**

That is, that went before Christ; accordingly the Syriac, Arabic, Persic, and Ethiopic versions, and Munster’s Hebrew Gospel, read, “that went before him”: these seem to be the much people that met him from Jerusalem,

and that followed him;

which were perhaps those that came from Jericho, and other parts;

cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David:

by calling Jesus the Son of David, they owned and proclaimed him to be the Messiah; this being the usual

1060 Targum in Esther viii. 15.

title by which the Messiah was known among the Jews; see the note on Mt 1:1 and by crying and saying Hosanna to him, which was done with loud acclamations, and the united shouts of both companies, before and behind; they ascribe all praise, honour, glory, and blessing to him, and wish him all prosperity, happiness, and safety. The word is an Hebrew word, and is compounded of נָא, and הוֹשִׁיעָה which signifies, “save I beseech”; and which words stand in Ps 118:25 to which the multitude had reference, as appears from what follows; and are formed into one word, anevwh, “Hosanna”, or “Hosanna”, in which form it frequently appears in the Jewish writings; and because of the often use of it at the feast of tabernacles, that feast was called “Hosanna”, and the seventh day of it was called הוֹשַׁנָּא רַבָּה, “the great Hosanna”¹⁰⁶¹. Moreover, the “Lulabs”, or the bundles made of branches of palm trees, and boughs of willow and myrtle, which they carried in their hands at the feast of tabernacles, often go by this name: it is said¹⁰⁶²,

“the Egyptian myrtle is right or fit לַהוֹשַׁנָּא, “for the Hosanna”.

That is, to be put into the “Lulab”, or bundle of boughs and branches, which was carried about, and shaken at the above feast. Again¹⁰⁶³,

“it is a tradition of R. Meir, that it was the practice of the honourable men of Jerusalem, to bind their “Lulabs” with golden threads says Rabbah, these are they מְגִדְלֵי הוֹשַׁנָּא, “that bind the Hosanna”: the gloss on it is, “that bind the Lulabs”, of the house of the head of the captivity; for in binding the Hosanna of the house of the head of the captivity, they leave in it an hand’s breadth and says the same Rabbah, a man may not hold an Hosanna in a linen cloth.”

Once more¹⁰⁶⁴,

“says R. Zera, a man may not prepare anevwh, “an Hosanna” for a child, on a good day.”

Sometimes the Hosanna seems to be distinguished from the “Lulab”, and then by the “Lulab” is meant, only the branches of palm tree; and by the Hosanna, the

1061 Seder Tephillot. fol. 298. 2.

1062 T. Bab. Succa, fol. 33. 1.

1063 Ib. fol. 37. 1.

1064 Ib. fol. 45. 2. Vid. Maimon. Hilch. Lulab, c. 8. sect. 10.

boughs of willow and myrtle; as when ¹⁰⁶⁵,

“Rabbah says, a man may not fix the “Lulab”, בְּהוֹשֵׁנָא, “in the Hosanna.”

And a little after says the same,

“a man may not bind the “Lulab” with the “Hosanna.”

Now these bundles might be so called, because they were lifted up and shaken, when the above words out of Ps 118:25 were recited: for thus it is said ¹⁰⁶⁶,

“when do they shake, that is, their “Lulabs”, or “Hosannas?” At those words, “O give thanks unto the Lord”, Ps 118:1 the beginning and end; and at those words, “Save now I beseech thee”, Ps 118:25. The house of Hillell, and the house of Shammai say also at those words, “O Lord I beseech thee, send now prosperity”: says R. Aki-ba, I have observed Rabban Gamaliel and Rabbi Joshua, that all the people shook their Lulabs, but they did not shake, only at those words, Save now I beseech thee, O Lord.”

Hence some have thought, that these are meant by the Hosanna in this text; and that the sense is, that the multitude cried, saying, These branches of palm trees we carry in our hands, and strow by the way side, are in honour to the Son of David, the true Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth: but then this sense will not agree with the following clause, “Hosanna in the highest”: it may therefore be further observed, that certain prayers and songs of praise, were called “Hosannas”: hence we read ¹⁰⁶⁷ of שַׁבַּת הוֹשֵׁנֹת, “the Hosannas of the sabbath”; which consisted of various sentences in praise of the sabbath, and thanksgiving to God for it, and are concluded with this word “Hosanna”; and of various petitions that God would save them, as he had done others; and at the end of each petition, is this word. As also of ¹⁰⁶⁸ שֵׁל הוֹשֵׁנָא רַבָּה, “the Hosannas of the great Hosanna”; which are certain words of prayer and praise, used on the seventh day of the feast of tabernacles: and whereas at that feast the “Hallel”, or hymn, was sung, which concluded with the 118th Psalm where the words, “Save now I beseech thee, O Lord”, stand, from whence this word is formed; the true sense and meaning of it here appears to be this; that the multitude that attended Christ to Jerusalem, as

they went along, sung songs of praise to him, as the true Messiah; particularly, applying the above passage to him, and earnestly wished him all success and prosperity; and importunately prayed for salvation by him; adding,

Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord:

which words are taken also out of Ps 118:26 and is an ascription of blessing and praise to Jesus, the Messiah; who being sent by God, came from him with his authority, as his apostle, and as representing him; and contains another petition for him, that he might be crowned with the blessings of divine goodness, for his people; and be blessed and praised by them, for all the spiritual blessings they are blessed with in him. And very properly and pertinently were those words used and applied to Christ, since the Psalm from whence they are taken belongs to him: the whole of it is, by some Jewish interpreters ¹⁰⁶⁹, said to be spoken concerning him; and particularly, he is designed in Ps 118:22 by the stone the builders refused, as is clear from Mt 21:42 of this chapter, and from Ac 4:11 and 1Pe 2:7 and which is allowed by some Jewish writers, ancient and modern ¹⁰⁷⁰; and Ps 118:27 the words following these, are by them interpreted of the days of the Messiah, the times of Gog and Magog, and the future age ¹⁰⁷¹. And others of them said, as Mark observes, Mark 11:10. “Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord”;

See Gill on “Mark 11:10”. Moreover, as it may be thought others of the people said, as Luke relates, Luke 19:38.

Blessed be the king that cometh in the name of the Lord;

See Gill on “Luke 19:38”. To which is added,

Hosanna in the highest;

that is, let songs of praise be sung to God, who is in the highest heavens, for all his grace and goodness vouchsafed to the sons of men, through Christ his beloved Son; or let not only all salvation, happiness, and prosperity attend the Messiah, David’s son, here on earth, but all glory and felicity in the highest heavens, above which he will be exalted. {d} Seder Tephillot. fol. 298. 2.

Matthew 21:10

Ver. 10. **And when he was come into Jerusalem....**

The metropolis of the nation, the seat of the ancient kings of Judah, and of his father David, entering into it in this very public manner; as he never did before; riding

¹⁰⁶⁹ Vid. Kimchi in Psal. cxviii. 1.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Zohar in Exod. fol. 93. 3. Jarchi in Mic. v. 2.

¹⁰⁷¹ T. Hicros. Megilla, fol. 73. 1.

in the manner the ancient judges and kings of Israel did, attended with a numerous retinue, shouting as they went along, and singing their “Hosannas” to him:

all the city was moved;

as Bethlehem was, when Naomi with Ruth returned thither; and of which the same phrase is used, as here, Ru 1:19.

all the city was moved about them;

which the Chaldee paraphrase renders,

”all the inhabitants of the city were gathered in troops about them.”

And so here the sense is, that the inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem were in general alarmed at the uncommon apparatus, and shouting, and ran in great numbers to inquire what was the matter:

saying, who is this?

They knew him not; for though he had preached unto them, and wrought miracles among them, yet they had never seen him in any such pomp and state; and could not devise who he should be, that entered their city in such a manner, amidst the shouts and acclamations of so great a multitude: it seemed greatly to affect them, and fill them with concern, astonishment, and fear.

Matthew 21:11

Ver. 11. **And the multitude said,**

Or the people, as the Vulgate Latin, and Munster’s Hebrew Gospel read; the common people, that went before, and followed after him: these knew Christ better than the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Scribes and Pharisees, and rulers of the people.

This is Jesus the prophet:

that prophet Moses spoke of, in De 18:15 and the nation of the Jews in general expected: of Nazareth of Galilee; who, though he was not born there, yet being educated, and having lived much in that place, is said to be of it; and which was the common opinion of the people.

Matthew 21:12

Ver. 12. **And Jesus went into the temple of God,**

At Jerusalem, which was built by his order, and dedicated to his worship, and where the Shechaniah, or the divine presence was. Christ went not to the tower of David, the strong hold of Zion, the palace of his father David; for he entered not as a temporal king; but he went to the house of his heavenly Father, as the lord and proprietor of it, to preach in it, and purge it; whereby the glory of the latter house became greater than that of the former; and so several prophecies had their accomplish-

ment, particularly Hag 2:7 though this was not the first time by many, of Christ’s being in the temple; yet this his entrance was the most public and magnificent of any: after, he had alighted from the colt, and sent back that and the ass to their proper owners, as is very probable, he went by the eastern gate, called the king’s gate, 1Ch 9:18 into the temple;

and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple:

not in the holy of holies, nor in the holy place, nor in the court of the priests, nor in the court of the Israelites, but in the court of the Gentiles, and in the mountain of the house, in which were shops, where various things were sold, relating to sacrifices. What these persons bought and sold, whom Christ cast out, is not said, but may be collected from Joh 2:14 where besides “doves”, of which hereafter, mention is made, of “sheep” and “oxen”; which were brought to be sold, on account of the passover, for it was then near their time of passover as now; for besides the lambs and kids, which were here also sold and bought for the passover supper, sheep and oxen were here also killed and sold for the Chagiga, or feast ¹⁰⁷², which was the day following: here likewise the drink offerings were bought and sold, of which take the following account.

There were fifteen presidents בְּמִקְדָּשׁ, “in the sanctuary”: Jochanan ben Phinehas was over the tickets, and Ahijah over the drink offerings, &c.--He that inquired for drink offerings, went to Jochanan, who was appointed over the tickets: he gave him the money, and took a ticket; he then went to Ahijah, that was appointed over the drink offerings, and gave him the ticket, and received from him the drink offerings; and in the evening they came together, and Ahijah produced the tickets, and took for them the money ¹⁰⁷³.

”This was one way of buying and selling in the temple;

and overthrew the tables of the money changers;

of which sort were they, who sat in the temple at certain times, to receive the half shekel, and change the money of such, who wanted one, by which they gained something, to themselves. It was a custom in our Lord’s time, for every Israelite, once a year, to pay half a shekel towards the temple charge and service, which was

¹⁰⁷² Vid. R. Sol. Jarchi, in Deut. xvi. 2.

¹⁰⁷³ Misn. Shekalim, c. 5. sect. 4. Maimon. Cele Hamikdash, c. 7. sect. 10, 11, 12.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Maimon. Hilch, Lulab, fol. 37. 2.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Misn. Succ, c. 3. sect. 9.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Seder Tephillot, fol. 297. 1.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Ib. fol. 298. 2.

founded upon the orders given by God to Moses in the wilderness; that upon his numbering the people, to take of everyone that was twenty years of age and upwards, rich or poor, half a shekel, Ex 30:13 though this does not seem to be designed as a perpetual rule. However, it now obtained, and was annually paid:

”On the first day of Adar (which answers to our February) they proclaimed concerning the shekels ¹⁰⁷⁴.

”That is, they gave public notice, in all the cities in Israel, that the time of paying the half shekel was near at hand, that they might get their money ready, for every one was obliged to pay it: the Jews ¹⁰⁷⁵ say,

”it is an affirmative command of the law, that every man in Israel should pay the half shekel every year; even though a poor man that is maintained by alms, he is obliged to it, and must beg it of others, or sell his coat upon his back and pay it, as it is said, Ex 30:15. The rich shall not give more, &c.--All are bound to give it, priests, Levites, and Israelites, and strangers, and servants, that are made free; but not women, nor servants, nor children.

”Notice being thus given ¹⁰⁷⁶,

”on the fifteenth day (of the same month), חנוכה שול, “tables” were placed in the province, or city (which Bartenora ¹⁰⁷⁷ interprets of Jerusalem; but Maimonides ¹⁰⁷⁸ says, the word used is the name of all the cities in the land of Israel, excepting Jerusalem), and on the twenty fifth they במקדשם “in the sanctuary”.

The same is related by Maimonides ¹⁰⁷⁹, after this manner:

”On the first of Adar they proclaim concerning the shekels, that every man may prepare his half shekel, and be ready to give it on the fifteenth; השולחנים “the exchangers” sit in every province or city, and mildly ask it; everyone that gives them it, they take it of them; and he that does not give, they do not compel him to give: on the twenty fifth, they sit in the sanctuary to collect it; and

1074 Misn. Shekalim, c. 1. sect. 1

1075 Maimon. Hilch. Shekalim, c. 1. sect. 1. 7.

1076 Misn. Shekalim, c. 1. sect. 3.

1077 In ib.

1078 In ib

1079 Hilch. Shekalim, c. 1. sect. 9.

henceforward they urge him that does not give, until he gives; and everyone that does not give, they oblige him to give pledge, and they, take his pledge, whether he will or not, and even his coat.

”This gives us a plain account of these money changers; of their tables, and of their sitting at them in the temple, and on what account. Now these exchangers had a profit in every shekel they changed ¹⁰⁸⁰.

”When a man went to an exchanger, and changed a shekel for two half shekels, he gave him an addition to the shekel; and the addition is called קולב, “Kolbon”; wherefore, when two men gave a shekel for them both, they were both obliged to pay the “Kolbon”.

Would you know what this “Kolbon”, whence these exchangers are called, κολλυβισται, “Collybistae”, in this text, or the gain which these men had, take this question and answer in their own words ¹⁰⁸¹.

”How much is the “Kolbon?” A silver “meah”, according to. R. Meir; but the wise men say, half an one.

”Or as it is elsewhere expressed ¹⁰⁸²,

”what is the value of the “Kolbon?” At that time they gave two pence for the half shekel, the “Kolbon” was half a “meah”, which is the twelfth part of a penny; and since, “Kolbon” less than that is not given.’

’Now a “meah” was the half of a sixth part of the half shekel, and the twenty fourth part of a shekel, and weighed sixteen barley corns: half a “meah” was the forty eighth part of a shekel, and weighed eight barley ¹⁰⁸³ corns; a “meah” was, of our money, the value of somewhat more than a penny, and half an one more than a halfpenny. This was their gain, which in so large a number that paid, must amount to a great deal of money. There seems to be nothing lie against these men being the very persons, whose tables Christ overturned, unless it should be objected, that this was not the time of their sitting; for it was now within a few days of the passover, which was in the month Nisan; whereas it was in the month Adar, that the half shekel was paid: but it should be observed, according to the above account, that they did not begin to sit in

1080 Ib c. 3. sect. 1.

1081 Misn. Shekalim, c. 1. sect. 7.

1082 Maimon. Hilch. Shekalim, c. 3. sect. 7.

1083 Maimon. & Bartenora in Misn. Shekalim, c. 1, sect. 7. & Cholin, c. 1. sect. 7.

the temple to receive this money, until the twenty fifth of Adar; and it was now but the tenth of Nisan, when Christ entered the temple and found them there: so that there was but fifteen days: between the one and the other; and considering the large numbers that were obliged to pay, and the backwardness and poverty of many, they may reasonably be thought to be still sitting on that account: and what Maimonides before relates deserves notice, and will strengthen this supposition; that on the twenty fifth: of Adar, they sat in the temple to collect this money; and that henceforward they urged and compelled persons to pay it. Moreover, these men had other business, in a way of exchange, than this to do; and especially at such a time as the passover, when persons came from different parts to attend it; and who, might want to have their foreign money changed for current coin; or bills of return, to be changed for money: add to all this the following account, which will show the large and perpetual business of these men ¹⁰⁸⁴.

”In the sanctuary there were before them, dynt, “continually”, or “daily”, thirteen chests (and there were as many tables) ¹⁰⁸⁵; every chest was in the form of a trumpet: the first was for the shekels of the present year, the second for the shekels of the year past; the third for everyone that had a “Korban”, or vow upon him to offer two turtledoves, or two young pigeons; the one a burnt offering, the other a sin offering: their price was, cast into this chest: the fourth for everyone that had the burnt offering of a fowl only on him, the price of that was cast into this chest. The fifth was for him, who freely gave money to buy wood, to be laid in order on the altar; the sixth, for him that freely gave money for the incense; the seventh, for him that freely gave gold for the mercy seat; the eighth, for the remainder of the sin offering; as when he separated the money for his sin offering, and took the sin offering, and there remained of the money, the rest he cast into this chest; the ninth, for the remainder of the trespass offering; the tenth, for the remainder of the doves for men and women in fluxes, and women after childbirth; the eleventh, for the remainder of the offerings of the Nazarite; the twelfth, for the remainder of the trespass offering of the leper: the thirteenth, for him that freely gave money for the

1084 Maimon. Hilch. Shckalim, c. 2. sect. 2.

1085 Misn. Shekalim, c. 6. sect 1.

burnt offering of a beast.

”**And the seats of them that sold doves,**

which were the offerings of the poor sort after child bearing, and on account of running issues: which cases were very frequent, and sometimes raised the price of doves very high, of which what follows is an instance ¹⁰⁸⁶.

”It happened at a certain time, that doves were sold in Jerusalem for a golden penny each; said Rabban ben Simeon Gamaliel, by this habitation (or temple which he swore by) I will not lodge (or lie down) this night, until they are sold for a silver penny each: he went into the council house and taught, that if a woman had five certain births, or five certain issues, she should bring one offering, and eat of the sacrifices, nor should there remain any debt upon her; and doves were sold that day for two fourths.”

That is, for a silver penny; now a golden penny was the value of twenty five silver pence ¹⁰⁸⁷; so that the price, by this means, was sunk very much: but not only doves were sold in the markets in Jerusalem, but in the temple itself ¹⁰⁸⁸.

”There was a president over the doves, which was he with whom they agreed, who sold doves for the offerings, so and so by the shekel; and everyone that was obliged to bring a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons, brought the price of them, vđqml, “to the sanctuary”; and the president gave the doves to the masters of the offerings, and made up the account with the treasurers.’

’Now at a feast time as this was, there was a greater demand for doves than usual; for women who had lain in, and such as had fluxes, whether men or women, who lived in distant parts, reserved their offerings till they came up to the feast ¹⁰⁸⁹; and which in consequence must occasion a greater call for these creatures, and furnishes out a reason, why there should be so many sitting at this time in the temple to sell doves. Some have thought, that those persons are here meant, which are often mentioned by the Jewish doctors ¹⁰⁹⁰, as an infamous sort of men,

1086 Misn. Cerithot, c. 1. sect. 7. {

1087 Maimon. & Bartenora in ib.

1088 Maimon. Hilch. Cele Hamikdash, c. 7. sect. 9.

1089 Gloss. in T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 11. 1.

1090 T. Bab. Erubin, fol. 82. 1. T. Sanhedrin, fol. 25. 2. & Gloss. in ib. Misn. Sanhedrin. c. 3. sect. 3. Maimon Bartenora, & Ez. Chayim in lb. & Edayot, c. 2. 7. & Bartenora in ib. Maimon. Hilch. Gazela veabada, c. 6. sect. 7. Toen unitan, c. 2.

who are not admitted as witnesses in any case; and are reckoned among thieves, robbers, usurers, and players at dice; who מִפְרִידי יוֹנִים, “teach doves to fly”, either to decoy other doves from their dove houses, or to out fly others for money, or to fight one against another; and these sat in the temple to sell this sort of doves, which was still more heinous; but the other sense is more agreeable.

Matthew 21:13

Ver. 13. **And said unto them, it is written,** in Isa 56:7.

My house shall be called the house of prayer.

These are the, words of God, calling the temple his house, which was built according to the plan he gave; and was the place of his worship, and where he dwelt, and vouchsafed his presence to his people; and signifying, that in time to come, it should be an house of prayer; not for the Jews only, but for the Gentiles also: “for all people”, as it is expressed by the prophet, and cited by Mark; and particularly this part of it, in which were the money changers and sellers of doves; for that was the court of the Gentiles, where they were admitted to pray, and perform other parts of worship. These words are rightly applied by Christ to the temple; nor can the Jews themselves deny it; for their own Targum paraphrases it thus, yvdqm tyb, “the house of my sanctuary shall be called an house of prayer”; or shall be one; for the meaning is not that it should go by such a name, but should be for such use, and not for buying and selling, and merchandise, to which use the Jews now put it: hence it follows,

but ye have made it a den of thieves.

These are the words of Christ, affirming what is complained of in Jer 7:11 and applying it to the present case, on account of the wicked merchandise, unlawful gain, avarice and extortion, of the priests and other officers of the temple, who had a considerable share in these things; and to whom the temple was, and by them used, as a den is to and by thieves and robbers, where they shelter themselves; for these persons robbed both God and man, and the temple was a sanctuary to them: here they screened themselves, and, under the appearance of religion and devotion, devoured widows’ houses, plundered persons of their substance, and were full of extortion and excess.

Matthew 21:14

Ver. 14. **And the blind and the lame came to him,**

The Syriac and Ethiopic versions read, “they brought unto him the blind and the lame”. The blind could not

sect. 2. & Eduth, c. 10. sect. 4.

come to him unless they were led, nor the lame, unless they were carried: the sense therefore is, they came, being brought to him:

in the temple;

that part of it, the court of the Gentiles, and mountain of the house, out of which he had cast the buyers and sellers, &c. and in the room of them, were brought in these objects of his pity:and he healed them; to the blind he restored sight, and caused the lame to walk; which miracles he wrought in confirmation of the doctrine he preached: for all the other evangelists relate, that he taught in the temple.

Matthew 21:15

Ver. 15. **And when the chief priests and Scribes,**

The inveterate enemies of Christ; who upon hearing the shouts of the people at Christ’s entrance into the city, and passage through it to the temple; and understanding that it was Jesus of Nazareth that was come thither, they came also to awe the people, and pick up what they could against him: who, when they

saw the wonderful things that he did; as the overturning the tables of the money changers, and the seats of those that sold doves, without any opposition, when these traders were so many, and in great power, and he a single person, and unarmed; and that the blind received their sight, and the lame were cured,

and the children crying in the temple;

who came from the various parts of the city, with their parents, to see the sight; who, when the multitude had done, they began the same ditty:and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; proclaiming Jesus to be the Messiah, and ascribing praise and glory to him, and wishing him all happiness and prosperity: the form they had taken up from the people, and might be encouraged by their parents; and which they pronounced without fear of the high priests, and Scribes, being disposed, directed, and overruled hereunto by the providence of God. It was indeed no unusual thing for children to sing the “Hosanna” at the feast of tabernacles; for, according to the Jewish canons ¹⁰⁹¹,

”a child that knew how to shake, was obliged to carry the “Lulab”

or bundle of myrtle, and willow boughs, and palm tree branches, at the shaking of which “Hosanna” was said: but that they should cry “Hosanna” to Jesus, as David’s son was very extraordinary, and what the high

¹⁰⁹¹ T. Bab. Succa, fol. 42. 1. Erachin, fol. 2. 2. Maimon. Hilch. Lulab, c. 7. sect. 19.

priests, and Scribes, took notice of with great resentment:

they were sore displeased;

at the children, that so said, at their parents that suffered them, and especially at Christ, who did not forbid them. The Persic version renders it, “it displeased the priests”; the Arabic reads, “they murmured”; and the Ethiopic has it, “it was not pleasant to them”.

Matthew 21:16

Ver. 16. **And said unto him, hearest thou what these say?**

Suggesting, that if he did, he ought to reprove them, or else he would be a very vain, as well as a weak man, to take such things to himself, which did not belong to him, and that from such poor, little, silly creatures, so void of knowledge and understanding:

and Jesus said unto them, yea;

signifying he did hear, and well approved of what they said, and was ready to vindicate it; and did, by putting the following question to them,

have ye never read;

that passage of Scripture in Ps 8:2out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise? in the original text it is, “thou hast ordained”, or “founded strength”; and which is rendered by the Septuagint, as it is by Matthew here; and glory and strength are mentioned together, as being to be given to God, Ps 29:1 and so “strength” and “praise” by the Targumist in Isa 13:3 by which is meant strong glory, or glory and praise expressed with a strong voice, or in a very vehement manner, as it was by these babes and sucklings; and this owing to God’s disposing them hereunto, putting it into their mouths, and strengthening them to declare it in a very strong and powerful manner; so that his strength was made perfect in their weakness, and his praise the more glorious. In the Psalm it is added, “because of thine enemies, that thou might still the enemy, and the avenger”: by whom are meant the high priests, the Scribes and Pharisees, the mortal enemies of Christ, who were full of enmity against him, and wanted to revenge themselves on him for spoiling their market at this time; but were stilled by the “Hosannas” of the children, and Christ’s defence of them. The Jews themselves seem to be conscious, that these words relate to the Messiah; for they say ¹⁰⁹², that”babes and sucklings, יהבני הוקפא, shall give strength to the king Messiah”manifestly referring to this passage.

Matthew 21:17

¹⁰⁹² Zohar in Exod. fol. 4. 2.

Ver. 17. **And he left them,**

The high priests and Scribes, confounded and put to silence, and as unworthy of his company and conversation;

and went out of the city;

of Jerusalem, partly to prevent being apprehended by his enemies before his time, and partly to remove all suspicion of seizing the city and government, and setting himself up as a temporal prince;

to Bethany;

which was about fifteen furlongs from Jerusalem, or almost two miles, Joh 11:18. Hither he went to converse with his dear friends, Lazarus, and Martha, and Mary, who were all of this place, and where he could lodge and rest quietly. The name of the town is variously interpreted: according to some ancient writers ¹⁰⁹³, it signifies “the house of obedience”; so Christ went from the disobedient and faithless city, to a place of obedience, where he had some faithful and obedient disciples: others read it, and so Munster’s Hebrew Gospel, בית ניה, “the house of affliction”; a suitable place for Christ to go to, who was about to suffer for the sins of his people. The Syriac version renders it בית ניא, and which is interpreted “an house”, or “place of business”, as this town of Bethany was. We read ¹⁰⁹⁴ of בית הינו של, “the shops of Bethany”, which were destroyed three years before Jerusalem, because they made their affairs to stand upon the words of the law; that is, as the gloss explains it, they found that what was forbidden by the wise men, was free by the law: a great trade might be drove here for olives, dates, and figs, which grew hereabout in great plenty: mention is made in the Talmud of ¹⁰⁹⁵ פני בית הינו, “the figs of Bethany”: hence, as Christ departed from this place, the next morning he saw a fig tree. But the true etymology and signification of the name is בית אהני “the house”, or “place of dates”, the fruit of the palm tree: hence they that came from Jerusalem to meet Christ, might have their palm tree branches. One part of Mount Olivet abounded with olives, from whence it had its name; another part bore palm trees, and that was called “Bethany”, from whence this town over against it had its name; and another part had great plenty of fig trees growing on it, and this called “Bethphage”; and that part of Jerusalem which was nearest to it went by the same name. We read ¹⁰⁹⁶ also of הינו

¹⁰⁹³ Jerom. in loc. Origen. in Joan. p. 131. T. 2. & in Matt. p. 435, 446, 447. T. 1. Ed. Huet.

¹⁰⁹⁴ T. Bab. Bava Metzia, fol. 88. 1.

¹⁰⁹⁵ T. Bab. Pesachim, fol. 53. 1. & Erubin, fol. 28.

¹⁰⁹⁶ T. Bab. Bava Metzia, fol. 88. 1

מִרְחַשׁ בֵּית “the washing place of Bethany”; which seems to me to be not a place for the washing and purification of unclean men and women, as Dr. Lightfoot thinks, but for washing of sheep; for the story is, that”

a fox tore a sheep in pieces at the washing place of Bethany, and the affair came before the wise men;”

that is, at Jerusalem, to know whether that sheep might be eaten or no, since that which was torn was forbidden. And some have interpreted “Bethany, an house”, or “place of sheep”: but so much for this town, and what account is given of it.

And he lodged there;

either in the house of Lazarus, and his two sisters, or in that of Simon the leper; for it was eventide when he went out of Jerusalem, as Mark observes. The Ethiopic version adds, “and rested there”; and so Origen¹⁰⁹⁷, reads it, and, according to Harpocratian¹⁰⁹⁸, the word used by the evangelist signifies to lie down, and sleep, and take one’s rest. Christ lodged here all night.

Matthew 21:18

Ver. 18. Now in the morning,

Greek “in the first”, or morning light, in the dawn, or break of day, the first spring of light; so the Latins¹⁰⁹⁹ use “prima luce” for early in the morning, as soon as ever day breaks: so early did Christ rise, and return from Bethany to Jerusalem; and as he returned to the city. The Persic version renders it, “they returned”; which, though not a good version, gives a true sense; for, as Christ went with the twelve to Bethany, as Mark affirms, so these returned with him, as is clear from what follows. Thus Christ, day after day, went to and from Jerusalem: in the evening he went to Bethany, or to some part of the Mount of Olives, and there abode all night, and returned in the daytime to Jerusalem, and taught in the temple; for it does not appear that he was one night in Jerusalem, before the night of the passover. He hungered, rising so early before his friends were up, he had eaten nothing that morning, and so before he had got far from Bethany, found himself hungry; which proves the truth of his human nature, which was in all respects like to ours, excepting sin.

Matthew 21:19

Ver. 19. And when he saw a fig tree,

¹⁰⁹⁷ In Matt. p. 447

¹⁰⁹⁸ Lexic. Decem Orator. p. 55.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Caesar. Comment. 1. 1. p. 14. & passim. Curtius, 1. 5. c. 5. passim. Apulei Metamorph. 1. 9. p. 134.

In the Greek text it is “one fig tree”, one remarkable fig tree: he must see a great many, as he went along; for a large tract of the Mount Of Olives was full of fig trees, and therefore called “Bethphage”: and notice has been taken already of the figs of Bethany: but he saw none that had such large and spreading leaves as this; for it was the time when the fig tree was just budding, and putting forth its leaves: wherefore he took notice of it; and though it was “afar off”, as Mark says, yet being hungry, he made up to it, expecting, from its promising appearance, to find fruit on it. This fig tree was “in the way”; by the road side, and probably had no owner; was common to anybody, and so no injury was done to any person by losing it: he came to it,

and found nothing thereon but leaves only:

Mark says, “he came, if haply he might find anything thereon”; which must be understood of him as man; for as he hungered as man, so he judged and expected as man, from the appearance of this fig tree, that he might find fruit upon it; and which is no contradiction to his deity, and his having the Spirit of God, as the Jew¹¹⁰⁰ objects; and especially since, as Bishop Kidder¹¹⁰¹ observes, such an expectation is attributed to God himself, in Isa 5:2 and it may be added, and with regard to that people, of which this fig tree was an emblem, and designed by Christ to be considered as such in what he did to it. The same evangelist further observes, “and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for the time of figs was not yet”. The word “yet” is not in the original text; which last clause is a reason, either why he found no fruit, or nothing but leaves upon it, because it was not a time, or season of figs: it was not a good fig year, so Dr. Hammond interprets it; and yet though it was not, since this tree was so very flourishing, fruit might have been expected on it: and also, it furnishes out a reason why Christ took so much pains to go to it, seeing there were very few figs to be had elsewhere, and this bid very fair to supply him with some in this time of scarcity: or else, as a reason why, besides its promising appearance, he expected fruit upon it, because the time of figs, that is, of the gathering of the figs, was not come: in which sense the phrase is used in Mt 21:34; and is Bishop Kidder’s interpretation of the passage: and since therefore the time was not come for the in gathering of the figs, none had been taken off of it, the more might be expected on it. This sense would be very probable, did it appear that figs were usually ripe about this time; but the contrary seems manifest, both

¹¹⁰⁰ R. Isaac, Chizzuk Emuna, par. 2. c. 30. p. 421.

¹¹⁰¹ Demonstration of the Messiah, par. 2. p. 38.

from Scripture, which represents the fig tree putting forth its leaves, as a sign the summer is nigh, Mt 24:32 and from the Talmudists, who say¹¹⁰², that the beginning of leaves, or putting forth of the leaves of trees, is in the month Nisan, the month in which the passover was kept, and so the then present time of the year; and who, from this time, reckon three times fifty days, or five full months before the figs are ripe¹¹⁰³: so that these words are rather a reason why Christ did not expect to find figs on other trees, which he saw in great abundance as he passed along, because the time of common, ordinary figs being ripe, was not come; and why he particularly expected to find some on this tree, because it being full of leaves, appeared to be of a different kind from other fig trees: and was either of that sort which they call שוּחַח בְּנוֹחַ, “Benoth Shuach”, as Dr. Lightfoot conjectures which were a kind of white figs that were not ripe till the third year¹¹⁰⁴. This tree put forth its fruit the first year, which hung on it the second, and were brought to perfection on the third: so that when it was three years old, it had fruit of the first, second, and third year on it: this being such a tree, by its being full of leaves, when others had none, or were just putting out, fruit, of one year, or more might have been expected on it, when it had none at all, and therefore was cursed: or it might be one of that sort which brought forth fruit twice a year; for of such sort of fig trees we read in the Jewish writings¹¹⁰⁵: and therefore though it was not the time of the common figs being ripe, yet this being one of the seasons, in which this tree bore ripe fruit, and being so very flourishing, might reasonably be expected from it: but there being none,

he said unto it, let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever;

or, as it is expressed in Mark, “no man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever”: for if none grew on it henceforward, no man could hereafter eat of it. Both expressions design the same thing, the perpetual barrenness of the fig tree: and presently the fig tree withered away: immediately, upon Christ’s saying these words, its sap was dried up, it lost its verdure; its leaves were shrivelled and shrunk up, and dropped off, and the whole was blasted. This tree was an emblem of the Jews: Christ being hungry, and very desirous of the salvation of men, came first to them,

¹¹⁰² Jarchi & Bartenora in Misn. Sheviith, c. 4. sect. 10. {

¹¹⁰³ T. Hieros. Sheviith, fol. 35. 4.

¹¹⁰⁴ Misn. Sheviith, c. 5. sect. 1. & Demai, c. 1. sect. 1. & Maimon. & Bartenora in ib.

¹¹⁰⁵ Misn. Demai, c. 1. sect. 1. & Maimon. in ib. T. Bab. Erubin, fol. 18. 1.

from whom, on account of their large profession of religion, and great pretensions to holiness, and the many advantages they enjoyed, humanly speaking, much fruit of righteousness might have been expected; but, alas! he found nothing but mere words, empty boasts, an outward show of religion, an external profession, and a bare performance of trifling ceremonies, and oral traditions; wherefore Christ rejected them, and in a little time after, the kingdom of God, the Gospel, was taken away from them, and their temple, city, and nation, entirely destroyed. {**Matthew 21:20**

Ver. 20. And when the disciples saw it,.... The next day in the morning, as Mark says: they had, heard what Christ had said to it the day before, as the same evangelist observes; but did not take notice of the immediate withering of the tree; but the next morning, as they returned from Bethany, they saw it dried up from the roots: they marvelled; not that Christ should curse it, but that it should wither away so soon, and upon his saying what he did; which was a considerable instance of his power and Godhead, all creatures, animate and inanimate, being at his command and disposal: saying, how soon is the fig tree withered away? This was said by Peter, in the name of the rest, who recollecting what Jesus had said to it the day before, and observing how the event had answered his words so soon, addressed Christ after this manner: “master, behold the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away”; expressing his wonder at it, and ascribing, it to the power of Christ; of which this was an amazing proof and evidence.

Matthew 21:21

Ver. 21. Jesus answered and said unto them,

His disciples wondering at his power, in causing the fig tree to wither so suddenly:

verily I say unto you, if ye have faith;

that is, in God, in his power, which reaches to all things: the object of faith is expressed in Mark, and by way of exhortation, “have faith in God”, that he will enable you to perform whatsoever ye shall desire; which must be understood, not of spiritual faith in the promises of God, and person of Christ, but of, the faith of miracles, or faith in the power of God to perform things that are above the strength of nature:

and doubt not;

either of the power, or will of God to do for you, and by you, the thing desired; for this kind of faith would not admit of the least degree of doubting: there must be no hesitation in the mind, no reasoning upon the thing,

how it can be performed; the mind must not be divided between the power and will of God, and the difficulties and discouragements which attend the case, but must believe in hope against hope, with a full persuasion of accomplishment: for want of this faith, without doubting, the disciples could not cure the child that was lunatic.

Ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree;

cause one to be dried up, and wither away by a word, as Christ had done to this, which, comparatively speaking, was but a lesser sort of miracle;

but also, if ye shall say to this mountain;

the Mount of Olives, where Christ and his disciples now were, and were passing over, or, at least, were very near it; or any other mountain wherever they might be, to which they should, upon any occasion, think fit to say,

be thou removed, and cast into the sea;

which was many miles off from Mount Olivet, and must be a very surprising performance for a mountain to be rooted up, so large as that was, and be carried several miles from its former situation, and be thrown into the sea; and yet, as difficult and amazing as this may seem,

it shall be done:

that is, provided the person doubts not; or, as it is said in Mark, “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”: for this must not be confined to the particular instances of drying up a fig tree, or removing a mountain, but the doing of any sort of miracle, how great soever. Nor is it our Lord’s meaning that they should do these particular things; nor is it certain that they ever did: but his sense is, that, had they faith, they should be able not only to do such lesser miracles, as, comparatively speaking, the withering of the fig tree was, but they should be able to perform things much more difficult and surprising, whenever the good of the souls of men, the propagation of the Gospel, and the glory of God required them.

Matthew 21:22

Ver. 22. **And all things whatsoever,**

Not only miracles, but any other thing which may be for the honour of God, the interest of religion, the spreading of the Gospel, the enlargement of the kingdom, of Christ, their own spiritual good, and the welfare of immortal souls,

ye shall ask in prayer, believing.

Munster’s Hebrew Gospel reads it, “in prayer, and in faith”; and the Arabic version renders it, “in prayer with

faith”; both to the same purpose, and aptly express the sense of the words, which design the prayer of faith; or that prayer which is put up in the strength of faith; and is of great avail with God: for whatever is asked in faith, agreeable to the will of God, which is contained in his covenant, word, and promises, and makes for his glory, and the good of his people, shall be given, be it what it will; though to carnal sense and reason it may seem impracticable and impossible:

ye shall receive;

of God, through Christ, freely and fully, and shall have and enjoy them, either they themselves, if asked for themselves, or others, for whom they are asked.

Matthew 21:23

Ver. 23. **And when he was come into the temple,**

The day following the cursing the fig tree: for the withering of it, and the notice the disciples took of it, and our Lord’s discourse with them about it, were not in one and the same day, as is clear from the account the Evangelist Mark gives; but on the morning that Christ had conversed with his apostles by the way from Bethany to Jerusalem, concerning the strength of faith in prayer, and the success of it; when they were come into the city, and to the temple, whither he directly went, and entered upon his work of preaching to the people,

the chief priests and elders of the people came unto him.

The “chief priests” were not the high priest, and his “sagan”, or deputy, but the principal of the priesthood, who were chosen from the rest of their brethren, to sit in the sanhedrim; and “the elders of the people” were the laity that were chosen from among the people, to be members of the same grand council: in this sense the Jewish writers interpret the word “elders”, in De 21:2 “thy elders, and thy judges”; that is,

”thy elders, who are thy judges: it is a tradition, R. Eliezer ben Jacob says, זֶה בֵּית דִּין הַגָּדוֹל, “thine eiders; this is the great sanhedrim”¹¹⁰⁶?

The other Evangelists Mark and Luke add to these, Scribes, who also were a part of this great assembly; so that the principal members of it, if not the whole sanhedrim, came in a body together, if possible, by their presence and authority, to daunt Christ, discourage his ministry, bring it into contempt with the people, and stop his proceedings and success. And this they did

as he was teaching;

the people, that is, preaching the Gospel to them, as

¹¹⁰⁶ T. Hieros Sota, fol. 23. 3. Jarchi in Deut. xxi. 2.

Luke explains it: he was instructing them in the things relating to himself, and his kingdom, dispensing the mysteries of his grace, the doctrines of regeneration, justification, and salvation. Mark says, it was “as he was walking in the temple”: and at the same time teaching the people, who flocked about him in like manner, as the Peripatetic philosophers taught their scholars walking: whence they had their name.

And said, by what authority

dost thou these things? that is, drive out the buyers and sellers out of the temple, which greatly provoked them, their own gain and interest being concerned therein; and perform these miracles of restoring sight to the blind, and causing the lame to walk; which he had very lately wrought in the temple; and particularly preach these doctrines, the work in which he was then engaged: and who gave thee this authority? They do not object to his doctrines, or dispute whether they were true or false; nor examine his miracles, whether they were of God, or of the devil: in these points they might fear he would be able to put them to silence and confusion, of which some of them had had an experience before; but they proceed in another way, in which they might hope for success, and attack him about his commission and authority under which he acted, whether he pretended to derive his authority from God, or from men: by this they designed to ensnare him and hoped they should gain their point, let him answer in what form he would. Should he say that God gave him the authority to do these things, they would charge him with enthusiasm and blasphemy, urging, that it was wickedness and presumption any man to pretend to be sent immediately from God; since the order of the priesthood, and of teaching was fixed, and none were to take upon them the office of a priest, or of a teacher of the people, but by their appointment; or none were called and sent, but through them, or by their means: and if he should say, that he had his authority from men, they would confront him, and absolutely deny that he had any from them, who only had the power of giving men an authority of preaching in the temple; wherefore he must be an usurper of this office, and a turbulent, seditious person, that sought to destroy all order, civil and ecclesiastical.

Matthew 21:24

Ver. 24. **And Jesus answered and said unto them,**

Not by replying directly to their question, but by putting another question to them, whereby he escaped the snare he saw they laid for him: I also will ask you

one thing, word, or question, which if ye tell me; honestly, and plainly answer to it, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things: which was putting the thing upon such a foot, and in such a form, as they could not well object to; for Christ promises, that if they would return a plain answer to the question he had to put to them, and which was no unreasonable, nor impertinent one, he would thoroughly satisfy them in this point; and expressly declare his commission and authority, what it was, and from whence he had it. The question is as follows:

Matthew 21:25

Ver. 25. **The baptism of John, whence was it?...**

By the baptism of John, is meant the ordinance of water baptism, which was first administered by him; from whence he took the name of John the Baptist: and the doctrine which he preached concerning it, and previous to it, and even the whole of his ministry; which is denominated from a principal part of it, and which greatly distinguished his ministry from all others: and the question put by Christ concerning it is, whence it was? by what authority did John administer the ordinance of water baptism, which had never been administered before by any? who sent him to preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, a doctrine the world had never heard of before? who gave him a commission to discharge the several parts of his ministry, which he performed in such a wonderful and powerful manner? did he receive his authority

from heaven, or of men?

that is, from God or man? as the opposition requires; and as it was usual for the Jews to call God by the name of “heaven”: in this sense it is used by them, when they say¹¹⁰⁷, that such have no part in the world to come, who affirm, that the law is not מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם, “from heaven”, that is, from God; which is exactly the phrase here: and when they observe¹¹⁰⁸, that care should be taken that a man does not pronounce שֵׁם שָׁמַיִם, “the name of heaven”, that is, God, in vain: and when they tell¹¹⁰⁹ us of a certain man that built large buildings by the way side, and put food and drink there, so that everyone that came went in and eat, and drank, וּבֵרַךְ לַשָּׁמַיִם, “and blessed heaven”; that is blessed, or gave thanks to God; and when they speak of¹¹¹⁰ מוֹתָה לַשָּׁמַיִם, “death by heaven”; that is, death

¹¹⁰⁷ T. Hieros. Sanhedrin, fol. 27. 3. Vid. ib. fol. 19. 3. T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 99. 1.

¹¹⁰⁸ {c} T. Bab. Megilla, fol. 3. 1.

¹¹⁰⁹ Abot. R. Nathan, c. 7. fol. 3. 2.

¹¹¹⁰ Ib. c. 11. fol. 4. 1. Vid. ib. c. 14. fol. 4. 4. & 5. 1. & c.

which is immediately inflicted by God. So when Christ here asks, whether John's baptism was from heaven, or of men, his meaning is, whether it was of divine institution, and that John acted by divine authority, and commission; or whether it was an human device of his own, or of other men, and that he took the office of preaching and baptizing upon himself of his own head, or by some human appointment: to this he requires a direct answer, as is said in Mark, "answer me"; whether it was from the one, or from the other;

and they reasoned with themselves;

either "within themselves", as the Arabic version renders it, "in their own minds", as the Syriac; or they took some little time and privately conferred together, what answer they should return; when they argued the point among themselves,

saying, if we shall say from heaven;

if we shall return for answer, that the baptism and ministry of John were of divine appointment, and that he acted by a divine authority,

he will say unto us, why did ye not believe him?

why did not ye believe the doctrine that he preached? and receive the testimony that he gave concerning the Messiah? and why were ye not baptized by him? why did ye reject the counsel of God against yourselves? They saw plainly, that if they owned the divine authority of John's baptism and ministry, they must allow Jesus to be the true Messiah, John bore witness to; and consequently, that it was by a divine authority he did what he did; and then there was an end of the question, and is the very thing that Christ had in view.

Matthew 21:26

Ver. 26. **But if we shall say of men,....** They reasoned with themselves, that should they give their answer in this form, and say, that the ministry and baptism of John, were merely human, and what he took up of himself, or which he performed by an authority derived from men,

we fear the people;

that were then upon the spot, in the temple; who, as many of them were now the followers of Christ, more of them had been the admirers of John, and probably had been baptized by him: wherefore the sanhedrim were afraid of them, lest if they should affirm, that the authority by which John acted was human, they would immediately rise up against them; and, as Luke says, "stone" them: so high a veneration had they for him, and so dear was his memory still unto them.

For all held John as a prophet.

These are the words of the high priests and elders, and not of the evangelist, expressing the reason of their fears from the people, who, in general, were thoroughly persuaded, as Luke expresses it, and firmly believed that John was a prophet, that was raised up, and sent immediately by God; and did not derive his authority and commission to preach and baptize from any man, or set of men, whatever.

Matthew 21:27

Ver. 27. **And they answered Jesus and said, we cannot tell,**

They saw the dilemma they were brought into; they chose rather therefore to speak against their own consciences, and tell a wilful lie, and incur the reproach of ignorance: who, at other times, took upon them to judge of a prophet, whether he was a true or a false one, and by what authority he acted, whether of God, or man: but now being reduced to this wretched condition, contrary to their office and character, declare they did not know, and could not tell from whence John had his commission, and who gave him his authority:

and he said unto them, neither tell I you by what authority I do these things:

since, according to the proposal of Christ, and the agreement he entered into with them, they did not give him a direct answer to his question, he looked upon himself under no obligation to inform them, what was his authority, and from whence he had it; though by the question he put to them he tacitly suggests, that he had his authority not from man, but from God; and by this his answer signifies, that since John preached and baptized without their authority and approbation, so might he; nor was he dependent on them, or accountable to them.

Matthew 21:28

Ver. 28. **But what think you?**

See Gill on "Mt 18:12"

a certain man had two sons.

This is a parable; the design of which is to show the hypocrisy and deceit of the Scribes and Pharisees, in pretending to works of righteousness, and not doing them; and to reprove them for their disbelief and rejection of John's ministry; and to make it appear, that the worst of sinners in the Jewish nation were preferable to them; and that many of them were, and would be, happy, when they would be miserable. By the "certain man", in the parable, God is designed; who, though he is not a man, nor to

be represented by any human form; yet, as man is the image of God, he is therefore, in an improper and figurative sense, compared to man, and set forth by him; which may be allowed in a metaphorical and parabolical way: and though the Son of God only assumed human nature, and really became man; yet God, the Father, seems rather to be here intended, who is sometimes compared to a husbandman and a vine dresser; see Joh 15:1 and as appears from the relation of the "two sons" unto him; by whom are meant not Jews and Gentiles; for the latter can never be intended by the first son; for these were not sons in such sense as the Jews were, nor were upon an equal foot of sonship with them, as the parable supposes; much less were they called first, and bid to work in the vineyard: but, on the contrary John the Baptist, Christ, and his apostles, were first, and only sent to the Jews; and God, as yet, was not come even in the external ministry of the word to the Gentiles; nor were they brought to repentance and obedience: but by them are meant two sorts of people, among the Jews, the Scribes and Pharisees, and publicans and sinners; as the application of the parable, by our Lord himself, most clearly shows: these were both the sons of God; not only by creation, as all men are, all having, in this sense, but one common father, whose offspring they be; but also by national adoption; for to all, who were Israelites, according to the flesh, whether good men, or bad men, alike belonged the general privilege of adoption, Ro 9:4. This publicans and sinners had an equal right to, as well as the Scribes and Pharisees, though they were not all the sons of God by special grace, or spiritual adoption:

and he came to the first;

the publicans and sinners among the Jews, by the ministry of John the Baptist, Christ, and his disciples, who first and chiefly preached to such sort of persons;

and said, son, go work today in my vineyard:

by the "vineyard", is meant the kingdom of God, or of heaven, the Gospel church state, the then present dispensation of things, which was set up, and which men were called to embrace and enter into; the doors of which the Pharisees, who pretended to have the key of knowledge, did all they could to shut up, and hinder persons going in, as they refused to do themselves: this is called it a "vineyard"; See Gill on "Mt 20:1". To work in it signifies to hear the word preached, to believe in the Messiah, embrace his doctrines, and submit to his ordinances, particularly the ordinance of baptism, which was the then principal ordinance of that dispensation. The time of working in it is "today"; directly, immediately, and whilst

it is day; for the hour cometh when no man can work, and when all these means and ordinances will be at an end, and attending on them will be over: the argument used to engage hereunto, is taken from the relation the person stood in as a "son", highly favoured by God, with the blessing of national adoption, besides that of natural sonship common to all mankind.

Matthew 21:29

Ver. 29. **He answered and said, I will not,**

Which answer fitly expresses the language and practice of openly profane and unregenerate sinners, who will not come to Christ, that they may have life; nor will they serve the Lord, but are bent upon indulging their lusts; nor will they be subject to the law of God; nor will they hear and receive the Gospel of Christ, or submit to his ordinances, and are averse to every good work: where is man's free will? this is the true picture of it; man has no will naturally to that which is good.

But afterward he repented, and went:

a change of mind was wrought in him, and this produced a change of life and conversation: so, many of the publicans and sinners repented of their sins of disobedience, and rebellion against God, under the ministry of John the Baptist, Christ, and his apostles; not of themselves, men do not naturally see their sin, or need of repentance; their hearts are hard and obdurate; nor have they any spiritual sense and feeling: nothing will bring them to repentance, not the most powerful ministry, the severest judgments, or the kindest mercies, without the grace of God: but it was of God, and owing to his powerful and efficacious grace, that they repented: it was his will they should come to repentance: he called them to it, and gave it to them, as a free grace gift of his: and they repented not in a mere legal way, with a legal repentance, which lies in a mere conviction of the outward acts of sin; in an external sorrow for it, in horror and terror of mind about it, and in shedding tears for it, accompanied with a cessation from the grosser acts of sin, and an outward reformation of life and manners: but they repented in an evangelical manner, as such do, who are really converted, and spiritually instructed; who are true believers in Christ, have views, and, at least, hopes of pardoning grace and mercy; and have the love of God shed abroad in their hearts by the Spirit: the repentance of such lies in a spiritual sight and sense of sin, of the evil nature of indwelling sin, and the exceeding sinfulness of it, as well as of the outward actions of life; in a hearty, godly sorrow for it, because committed against a God of purity, grace,

and goodness; in a loathing it, and themselves for it; in a holy shame, and blushing, on account of it; and is attended with an ingenuous confession of it, and forsaking it: the consequence of which is, that such go readily and cheerfully into the Lord's vineyard; hear the word with all diligence, receive it with gladness; walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord; and are taught, by the grace that has appeared to them, to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world.

Matthew 21:30

Ver. 30. **And he came to the second,**

The Scribes and Pharisees, by the ministry of John the Baptist, Christ, and his apostles also:

and said likewise;

the same things as to the other son, the publicans and sinners; calling them into the Gospel dispensation, to hear the word, embrace truth, attend on ordinances, and labour in promoting the kingdom, and interest of the Messiah, whilst they had the light of the Gospel with them. Urging also the relation they stood in to God, as a part of the Jewish body; to whom, among other external privileges, the adoption belonged:

and he answered and said, I go, sir, and went not:

the word "go" is not in the generality of the Greek copies; the phrase is only "I sir", though it is rightly enough supplied as to the sense. Beza says, it was in his most ancient copy; and so it is in the Arabic and Persic versions, and in Munster's Hebrew Gospel; though it is not in the Syriac and Ethiopic versions. So, the Scribes and Pharisees seemed pleased with the ministry of John for a while, and at first were forward to submit to his baptism, and were very inquisitive about the Messiah: yet, when he was declared in John's ministry, and by his own doctrine, and miracles, they refused to give in to the belief of him; they would neither enter into the Gospel kingdom, embrace the doctrines, and obey the commands of it themselves, nor suffer others to enter in; but, as much as in them lay, by their reproaches, menaces, and excommunications, deterred them from it. They, were like some other persons, who promise fair, and talk much of doing good works, but do none; teach the people to do them, but do not perform them themselves, though they would seem to do them; make great pretensions to them, boast of them, and trust in them; and therefore, of all men, ought to be careful to maintain them, and yet do the least.

Matthew 21:31

Ver. 31. **Whether of them twain did the will of his**

father?

This is the question put by Christ, upon the preceding parable to the chief priests, elders, and Scribes;

they say unto him, the first:

an answer which natural reason, and common sense, directed them to; and therefore they give it out at once, directly, without staying upon it, and demurring about it; though they seemed not to be aware of the application of it to themselves, which follows:

Jesus saith unto them, verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots;

that is, such who had been so; See Gill on "Mt 9:10".

go into the kingdom of God before you.

They are signified by the first son, who repenting went, and did the will of his father: these repented under John's ministry, were called, and brought to repentance by the preaching of Christ, and his apostles: these justified God, their Father, by being baptized with John's baptism: these embraced the Messiah, believed in him, and were the first in his kingdom, and set an example to the chief among the Jews to follow: and it is easy to observe, that a poor profane sinner may, by the grace of God, be brought to repentance, that before was obstinate, rebellious, and disobedient, and be made willing to go and work in the Lord's vineyard here, and be at last glorified; when a self righteous person, notwithstanding all his fair promises and resolutions to do good, his professions of, and pretensions to religion, neither repents of his sins, nor believes in Christ; has no share in the kingdom of grace here, nor will he enter into the kingdom of glory.

Matthew 21:32

Ver. 32. **For John came unto you in a way of righteousness,**

He had a commission from God; he was no impostor; the doctrine he taught was true, and which he faithfully delivered; his life and conversation were unblamable; there was nothing in his credentials, ministry, and conduct, that could justly be found fault with:

and ye believed him not;

to be the forerunner of the Messiah, or the Elias that was to come; nor attended to the doctrine of repentance preached by him, nor were subject to the ordinance of baptism he administered; nor gave any assent, or credit, to the Messiah he so manifestly pointed out:

but the publicans and harlots believed him;

what he said concerning the wrath to come, and the miserable state and danger they were in; and they repented of their sins, and confessed them, and were baptized

of him in Jordan; believing the testimony he gave of Jesus of Nazareth being the Messiah, and Son of God:

and ye, when ye had seen it;

the repentance and faith of these persons, and what a wonderful reformation was wrought in them,

repented not afterwards;

of their disobedience, impenitence, and unbelief, after they had seen the effects of John's ministry on these very profligate sinners, and after, the death of John; who, by his constancy, zeal, and faithfulness, had shown himself to be a true, and upright minister of the word; and afterwards under the ministry of Christ, and his apostles, by, whom the same doctrines were preached, and the same ordinances administered,

that ye might believe him;

the testimony he has left behind him concerning the Messiah.

Matthew 21:33

Ver. 33. **Hear another parable,**

Which, though Luke says was spoken to the people, who, were gathered round about him, yet was directed to, and against the chief priests; who continued with him till it was delivered, and the application of it made; when they perceived it was spoken of them. The design of it is, to set forth the many favours and privileges bestowed on the Jewish nation; their unfruitfulness, and the ingratitude of the principal men among them; and their barbarous usage of the servants of the Lord, and particularly of the Son of God himself: the consequence of which would be, the removal of the Gospel from them, and the miserable destruction of them. So that this parable is partly a narrative, of some things past, and partly a prophecy of some things to come:

there was a certain householder:

by whom the great God of heaven and earth is meant; who may be so called, either with respect to the whole world, which is an house of his building, and the inhabitants of it are his family, who live, are nourished, and supplied by him; or to the church, the house of the living God, the family in heaven and in earth, called the household of God, and of faith; or to the people of Israel, often called the house of Israel, the family, above all the families of the earth, God took notice of, highly favoured, and dwelt among.

Which planted a vineyard:

of the form of a vineyard, the manner of planting it, and the size of it, the Jews say many things in their Misna

¹¹¹¹.

"He that plants a row of five vines, the school of Shammai say, "it is a vineyard"; but the school of Hillel say, it is not a vineyard, unless there are two rows--he that plants two vines over against two, and one at the tail or end, כרם זה קרי זה "lo! this is a vineyard"; (it was a little vineyard;) but if two over against two, and one between the two, or two over against two, and one in the midst, it is no vineyard, unless there are two over against two, and one at the tail or end."

Again ¹¹¹²,"

a vineyard that is planted with less than four cubits (between every row), R. Simeon says, is no vineyard; but the wise men say it is a vineyard."

And the decision is according to them. Now by this vineyard is meant, the house of Israel and the men of Judah, the nation of the Jews, as in Isa 5:7 from whence our Lord seems to have taken many of the ideas expressed in this parable; who were a people separated from the rest of the world, and set with valuable plants, from whom fruit might reasonably be expected: the planting of them designs the removing them out of Egypt, the driving out the natives before them, and settling them in the land of Canaan, where they were planted with choice vines, such as Joshua, Caleb, &c. and where they soon became a flourishing people, though for their iniquities, often exposed to beasts of prey, the neighbouring nations, that were suffered at times to break in upon them. The Jews often speak ¹¹¹³ of the house of Israel, as the vineyard of the Lord of hosts, and even call their schools and universities vineyards: hence we read ¹¹¹⁴ כרם ביבנהש, the vineyard in Jabneh, where the scholars were placed in rows, as in a vineyard.

And hedged it round about;

as it was usual to set a hedge, or make a wall round a vineyard, which according to the Jewish writers, was to be ten hands high, and four broad; for they ask ¹¹¹⁵,"

אי זה נדר "what is a hedge?" That which is ten hands, high.

¹¹¹¹ Misna Kilaim, c. 4. sect. 5, 6. Maimon. Hilch. Kilaim, c. 7. sect. 7.

¹¹¹² Ib. c. 5. sect. 2. Maimon ib. sect. 1.

¹¹¹³ Tzeror Hammor, fol. 148. 2. Zohar in Exod. fol. 2.

1. 1078 T. Hieros. Beracot, fol. 7. 4. T. Bab. Yebamot, fol. 42.

2.

¹¹¹⁵ Misn. Kilaim, c. 4. sect. 3.

”And elsewhere ¹¹¹⁶,

”An hedge that encompasses a vineyard, which is less than ten hands high, or which is ten hands high, but not four hands broad, it has no circuit (or void place between that and the vines)--an hedge which is ten hands high, and so a ditch which is ten hands deep, and four broad, lo! this is lawful to plant a vineyard on one side of it, and herbs on the other; even a fence of reeds, if there is between the reeds the space of three hands, lo! this divides between the vineyard and the herbs, as an hedge.

”By this “hedge” is designed, either the law, not the oral law, or the traditions of the elders, which the Jews ¹¹¹⁷ call hrwtl gyo, “an hedge for the law”, which was none of God’s setting, but their own; but either the ceremonial law, which distinguished them from other people, was a middle wall of partition between them, and the nations of the world, and kept them from coming among them, and joining together; or the moral law, which taught them their duty to God and man, and was the means of keeping them within due bounds; or else the protection of them by the power of God, which was an hedge about them, is here intended; and which was very remarkable at the time of their three feasts of passover, pentecost, and tabernacles; when all their males went up to Jerusalem, and the whole country was, left an easy prey to the nations about them; but God preserved them, and, according to his promise, suffered not their neighbours to have any inclination or desire after their land.

And digged a winepress in it;

which is not הרץ, “the ditch”, that went through a vineyard; for this cannot be said of a winepress, and is Dr. Lightfoot’s mistake ¹¹¹⁸; but נַח “the winefat”, in which they squeezed the grapes and made the wine, and this used to be in the vineyard: the rule about it is this,

”הגת שבכרמי, the winepress that is ten hands deep and four broad, R. Eliezer says, they may set in it; but the wise men do forbid it ¹¹¹⁹.”

By this may be meant, the altar where the drink offerings of wine were poured forth; and so the Targumist ¹¹²⁰ renders it מִזְבֵּחַ יְיָ, “my altar I have given them, to

atone for their sins”: though one of their commentators ¹¹²¹, by it, understands the prophets, who taught Israel the law, that their works might be good before God and men; they urged and pressed them to the performance of them, as grapes are squeezed in the winepress:

and built a tower;

the same the Jews call שומרה, “the watch house”; which was an high place, in which the watchman stood to keep ¹¹²² the vineyard, and which was built in the vineyard; of this they say,

”שומרה שבכרמי, the “watch house which is in the vineyard”, that is ten hands high and four broad, they set in it ¹¹²³.

”By this is meant, either the city or Jerusalem, which stood in the midst, and on the highest part of the land of Israel; or the temple, which stood on the highest part of Jerusalem, where the priests and Levites kept their watch every night; and so the Targumist ¹¹²⁴ interprets it, מִקְדָּשִׁי יְיָ, “my sanctuary I built among them”: that is, the temple:and let it out to husbandmen; of which there were different sorts, as there were different methods of hiring and letting out fields and vineyards among the Jews: one sort was called הַשִּׁכְרָה and such was he, who hired of his neighbour a field to sow in it, or a vineyard to eat of the fruit of it, for a certain sum of money yearly; see So 8:11 another sort was called rkwxh, and this was one that hired a field, or a vineyard, and agreed to give the proprietor of it yearly, so many measures of the fruit thereof, whether it yielded more or less; and there was a third sort, called oyra, or lbqm, and such was he, who agreed to give the owner half, or a third, or a fourth part of the increase of the field, or vineyard ¹¹²⁵. Now it is not of the former, but of the latter sort of letting out and farming, that this is to be understood; not of letting it out for money, but for fruit, as appears from Mt 21:34 and by the husbandmen are meant, the rulers of the Jews, civil and ecclesiastical, especially the latter; the priests, Levites, and Scribes, who were intrusted with the care of the Jewish people, to guide and instruct them, and

¹¹²¹ R. David Kimchi in loc.

¹¹²² Maimon. in Misn. Kilaim, c. 5. sect. 3. Aben Ezra in Isa. v. 2.

¹¹²³ Misn. Kilaim, c. 5. sect. 3. Maimon. Hilch. Kilaim, c. 7. sect. 22.

¹¹²⁴ Targum Jon. in Isa. v. 2.

¹¹²⁵ T. Hieros. Demai, fol. 25. 1. Gloss in T. Bab. Moed. Katon, fol. 11. 2. & in Bava Metzia, fol. 103. 1. in Avoda Zara, fol. 21. 2. Maimon. Hilch. Shecirut, c. 8. sect. 1, 2. Bartenora in Misn. Pea, c. 5. sect. 5. & in Demai, c. 6, sect. 1.

cultivate the knowledge of divine things among them, that they might bring forth fruits of righteousness; and to offer their gifts and sacrifices, and the like, which are meant by letting out the vineyard to them: and went into afar country; which must be interpreted consistent with the omnipresence of God, who is every where, and cannot be said properly to move from place to place; but fills heaven and earth with his presence, and cannot be contained in either: but this phrase seems to design his taking up his residence in the thick darkness, in the tabernacle and temple, when the civil and ecclesiastical state of the Jews was settled, and God did not appear to them in that visible manner he had done before; but having fixed their order of government, worship, and duty, left them to themselves and their rulers; for many years; in which he expressed much longsuffering and patience towards them.

Matthew 21:34

Ver. 34. **And when the time of the fruit drew near,**

Of gathering the fruit, when it was ripe, and might be eaten, or profit made of it, according to the law in Le 19:23. The fruit of all manner of trees, for the first three years, was uncircumcised; it was not to be eaten, nor any profit made of it, and on the fourth year it was to be holy to praise the Lord with; being either given to the priests, or eaten by the owners before the Lord at Jerusalem; and on the fifth year it might be eaten, and made use of for profit, and henceforward every year; which law regarded the fruit of the vine, as any other fruit: hence it is said ¹¹²⁶, that”

the grapes of the vineyard of the fourth year, the sanhedrim ordered that they should be brought up to Jerusalem, a day’s journey on every side, so that they might crown or adorn the streets with fruits.”

To this time of fruit, and the custom of bringing it up to Jerusalem, the allusion seems to be here. Thus, God after a long time, after he had waited a great while for fruit from the Jewish nation, from whom much might have been expected, by reason of the advantages they enjoyed; he sent his servants to the husbandmen: by his servants are meant, the prophets of the Old Testament; who were sent by God from time to time, to the kings, priests, and people of the Jews; to instruct them in their duty, to exhort them to the performance of it, to reprove them for their sins, to stir them up to repentance, and to

¹¹²⁶ Maimon. Hilch. Maaser. Sheni, c. 9. 5. Misn. Maaser Sheni, c. 59. sect. 2.

bring forth fruits meet for it, signified in the next clause:

that they might receive the fruits of it;

of the vineyard from the husbandmen, for the use of the owner; for fruits of justice and judgment, of righteousness and holiness, might be justly expected and demanded of such persons, to be brought forth by them, to the honour and glory of God.

Matthew 21:35

Ver. 35. **And the husbandmen took his servants,**

They seized and laid hold of them in a rude and violent manner: so far were they from treating these servants with respect, as they ought to have done; considering whose they were, from whom they came, and upon what account; and also so far from delivering to them the fruit due to their master, or excusing their inability to make a suitable return, as might be expected, they use them very roughly:

and beat one;

either with the fist, as Jeremiah was struck by Pashur, the son of Immer, the priest, one of these husbandmen, Jer 20:1 and as Micaiah was smitten on the cheek by Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah, the false prophet, 2Ch 18:23 or with a scourge, and may refer to the punishment of beating with forty stripes, save one, by which the skin was flayed off; as the word here signifies; for some of these servants had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, Heb 11:36. And killed another; that is, with the sword. There were four kinds of death in the power of the sanhedrim, of which this is one, and what follows is another; and were these, stoning, burning, killing (i.e. beheading with the sword), and strangling: the manner of executing this punishment here expressed, was this:

”They cut off the person’s head בִּיָּד, “with a sword”, in the manner the government orders it. R. Judah says, this is indecent (i.e. to cut off his head standing, they do not do so), but they put his head upon a block, and cut it off with an axe; they reply to him, there is no death more abominable than this ¹¹²⁷.”

So the prophets, in the time of Elijah, were killed with the sword, 1Ki 19:14 see also Da 11:33.

And stoned another;

as they did Zechariah, 2Ch 24:21 and doubtless many others; since Jerusalem had the character of killing the prophets, and stoning them that were sent unto her, Mt 23:37 these seemed such that were stoned, but not killed; but as Mark says, were wounded in the head with

¹¹²⁷ Misn. Sanhedrin, c. 7. sect. 1, 3.

¹¹¹⁶ Maimon. Hilch. Kilaim, c. 7. sect. 14, 15.

¹¹¹⁷ Pirke Abot. c. sect. 1.

¹¹¹⁸ Horae in Mark xii. 1.

¹¹¹⁹ Misn. Kilaim, c. 5. sect. 3.

¹¹²⁰ Targum Jon. in Isa. v. 2. Vid. T. Hicros. Succa, fol. 54. 4.

the stones thrown at them, and shamefully handled, and sadly abused

Matthew 21:36

Ver. 36. **Again he sent other servants,**

Meaning, perhaps, such as suffered in the times of the Maccabees: more than the first; their number was greater, though their office was the same, at least not higher: and they did unto them likewise; they beat them with rods, they killed them with the sword, and stoned them, Heb 11:36.

Matthew 21:37

Ver. 37. **But last of all,**

In the last times, in the last days, in the end of the world, the Jewish world, at the close of their ecclesiastic and civil state; after all the prophets had been sent, and finished their course, came the greatest prophet of all, to seal up the vision and prophecy:

he sent unto them his son;

not a servant as before, but a son; his own son, his only begotten son, the son of his love, his dearly beloved one; him he sent to these husbandmen the Jews. The Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, was sent only to the house of Israel: he was the minister of the circumcision; he was the great prophet raised up among them, and was sent to bless them, by turning them from their iniquities; he came to them, to his own, to them of his own nation, but they received him not:

saying, they will reverence my son.

The Son of God is to be revered equally as his Father, since he is in nature and glory equal to him; and it is the will of his Father he should be so revered, as he is by the angels in heaven, and by the saints, both in heaven and in earth; but did these husbandmen reverence him? no; they despised and rejected him; they reproached and traduced him, as the vilest of men, and used him in the most cruel and barbarous manner. And did not his Father know this? yes; this is certain from his omniscience, which reaches to all future events, the most minute and contingent; and from the predictions of the usage of these persons of him, delivered long before it came to pass. Luke says, “it may be they will reverence him”: so that it was not a positive affirmation, that they would do it, and which also is to be understood after the manner of men: that humanly speaking, it might be expected that they would give him reverence, in consideration of the dignity of his person, his character, and relation to God, which was his due and their duty; but he had a very different treatment from them.

Matthew 21:38

Ver. 38. **But when the husbandmen saw the son,**

Whom many of them knew, though some did not: some were entirely ignorant of him; some knew him, but durst not confess him, yet were not injurious to him; others acted against light and conscience, with spite and malice, as did these men. They expected the Messiah about this time; they knew, by prophecy, it could not be long ere he appeared: when they saw Jesus of Nazareth, they knew by various circumstances, by all the characters of the Messiah meeting in him, and by his miracles, that he must be the same.

They said among themselves;

privately, not openly to the people,

this is the heir;

as indeed he is of all things, as the Son of God, and as the mediator of the new covenant: he is heir of all that his Father has, as he is his natural, essential, and only begotten Son; and as mediator, he is heir of all things, natural, spiritual, and eternal, for the use and benefit of his church and people, who are also his portion and inheritance: but here it seems to denote, his being heir to the throne of Israel, the government of the Jewish nation, as he was the son of David; and the Jews confess¹¹²⁸, that because it was said that Jesus of Nazareth was (קרוב למלכות) , “near to the kingdom”, therefore they put him to death:

come let us kill him, and seize on his inheritance:

concluding, that could they be rid of him, their nation would be in peace, their temple would stand, and temple worship and service continue, and they remain in their office and authority undisturbed; the contrary of which they feared, should he be suffered to live; though what they feared from his life, befell them upon, and in consequence of his death, quite beyond all their counsels and expectations.

Matthew 21.39

And they caught him

Seized and laid hold of him, in a rude and violent manner, as they had some of the servants before. This regards their apprehending of Christ in the garden, by a band of soldiers and officers, sent by the chief priests and Pharisees, who with swords and staves took him, bound him, and led him away:

and cast him out of the vineyard;

which is not to be understood of their casting him out of the synagogue, which is never said of them; nor

¹¹²⁸ 5 T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 43. 1.

does it so much relate to the leading of him without the gates of Jerusalem, where they crucified him, though this is a sense not to be despised and rejected; but rather, to the delivery of him to those, that were without the vineyard of the Jewish church and nation, to the Gentiles; to be mocked, scourged, and put to death by them:

and slew him:

for though the sentence of death was pronounced on him by Pilate, an Heathen governor, and was executed by the Roman soldiers; yet it was through the instigation and at the pressing importunity of these husbandmen, the Jewish rulers; and who were afterwards frequently charged by the apostles with the murder of him.

Matthew 21:40

When the Lord therefore of the vineyard cometh

In a way of providence, to call these husbandmen to an account; not only for the fruit they were to bring to him; but for their barbarity to his servants, the prophets, time after time; and especially, for the inhuman usage and murder of his own son;

what will he do unto those husbandmen?

This question is put to the chief priests, elders, and Scribes: and they themselves, who are designed hereby, are made judges in this case, just as the inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah are, in (Isaiah 5:4) which passage of Scripture our Lord had greatly in view when he spake this parable.

Matthew 21:41

They say unto him

Either the common people that were about him; or rather the chief priests, scribes, and elders, to whom he put the question; little thinking then, that they were the persons intended in this parable:

he will miserably destroy those wicked men:

in saying which, they own that persons guilty of such crimes, as beating, killing, and stoning, servants sent to them by the proprietor of the vineyard, to receive his due and proper fruit, and at last murdering his son and heir, were very wicked persons, and deserved the severest punishments to be inflicted upon them, and that without mercy; nor could it be thought, but this must and would be unavoidably their case, when the Lord of the vineyard should come: thus tacitly did they condemn themselves as wicked men, and as deserving the worst of deaths, who in a few days after this, were concerned in the death of the Son of God:

and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen;

allowing it to be a very just thing, not only to put these men to the most miserable and tormenting death that could be devised, but to take the vineyard out of the hands of their posterity, and let it out to other persons; as it was a righteous thing with God, to remove the church state, Gospel and ordinances from the Jews, and deliver them to the Gentiles:

which shall render him the fruits in their seasons;

that is, his due, and that in proper time. The other evangelists relate these words, as spoken by Christ: for the reconciliation of which let it be observed, that they were first spoken by the Jews, as is here signified; and after that were spoken by Christ, confirming what they said, and applying it to them; upon which they said, “God forbid”; that we should ever be guilty of such crimes, incur such punishment, and this should be our case: but in proof of it, that so it would be, our Lord alleges the following words.

Matthew 21:42

Jesus saith unto them, did ye never read the Scriptures, &c.] The passage which stands in (Psalms 118:22 Psalms 118:23) .

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.

Very appropriately is this Scripture cited, and applied to the present case; which expresses the rejection of the Messiah by the Jewish builders, priests, and scribes: the whole Psalm may be understood of the Messiah. R. David Kimchi owns¹¹²⁹, that there is a division among their Rabbins about it: some say that the Psalm is spoken of David, and others, that it is spoken of the days of the Messiah; and these are certainly in the right; and as for this particular passage, it is applied by some of them to the Messiah: so on mentioning (Hosea 3:5) they¹¹³⁰ say,

“David was king in this world, and David shall be king in the time to come: wherefore it is said, the stone which the builders refused”

And one of their noted commentators¹¹³¹ on those words, “though thou be little among the thousands of Judah”, has this note:

“It is fit thou shouldest be little among the families of Judah, because of the impurity of Ruth the Moabitess, which is in thee: out of thee shall come forth unto me, Messiah, the son of David;

¹¹²⁹ In Psal. cxviii. 1.

¹¹³⁰ Zohar in Exod. fol. 93. 3.

¹¹³¹ Jarchi in Mic. v. 2.

for so he saith, “the stone which the builders refused”

Christ is often in Scripture compared to a stone, and is called the stone of Israel; is said to be a stone of stumbling to some, and a precious tried stone to others: is represented as a stone cut out of the mountain without hands, and on which are seven eyes: and is fitly compared to one, for his usefulness in the spiritual building the church, where he is as both the foundation and corner stone, and for his strength and duration. Christ is the sure, firm, and everlasting foundation, which God has laid in Zion, and the only one of any avail; nor can any other be laid to any purpose; and if he is neglected, and laid aside, in the ministration of the word, the building which men endeavour to rear, or exhort unto, will come to nothing. Whoever build on him are safe, and on nothing else: Christ is the foundation, on which the church, and every believer, are built, and therefore will abide; for the gates of hell cannot prevail against them: the covenant of grace is immovable, being established in him; its mercies are sure, and its promises yea and amen: the salvation of immortal souls is certain, resting upon him; the faith and hope of the saints fail not, being directed to, and settled on him: the house not made with hands, which is in heaven, is an eternal one; and the city, which has foundations, is a continuing one, because of the concern that Christ has in it; and though he is of such eminent use and importance in the building, yet, as such, the “builders rejected” him: by the builders are meant, the Jewish rulers, both political and ecclesiastical, especially the latter, who pretended to instruct, and build up the people in knowledge and understanding; but in a very bad way did they do it, and upon a very sandy foundation, upon their fleshly privileges, their moral righteousness, and the observance of the ceremonial law, and the traditions of the elders. The Jews used to call their doctors and their scholars “builders”¹¹³²: says R. Jochanan,

“the disciples of the wise men are called (Nyanb), “builders”, because they study in the building of the world all their days, which is the law.”

These rejected the Messiah, refused to receive, and acknowledge him as such: they disallowed and disapproved of him, as base and vile, and the most contemptible of mortals, and set him at nought, and had him in the utmost scorn and derision. And so he is rejected by some who bear the characters of builders among Chris-

¹¹³² T. Bab. Subbut, fol. 114. 1. Vid. En Israel, fol. 64. 3. & Juchasin, fol. 80. 2. & 81. 1.

tians: as when his proper deity, and eternal sonship are denied, and he is treated as a mere creature; when his satisfaction and atoning sacrifice are either wholly rejected, or little regarded, lessened, and depreciated, and repentance and good works are put in the room of them; when his imputed righteousness is opposed, and laid aside, and the righteousness of men preferred unto it, and cried up as the matter of justification in the sight of God; when his efficacious grace is represented as unnecessary to regeneration, conversion, and sanctification, and to the performance of good works; and when he is left out of public ministrations, as the way of life and salvation, as the fountain of all grace, and foundation of all happiness, and human power, free will, and moral righteousness are put in his room. But notwithstanding the former and present rejection, and ill treatment of him, he is

become the head of the corner:

he is the corner stone in the building which knits and cements it together, angels and men, Jews and Gentiles; Old and New Testament saints; saints above, and saints below, and in all ages and places, all meet, and are united together in this corner stone; which also strengthens and supports the building, and holds it together, and is the ornament and beauty of it: he is the chief corner stone; he is higher than the kings of the earth; he is superior to angels, and the chiefest among ten thousands of his saints; he is exalted above all creatures, angels, and men, who, by the Jewish builders, was despised and rejected, and scarce allowed to be worthy the name of a man:

this is the Lord's doing;

this stone is laid in the building by him: the rejection of him is according to his determinate counsel and foreknowledge; and the exaltation of him, above every name, is owing to him, and he is by, and at his own right hand: and

is marvellous in our eyes;

in the eyes of all the saints; there being in all this such, a wonderful display of the wisdom, grace, mercy, power, and faithfulness of God.

Matthew 21:43

Therefore I say unto you

This is the application of the parable; and the words are directed to the chief priests, elders, scribes, and people of the Jews; and are delivered as what would be in consequence of the builders, rejecting the Messiah, the foundation and corner stone of the building.

The kingdom of God shall be taken from you:

by which is meant, not their political estate, their civ-

il government, which was of God, and in a short time was to depart from them, according to ancient prophecy, and which is come to pass, as the event shows; nor their legal national church state and ordinances only, or the priesthood, and the appendages of it; all which, in a little while, were shaken and removed; but the Gospel, which had been preached among them by John the Baptist, Christ, and his apostles; so called because it treats of the kingdom of God, and things pertaining to it, and shows men both their right and meetness for it; the one as in the righteousness of Christ, and the other in the regenerating and sanctifying grace of the Spirit, which Gospel may be taken away from a people, as from the Jews, because of their contempt of it, and opposition to it, or lukewarmness and indifference about it, or unfruitfulness under it; and when God has no more souls to gather in by it in such a place, and which is a very unhappy case, whenever it is the case of any people: for when the Gospel is taken away, the riches of a people are gone; the glory of a nation is departed; the light of it is put out; the spiritual bread of a people is no more; the means of conversion and spiritual knowledge cease: all which have a melancholy aspect on posterity. Moreover, the Gospel church state, which was set up in Judea, may be here meant; which, though it continued and flourished a while, in process of time was to be removed: and which may be done elsewhere, as it has been in Judea, by God's suffering persecution to arise, as he did against the church of Jerusalem, whereby the ministers of the Gospel are driven into corners, or scattered abroad; or by ordering his ministers to preach no more unto such a people, as the apostles were ordered to turn from the Jews to the Gentiles; or by taking away ministers and members of churches by death, and not raising up others in their room; or by withholding a blessing from the word; or by permitting the growth of errors and heresies, which, in course of time, must issue in the dissolution of the church state in such a place, and which necessarily follows upon the removing of the Gospel:

and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

Though God may take away the Gospel from a people, as he did from the Jews; yet he does not, nor will he, as yet, take it out of the world: he gives it to another “nation”; to the Gentiles, to all the nations of the world, whither he sent his apostles to preach and where it must be preached before the end of the world comes, in order to gather his elect out of them: for not one particular nation is meant, unless the nation of God's elect, among

all nations, can be thought to be designed. It may be observed, that the Gospel, wherever it comes, it comes as a gift; it is “given”: to have it only in the external ministration of it, is a favour; and more especially to understand it spiritually; this is an unmerited gift; as is also ability to preach it: and it is likewise a national mercy wherever it comes; for though it comes in power only to a few in a nation, yet it is more or less a blessing to the whole: nor is it easy to say what temporal advantages a nation enjoys through the ministration of the Gospel in it: and where it is given, and comes in power, it brings forth fruit, as it did in all the world of the Gentiles; even the fruits of grace, and righteousness, and every good work; all which come from Christ, under the influence of his Spirit, and by the word and ordinances, as means, and highly become the Gospel, and the professors of it; and for want of which it is removed sometimes from one nation to another: for this cause it was taken from the Jews, and given to the Gentiles. One of the Jewish commentators¹¹³³ on these words, in (Jeremiah 13:17) “my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride”, has this note;

“because of your grandeur, which shall cease; because of the excellency of “the kingdom of heaven”, (שתהנו לפילי) , “which shall be given to the profane”;

i.e. the nations of the world.

Matthew 21:44

And whosoever shall fall on this stone

This is not to be understood of believing in Christ, or of a soul's casting itself on Christ, the foundation stone; relying on him, and building all its hopes of happiness and salvation on him; which is attended with contrition and brokenness of heart, or repentance unto life, which needed not to be repented of nor of a believer's offending Christ by evil works, whereby his conscience is wounded, his soul is grieved, and his faith shaken; and though he is hereby in great danger, he shall not be utterly destroyed, but being recovered by repentance, shall be preserved unto salvation; but of such to whom Christ is a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence: for as he is the foundation and corner stone to some, and is set for the rising of them, and to whom he is precious; so he is a stone set for the fall of others, and at which they stumble and fall, and fall upon it: and such are they who are offended at Christ's state of humiliation on earth; at the manner of his birth, the meanness of his parentage, and education; the despicable figure he made in his person,

¹¹³³ Jarchi in Jer. xiii. 17

disciples, and audience; and at his sufferings and death: and these “shall be broken”: as a man that stumbles at a stone, and falls upon it, breaks his head or his bones, at least bruises himself, does not hurt the stone, but the stone hurts him; so all such as are offended at Christ, injure their own souls, being filled with prejudices against him, and contempt and disbelief of him, which if grace prevents not will issue in their everlasting destruction: but whilst there is life, the means of grace continue, the kingdom of God is not taken away; there is hope that such may be recovered from their impenitence and unbelief: “but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder”. Just as if a millstone, or any stone of such like weight and bulk, was to fall upon an earthen vessel; or, as the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, by which the Messiah and his kingdom, are designed, brake in pieces the image in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, so that it became like the chaff of the summer threshing floor. As the former part of this verse expresses the sin of unbelievers, and the danger they are exposed unto by it, this sets forth their punishment; and has respect both to the vengeance of Christ, on the Jewish nation, at their destruction, which would fall heavy from him in his state of exaltation, for their evil treatment of him in his state of humiliation; and to his severe wrath, which will be executed at the day of judgment on all unbelievers, impenitent Christless sinners, who have both offended him, and been offended at him; when their destruction will be inevitable, their salvation irretrievable, and their souls irrecoverably lost, and ruined. Some have thought, that there is an allusion in these words to the manner of stoning among the Jews, which was this ¹¹³⁴:

“the place of stoning was two men’s heights; one of the witnesses struck him on his loins, to throw him down from thence, to the ground: if he died, it was well; if not, they took a stone, which lay there, and was as much as two men could carry, and cast it, with all their might, upon his breast: if he died, it was well; if not, he was stoned by all Israel.”

Maimonides observes ¹¹³⁵, that

“stoning, or throwing down from the high place, was that he might fall upon the stone, or that the stone might fall upon him; and which of them either it was, the

¹¹³⁴ Misu. Sanhedrin, c. 6. sect. 4. T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 45. 1, 2. Maimon. Hilch. Sanhedrin, c. 15. sect 1. Moses Kotsensis Mitzvot Tora pr. Affirm. 99.

¹¹³⁵ In Misn. Sanhedrin, c. 6. sect. 4.

pain was the same.”

Matthew 21:45

And when the chief priests and Pharisees

Which latter, though not before mentioned, were many of them of the grand sanhedrim, as well as the chief priests, scribes, and elders: “had heard his parables”; that of the two sons being sent into the vineyard, and that of the letting out the vineyard to husbandmen,

they perceived that he spake of them:

they plainly saw that they were designed by the son, that promised to go into the vineyard, but did not; only talked of works, but did not do them: and that they were the husbandmen that acted the ungrateful part to the householder, and the cruel one to his servants, and would to his son, their own consciences told them they were the men. They knew that the whole was levelled against them, and designed for them, and exactly hit their case.

Matthew 21:46

But when they sought to lay hands on him

Not that they attempted by any outward action to apprehend him, and carry him off, or by any immediate act of violence to take away his life; but they secretly wished, and earnestly desired to do it: they were so irritated and provoked, that they could scarcely keep their hands off of him, and could have been glad of an opportunity of satiating their revenge upon him: and whereby they would but have fulfilled what he in this parable had prophetically said of them: and yet so hardened were they, though they understood his meaning, they were not deterred thereby, but on another account:

they feared the multitude;

which were now about Christ, lest there should be a tumult, and they should take the part of Christ against them, to which they seemed inclined; when their lives, had they attempted anything of this nature, would have been in a great deal of danger:

because they took him for a prophet;

by the doctrines which he taught, by the boldness and freedom of speech he used, and by the miracles he wrought: wherefore, though they might not all of them believe that he was the Messiah, or that prophet Moses spoke of; yet, since it was exceeding manifest, that he was a teacher sent of God, and endowed with very wonderful gifts; and from whom many of them had received singular benefits, if not for their souls, yet for their bodies; being healed by him of their lameness, or blindness, or other diseases; therefore would not suffer him to be abused, and ill treated by them: so that, as Mark says, “they left

him, and went their way”; to consult together what was proper to be done, and wait for a better opportunity to seize him.

Matthew Chapter 22

Matthew 22:1

Ver. 1. And Jesus answered and spake unto them again,.... Not to the multitude only, but to the chief priests, elders, Scribes, and Pharisees: for though Mark seems to intimate, that upon the delivery of the last parable of the vineyard, they left him, and went their way; yet since he does not relate the following parable, they might not leave him until they had heard that, which is spoken with much the same design as the former, and might increase their resentment the more: or if the chief priests and elders did go away, the Pharisees remained behind, as is clear from Mt 22:15 to whom he spake

by parables,

similitudes, and comparisons, taken from earthly things, and against whom he directed the following one;

and said,

as hereafter related.

Matthew 22:2

Ver. 2. **The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king,....** The Gospel dispensation which had now taken place, the methods of divine grace in it, and the behaviour of men under it, may be fitly illustrated by the following simile, or parable; the design of which is to express the great love of God the Father, who is represented by this

certain king,

in espousing any of the children of men to his own son: as, that he a king, who is the King of kings, and Lord of Lords, should concern himself in this manner; and especially, that he should espouse such mean and unworthy creatures to his own, his only, and beloved son, his equal, and his heir: also, the view of it is to set forth the plenteous provisions of grace made under the Gospel dispensation in the word and ordinances; the great neglect and contempt of these by the Jews, who were externally called unto them; the wrath of God upon them for their abuse of them, and ill usage of his servants; the calling of the vilest among them, or of the Gentiles, and how far persons may go in a profession of religion without the wedding garment, and at last be lost:

which made a marriage for his son:

which may be understood either of contracting and bringing him into a marriage relation, or of making a marriage feast on that account: in the former sense, the

persons concerned are the Father, the bridegroom, and the bride: the parties contracted are the Son of God and sinful creatures. The bridegroom is no other than the only begotten of God the Father, his only Son and heir, the Maker and Governor of the universe, who has all the, perfections of the Deity, and fulness of the Godhead in him; and, as mediator, has all accomplishments and excellencies; he has all the riches of grace and glory; all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; all loveliness, beauty, and amiableness in his person, and everything to recommend him as the chiefest among ten thousand: on the other hand, the bride is the church, which consists of a set of persons chosen by God, in Christ, before the foundation of the world; who were considered as sinful creatures, and viewed as such when first betrothed to Christ in the everlasting covenant: but for the further demonstration of his love to them, were suffered to fall in Adam, with the rest of mankind, and to be scattered abroad; when they lost the image of God, came short of his glory, passed under a sentence of condemnation, became liable to the curse of the law, and eternal death; were defiled and polluted in their nature, and in their estate became bankrupts and beggars; and yet this hindered not the consummation of the marriage between Christ and them. The person that contracted this relation between them, is the Father of Christ, who chose them for him to be his spouse and bride; brought and presented them to him, as he did Eve to Adam before the fall; and gave them to him, and made them one body and flesh with him, in the everlasting covenant; and draws them, and brings them to him by his powerful grace, in the effectual calling; there was a secret betrothing of all these persons to him in eternity, at his own request, and the full consent of his Father, who had the disposal of them; there is an open espousal of them, as particular persons, at conversion; and there will be a more public and general consummate marriage of them, at the last day, when they are all called by grace, and brought home: moreover, this may be understood of the marriage feast which the Father makes on this extraordinary account. So the Syriac version renders the word by atyvm, “a feast”; and in this sense is it used by the Septuagint in Ge 29:22 by which is meant, not the latter day glory, or marriage feast of the Lamb, to which only saints will be invited, and partake of; nor the ultimate glory, when all the elect shall go with Christ into the marriage chamber, and spend an eternity in endless and unspeakable felicity with him; nor the spiritual blessings of grace enjoyed by believers now; but the external ministry of the word and

ordinances, which are a feast of fat things, a rich entertainment, the particulars of which are after given; which many are invited to, who never partake thereof, and others do, and yet destitute of the grace of God; for both good and bad were guests at this feast. The allusion is to the custom of the Jews, and of other nations, in making feasts and grand entertainments at such times. The Jews used to make feasts both at espousals, and at marriage: hence we ¹¹³⁶ read of *נֵדָה אִירֵיוֹן*, “a feast of espousals”, and of *נֵדָה נִשְׂוֵאִין*, “a marriage feast”: the reference here is to the latter; and which used to be made at the charge of the father: for so runs one of their canons ¹¹³⁷:

“a father marries his son, *וְנָשָׂה לּוֹ מִשְׁתָּה*, “and makes a feast for him”, and the expense is the father’s &c.”

Matthew 22:3

Ver. 3. **And sent forth his servants,**

The ministers of the Gospel, who are the servants of the most high God, of his choosing and ordaining, of his calling and sending, and of his qualifying and employing, and who voluntarily and cheerfully serve him; and may intend John the Baptist, and the twelve apostles of Christ, who were sent

to call them that were bidden to the wedding;

הַקְרוּאִים, “those that were called”, as in 1Sa 9:13 by whom are meant the Jews, who were the “bidden”, or “called ones”; called of God, and therefore styled “Israel my called” Isa 48:12 and by the Targum interpreted *בְּיַמֵּי מִיָּמֵי*, “my bidden”. They were called by the name of God, and called the people of God, and the children of God, and were the children of the kingdom; and were called to many valuable and external privileges; and had previous notice of the Gospel dispensation by the prophecies concerning Christ, and the blessings of his grace under the former dispensation; and by the ordinances and sacrifices of it, which in a very significant manner set him forth to that people; and now were called to embrace him, to receive his doctrines, and submit to his ordinances, by the ministry of John the Baptist, and the disciples of Christ. It seems, it was sometimes customary to give two invitations to a feast, or to send a second time to the persons bidden to the feast ¹¹³⁸; to which the allusion is here;

and they would not come:

which shows the insolence and ingratitude of men,

¹¹³⁶ T. Bab. Yebamot, fol. 43. 1. 2.

¹¹³⁷ Maimon. Hilch. Nechalot, c. 9. sect. 13. Vid. Misn. Sheviith, c. 7. sect. 4. & Juchasin, fol. 88. 1.

¹¹³⁸ via. Joseph. apud Grotium in loc.

their natural aversion to the Gospel, and the ordinances of it; the depravity of the will of man, with respect to things spiritual and evangelical; the insufficiency of outward means, to work with effect, upon the minds of men; and the necessity there is of efficacious and unfrustrable grace to bring men to believe in Christ, cordially to receive his truths, and be subject to his commands. There is a two fold call by the ministry the word; the one is internal, and that is, when the word comes not in word only, but in power; is the power of God unto salvation, and the savour of life unto life; for by the Gospel are the elect of God called to the obtaining of the glory of Christ; 2Th 2:14. This call is of grace; it springs from the free grace and favour of God, and it is effected by the mighty power of his grace; and it is to special blessings of grace; it is a fruit of God’s everlasting love, and an evidence of it; and is according to the eternal purpose of God, which is never frustrated: it is a call to the enjoyment of spiritual blessings, as peace, pardon, righteousness, and everlasting happiness; by it men are called to light and liberty, to the grace of Christ, and communion with him; to all the privileges of God’s house here, and eternal glory hereafter; to which he that calls them, gives them a right and meetness, and infallibly brings them to it: and therefore it is styled an heavenly calling, and the high calling of God in Christ; for this call is ever effectual, and the ends of it are always answered; it is unchangeable, irreversible, and never repented of. But besides this, there is a bare external call to the sons of men, through the preaching of the word; which is not to make their peace with God, a thing impossible to be done by them, and which is contrary to the Gospel, and reflects dishonour on Christ, the peacemaker; nor to get an interest in him, which, wherever possessed, is given, and not gotten; nor to regenerate themselves; this is the work of the Spirit of God, and in which men are as passive, as the infant in its natural generation, conception, and birth; nor to the exercise of evangelical grace, as faith, love, &c. which are not in them, and no man can exercise that which he has not, nor should he be called to it; nor to any spiritual vital act, since men are dead in trespasses and sins, and cannot put forth any: but this call in the word, is to the natural duties of religion, as to hear, read, and pray; to attend on the word, to wait at Wisdom’s gates, and watch at the posts of her door, and so lie in the way of being effectually called by the grace of God; but this call may be where election does not go before, and where sanctification does not follow, and where there may be no salvation, Mt 20:16 and is often slighted, neglected, and of no

effect, which is the case here.

Matthew 22:4

Ver. 4. **Again he sent forth other servants,**

The seventy disciples, and other ministers of the Gospel, as Barnabas and Saul, and others that were joined to, and were helpers of the apostles, who were sent, and preached to the Jews, any time before the destruction of Jerusalem:

saying, tell them which are bidden;

for these preachers of the word were first sent to the Jews, and preached unto them, until they by their carriage and conduct, showed themselves to be unworthy of the blessing. These men had notice of the Gospel feast by the prophets, and were invited to it, by the forerunner of Christ, by him, and his disciples, and again by them, and others; which strongly expresses the goodness, grace, and condescension of God to these people, and aggravates their stupidity, ingratitude, and wickedness:

behold, I have prepared my dinner.

The ministry of the word and ordinances under the Gospel dispensation, is signified by a “dinner”; of God’s preparing and providing; which is a full meal at noon, and in it is plenty of food, and of that which is wholesome to the souls of men, sweet and savoury to a spiritual taste, and very nourishing and satisfying; and this dinner is a feast, a rich banquet, a grand entertainment; in which are a variety of provisions, suited to all sorts of persons, and plenty of the richest dainties, attended with the largest expressions of joy; and this feast is a marriage one, and that not for an ordinary person, but for the king’s son, the son of the King of kings; it is large, grand, and noble, rich and costly, and yet all free to the guests; it is kept in the king’s palace, the banqueting house, the church, is common to all, and of long continuance, it will last unto the end of the world. What privileges the patriarchs and prophets, and the people of the Jews enjoyed, in the morning of the world, before the coming of Christ, who made the bright and full day of the Gospel, were but as a “breakfast”, a short meal; the means of grace were not so rich and plentiful, and their knowledge of spiritual things not so large; they had but, as it were, a taste of what is plentifully bestowed under the Gospel dispensation, and therefore that is called a “dinner”; grace and truth in all their fulness, coming by Jesus, by whom God has delivered at once his whole mind and will; whereas, before, it was delivered piecemeal, at sundry times and divers manners; and this is distinguishable from the “supper” of the Lamb, in the evening of the world, in the

latter day, when the Jews will be converted, and will not act the part they are represented to do in the parable; and the fulness of the Gentiles will be brought in, and the Gospel will have a general spread all over the world. The dinner is the same with the feast of fat things, which God is said to make for all people, Gentiles as well as Jews, in his holy mountain the church, Isa 25:6 and the table which wisdom has furnished, Pr 9:2 with all sorts of suitable food, proper to persons of every age: here’s milk for babes, even the sincere milk of the word, that their souls may grow thereby, who are newborn babes, and have tasted of the grace of God; namely, the plainer and more easy truths of the Gospel, to be taken in, understood, fed upon, and digested; and meat for strong men, the more sublime doctrines of it, which such as are strong in faith, receive, relish, and live upon, and are greatly refreshed and edified with: here’s the wine of God’s everlasting love set forth, in the election, redemption, justification, pardon, adoption, regeneration, and salvation of his people; and fruits served up both new and old, for their comfort, delight, and pleasure; in the ordinances of the Gospel, are the flesh and blood of Christ, the Lamb of God, and fatted calf, whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed: here is everything for delight and nourishment, for faith to feed and live upon; and therefore may well be called a dinner, and what is worthy of him, who is the maker of it, and exceedingly well suited to the persons who are to partake of it.

My oxen and my fatlings are killed;

in allusion to feasts and large entertainments, when oxen and fatted calves, and the best of the flock were killed and dressed; or to the sacrifices of oxen and other creatures, under the law, as typical of the sacrifice of Christ; and may here represent Christ as crucified and slain, held forth in the ministry of the word and ordinances; who as such, is suitable food for believers, is spiritual, solid, and substantial, and greatly to be desired; is nourishing and strengthening, comforting and quickening, delightful and satisfying:

and all things are ready;

for upon the crucifixion and death of Christ, and after the renewed commission of Christ to his disciples, to preach the Gospel, beginning at Jerusalem, it might be justly represented in the ministry of the word, that all things were now ready. Redemption was obtained by Christ; an everlasting righteousness was wrought out and brought in; pardon of sin was procured; peace and reconciliation were made; the sacrifice of Christ was offered up, and full satisfaction given to law and justice;

the covenant of grace, with all the blessings and promises of it, were ratified and confirmed; and all were ready in Christ's hands to distribute, to as many as came to him; in whom are life and salvation, and everything necessary for peace and comfort here, and eternal happiness hereafter. This shows the completeness and perfection of the Gospel dispensation, this being that better thing, which God has provided for his people in the last times, that former saints might not be perfect without them, See Gill "Heb 11:40". The law made nothing perfect; there was nothing got ready by that; the works, sacrifices, rites, and ceremonies of it, could not justify men's persons, nor sanctify their hearts, nor purge the consciences of the worshippers, nor take away sin, nor pacify God, or give satisfaction to his justice, or procure peace, pardon and salvation; but now all these things are declared to be ready in the Gospel: but this is not owing to man, it is all of God; it is of his providing and preparing; and he is a rock, and his work is perfect; and nothing can be brought by the Creature to be added to it, nor does it need it; there is everything exhibited in the Gospel that a poor sinner stands in need of, or can desire, even that can make him comfortable here, and happy hereafter.

Come unto the marriage;

the marriage feast; come into the Gospel dispensation, attend the word and ordinances: the invitation is pressing, the arguments are strong and moving, but the persons invited were averse, self-willed, stubborn, obstinate, and inflexible.

Matthew 22:5

Ver. 5. But they made light of it,

The invitation. They neglected the ministry of the Gospel; they did not care for it, nor showed any regard to it: and this is the ease, when either it is not attended on, though there is an opportunity, yet having no heart to embrace it, and no value for it, neglect attendance on it; and which often arises from loving of the world too much: or when it is attended on, but in a very negligent and careless manner; when men pull away the shoulder, or stop their ears; when they do not mind what they hear, let it slip and forget it; when they are unconcerned for it, and their thoughts are employed about other things: or when the Gospel and the ordinances of it are looked upon as things of no importance; not knowing the real worth and value of them; seeing no wisdom in them, having never tasted the sweetness, or felt the power of them, or seen the need of the things revealed by them: as also when there is an aversion to the Gospel, a loath-

ing of it, as a novel, upstart doctrine, received but by a few, and these the meanest and most illiterate; as contrary to reason, and tending to licentiousness; and especially, when it is contradicted and blasphemed, as it was by the Jews, and its ministers despised: some men make light of it, because of the loss of time from worldly employments; because of the charge attending it; because it teaches them to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts; and because they prefer their bodies to their souls, and things temporal, to things eternal. The aggravations of their sin, in slighting and neglecting the Gospel and Gospel ordinances, are, that this is a grand entertainment, a very expensive provision, as well as a very plentiful one; that it was a wedding dinner, a feast of love, they were invited to; that it was prepared by so great a person as a king, and who is the King of kings, and the only potentate; who provided this dinner of his own sovereign good will and pleasure, in the everlasting council and covenant of grace and peace: for the things of which it consists, there was a scheme so early contrived to bring them about; and that this was made on the account of the marriage of his Son, the Messiah, who had been so often spoken of by the prophets of the Old Testament, these men professed a value for; one so long expected by their forefathers, and is the messenger of the covenant, whose coming they themselves desired and sought for; and that they should be invited to it again and again, and one set of servants sent after another, and the most striking and moving arguments made use of; and yet they slighted and made light of all this, and were careless and unconcerned; to which may be added, that the things they were invited to, were such as concerned their immortal souls, and the spiritual and eternal welfare of them; in short, it was no other than the great salvation, wrought out by the great God, and our Saviour, for great sinners, at the expense of his blood and life, which they neglected; See Gill "Heb 2:3".

And went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise:

they all turned their backs on the Gospel, and the ministration of it, and pursued their own worldly inclinations, ways, and methods of life: those that were brought up in a rural way, lived a country life, and were concerned in meaner employments, went everyone to their "village"; as the Vulgate Latin, and Munster's Hebrew Gospel read it, and to their farms, there to manage their cattle, and till their ground; and others, that lived in larger towns and cities, and were concerned in greater business of life, betook themselves to trade at home, or

traffic abroad; placing their happiness in the affluence of this life, which they preferred to the word and ordinances of Christ. Such a division of worldly employment is made by the Jews ¹¹³⁹;

"the way of that host is like to a king, who makes a grand entertainment, and says to the children of his palace, all the rest of the days ye shall be everyone in his house; this shall do his business, *hytrxob lyza adw*, "and this shall go about his merchandise", *וּדְא אִוִּיל בְּהַקְלִיָּה*, "and this shall go to his field", except on my day."

Matthew 22:6

Ver. 6. And the remnant took his servants,

They that went to their several worldly callings and occupations of life, troubled themselves no further about the Messiah, his doctrines and ordinances; but others of them were more spiteful and injurious: they not only slighted the message, and took no notice of the invitation, but also abused the messengers; some of the servants they laid hold upon, and put them in the common prison, and detained them there a while; as they did the apostles quickly after our Lord's ascension, particularly Peter and John:

and entreated them spitefully;

gave them very hard words, and reproachful language; menacing and threatening them what they would do to them, if they did not forbear preaching in the name of Jesus; though they were not intimidated hereby, but rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame on such an account; and even their malice and wickedness proceeded so far, as to take away the lives of some of them:

and slew them:

thus they stoned Stephen to death, the first martyr for Christ; and killed James, the brother of John, with the sword; which last, though he was put to death by Herod, yet with the consent and approval of the Jews.

Matthew 22:7

Ver. 7. But when the king heard thereof,

Of this maltreatment, and barbarous usage of his servants, their cries coming up into his ears, and their blood calling for vengeance at his hands; and he full well knowing what they did unto them, and upon what account, being the omniscient God; and observing their malignity and wickedness,

he was wroth:

who, though slow to anger, bears much, and suffers long; yet was now highly incensed and provoked, and stirred up all his wrath, determining to take vengeance on such a vile generation of men. Christ, when he was here on earth, was sometimes provoked by the Jews, through their unbelief, their obstinacy, and the hardness of their hearts and was angry with them, being grieved for them, Mark 3:5, but then was not the proper time to execute his wrath; he then appeared as the Lamb of God, to take away the sin of the world; he came to save men, and not to destroy their lives, nor to condemn the world: when his martyr Stephen was suffering, he was seen by him standing at the right hand of God, being risen from his seat, as one incensed at the usage his servant met with from the wicked Jews; but the time of his vengeance was not yet come, more patience and forbearance were to be exercised towards them: but now his kingdom came with power, and he appears as the Lion of the tribe of Judah; and pours out his wrath to the uttermost upon them, destroys their city and temple, and puts an end to their civil and ecclesiastical state, and cuts them off from being a nation; and now it was, that he ordered these his enemies, who would not have him to rule over them, brought before him, and slain in his presence; and in all this, he showed his kingly power and authority; and by removing the sceptre from them, and all show of dominion and government, made it fully appear that he, the Messiah, was come. Well had it been for them, had they taken the advice of the Psalmist, "Kiss the Son", the Son of God, believe in him as such, embrace him as the Messiah, yield subjection and obedience to his word and ordinances, "lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little", Ps 2:12. But now his wrath was kindled very much, and was poured out like fire, and there was no standing before it; the day of the Lord burned like an oven, and destroyed the Jews root and branch: the manner and means, in and by which this utter ruin was brought about, are as follow:

and he sent forth his armies;

not the angels, who are the armies and hosts of heaven; nor desolating judgments only, as pestilence and famine, though the latter was severely felt by the Jews, but chiefly the Roman armies are here meant; called "his", because they came by the Lord's appointment and permission; and were used by him, for the destruction of these people:

and destroyed those murderers;

of Christ and his apostles, as their fathers had been of

¹¹³⁹ Zohar in Lev. fol. 40. 2

the prophets before them:

and burnt up their city;

the city of Jerusalem, the metropolis of the Jews, and where the principal of these murderers dwelt; and which was burnt and destroyed by the Roman army, under Titus Vespasian. And a worse punishment than this, even the vengeance of eternal fire, may all the neglecters of the Gospel, and persecutors of the ministers of it expect, from him, whose vengeance is, and who will repay it; for if judgment began at the house of God, the people of the Jews who were so called, what will be the end of them that obey not the Gospel of Christ? How sore a punishment shall they be thought worthy of, who trample under foot the Son of God, count his blood a common thing, and do despite to the Spirit of grace? If the law, when transgressed; demanded a just recompense of reward, or inflicted deserved punishment, how shall the neglecters of the great salvation revealed in the Gospel escape?

Matthew 22:8

Ver. 8. **Then saith he to his servants,**

That were preserved from their rage and malice, and outlived their implacable enemies, and saw their utter ruin and destruction:

the wedding is ready;

meaning not the marriage contract, which was secretly performed in eternity; or the calling of God's elect among the Jews, and their open espousal to Christ, which for the present was now over; but the marriage feast, or the Gospel dispensation, which was ushered in, and the ministry of it, to which nothing was wanting; all the promises, prophecies, types, and shadows, of the former dispensation, were now accomplished; the Lamb of God was slain, and all things to be done by him, were now finished; the ministers of the Gospel, the apostles, were called, their commission enlarged, and they qualified with a greater measure of the Spirit, and were sent to preach both to Jews and Gentiles:

but they which were bidden were not worthy;

that is, the Jews, who had notice of this dispensation by the prophets, were told by John the Baptist, that it was at hand; were once, and again externally called unto it by the ministry of the apostles; but they were not only unworthy in themselves, as all men are, of such a blessing and privilege, but they behaved towards it in a very unworthy manner; they were so far from attending on it in a diligent and peaceable way, as becomes all such persons that are blessed with the external ministry of it; who when they do so, may be said to behave worthily,

and, in some sense, to be worthy of such a privilege being continued with them; see Mt 10:13 compared with Luke 10:6 that they contradicted and blasphemed it, and by their own outrageous carriage, showed plainly that they were unworthy of it; and were so judged by Christ and his apostles, who ordered them to turn from them, and go to the Gentiles, and which may be intended in the following words.

Matthew 22:9

Ver. 9. **Go ye therefore into the highways,**

Either of the city, which were open and public, and where much people were passing to and fro; or of the fields, the high roads, where many passengers were travelling; and may design the Gentile world, and Gentile sinners, who, in respect of the Jews, were far off; were walking in their own ways, and in the high road to destruction; and may denote their being the vilest of sinners, and as having nothing to recommend them to the divine favour, and to such privileges as this entertainment expresses:

and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage;

to the marriage feast, not the marriage supper, but the dinner, Mt 22:4, their orders were to go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature, Jew or Gentile, high or low, rich or poor, outwardly righteous, or openly profane, greater or lesser sinners, and exhort them to attend the Gospel ministry, and ordinances.

Matthew 22:10

Ver. 10. **So these servants went out into the highways,**

Turned from the Jews, and went among the Gentiles, preaching the Gospel to them; particularly the Apostle Paul, with Barnabas, and others:

and gathered together all, as many as they found, both good and bad:

the Persic version reads it, "known or unknown". The Gospel ministry is the means of gathering souls to Christ, and to attend his ordinances, and into his churches; and of these that are gathered by it into churches, and to an attendance on outward ordinances, some are good and some bad, as the fishes gathered in the net of the Gospel are said to be, in Mt 13:47 which may either express the character of the Gentiles before conversion, some of them being outwardly good in their civil and moral character; closely adhering to the law and light of nature, doing the things of it, and others notoriously wicked; or rather, how they proved when gathered in, some being real believers, godly persons, whose conversations were

as became the Gospel of Christ; others hypocrites, empty professors, having a form of godliness, and nothing of the power of it; destitute of grace in their hearts, and of holiness in their lives; and the whole sets forth the diligence of the servants, in executing their master's orders, with so much readiness and exactness:

and the wedding was furnished with guests;

that is, the wedding chamber, or the place where the wedding was kept, and the marriage dinner was prepared, and eat; so the Syriac renders it,

atytvm tyb, "the house of the feast", or where the feast was kept; and so the Ethiopic version: the Persic version reads it, "the house of the nuptial feast": which designs the house and church of God, into which large numbers of the Gentiles were brought, by the ministry of the apostles; so that it was filled with persons that made a profession of Christ and his Gospel.

Matthew 22:11

Ver. 11. **And when the king came in to see the guests,**

Professors of religion, members of churches, whom God takes particular notice of; he is an omniscient being, and his eyes are upon all men and their actions, and especially on such as are called by his name: he takes notice how they behave in the exercise of grace, and discharge of duty, and distinguishes hypocrites from real believers; the latter of which he has a special affection for, makes rich and large provisions for them, and protects and defends them; he knows them that are his, and gives them marks of respect; and he spies out such as are not, and will in his own time discover them, to their utter confusion and ruin. There are certain times and seasons, when God may be said to come in to see his guests; as sometimes in a way of gracious visits to his dear children, when he bids them welcome to the entertainment of his house, and invites them to eat and drink abundantly: and sometimes in a way of providence, against formal professors and hypocrites; and at the last judgment, when he will separate the sheep from the goats, and discern between the righteous and the wicked:

he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment;

by which is meant, not good works, or a holy life and conversation, nor any particular grace of the Spirit, as faith, or charity, or humility, or repentance, or any other, nor the whole work of sanctification, nor the Holy Ghost, but the righteousness of Christ: for though good works are the outward conversation garments of believers, and

these greatly become them and adorn the doctrine of Christ, yet they are imperfect, and have their spots, and need washing in the blood of Christ, and cannot in themselves recommend them to God; and though the Holy Spirit and his graces, his work of holiness upon the heart, make the saints all glorious within, yet not these, but the garment of Christ's righteousness, is their clothing of wrought gold, and raiment of needlework, in which they are brought into the king's presence: this, like a garment, is without them, and put upon them; and which covers and protects them, and beautifies and adorns them; and which may be called a wedding garment, because it is that, in which the elect of God were betrothed to Christ; in which they are made ready and prepared for him, as a bride adorned for her husband: and in which they will be introduced into his presence, and be by him presented, first to himself, and then to his Father, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. This man had not on this garment, this robe of righteousness; it was not imputed to him; he had no knowledge of it; or if he had any, it was only a speculative one; he had no true faith in it; he had never put on Christ, as the Lord his righteousness; he had got into a church state without it, though there is no entrance into the kingdom of heaven but by it.

Matthew 22:12

Ver. 12. **And he saith unto him, friend,**

Either in an ironical way, or because he professed to be a friend of God and Christ:

how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment?

Which way didst thou come in hither? since he did not come in by faith, in the righteousness of Christ; intimating, that he climbed up some other way, and was a thief and robber; or with what face, or how couldest thou have the assurance to come in hither in such a dress, having nothing but the filthy rags of thine own righteousness? How couldest thou expect to meet with acceptance with me, or to be suitable company for my people, not being arrayed with the garments of salvation, and robe of righteousness, as they are?

And he was speechless:

or muzzled: his mouth was stopped, he had nothing to say for himself: not but that there will be pleas made use of by hypocrites, and formal professors, another day; who will plead either their preaching and prophesying in Christ's name; or their attendance on outward ordinances; or the works they have done, ordinary or extraordinary; but then these will all be superseded and silenced,

their own consciences will condemn them, their mouths will be stopped, and they will have nothing to say in vindication of themselves; their righteousness will not answer for them in a time to come. The Jews have a tradition¹¹⁴⁰, that

“Esau the wicked, will veil himself with his garment, and sit among the righteous in paradise, in the world to come; and the holy blessed God will draw him, and bring him out from thence, which is the sense of those words, Ob 1:4. “Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord.””

Matthew 22:13

Ver. 13. **Then said the king to his servants,**

By whom are meant, either the ministers of the Gospel, and pastors of churches, who by the order of Christ, and in the name of the churches, cast out all such as appear, by their bad principles and evil practices, to be without the grace of God, and righteousness of Christ; or rather, the angels, who will bind up the tares in bundles, and burn them, and gather out of Christ's kingdom all that offend and do iniquity; and sever the wicked from the just, and use them in the manner here directed to:

bind him hand and foot;

as malefactors used to be, to denote greatness of his crime, his unparalleled insolence, and the unavoidable-ness of his punishment; such methods being taken, that there could be no escaping it:

and take him away;

from hence, to prison; a dreadful thing, to go out of a church of Christ to hell. This clause is not in the Vulgate Latin, nor in the Syriac and Arabic versions, nor in Munster's Hebrew Gospel, but is in all the ancient Greek copies;

and cast him into utter darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth; See Gill “Mt 8:12”

Matthew 22:14

Ver. 14. For many are called, but few chosen. See Gill “Mt 20:16”

Matthew 22:15

Ver. 15. **Then went the Pharisees,**

After they had heard the parables of the two sons being bid to go into the vineyard, of the vineyard let out to husbandmen, and of the marriage feast; for it is clear from hence, that these stayed and heard the last of these

parables, in all which they saw themselves designed; and though they were irritated and provoked to the last degree, they were obliged to hide their resentments, nor durst they use any violence for fear of the people; wherefore they retired to some convenient place, to the council chamber, or to the palace of the high priest, or where the chief priests were gone, who seem to have departed some time before them:

and took counsel;

among themselves, and of others, their superiors; not how they should behave more agreeably for the future, and escape due punishment and wrath to the uttermost, which the King of kings would justly inflict on them, very plainly signified in the above parables; but

how they might entangle him in his talk,

or “take hold of his words”, as in Luke; or “catch him in his words”, as in Mark: they consulted to draw him into a conversation, on a dangerous and ensnaring subject; when they hoped a word might drop unwarily from him, which they might catch at, lay hold on, and improve to his disadvantage; either with the common people, or the government, and especially the latter; as is to be learned from Luke, who expressly says their end was,

that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor;

the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, should he say any thing against Caesar, which they endeavoured to ensnare him into; by which means, they doubted not of setting the populace against him, and of screening themselves from their resentments; and of gaining their main point, the delivery of him up into the hands of the civil government, who, for treason and sedition, would put him to death.

Matthew 22:16

Ver. 16. **And they sent out unto him their disciples,**

Who were trained up in the same way of thinking with themselves, had imbibed the same tenets, and were strenuous defenders of them; and no doubt they selected the most crafty and artful among them; and who were the best versed in their principles and sophistic method of arguing: these they the rather sent, imagining they would not be known, as they themselves were: and from their age and air of simplicity, might be taken for innocent persons, who in great sincerity, came to be instructed by him,

with the Herodians:

learned men are very much divided in their sentiments about these men; some think they were Gen-

tiles under the government of Herod; but it is not likely that the Pharisees would join themselves with such, whose company they carefully shunned; others, that they were Gentile proselytes, as Herod was; but that on either of these accounts, they should be called by his name, there seems to be no reason: others say, they were Greeks, whom Herod brought out of a desert into his own country, and formed a sect, which from him were called Herodians: this way went Drusius, in which he was followed by several learned men, until the mistake was detected; who took it from a passage in the Hebrew Lexicon, called “Baal Aruch”, mistaking the word יוני, for “Greeks”, which signifies “doves”: the Jewish writer referring to a passage in the Misna¹¹⁴¹, which speaks of יוני הרדיאות, “Herodian doves”; that is, tame ones, such as were brought up in houses: for that these are meant, is clear from the Misnic and Talmudic writers, and their commentators¹¹⁴²; and were so called, because that Herod was the first that tamed wild doves, and brought up tame ones in his own palace; and so Josephus¹¹⁴³ says, that he had many towers stored with tame doves, which was a new thing in Judea. Others, that they were Sadducees, which carries some appearance of truth in it; since what is styled the leaven of the Sadducees, in Mt 16:6 is called the leaven of Herod, in Mark 8:15 And very probable it is, that Herod was a Sadducee, and that his courtiers, at least many of them, were of the same sect; but yet it is certain, that the Sadducees are spoken of, as distinct from these Herodians, in Mt 22:23 of this chapter. Others, that they were a set of men, that formed a new scheme of religion, consisting partly of Judaism, and partly of Gentilism, approved and espoused by Herod, and therefore called by his name; and others, that they were such as held, that Herod was the Messiah; but it is certain, that Herod did not think so himself, nor the people of the Jews in common; and whatever flatterers he might have in his life time, it can hardly be thought, that this notion should survive his death, who was odious to the Jewish nation: others think, that they were such, who were not for paying tribute to Caesar, but to Herod, and were encouraged and defended by him and his courtiers, as much as they could; since he and his family looked upon themselves to be injured by the Romans, and secretly grudged that tribute should be paid unto them:

¹¹⁴¹ Cholin, c. 12. sect 1.

¹¹⁴² T. Bab. Cholin, fol. 139. 1. & Betza, fol. 24. 1. & 25. 1. Misn. Sabbat. c. 24. 8. & Cholin, c. 12. sect. 1. & Maimon. & Bartenora in ib.

¹¹⁴³ De Bello Jud. 1. 6. c. 13. {p} Juchasin, fol. 19. 1.

others, on the contrary, say, that these were such, who pleaded that tribute ought to be paid to Caesar, by whose means Herod enjoyed his government, and was supported in it; and were just the reverse of the Pharisees, with whom they are here joined, in their attempts on Christ. The Syriac version renders the word by odwrh tybd, “those of the house”, or “family of Herod”, his courtiers and domestics: in Munster's Hebrew Gospel, they are called owdרי הרדי, “the servants of Herod”; and certain it is, that Herod was at Jerusalem at this time, Luke 23:7 We read {p} of Menahem, who was one while an associate of Hillel, who with eighty more clad in gold, went מלכ לְבִרְתָּה “into the service of the king”, that is, Herod, and hence might be called Herodians. Wherefore these seem rather to be the persons designed, whom the Pharisees chose to send with their disciples, though they were of Herod's party, and were on the other side of the question from them; being for giving tribute to Caesar, by whom their master held his government; that should Christ be ensnared by them, as they hoped he would, into any seditious or treasonable expressions against Caesar, these might either accuse him to Herod, or immediately seize him, and have him before the Roman governor. Luke observes, that these men, the disciples of the Pharisees and the Herodians, were sent forth as “spies, which should feign themselves just men”; men of religion and holiness, and who were upright and sincere in their question, and who had strong inclinations to become his disciples: the Jews themselves own, that they sent such persons to Jesus, whom they mention by name, in such a disguised manner to deceive him: their words are these¹¹⁴⁴,

”They (the Sanhedrim) sent unto him Ananiah and Ahaziah, honourable men of the lesser sanhedrim, and when they came before him they bowed down to him--and he thought that they believed in him, and he received them very courteously.”

Saying, master:

as if they were his disciples, or at least were very willing to be so: however, they allow him to be a doctor or teacher, and a very considerable one:

we know that thou art true;

a true and faithful minister, that teachest truth, and speakest uprightly; one of great integrity, and to be depended upon:

and teachest the way of God in truth;

rightly opens the word of God, gives the true and

¹¹⁴⁴ Toldos Jesu, p. 8.

¹¹⁴⁰ T. Hieros. Nedarim, fol. 38. 1.

genuine sense the law of God, faithfully instructs men in the worship of God; and with great sincerity, directs men to the way of coming to God, and enjoying eternal happiness with him; having no sinister ends, or worldly interest in view:

neither carest thou for any man;

be he ever so great and honourable, in ever so high a station, be he Caesar himself; signifying, that he was a man of such openness and integrity, that he always freely spoke the real sentiments of his mind, whether men were pleased or displeased; being in no fear of man, nor in the least to be intimidated by frowns and menaces, or any danger from men: for thou regardest not the person of men; as he had not the persons of the high priests and elders, the grand sanhedrim of the nation, who had lately been examining him in the temple: and seeing therefore he made no difference among men, whether learned or unlearned, rich or poor, high or low; whether they were in exalted stations and high offices, or not he feared no man's face, and accepted no man's person, but gave his sense of things, without fear or flattery; they hoped he would give a direct answer to the following question, though Caesar himself was concerned in it.

Matthew 22:17

Ver. 17 **Tell us therefore what thinkest thou,**

Since, as they suggested he was a person of great understanding and sincerity, they earnestly desire that he would be pleased, according to his usual frankness and openness, to give them his opinion; in which they intimate, they should sit down satisfied and contented:

whether is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?

Meaning, according to the law of God: this was a question among the Jews: the Herodians were for it, the Pharisees were against it, at least secretly; and, indeed, this latter was the general sense of the nation, who looked upon themselves to be, or however ought to be, a free people, being the children of God, and the seed of Abraham; and who urged, that according to their law, none but one of their own brethren, who was of their own nation and religion, was to be set as king over them; whereas Caesar, the Roman emperor, was a stranger, one of another nation, and an idolater; and some openly refused it, and made mutinies and insurrections on account of it, as Theudas, and Judas of Galilee: now by putting this question to Christ, in the presence of different parties, they hoped to get an advantage of him either way; for had he been silent, they would have reproached

him, as not being the honest, faithful, frank, and open man, they pretended to take him to be; and if he had answered either in the affirmative or negative, they were prepared to make use of it to his injury; had he said that it was lawful to give tribute to Caesar, this being contrary to the general notions of the people, they would have improved it to draw them from him, and to set them against him; and had he affirmed it was not lawful to do it, they would then have accused him to the Roman governor, and delivered him up into his hands, to judge and condemn him, according to the Roman laws; which latter was what they were wishing for.

Matthew 22:18

Ver. 18. **But Jesus perceived their wickedness,**

Luke says, "their craftiness"; and Mark says, "knowing their hypocrisy"; for there was, a mixture of malice, hypocrisy, and artfulness, in the scheme they had formed; but Christ being the omniscient God, saw the wickedness of their hearts, knew their hypocritical designs, and was well acquainted with all their artifice: he judged not according to the outward appearance of their affection for him, and opinion of him, of religion, righteousness, and holiness in themselves, and of a sincere desire to have their conscience satisfied about this matter; the snare they laid was visible to him, the mask they put on could not screen them from him, nor impose upon him:

and said, why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?

as he might well call them, who feigned themselves just persons, pretended a great deal of respect for him, call him master, compliment him with the characters of a faithful, sincere, and disinterested preacher; yet by putting the above question, designed no other than to ensnare him, and bring him into disgrace or trouble.

Matthew 22:19

Ver. 19. **Shew me the tribute money,**

Not any money, or any sort of coin that was current among them; but that in which the tribute was usually paid, which was Roman money: and they brought unto him a penny; not as, being what was the usual sum that was paid for tribute at one time, but as a sample of what sort of money it was paid in, in Roman pence; one of which was seven pence halfpenny of our money.

Matthew 22:20

Ver. 20. **And he saith unto them,**

Having the penny in one hand, and pointing to it with the other,

whose is this image and superscription?

or inscription? for the penny that was, brought him had an image upon it, the form of a man's head struck on it, and round about it an inscription, or writing, showing who it was the image of, and whose money it was, and when it was coined: this is enough to show, that this penny was not a Jewish, but a Roman one; for the Jews, though they put inscriptions, yet no images on their coin; and much less would they put Caesar's thereon, as was on this: it is asked ¹¹⁴⁵,

"What is the coin of Jerusalem? The answer is, David and Solomon on one side, and Jerusalem the holy city off the other side, i.e. as the gloss observes, David and Solomon were "written" on one side, and on the other side were written Jerusalem the holy city."

It follows,

"and what was the coin of Abraham our father? an old man and an old woman, (Abraham and Sarah,) on one side, and a young man and a young woman, (Isaac and Rebekah,) on the other side."

The gloss on it is,

"not that there was on it the form of an old man and an old woman on one side, and of a young man and a young woman on the other, for it is forbidden to make the form of a man; but so it was written on one side, an old man and an old woman, and on the other side, a young man and a young woman."

Matthew 22:21

Ver. 21. **They say unto him, Caesar's,**

Either Augustus Caesar's; for there was a coin of that emperor's, as Dr. Hammond reports, from Occo, which had his image or picture on it, and in it these words written, Augustus Caesar, such a year, "after the taking of Judaea"; which if this was the coin, was a standing testimony of the subjection of the Jews to the Romans; and this being current with them, was an acknowledgment of it by them, and carried in it an argument of their obligation to pay tribute to them; or it might be Tiberius Caesar's, the then reigning emperor, in the nineteenth year of whose reign, Christ was crucified; and seeing he had reigned so long, it is reasonable to suppose, his money was very common, and most in use: we read in the Talmud ¹¹⁴⁶, of קיראנה דינרא קיראנה, "a Caesarean penny", or "Caesar's penny", the

¹¹⁴⁵ T. Bab. Bava Kama, fol. 97. 2. Vid. Bereshit Rabbas sect. 39. fol. 34. 4. & Midrash Kohelet, fol 95. 4.

¹¹⁴⁶ T. Bab. Avoda Zara, fol. 6. 2.

same sort with this: now this penny having Caesar's image and inscription on it, our Lord tacitly suggests, that they ought to pay tribute to him; since his money was allowed of as current among them, which was in effect owning him to be their king; and which perfectly agrees with a rule of their own, which runs thus ¹¹⁴⁷:

"A king whose "coin" is "current" in any country, the inhabitants of that country agree about him, and it is their joint opinion, אדונייהו והו לוי בדימי שהוא "that he is their Lord, and they are his servants".

This being the case now with the Jews, Christ's advice is,

render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God,

the things that are God's: give Caesar the tribute and custom, and fear, and honour, and obedience, which are due to him; which may be done without interfering with the honour of God, and prejudicing his interest and glory, when care is taken, that all the worship and obedience due to God are given to him: subjection to civil magistrates is not inconsistent with the reverence and fear of God; all are to have their dues rendered unto them, without entrenching upon one another. And the Jews themselves allow, that a king ought to have his dues, whether he be a king of Israel, or of the Gentiles:"

"a publican, or tax gatherer (they say ¹¹⁴⁸,) that is appointed by the king, whether a king of Israel, or of the Gentiles, and takes what is fixed by the order of the the government; it is forbidden to refuse payment of the tax to him, for דמלכות דינא "the right of a king is right"?"

Just and equitable, and he ought to have his right.

Matthew 22:22

Ver. 22. When they had heard these words,

This answer returned unto them, this advice which was given them, which they could not gainsay or deny to be good, they marvelled: were amazed and astonished, at his prudence and wisdom, in answering them, in such an unexpected and cautious manner: they left him: being silenced, confounded, and disappointed: and went their way: not being able to get any advantage against him, neither to bring him into contempt with the people, and alienate their affections from him; nor to charge him

¹¹⁴⁷ Maimon. Hilch. Gerala, c. 5. sect. 18.

¹¹⁴⁸ Maimon. & Bartenora in Misn. Nedarim. c. 3. sect. 4. & Maimon. Hilch. Gezala, c. 5. sect. 11.

with sedition or treason to the Roman governor; and so had but a very indifferent account of their success, to report to them that sent them.

Matthew 22:23

Ver. 23 **The same day came to him the Sadducees,**

Quickly after the Pharisees and Herodians had left him; and which shows, that the Herodians and Sadducees were not the same; but that the Sadducees were a distinct sect, both from the Pharisees and the Herodians. These understanding that the former had not succeeded, came with a knotty question, with which they had often puzzled the Pharisees, and hoped they should nonplus Christ with it, showing the absurdity of the doctrine of the resurrection, an article which they denied; as it follows, which say,

that there is no resurrection of the dead:

they denied that there were angels and spirits, and the immortality of the soul; they affirmed, that the soul died with the body, and that there was no future state: the rise of this sect, and of these notions of their's, was this, as the Jews relate ¹¹⁴⁹.

"Antigonus, a man of Socho, used to say, be not as servants, that serve their master on account of receiving a reward, but be as servants that serve their master, not on account of receiving a reward; and let the fear of heaven (God) be upon you, so that your reward may be double in the world to come: this man had two disciples, who altered his words, and taught the disciples, and the disciples their disciples, and they stood and narrowly examined them, and said, what did our fathers see, to say this thing? Is it possible, that a labourer should work all day, and not take his reward at evening? But if our fathers had known that there is another world, and that there is Mytmh tytyht, "a resurrection of the dead", they would not have said thus: they stood and separated from the law, and of them there were two parties, the Sadducees and Baithusites; the Sadducees on account of Sadoc, and the Baithusites on account of Baithus.'

'The Syriac version reads, "and they said" and the Ethiopic version also, "saying, there is no resurrection of the dead"; taking the sense to be, that they at this time declared their sense of this doctrine, and according to a settled notion of their's, affirmed before Christ, that there was no such thing; that never any was raised from

¹¹⁴⁹ Abot R. Nathan, c. 5. fol. 3. 1.

the dead, nor never will; and they were desirous of entering into a controversy with him about it:

and asked him;

put the following question to him, in order to expose the weakness and absurdity of such a doctrine.

Matthew 22:24

Ver. 24. **Saying, master,**

Rabbi, or doctor, as he was usually called Moses said, in De 25:5

if a man die having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother;

which, though not expressed in the self same words, yet is the sense of the passage referred to, and was a practice in use before the times of Moses, as appears from the case of Er and Onan; the design of which was, to preserve families, and keep their inheritances distinct and entire. This law only took place, when a man died without children; for if he left any children, there was no need for his brother to marry his wife; yea, as a Jewish writer observes ¹¹⁵⁰, she was forbidden, it was not lawful for him to marry her, and was the case if he had children of either sex, or even grandchildren: for as another of their commentators notes ¹¹⁵¹, his having no child, regards a son or a daughter, or a son's son, or a daughter's son, or a daughter's daughter; and it was the eldest of the brethren, or he that was next in years to the deceased, that was obliged by this law ¹¹⁵², though not if he had a wife of his own; and accordingly in the following case proposed, each of the brethren married the eldest brother's wife in their turn, according to the course of seniority; and by this law, the first child that was born after such marriage, was reckoned the seed of the deceased, and was heir to his inheritance. The Jews in their Misna, or oral law, have a whole tract on this subject, called Yebamot, which contains various rules and directions, for the right observance of this law.

Matthew 22:25

Ver. 25. **Now there were with us seven brethren,**

That is, there was in the city, town or neighbourhood, where these Sadducees dwelt, probably at Jerusalem, a family, in which were seven sons, all brethren by the father's side; for brethren by the mother's side were not counted brethren, nor obliged by this law ¹¹⁵³; whether

¹¹⁵⁰ Aben Ezra in Deut. xxv. 5.

¹¹⁵¹ Jarchi in ib. Vid. Maimon. Hilch. Yebum, c. 1. sect. 3.

¹¹⁵² Jarchi in Deut. xxv. 5. Misn. Yebamot, c. 2. sect. 8. & 4, 5. Maimon. Hilch. Yebum, c. 2. sect. 6.

¹¹⁵³ Maimon. Hilch. Yebum, c. 1. sect. 7.

this was a reigned case which is here and in the following verses put, or whether it was real fact, which is possible, it matters not: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: the eldest of these seven brethren married a wife, and after some time died, having no children, son or daughter, by his wife; and therefore, according to the above law, leaves her to his next brother to marry her, and raise up seed unto him; which, according to the Jewish canons ¹¹⁵⁴, could not be done before ninety days, or three months after the decease of his brother; for so long they were to wait and see, whether she was with child by his brother or not; for if she was, it was not necessary, yea, it was unlawful for him to marry her.

Matthew 22:26

Ver. 26. **Likewise the second also,**

The eldest of the surviving brethren, having married his brother's wife, after sometime died also without children, and left her to his next brother to marry her; and the third brother accordingly did marry her, and in process of time died likewise, leaving no issue behind him; and thus they went on in course, unto the seventh: the fourth, fifth, and sixth, married her in turn, and so did the seventh; and all died in the same circumstances, having no children by her.

Matthew 22:27

Ver. 27. And last of all the woman died also.

A widow and childless, having never married another person but these seven brethren; and the case with them being alike, no one having any child by her, upon which any peculiar claim to her could be formed, the following question is put.

Matthew 22:28

Ver. 28. **Therefore in the resurrection,**

As asserted by the Pharisees and by Christ, supposing that there will be such a thing, though not granting it; for these men denied it, wherefore the Ethiopic version reads it hypothetically, "if therefore the dead will be raised"; upon such a supposition,

whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her,

or were married to her. By putting this question, they thought to have got some advantage against Christ, and in favour of their notion; they hoped, either that he would give into their way of thinking, and relinquish the doctrine of the resurrection upon this, and join with them against the Pharisees, and so there would be no

¹¹⁵⁴ T. Bab. Erubin, fol. 47. 1. Maimon. ib. c. 1. sect. 19.

need of an answer to the question; or they judged, that if he returned an answer, it would be either that he did not know whose wife she should be, and then they would traduce him among the common people, as weak and ignorant; or should he say, that she would be the wife of one of them only, naming which of them, or of them all, or of none of them, they fancied that such absurd consequences would follow on each of these, as would expose the doctrine of the resurrection to ridicule and contempt; but they missed their aim, and were sadly disappointed by Christ's answer and reasonings which follow.

Matthew 22:29

Ver. 29. **Jesus answered and said unto them,**

The Sadducees: as idle and impertinent as the case they put may seem to be and really was, our Lord thought fit to return an answer to them, thereby to expose their ignorance, and put them to silence and confusion: ye do err; not only in that they denied the immortality of the soul and the resurrection, but that supposing that there would be a resurrection, things in that state would be just they were in this; as particularly for instance, that there would be the same natural relation of husband and wife, which their question supposes. Mark reads these words by way of interrogation,

do ye not therefore err, because?

And by Luke they are wholly omitted, as also what follows,

not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.

These two things were the spring and source of their errors: they had not a true knowledge, and right understanding of the Scriptures; which if they had had, it must have appeared to them, from many places in the Old Testament, that the soul remains after death, and that the body will be raised from the dead: they owned the authority of the Scriptures, and allowed of all the writings of the Old Testament; for it seems to be a mistake of some learned men, who think that they only received the five books of Moses, and that therefore Christ takes his proof of his doctrine from thence; but though they had the greater esteem for the law, and would admit of nothing that was not clearly proved from that; yet they did not reject the other writings, as what might serve to confirm and illustrate what was taught in the law; but then, though they approved of the Scriptures and read them, yet they did not understand them, and so fell into those gross errors and sad mistakes; nor did they attend to the power of God, which, as it was able to make men out of the dust of the earth, was able to raise them again, when

crumbled into dust; but this was looked upon by them, as a thing impossible, and so incredible; see Ac 26:8.

Matthew 22:30

Ver. 30. **For in the resurrection,**

At the time of the resurrection, and in that state; when the bodies and souls of men shall be reunited, **they neither marry, nor are given in marriage;** neither the men marry wives, nor are the women given in marriage to men, which is done by their parents here, generally speaking, they having the right of disposing of children in marriage: but, as Luke says, “they which shall be accounted worthy”; not through their own works of righteousness, but through the grace of God and righteousness of Christ, “to obtain the world”, the world to come, a future state of happiness, “and the resurrection of the dead”, that which will be unto everlasting life and glory, “neither marry nor are given in marriage”; shall not enter into any such natural and carnal relation: and this agrees with the notion of the other Jews, who say ¹¹⁵⁵; that

”In “the world to come”, there is neither eating nor drinking, ולא פרייה ורבייה, “nor fructification, nor increase” (of children), no receiving and giving, (no commerce), nor envy, nor hatred, nor contention.”

But are as the angels of God in heaven;

or, as in Luke, “are equal unto the angels”; and which he explains their immortality: “neither can they die any more”; no more than the angels can: for this must not be extended to everything; not in everything will the saints be like, or equal to the angels; they will not be incorporeal, as the angels are, but then, even their bodies will be spiritual, and in some respects, like spirits; they will not stand in any need of sustenance, by eating and drinking, any more than the angels; nor will there be any such things as marriage, and procreation of children among them, any more than among angels; for they “are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection”: they will then appear to be the children of God by adopting grace, through their enjoying the adoption, even the redemption of their bodies; and possessing, in soul and body, the heavenly inheritance they are heirs of: indeed, the souls of the saints before the resurrection, during their separate state, are in some sense like the angels, to which may be applied those words of Maimonides ¹¹⁵⁶.

”In the world to come, there is no body, but the

¹¹⁵⁵ T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 17. 1.

¹¹⁵⁶ Hilch. Teshuba, c. 8. sect. 2.

souls of the righteous only, without a body, השרה כמלאכי “as the ministering angels”; and seeing there is no body, there is no eating nor drinking in it, nor any of all the things which the bodies of the children of men stand in need of in this world; nor does anything befall which happens to bodies in this world, as sitting or standing, or sleep or “death”, or grief, or laughter, or the like.’

’And according to the sense of the Jews, they will be like to the angels after the resurrection: so God is by them introduced speaking ¹¹⁵⁷;”At the appointed time known by me, to quicken the dead, I will return to thee that body which is holy and renewed, as at the first, to be כמלאכי קדושי, “as the holy angels.””This was an usual way of speaking with them, to compare saints in a state of immortality, to angels ¹¹⁵⁸. Christ, by making mention of angels, strikes at another notion of the Sadducees, that there were no angels, Ac 23:8.

Matthew 22:31

Ver. 31. **But as touching the resurrection of the dead,....**

In proof of that doctrine, and which will greatly serve to confirm and establish it, and that it may appear that the dead are, or will be raised, and to put it out of all doubt,

have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God,

as Mark adds, “in the book of Moses”; which was written by him, the book of Ex 3:6 and though the words were spoke to Moses, yet were designed for the use, instruction, and comfort of the Israelites; not only at that time, but in succeeding ages, they being the posterity of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; whose God the Lord there declares himself to be. Moreover, whereas these words were spoken by God to Moses, there is some little difficulty occasioned, by Luke’s representing them to be the words of Moses; for he says, “Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord, the God of Abraham”, &c. which may be removed by observing, that the sense is, that when Moses showed to the children of Israel, what he heard and saw at the bush on Mount Sinai, he called the Lord by these names, in which he spoke of himself to him; he recited to them what the Lord said to him; and indeed he was bid to say to them these words; See Ex 3:14

saying,

¹¹⁵⁷ Midrash Hanneelam in Zohar in Gen. fol. 66. 4.

¹¹⁵⁸ Vid. Abot. R. Nathan, c. 1. fol. 1. 3. Caphtor, fol. 18. 2. Philo de Sacrific. Abel & Cain, p. 131.

as follows,

Matthew 22:32

Ver. 32. **I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,**

The Sadducees expressly denied, that the resurrection could be proved out of the law.”

Says R. Eliezer, with R. Jose ¹¹⁵⁹, I have found the books of the Sadducees to be corrupt; for they say that the resurrection of the dead is not to be proved out of the law: I said unto them, you have corrupted your law, and ye have not caused anything to come up into your hands, for ye say the resurrection of the dead is not to be proved out of the law; lo! he saith, Nu 15:31 “That soul shall be utterly cut off, his iniquity shall be upon him; he shall be utterly cut off” in this world; “his iniquity shall be upon him”, is not this said with respect to the world to come?.

”Hence, in opposition to this notion of the Sadducees, the other Jews say ¹¹⁶⁰, that

Though a man confesses and believes that the dead will be raised, yet that it is not intimated in the law, he is an heretic; since it is a fundamental point, that the resurrection of the dead is of the law.”Hence they set themselves, with all their might and main, to prove this doctrine from thence, of which take the following instances ¹¹⁶¹.

”Says R. Simai, from whence is the resurrection of the dead to be proved out of the law? From Ex 6:4 as it is said, “I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan: to you” it is not said, but “to them”; from hence then, the resurrection of the dead may be proved out of the law.”

The gloss upon it is,

”the sense is, that the holy blessed God, promised to our fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that he would give to them the land of Israel; and because he gave it to them, has he not given it to their children? But we learn from hence, that they shall be raised, and that God will hereafter give them the land of Israel.”

¹¹⁵⁹ T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 90. 2.

¹¹⁶⁰ Gloss. in ib. col. 1.

¹¹⁶¹ T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 90. 2. {k} T. Hieros. Betacot, fol. 4. 4, Midrash Kohelet, fol. 78. 2. Tzeror Hammor, fol. 158. 3.

And which the learned Mark. Mede takes to be the sense of the words of this text, cited by our Lord; and this the force of his reasoning, by which he proves the resurrection of the dead. Again,

”the Sadducees asked Rabban Gamaliel, from whence does it appear that the holy blessed God will quicken the dead? He said unto them, out of the law, and out of the prophets, and out of the Hagiographa; but they did not receive of him (or regard him): out of the law, as it is written, “Thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, and rise up”, De 31:16 And there are that say from this Scripture, De 4:4. “But ye that did cleave unto the Lord your God, are alive every one of you this day”: as this day all of you stand, so in the world to come, all of you shall stand.”

Thus our Lord having to do with the same sort of persons, fetches his proof of the doctrine of the resurrection out of the law, and from a passage which respects the covenant relation God stands in to his people, particularly Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and which respects not their souls only, but their bodies also, even their whole persons, body and soul; for God is the God of the whole: and therefore as their souls now live with God, their bodies also will be raised from the dead, that they, with their souls, may enjoy everlasting glory and happiness; which is the grand promise, and great blessing of the covenant of grace. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living; as all the saints are; for though their bodies are dead, their souls are alive, and their bodies will be raised in consequence of their covenant interest in God, to enjoy an immortal life with him: so the Jews are wont to say, that the righteous, even in their death, are called living ¹¹⁶²:

”from whence is it proved, (say they,) that the righteous, even in their death, קרויין חיים, “are called living?”

from De 34:4 as it is written, “and he said unto him, this is the land which I have sworn to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying.” Menasseh ben Israel, a learned Jew, of the last century, has produced ¹¹⁶³ this same passage of Scripture, Christ here does in proof of the immortality of the soul, and argues from it in much the same manner: having mentioned the words, he adds,

¹¹⁶² T. Hieros. Betacot, fol. 4. 4, Midrash Kohelet, fol. 78. 2. Tzeror Hammor, fol. 158. 3.

¹¹⁶³ De Resurrect. Mort, l. i. c. 10. sect. 6.

”for God is not the God of the dead, for the dead are not; but of the living, for the living exist; therefore also the patriarchs, in respect of the soul, may rightly be inferred from hence to live.

Matthew 22:33

Ver. 33. **And when the multitude heard this,**

This wise and full answer of Christ to the posing question of the Sadducees, with which perhaps they had puzzled many, and never had met with their match before: they were astonished at his doctrine; concerning the pure, perfect, and angelic state of the righteous in the world to come; and how strongly and nervously he proved the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection of the dead, which were both denied by the Sadducees; and who were so confounded with his answer, proof, and reasonings, that Luke says, “after that they durst not ask him any question at all”: and the Scribes were so pleased therewith, that certain of them applauded him, saying, “master, thou hast well said”.

Matthew 22:34

Ver. 34. **But when the Pharisees had heard,**

Either with their own ears, they being some of them present: or rather from the relation of others, from the Scribes, who expressed their approbation of Christ’s answer to the Sadducees; for the Pharisees, with the Herodians, in a body, had left him, and were gone to their respective places of abode; or to them that sent them, being baffled and confounded by him: but now hearing

that he had put the Sadducees to silence,

or stopped their mouths, having nothing to reply, which itself, was not disagreeable; for they were as opposite as could be to them in the doctrine of the resurrection, and in other things, and were their sworn and avowed enemies: and yet it sadly gravelled them, that Christ should be too hard for, and get the victory over all sects among them. Wherefore, considering that should he go on with success in this manner, his credit with the people would increase yet more and more; and therefore, though they had been so shamefully defeated in two late attempts, yet

they were gathered together

in great hurry upon this occasion. The Ethiopic version reads it, “they were gathered to him”, that is, to Christ; and so reads the copy that Beza gave to the university of Cambridge: but the other reading, as it is general, so more suitable to the place: they gathered together at some certain house, where they consulted what to do, what methods to take, to put a stop to his growing inter-

est with the people, and how they might bring him into disgrace with them; and they seemed to have fixed on this method, that one among them, who was the ablest doctor, and best skilled in the law, should put a question to him relating to the law, which was then agitated among them, the solution of which was very difficult; and they the rather chose to take this course by setting a single person upon him, that should he succeed, the victory would be the greater, and the whole sect would share in the honour of it; and should he be silenced, the public disgrace and confusion would only fall on himself, and not the whole body, as in the former instances. This being agreed to, they went unto him.

Matthew 22:35

Ver. 35. **Then one of them, which was a lawyer,**

Or that was “learned”, or “skilful in the law”, as the Syriac and Persic versions, and Munster’s Hebrew Gospel read. The Ethiopic version calls him, “a Scribe of the city”, of the city of Jerusalem; but I do not meet with any such particular officer, or any such office peculiar to a single man any where: mention is made of “the Scribes of the people” in Mt 2:4 and this man was one of them, one that interpreted the law to the people, either in the schools, or in the synagogues, or both; and Mark expressly calls him a “Scribe”: and so the Arabic version renders the word here; and from hence it may be concluded that the lawyers and Scribes were the same sort of persons. This man was by sect a Pharisee, and by his office a Scribe; or interpreter of the law, and suitable to his office and character,

asked him a question, tempting him, and saying:

he put a difficult and knotty question to him, and thereby making a trial of his knowledge and understanding of the law; and laying a snare for him, to entrap him if he could, and expose him to the people, as a very ignorant man: and delivered it in the following form.

Matthew 22:36

Ver. 36. **Master, which is the great commandment in the law?**

He calls him “master, Rabbi, or doctor”, as the Sadducees had in Mt 22:24 either because he was usually so called by his disciples, and by the generality of the people; or merely in complaisance to engage his attention to him, and his question: and might hereby suggest, that should he return a proper and satisfactory answer to it he should be his master. The question is not which of the laws was the greatest, the oral, or the written law: the Jews give the preference to the law delivered by word of

mouth; they prefer the traditions of the elders before the written law of Moses; See Gill on “Mt 15:2”; but the question was about the written law of Moses; and not merely about the decalogue, or whether the commands of the first table were greater than those of the second, as was generally thought; or whether the affirmative precepts were not more to be regarded than negative ones, which was their commonly received opinion; but about the whole body of the law, moral and ceremonial, delivered by Moses: and not whether the ceremonial law was to be preferred to the moral, which they usually did; but what particular command there was in the whole law, which was greater than the rest: for as there were some commands that were light, and others that were weighty, a distinction often used by them {m}, and to which Christ alludes in Mt 23:23. It was moved that it might be said which was the greatest and weightiest of them all. Some thought the commandment of the sabbath was the greatest: hence they say ¹¹⁶⁴, that he that keeps the sabbath is as if he kept the whole law: yea, they make the observance of the three meals, or feasts, which, according to the traditions of the elders, they were obliged to eat on the sabbath, to be at least one of the greatest of them.

”These three meals (says one of their writers ¹¹⁶⁵) are a great matter, for it is one *מהמונת הגדולות שבתורה* “of the great commandments in the law”.

Which is the very phraseology used in this question. Others give the preference to circumcision, on which they bestow the greatest encomiums, and, among the rest ¹¹⁶⁶, say, it drives away the sabbath, or that is obliged to give place unto it. Others ¹¹⁶⁷ say of the “phylacteries”, that the holiness of them is the greatest of all, and the command to be arrayed with them all the day, is more excellent than all others; and even of the fringe upon the borders of their garments, others observe ¹¹⁶⁸, that a man that is guilty of that command, is guilty of all others, and that single precept is equal to all the rest. In this multiplicity of opinions, Christ’s is desired on this subject, though with no good intention.

Matthew 22:37

Ver. 37. **Jesus said unto him,**

Directly, without taking time to think of it; and

¹¹⁶⁴ Zohar in Exod. fol. 37. 1.

¹¹⁶⁵ Tzeror Hammor, fol. 3. 3.

¹¹⁶⁶ Misn. Nedarim, c. 3. sect. 11.

¹¹⁶⁷ Maimon. Hilch. Tephillin, c. 4. sect. 25, 26. {r} T. Bab. Menachot, fol. 43. 2.

¹¹⁶⁸ T. Bab. Menachot, fol. 43. 2.

though he knew with what design it was put to him, yet, as an answer to it might be useful and instructive to the people, as well as silence and confound his adversaries, he thought fit to give one; and is as follows, being what is expressed in De 6:5.

thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind;

that is, with all the powers and faculties of the soul, the will, the understanding, and the affections; in the most sincere, upright, and perfect manner, without any dissimulation and hypocrisy, and above all objects whatever, for this the law requires; and which man, in his state of innocence, was capable of, though now fallen, he is utterly unable to perform; so far from it, that without the grace of God, he has no true love at all to God, in his heart, soul and mind, but all the reverse; his carnal mind is enmity against God, and everything that is divine and good, or that belongs unto him: and though this is now the case of man, yet his obligation to love the Lord in this manner is still the same; and when the Spirit of God does produce the grace and fruit of love in his soul, he does love the Lord sincerely; because of the perfections of his nature, and the works of his hands, and because of the blessings of grace bestowed, and especially for Christ, the unspeakable gift of his love; and most affectionately does he love him, when he is most sensible of his everlasting and unchangeable love to him, and when that is shed abroad by the Spirit; “for we love him, because he first loved us”, 1Jo 4:19 instead of, “with all thy mind”, as here, in De 6:5 it is read, “with all thy might”; and which clause is here added by the Syriac, Persic, and Ethiopic versions, as it is in Mark 12:30. The Hebrew phrase seems to denote the vehemency of affections, with which God is to be beloved. Though the Jewish writers ¹¹⁶⁹ paraphrase and interpret it, “with all thy substance”, or “money”; and in the Misna ¹¹⁷⁰, the following interpretation is given of the whole;”

with all thy heart”, with thy imaginations, with the good imagination, and with the evil imagination; and “with all thy soul”, even if he should take away thy soul; and “with all thy strength”, with all thy “mammon”, or riches; or otherwise, “with all thy might”, with every measure he measures unto thee, do thou measure unto him;”

¹¹⁶⁹ Targum Onk. & Jarchi in Deut. vi. 5.

¹¹⁷⁰ Beracot, c. 9. sect. 5. Vid. Targum Jon. in Dent. vi. 5.

that is, as one of the commentators says ¹¹⁷¹, whether it be good or evil; or, as another ¹¹⁷², in every case that happens give thanks to God, and praise him. And certain it is, that as God is to be loved in the strongest manner we are capable of, and with all we have, and are; so always, at all times, under all dispensations of his providence, and upon all accounts, and for all he does towards, in, upon, and for us.

Matthew 22:38

Ver. 38. **This is the first and great commandment.**

Whether the object of it is considered, who is the first and chief good; or the manner in which it is to be observed, which requires and engrosses the whole heart, soul, and mind, and all the strength and power of man; or its being the principle from whence all the duties, and actions of men should flow, and the end to which all are to be referred; and is not only a compendium of the duties of the first table of the decalogue, but of all others that can be thought to, and do, belong to God. This is the first command in order of nature, time, dignity, and causality; God being the first cause of all things, infinitely above all creatures, and love to him being the source, spring and cause of love to the neighbour; and it is the greatest in its object, nature, manner, and end. That this command, and these words our Lord cites, are so full and comprehensive, the Jews themselves cannot deny. A noted writer of their's ¹¹⁷³ says,

”the root of “all the commandments” is, when a man loves God with all his soul, and cleaves unto him.

”And, says ¹¹⁷⁴ another,”in this verse only, “thou shalt love the Lord thy God”, &c. *שְׂרַת הַדְּבָרֹת*. “the ten words, or decalogue, are comprehended”.

Matthew 22:39

Ver. 39. **And the second is like unto it,**

For there is but a second, not a third: this is suggested in opposition to the numerous commandments in the law, according to the opinion of the Jews, who reckon them in all to be “six hundred and thirteen”: of which there are “three hundred and sixty five” negative ones, according to the number of the days of the year; and “two hundred and forty eight” affirmative ones, according to the members of a man's body ¹¹⁷⁵. Christ reduces

all to two, love to God, and love to the neighbour; and the latter is the second in order of nature, time, dignity, and causality; the object of it being a creature; and the act itself being the effect of the former, yet like unto it: for though the object is different, yet this commandment regards love as the former, and requires that it be as that, true, hearty, sincere, and perfect; that it be with singleness of heart, always, and to all men; and that it spring from love to God, and be performed to his glory: and which is expressed in the words written in Le 19:18 “thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”; as heartily and sincerely, and as a man would desire to be loved by his neighbour; and do all the good offices to him he would choose to have done to himself by him. This law supposes, that men should love themselves, or otherwise they cannot love their neighbour; not in a sinful way, by indulging themselves in carnal lusts and pleasures; some are lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; but in a natural way, so as to be careful of their bodies, families, and estates; and in a spiritual way, so as to be concerned for their souls, and the everlasting happiness of them: and in like manner should men love their neighbours, in things temporal do them all the good they can, and do no injury to their persons or property; and in things spiritual pray for them, instruct them, and advise as they would their own souls, or their nearest and dearest relations. And this is to be extended to every man; though the Jews restrain it to their friend and companion, and one of their own religion.”

”Thy neighbour”; that is, (say they ¹¹⁷⁶), thy friend in the law; and “this is the great comprehensive rule in the law”, to show that it is not fit there should be any division, or separation, between a man and his companion, but one should judge every man in the balance of equity: wherefore, near unto it is, “I am the Lord”: for as I the Lord am one, so it is fit for you that ye should be one nation without division; but a wicked man, and one that does not receive reproof, it is commanded to hate him; as it is said, “do not I hate them that hate me?”

But our Lord intends by it to include, that love, benevolence, and good will, which are due to every man; and suggests, that this comprehends not only all that contained in the second table of the decalogue, but all duties that are reducible thereunto, and are obligatory on men one towards another whatever; all which should

¹¹⁷⁶ Moses Kotsensis Mitzvot Tora pr. affirm. 9.

spring from love, and be done heartily and sincerely, with a view to the neighbour's good, and God's glory: and with this Maimonides agrees, saying ¹¹⁷⁷, that

”all the commands, or duties, respecting a man, and his neighbour, *נְכֻנֹת בְּנִמְיֻלוֹת הַיְיָדִימ* “are comprehended in beneficence.”

Matthew 22:40

Ver. 40. **On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.**

Not that all that is contained in the five books of Moses, and in the books of the prophets, and other writings of the Old Testament, is comprehended in, and is reducible to these two precepts; for there are many things delivered by way of promise, written by way of history, &c. which cannot, by any means, be brought into these two general heads: but that everything respecting duty that is suggested in the law, or is more largely explained and pressed in any of the writings of the prophets, is summarily comprehended in these two sayings: hence love is the fulfilling of the law; see Ro 13:8. The substance of the law is love; and the writings of the prophets, as to the preceptive part of them, are an explanation of the law, and an enlargement upon it: hence the Jews have a saying ¹¹⁷⁸, that “all the prophets stood on Mount Sinai”, and received their prophecies there, because the sum of them, as to the duty part, was then delivered. Beza thinks, that here is an allusion to the “phylacteries”, or frontlets, which hung upon their foreheads and hands, as a memorial of the law. And certain it is, that the first of these commands, and which is said to be the greatest, was written in these phylacteries. Some take the phrase, “on these hang all the law and the prophets”, to be a mere Latinism, but it is really an Hebraism, and often to be met with in the Jewish writings: so Maimonides says ¹¹⁷⁹,

”the knowledge of this matter is an affirmative precept, as it is said, “I am the Lord thy God”; and he that imagines there is another God besides this, transgresses a negative, as it is said, “thou shalt have no other Gods before me”; and he denies the fundamental point, for this is the great foundation, *שֶׁהַכֹּל תְּלִי בּו*, “on which all hang”:

”and so the word is used in many other places {e}.

¹¹⁷⁷ In Misn. Peah, c. 1. sect. 1.

¹¹⁷⁸ Jarchi in Isa. xlvi. 16. & in Mal. i. 1.

¹¹⁷⁹ Hilch. Yesode Hatorah, c. 1. sect. 6. {e} Vid. Abkath Rokel. l. 1. p. 3.

The sense is plainly this, that all that are in the law and prophets are consistent with, and dependent on these things; and are, as the Persic version renders the word, “comprehended” in them, and cannot be separated from them.

Matthew 22:41

Ver. 41. **While the Pharisees were gathered together,**.... Or rather, “when” they were gathered together, and while they continued so, before they left him: for this is to be understood not of their gathering together, to consult privately about him; this is expressed before in Mt 22:34 but of their gathering together about Christ, to hear what answer he would return to the question their learned doctor would put to him: and he having given an answer to that, which the Scribe was obliged to allow was a good one; and he having no more to say, Christ directs his discourse not to him individually, but to all the Pharisees before he parted with them, and puts a question to them, in his turn; and which would lead on to another they could not answer, and they must therefore leave him once more with great shame and confusion.

Jesus asked them:

as the lawyer put a question to him suitable to his office and character, Christ puts another to the Pharisees suitable to his office and character, as a Gospel preacher; suggesting by it, that salvation was not by the law, and the works of it, which they set up for doctors and interpreters of, and advocates for, but by the Messiah, who was promised to their fathers, and they expected.

Matthew 22:42

Ver. 42. **Saying, what think ye of Christ,**

Or the Messiah; he does not ask them whether there was, or would be such a person in the world. He knew, that he was so plainly spoken of in the writings of the Old Testament, which they had in their hands, that they could not be ignorant, that such a person was prophesied of: he knew that they believed that he would come, and that they were in continual expectation of his coming; wherefore he asks them what they thought of him, what were their sentiments and opinions concerning him; as about his person, whether they thought him to be divine, or human, a mere man, or God, as well as man; what they thought of his work and office he came to perform, whether it was a spiritual, or temporal salvation, they expected he should be the author of; and so of his kingdom, whether it would be of this world or not; and particularly, what thoughts they had of his sonship, and who was his father;

whose son is he?

and which the Pharisees understanding only as respecting his lineage and descent as man, as, of what family he was? who were his ancestors and progenitors?

they say unto him, the son of David.

This they said directly, without any hesitation, it being a generally received notion of their's, and was very right, that the Messiah should be of the seed and family of David: and hence he is frequently, in their writings, called by no other name, than the son of David; See Gill on "Mt 1:1". If this question was put to some persons, it would appear, that they have no thoughts of Christ at all. The atheist has none; as God is not in all his thoughts, nor in any of them, for all his thoughts are, that there is no God; so neither is Christ the Son of God. The deist thinks thing of him, for he does not believe the revelation concerning him. The epicure, or voluptuous man, he thinks only of his carnal lusts and pleasures: and the worldling, or covetous man, thinks nothing but of his worldly substance, and of the much good things he has laid up for many years: to say nothing of the Heathens, who have never heard of him; others, and such as bear the Christian name, have very wrong thoughts of Christ, mean, and undervaluing. The Arrian thinks he is a created God, of a like, but not of the same nature with the Father. The Socinian thinks he is a God by office, and did not exist until he was born of the Virgin Mary; and has no notion of his sacrifice, and satisfaction for the sins of men. The Arminian thinks meanly of his righteousness, and denies the imputation of it to them that believe. And indeed, all such think wrongly of Christ, who divide their salvation between their works and him, and make them their Christ, or their frames their Christ, or their graces, and particularly their believing in him; that is, that ascribe that to them, which properly belongs to him. And as for those who do not bear the name Christians, it is no wonder that they entertain wrong and low thoughts of Christ. The Jews thought him to be a mere man, and the carpenter's son. The Pharisees thought that he was an Antinomian, a libertine, a loose, and licentious person, that had no regard to the law, and good works: hence those words of his, "think not that I am come to destroy the law", Mt 5:17. Yea, they thought him to be a Samaritan, and to have a devil, and to cast out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils. The Mahometans, though they allow him to be a prophet, yet think that he is inferior to Mahomet their prophet. There are others that think well of Christ, admire the loveliness of his person, and the fulness of his grace, but are afraid Christ

does not think well of them: they think well of the suitability there is in Christ, of his righteousness to justify, of his blood to cleanse and pardon, and of the fulness of his grace to supply all wants, but think these are not for them: they often revolve in their minds his ability to save, and firmly believe it, but question his willingness to save them: they often think of Christ, what he is to others, but cannot think of him for themselves; only believers in Christ have a good thought of him, to their own joy and comfort: faith is a good thought of Christ; to them that believe, he is precious; and such, through believing in him, are filled with joy unspeakable, and full of glory; such think often, and well, of the dignity of Christ's person, of the excellency and usefulness of his offices, of the virtue of his blood, righteousness, and sacrifice, and of the sufficiency of his grace for them: they think well of what he did for them in eternity, as their surety, in the council and covenant of peace; and of what he has done for them in time, by suffering and dying for them in their room and stead; and of what he is now doing for them in heaven, as their advocate and intercessor.

Matthew 22:43

Ver. 43. **He saith unto them,**

Not denying it to be a truth they affirmed; but rather granting and allowing it: he argues upon it, though he tacitly refuses their sense and meaning of the phrase, thus,

how then doth David in spirit call him Lord? that is, if he is a mere man, if he is only the son of David, according to the flesh, if he has no other, or higher descent than from him, how comes it to pass, that David, under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, by which he wrote his book of Psalms, see 2Sa 23:1 where the passage, after cited, stands, to call him Lord; which supposes him to be more than barely his son, and to be a greater person than himself, one superior in nature and dignity to him? for the phrase "in spirit", is not to be connected with the word Lord; as if the design of it was to show, that the Messiah was Lord, or God, in spirit, or with respect to his divine nature, but, with the word "call", expressing the influence of the Spirit of God, under which David wrote; otherwise the Pharisees would have had a direction how to have answered the question, which much puzzled them:

saying,

as in Ps 110:1.

Matthew 22:44

Ver. 44. **The Lord said unto my Lord,**

By the Lord that said, is meant "Jehovah" the Father, who said the following words at the time of Christ's ascension, and entrance into heaven, after he had finished the great work of man's salvation; prophetically delivered by the Psalmist, under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, being what was before purposed and promised: by "my Lord", the person spoken to, the Messiah is designed, who was David's "Adon", or Lord, by right both of creation and redemption: as God, he made him: and as the Messiah and Saviour, redeemed him; and on both accounts had a right to rule over him. The words said unto him are,

sit thou on my right hand;

which is a figurative phrase, and expressive of the exaltation, dignity, power, and authority of the Messiah; and of an honour done to him, which was never granted to the angels, nor to any mere man:

till I make thine enemies thy footstool;

till all the enemies of him, and his people, are subdued under him; carnal professors, as the Pharisees, and profane sinners, who neither of them would have him to rule over them; the world, the devil, antichrist, and all the powers of darkness, and the last enemy, death itself. That these words were spoken of the Messiah, and therefore pertinently cited, and properly applied to him, by Jesus, is evident from the silence of the Pharisees; for had it not been the generally received sense of the Jewish church, they would, at once, have objected it to him; which might, in some measure, have relieved them under that distress, into which they were brought by this passage proposed unto them: but by their silence they acknowledged, that the Psalm was wrote by David; that it was wrote by him under the inspiration of the Spirit of God; and that the Messiah was the subject of it. And the same is owned by some of their doctors, ancient, and modern.

"Says R. Joden, in the name of R. Chijah, in time to come the holy blessed God will cause the king Messiah to sit at his right hand; as it is said, "the Lord said unto my Lord", &c. ¹¹⁸⁰."

And the same says, R. Berachiah, in the name of R. Levi, elsewhere ¹¹⁸¹. And, says, another of their writers ¹¹⁸²,

"we do not find any man, or prophet, whose birth

¹¹⁸⁰ Midrash Tillira in Psal. xviii. 35. apud Galatin. de Cath. ver. arcan. l. 8. c. 24.

¹¹⁸¹ R. Moses Hadarsan in Gen. xviii. 1. apud ib.

¹¹⁸² R. Isaac Arama in Gen. xlvi. 6. spud ib. l. 3. c. 17.

was prophesied of before the birth of his father and mother, but Messiah our righteousness; and of him it is intimated, "from the womb of the morning", &c. i.e. before the womb of her that bore thee was created, thy birth was prophesied of: and this these words respect, "before the sun, his name is Yinnon", Ps 72:17 i, e. before the creation of the sun, the name of our Messiah was strong and firm, and he shall sit at the right hand of God; and this is what is said, "sit at my right hand".

In some writings of the Jews, esteemed by them, very ancient ¹¹⁸³, the "Adon" or Lord, to whom these words are spoken, is interpreted of Messiah ben Joseph, whom they make to sit at the right hand of Abraham; which, though a false interpretation of the words, carries in it some marks and traces of the ancient sense of them: yea, even some of the more modern Jews ¹¹⁸⁴ have owned, that they belong to the Messiah, and apply them to him. Though others, observing what confusion their forefathers were thrown into by Jesus, and what improvement his followers have made of this sense of the words since, have quitted it, and introduced strange and foreign ones. Some ¹¹⁸⁵ of them would have Abraham the patriarch to be the subject of this Psalm; and that it was composed either by Melchizedek or by Eliezer, the servant of Abraham; or by David, on account of the victory Abraham obtained over the four kings, in rescuing his kinsman Lot: but Melchizedek could not be the author of it, because he was a far greater person than Abraham; he blessed him, and took tithes of him, and therefore would not call him Lord. Eliezer might indeed, as being his servant; but then he could not assign to him a seat at the right hand of God, or say of him, that he had an everlasting priesthood, after the order of Melchizedek: and though the Psalm was composed by David, yet not on the above account, for the same reasons. Nor is David the subject of it, as others {m} have affirmed; for it cannot be thought that David would say this of himself, or call himself his Lord, which this sense of the words makes him to do: and whereas others of them say, that it was wrote by one of the singers concerning him; it may be replied, that the title declares the contrary: besides, David is not ascended into heaven,

¹¹⁸³ Zohar in Num. fol. 99. 2. & Raya Mehimna, in ib. in Gen. fol. 37. 3.

¹¹⁸⁴ R. Saadiah Gaon in Dan. vii. 13. Nachman. disp. cure Paulo. p. 36, 55.

¹¹⁸⁵ Zohar in Gen. fol. 60. 3. Jarchi in Psal. cx. 1. Vet. Nizzachon, p. 179, 180.

nor is he set down at the right hand of God, nor had he any thing to do with the priesthood, much less was he a priest after the order of Melchizedek, and that for ever: but all is true of the Messiah Jesus, of whose kingdom and priesthood, sufferings, and exaltation, conquest of his enemies, and success of his Gospel, this whole Psalm is a very plain and manifest prophecy

Matthew 22:45

Ver. 45. **If David then call him Lord,**

That is, the Messiah, which is taken for granted, nor could the Pharisees deny it,

how is he his son?

The question is to be answered upon true and just notions of the Messiah, but unanswerable upon the principles of the Pharisees; who expected the Messiah only as a mere man, that should be of the seed of David, and so his son; and should sit upon his throne, and be a prosperous and victorious prince, and deliver them out of the hands of their temporal enemies: they were able to make answer to the question, separately considered, as that he should be of the lineage and house of David; should lineally descend from him, be of his family, one of his offspring and posterity, and so be properly and naturally his son; but how he could be so, consistent with his being David's Lord, puzzled them. Had they understood and owned the proper divinity of the Messiah, they might have answered, that as he was God, he was David's Lord, his maker, and his king; and, as man, was David's son, and so both his root and offspring; and this our Lord meant to bring them to a confession of, or put them to confusion and silence, which was the consequence.

Matthew 22:46

Ver. 46. **And no man was able to answer him a word,**

They saw the dilemma they were reduced to, either to acknowledge the deity of the Messiah, or confess their ignorance; and neither of them they cared to do, and therefore judged it to be the wisest part to be silent. Neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions: neither Pharisees nor Sadducees, for the same is observed by Luke 20:40 of the Sadducees particularly, and was true of all sorts, and every sect, of men among them: and thus our Lord was freed from a cavilling, captious, and troublesome generation of men, from this time forward, to the time of his sufferings, which was not very long after; for this was the third day before the passover, as appears from Mt 26:1.

Matthew Chapter 23

Matthew 23:1

Ver. 1. **Then spake Jesus to the multitude,**

To the common people that were about him in the temple; the high priests and elders, Scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees, having left him, being all nonplussed and silenced by him: and now, lest on the one hand, the people seeing the ignorance and errors of these men detected by Christ, should be tempted to conclude there was nothing in religion, and to neglect the word and worship of God, on account of the concern these men had in it; and on the other hand, because of their great authority and influence, being in Moses's chair, lest the people should be led into bad principles and practices by them, he directs them in what they should observe them, and in what not: that they were not altogether to be rejected, nor in everything to be attended to; and warns them against their ostentation, pride, hypocrisy, covetousness, and cruelty; and, at the same time, removes an objection against himself, proving that he was no enemy to Moses, and the law, rightly explained and practised:

and to his disciples;

not only the twelve, but to all that believed in him, and were followers of him.

Matthew 23:2

Ver. 2. **Saying, the Scribes and Pharisees,**

The Persic version adds, the priests: but Christ does not here speak of the sanhedrim, or grand council of the nation, and of their legislative power; but of those that were the teachers of the people, and the interpreters of the law; and of those, who, though they corrupted the word with their glosses and traditions, yet retained some truth, and at least came nearer truth, than the Sadducees; who therefore are omitted, and only Scribes and Pharisees mentioned, who gave the literal and traditional sense of the Scriptures; of whom he says, they

sit in Moses's seat:

not that they were his successors in his office as a legislator and mediator; though the Persic version reads it, "sit in the place and chair of Moses"; but they read his law, and explained it to the people: this post and place, as yet, they kept in the office they were, and were to continue; and the people were to regard them so far as they spoke consistent with the law, until it had its full accomplishment in Christ. The allusion is not to the chairs in which the sanhedrim sat in trying and determining causes, but to those in which the doctors sat when they expounded the law; for though they stood up when they read the law, or the prophets, they sat down when they preached

out of them: this custom of the synagogue was observed by our Lord; see Luke 4:16.

Matthew 23:3

Ver. 3. **All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe,**

This must be restrained to things that were agreeable to the chair of Moses, in which they sat, to the law of Moses, which they read and explained, to other parts of Scripture and truth in general; for otherwise many of their glosses and traditions were repugnant to the law, and ought not to be observed, as appears from Mt 5:1. The word "observe", in this clause, is omitted by the Vulgate Latin, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions, and in Munster's Hebrew Gospel; and Beza says, it is wanting in one ancient copy, but is in others; and is retained in the Syriac and Persic versions

that observe and do;

hearken to what they say, give diligent heed unto it, take notice of it, and act according to it:

but do not ye after their works;

let their doctrine be the rule of your lives, so far as it agrees with the law of Moses; but let not their actions be drawn into an example by you; conform to their instructions, but do not imitate their practices:

for they say, and do not;

they talk of good works, but do none; they bid others do them, but do not practise them themselves; they very strictly and severely enjoin them on others, but are very careless themselves to observe them; and of this the Jews are so conscious, that they suggest the same doctrine¹¹⁸⁶.

"The daughter of Ahar (a wicked man) came before Rabbi; she said to him, Rabbi, supply me with the necessaries of life: he replied to her, daughter, who art thou? she answered him, the daughter of Ahar: he said to her, is there any of his seed in the world? for lo! it is written, Job 18:19. "He shall neither have son, nor nephew, among his people, nor any remaining, in his dwellings": she replied to him, זכור לחורתי ואל תזכור משׁי, "remember his law, or doctrine, but do not remember his works."--Says R. Jochanan, what is that which is written, Mal 2:7. "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts." If the doctor is like to an angel, or messenger of the Lord of hosts, they should seek the law at his mouth; and if not, they should not seek

1186 T. Bab. Chagiga, fol. 15. 2.

the law at his mouth. Says Resh Lekish, R. Meir found and explained that Scripture, Pr 22:17. "Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart to my knowledge": to their knowledge it is not said, but to my knowledge. R. Chanina says, hence, Ps 45:10. "Hearken, O daughter! and consider, incline thine ear, forget thine own people, and thy father's house": on which the gloss is, forget their works, and do not learn them: he that knows how to take care not to learn their works, may learn the law from their mouths."

--And a little after,

"the disciples of the wise men are like to a nut; as a nut, though it is defiled with mire and filth, yet that which is within it is not to be rejected; so a scholar, or a disciple of a wise man, though he act wickedly, his law, or doctrine, is not to be despised."

Good doctrine is not the worse for being taught by bad men; nor are good works to be slighted and neglected, because they are not done by all that teach them; but it must be owned that examples are very useful and forcible, and practice greatly recommends doctrine; and it is to be wished, that they both always went together.

Matthew 23:4

Ver. 4. **For they bind heavy burdens,**

Meaning not the rites and ceremonies of the law of Moses, circumcision, and other rituals, which obliged to the keeping of the whole law, which was a yoke men were not able to bear; but the traditions of the elders, which the Scribes and Pharisees were very tenacious of, and very severely enjoined the observance of, and are called their "heavy" things¹¹⁸⁷.

"It is a tradition of R. Ishmael, there are in the words of the law, that, which is bound or forbidden, and that which is loose or free; and there are in them light things, and there are in them heavy things; but the words of the Scribes, כבולין המורין הן, "all of them are heavy"."

And a little after,

"the words of the elders, המורין, "are heavier" than the words of the prophets."

Hence frequent mention is made of

"the light things of the school of Shammai, ומזומרי,

1187 T. Hieros. Peracot, fol. 3. 2.

“and of the heavy things of the school of Hillel”¹¹⁸⁸

two famous doctors, heads of two universities, in being in Christ’s time: these are also called, מכות פרושי, “the blows, or wounds of the Pharisees”¹¹⁸⁹; not as Barteno-ra explains them, the wounds they gave themselves, to show their humility; or which they received, by beating their heads against the wall, walking with their eyes shut, that they might not look upon women, under a pretence of great chastity; but, as Maimonides says, these are their additions and heavy things, which they add to the law. Now the binding of these heavy things, means the imposing them on men, obliging them to observe them very strictly, under great penalties, should they omit them. The allusion is, to those frequent sayings in use among them, such a thing is “bound”, and such a thing is loosed; such a “Rabbi binds”, and such an one looses; that is, forbids, or allows of such and such things; See Gill on “Mt 16:19”.

and grievous to be borne.

This clause is left out in the Syriac, Arabic, Persic, and Ethiopic versions; but is in all the Greek copies, and serves to illustrate and aggravate the burdensome rites and institutions of these people: and

lay them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers:

the sense is, not that they were so rigid and hard-hearted, that they would not move a finger to remove these burdens from the shoulders of men, or ease them in the least degree, or dispense with their performance of them in the least measure, upon any consideration, though this also was true in many respects; but that they were so slothful and indolent themselves, that though they strictly enjoined the observance of their numerous and unwritten traditions on the people, yet in many cases, where they could without public notice, they neglected them themselves, or at least, made them lighter and easier to them, as in their fastings, &c. In the Misna¹¹⁹⁰, mention is made of “a crafty wicked man”, along with a woman Pharisee, and the blows of the Pharisees before spoken of; and in the Gemara¹¹⁹¹, is explained by R. Hona, of one,

“that makes things “light” for himself, and makes

1188 T. Hieros. Sota, fol. 19. 2. Yom Tob. fol. 60. 2. & Berncot, fol. 3. 2.

1189 Misn. Sota, c. 3. sect. 4.

1190 Ubi supra. (Misn. Sota, c. 3. sect. 4.)

1191 T. Bab. Sota, fol. 21. 2.

them “heavy” for others.”

Such crafty wicked men were Scribes and Pharisees; though R. Meir pretended that he made things “light” to others and “heavy” to himself¹¹⁹².

Matthew 23:5

Ver. 5. **But all their works they do for to be seen of men,**

All their prayers, alms deeds, and fastings, were all done in a public manner, that men might behold them, and they might have applause and glory from them: they sought neither the glory of God, nor the good of their fellow creatures, nor any spiritual advantage and pleasure to themselves, in their performances; they neither attended to moral duties, nor ceremonious rites, nor the traditions of their fathers, any further than they could be seen by men in them, and keep up their credit and esteem among them. Hence,

they make broad their phylacteries:

these were four sections of the law, wrote on parchments, folded up in the skin of a clean beast, and tied to the head and hand. The four sections were these following, viz. the “first”, was Ex 13:2 the “second”, was Ex 13:11 the “third”, was De 6:4 the “fourth”, was De 11:13. Those that were for the head, were written and rolled up separately, and put in four distinct places, in one skin, which was fastened with strings to the crown of the head, towards the face, about the place where the hair ends, and where an infant’s brain is tender; and they took care to place them in the middle, that so they might be between the eyes. Those that were for the hand, were written in four columns, on one parchment, which being rolled up, was fastened to the inside of the left arm, where it is fleshy, between the shoulder and the elbow, that so it might be over against the heart¹¹⁹³. These, they imagined, were commanded them by God, in

Ex 13:16 whereas the sense of these passages only is, that the goodness of God in delivering them out of Egypt, and the words of the law, should be continually before them, in their minds and memories, as if they had tokens on their hands, and frontlets between their eyes; but they understood them literally, and observed them in the above manner. These the Jews call “Tephillin”, because they use them in time of prayer, and look upon them as useful, to put them in mind of that duty:

1192 T. Hieros. Beracot, fol. 3. 1.

1193 Targ. Jon. Jarchi, & Baal Hatturim in Exod. xiii. 16. & Deut. vi. 8. Maimon. Hilch. Tephillin, c. 1. sect. 1. & c. 2. sect. 2. & c. 3. sect. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. & c. 4. sect. 1, 2.

they are here called “phylacteries”, because they thought they kept them in the fear of God, preserved in them the memory of the law, and them from sin; yea, from evil spirits, and diseases of the body. They imagined there was a great deal of holiness in, and valued themselves much upon the use of them¹¹⁹⁴; and the Pharisees, because they would be thought to be more holy and religious, and more observant of the law than others, wore these things broader than the rest of the people;

and enlarge the borders of their garments.

These were the fringes which they put upon the borders of their garments, and on them a ribbon of blue, to put them in mind of the commandments, to obey them, Nu 15:38. The observance of this law is of so much consequence with the Jews, that they make all the commandments to depend on it¹¹⁹⁵; and say, that it is equal to them all, and that he that is guilty of the breach of it, is worthy of death¹¹⁹⁶: they ascribe the like virtue to these fringes, as to their phylacteries, and think themselves much the better for the wearing them; and the Pharisees, because they would appear with a greater air of sanctity and devotion than others, made their’s larger. We¹¹⁹⁷ read of one Ben Tzitzith Hacceseth, a man of this complexion, who was so called, because his התחזות, or fringes, were drawn upon, a pillow; and there are some that say, that the pillow was bore between the great men of Rome: it was drawn after him, not upon the ground, but upon a cloth or tapestry, and the train supported by noblemen, as is pretended. This was one of those, that enlarged the התחזות, or fringes, beyond the ordinary size; hence Mark calls it, “long clothing.”

Matthew 23:6

Ver. 6. **And love the uppermost rooms at feasts,**

Or the first and chief places to sit, or lie down on, at ordinary meals, and especially at large entertainments, where the great ones sat, as in 1Sa 9:22 where Jarchi on the place observes, that by the manner of their sitting, it was known who was the greatest; and this the Scribes and Pharisees affected. With the Romans, the most honourable place was at the upper end of the table: some think it was more honourable to sit in the middle, but the master of the feast sat at the lower end; and to senior men, and who were venerable with age, or excelled in

1194 Maimon. ib. c. 4. sect. 25, 26. Moses Kotsensis Mitzvot Tora, pr. affirm. 3. 23. Targ. in Cant. viii. 3.

1195 Maimon. Hilch. Tzitzith, c. 3. sect. 12.

1196 T. Bab. Nedarim, fol. 25, 1. Shebuot, fol. 29. 1. & Menachot, fol. 43. 2.

1197 T. Bab. Gittin, fol. 56. 1.

prudence and authority, the first sitting down, and the more honourable place, were given; and when the table was taken away, they used to rise first¹¹⁹⁸: the middle place was the more honourable with the Numidians¹¹⁹⁹, and so it seems to be with the Romans¹²⁰⁰, and also with the Jews; and this the Scribes and Pharisees loved, desired, sought for, and were pleased if they had not it. It is said¹²⁰¹ of Simeon ben Shetach, a noted Pharisee, about, or rather before the time of Christ, that having fled upon a certain account from king Jannai, he sent for him, and when he came,

“he sat himself between the king and the queen: the king said to him, why dost thou mock me? he replied to him, I do not mock thee, thou hast riches and I have learning, as it is written, “Wisdom is a defence, and money is a defence”, Ec 7:12. He said to him, but why dost thou “sit between the king and queen?” He replied, in the book of Ben Sira, it is written, “Exalt her and she shall promote thee, and cause thee to sit among princes.” He ordered to give him a cup, that he might ask a blessing; he took the cup and said, blessed be the food that Jannai and his friends eat.”

Thus on account of their wisdom and learning, they thought they had a right to take the upper hand of kings themselves:

and the chief seats in the synagogues;

for these were different; the seats of the senior men were turned towards the people, and the backs of them were towards the ark or chest, in which the holy books were put; and these seem to be what the Scribes and Pharisees coveted, that they might be in the full view of the people. And so says Maimonides¹²⁰², “How do the people sit in the synagogues?”

“The elders sit, i.e. first, and their faces are towards the people, and their backs are to the temple, or holy place; and all the people sit in rows, and the faces of one row are to the backs of the row that is before them; so that the faces of all the people are to the holy place, and to the elders,

1198 Alex. ab Alex. Genial Dier. l. 5. c. 21.

1199 Sallust. Bell. Jugurth. p. 45.

1200 Vid. Alstorph. de lect. vet. p. 117. Minut. Felix, p. 3, 4.

1201 T. Hieros. Betacot, fol. 11. 2. Beresh. Rabba, sect. 91. fol. 78. 4.

1202 Hilchot Tephilla, c. 11. sect. 4.

and to the ark.”

Matthew 23:7

Ver. 7. **And greetings in the markets,**

They used to stroll about the markets, being public places, where there was a great concourse of people, on purpose to be taken notice of before multitudes, with singular marks of respect; as stretching out the hand, uncovering the head, and bowing the knee:

and to be called of men Rabbi,

Rabbi; because of their great authority, and largeness of their knowledge: the repetition of the word Rabbi, is not made in the Vulgate Latin, nor in the Syriac, Arabic, Persic, and Ethiopic versions, nor in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel, but is in all the Greek copies, and very justly; since it was usual in the salutations of them, to double the word. It is reported ¹²⁰³ of R. Eleazar ben Simeon, of Migdal Gedur, that having reproached a deformed man he met in the road; when he came to the city where the man lived,

“the citizens came out to meet him, and said to him, peace be upon thee, רבי רבי מורי מורי, “Rabbi, Rabbi, Master, Master”; he (Eleazar) said to them, who do you call “Rabbi, Rabbi?” They replied to him, he who followed thee: he said unto them, if this be a Rabbi, let there not be many such in Israel.”

The Jews pretend, that king Jehoshaphat used to salute the doctors with these titles; though they forget that they were not in use in his time, as will be hereafter observed: they say ¹²⁰⁴,

“whenever he saw a disciple of the wise men, he rose from his throne, and embraced and kissed him, and called him, אבי רבי רבי מורי מורי, “Father, Father, Rabbi, Rabbi, Master, Master”.

Where you have the three different words used by our Lord in this and the following verses, by which these men loved to be called, and he inveighed against; nay, they not only suggest, that kings gave them these honourable titles, and they expected them from them, but even they liked to be called kings themselves. It is said ¹²⁰⁵ of R. Hona arid R. Chasda, that as they were sitting together, one passed by them,

“and said to them, “peace be to you kings”, מלכי שלום ליכי, “peace be to you kings”: they said to

¹²⁰³ T. Bab. Taanith, fol. 20. 2.

¹²⁰⁴ T. Bab. Maccot, fol. 24. 1. & Cetubot, fol. 103. 2.

¹²⁰⁵ T. Bab. Gittin, fol. 62. 1.

him, from whence does it appear to thee, that the Rabbins are called kings? He replied to them, from what is written, “by me kings reign”, &c. They said to him, from whence hast thou it, that we are to double or repeat peace, or salutation to kings? He answered them, that R. Judah said, that Rab said from hence, 1Ch 12:18. “Then the spirit came upon Amasai”, &c.”

This title began but to be in use in the time of our Lord, or a very little while before: none of the prophets had it, nor Ezra the Scribe, nor the men of the great synagogue, nor Simeon the Just, the last of them; nor Antigonus, a man of Socho, a disciple of his: and it is observed by the Jews themselves ¹²⁰⁶, that

“the five couple are never called by the name of Rabban, nor by the name of Rabbi, only by their own name.”

By whom are meant, Joseph ben Joezer, and Joseph ben Jochanan; Joshua ben Perachia, said to be the master of Jesus of Nazareth, and Nittai the Arbelite; Judah ben Tabai, and Simeon ben Shetach; Shemaiah and Abtalion; Hillell and Shammai. The sons, or disciples of the two last, first took these titles. Rabban Simeon, the son of Hillell, thought by some to be the same Simeon that had Christ in his arms, is ¹²⁰⁷ said to be the first that was called by this name; and it is also observed by them ¹²⁰⁸, that Rabban was a name of greater honour than Rabbi, or Rab, and that Rabbi was more honourable than Rab; and to be called by a man’s own name, was more honourable than any of them. The Karaite Jews make much the same complaint, and give much the same account of the pride and vanity of the Rabbinical doctors, as Christ here does; for so one of them says ¹²⁰⁹;

“The Karaites do not use to act according to the custom of the wise men among the Rabbans, to make to themselves gods of silver, and guides of gold, with this view, br arqhl, “to be called Rab”; and also to gather wealth and food to fulness, &c.”

Matthew 23:8

Ver. 8. **But be not ye called Rabbi,**

Do not be ambitious of any such title, fond of it, or

¹²⁰⁶ Ganz. Tzemach David, par. 1. fol. 21. 1.

¹²⁰⁷ Ganz. Tzemach David, par. 1. fol. 25. 1.

¹²⁰⁸ lb.

¹²⁰⁹ Eliahu Adderet, c. 6. apud Trigland. de. Sect. Kar. c. 10. p. 164.

affect it, or be elated with it, should it be given you; nor look upon yourselves as men of power and authority over others; as having the dominion over men’s faith, a power to make laws for others, impose them in a magisterial way, and bind and loose men’s consciences at pleasure, as these men do:

for one is your master, even Christ;

meaning himself, the true Messiah, the head of the church, King of saints, and Lord of all; who had all power in heaven and in earth, to make laws, appoint ordinances, and oblige men to receive his doctrines, and obey his commands: the word “Christ”, is left out in the Vulgate Latin, the Syriac, Persic, and Ethiopic versions; but is in the Arabic version, and Munster’s Hebrew Gospel, and in all the ancient Greek copies Beza consulted, excepting two: no other indeed can be meant; he is the great Rabbi, and doctor, that is to be hearkened to, and the master we are all to obey:

and all ye are brethren;

not merely as the descendants of Adam, but as being in a spiritual relation, the children of God, and disciples of Christ, and so have no superiority one over another: this may regard the disciples, both as believers and Christians, partakers of the same grace, and standing in the same relation to God, Christ, and one another, and having an equal right to the same privileges: and as apostles and ministers, one as such, no, not Peter, having no pre-eminence over the other, having the same commission, doctrine, and authority, one as the other.

Matthew 23:9

Ver. 9. **And call no man your father upon the earth,**

Not but that children may, and should call their natural parents, fathers; and such who have been instrumental in the conversion of souls, may be rightly called by them their spiritual fathers; as servants and scholars also, may call those that are over them, and instruct them, their masters: our Lord does not mean, by any of these expressions, to set aside all names and titles, of natural and civil distinction among men, but only to reject all such names and titles, as are used to signify an authoritative power over men’s consciences, in matters of faith and obedience; in which, God and Christ are only to be attended to. Christ’s sense is, that he would have his disciples not fond of any titles of honour at all; and much less assume an authority over men, as if they were to depend on them, as the founders of the Christian religion, the authors of its doctrines and ordinances; and to take that honour to themselves, which did not belong

to them; nor even choose to be called by such names, as would lead people to entertain too high an opinion of them, and take off of their dependence on God the Father, and himself, as these titles the Scribes and Pharisees loved to be called by, did: and who were called not only by the name of Rabbi, but Abba, “Father”, also: hence we read of Abba Saul, or “Father” Saul ¹²¹⁰; Abba Jose ben Jochanan, a man of Jerusalem ¹²¹¹, Abba Chanan ¹²¹², Abba Chelphetha, a man of the village of Hananiah ¹²¹³; Abba Gorion ¹²¹⁴, and others; and this name was

לשון כבוד כמו רבי, “a name of honour, even as Rabbi” ¹²¹⁵, and of great authority: the wise men are said to be אבות הכל, “the fathers of all” ¹²¹⁶, to whom all gave heed, and upon whom all depended, as so many oracles. There is a whole treatise in their Misna, called Pirke Abot, which contains some of the oracles, and peculiar sayings of these “fathers”, the Misnic doctors, and which are preferred to the writings of Moses, and the prophets. In this sense, and upon this score, our Lord inveighs against them, and cautions his disciples against giving or taking all such titles, in such sense. “For one is your Father, which is in heaven”; who is so, both by creation and adoption, and is possessed of all paternal authority; and is to be honoured and obeyed by all; from whom all wisdom and knowledge is derived, and who has the care and government of all in heaven and in earth.

Matthew 23:10

Ver. 10. **Neither be ye called masters,**

Or guides and leaders; not but that, the ministers of the word are in a sense such; it is their business to lead and direct souls to Christ, to guide their feet in the way of peace, and to go before them, as examples to them, in word, in conversation, faith, and purity; but then they are to guide them according to the word of God, and not their own dictates; and teach them to observe the rules, and obey the ordinances of Christ, and not what are of their own inventing and prescribing; and to enforce the authority of their great Lord and Master, and not their own; and direct men to a dependence on Christ, as head of the church, who is the one Lord, as his faith is one, and his baptism one also: “for one is your master, even

¹²¹⁰ Pirke Abot, c. 2. sect. 8.

¹²¹¹ T. Bab. Yebamot, fol. 53. 2.

¹²¹² Ib. fol. 64. 1.

¹²¹³ T. Bab. Bava Metzia, fol. 94. 1. & Bava Bathra. fol. 56. 2.

¹²¹⁴ Massech Sopherim, c. 15. sect. 10.

¹²¹⁵ Juchasiu, fol. 31. 2. & 61. 2.

¹²¹⁶ Maimon. in Misn. Peah, c. 1. sect. 1.

Christ”; which is said before, in Mt 23:8 but being a matter of so much importance to the honour of Christ, and men being so apt to set up for masters themselves, in opposition to him, or in conjunction with him, or above him, it was necessary to repeat it; for in an authoritative sense he is the one, and only master of the assemblies.

Matthew 23:11

Ver. 11. **But he that is greatest among you,**

Either who really is so, having more grace, and greater gifts bestowed upon him, than others; which doubtless was the case of some of the disciples, or who desired to be the greatest, was ambitious of, and affected a superiority over others, and to be in the highest post and place, as it is certain some of them did. This was what they were often contending about among themselves, who should be greatest: and Christ here seems to have regard to that vain spirit, which appeared among them; and his view is, to check and restrain it: “shall be your servant”; or “let him be your servant”. Service is the way to honour; he that would be most esteemed ought to do the most work; and the man that has the most grace, and the greatest gifts, ought to employ them for the use and benefit of others; See Gill on “Mt 20:27”.

Matthew 23:12

Ver. 12. **And whosoever shall exalt himself,**

Above his fellow Christians, or fellow ministers, by entertaining too high an opinion of himself, by boasting of his gifts, as preferable to others, and as if he had not received them; by assuming, or eagerly coveting titles of honour among men, or by affecting honour that do not belong to him, or, abusing what he has: “shall be abased”; or humbled by God, or men, or both; such shall lose the honour they have, and come greatly short of what they are ambitious of; they shall fall into disgrace with men, and are abominable in the sight of God: “and he that shall humble himself”; by entertaining low thoughts, and a mean opinion of himself, behaving modestly among men; not being elated with his gifts, but acknowledging that they are owing to the grace and goodness of God; and using them in an humble manner, for the advantage of others; not coveting honour from men, nor lifted up with what is conferred on him: “shall be exalted”; by God, or men, or both; if not in this world, yet in the world to come: and indeed, generally speaking, such modest, humble, persons, are most esteemed among men; and God gives more grace unto them, and will at last give them glory. This is a saying, often used by our Lord on different accounts, both with respect to

his disciples, for their instruction, and with regard to the scribes and Pharisees, for their mortification; see Luke 14:11. It seems to be a proverbial expression, and much in use among the Jews: it is said in so many words in the Talmud ¹²¹⁷, as here;

“whosoever shall humble himself, the holy blessed God shall exalt him; and whosoever shall exalt himself, the holy blessed God shall humble him.”

Matthew 23:13

Ver. 13. **But woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites,**

It seems from hence, that the Scribes and Pharisees had not left him, at least not all of them, notwithstanding the confusion they were thrown into; but were still about him, observing what he said to the people, and watching an opportunity to take every advantage against him; whom he addresses in a very awful manner, calling them “hypocrites”, as he truly might; for they were such, both to God and men: he had detected them already before the people, in several instances of hypocrisy; and gives sufficient reasons, in the following part of this chapter, to support the character, he gives of them, and his charge against them; denouncing a woe upon them in this world, and that which is to come, no less than eight times; expressing his abhorrence of their wickedness, his commiseration of their case, and their certain destruction: “for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men”: not eternal life and happiness, the entrance into which can neither be opened nor shut by men: those whom God determines to bring thither, shall have an entrance abundantly ministered to them, in spite of the opposition of men and devils; though these men did all that in them lay, to hinder persons enjoying everlasting glory. But the Gospel dispensation is here meant, which opened by the ministry of John the Baptist, Christ and his disciples, and which the Scribes and Pharisees did all they could to shut; by discouraging the preaching of the Gospel, and the administration of ordinances, in which this dispensation lay; and prejudicing the minds of men against it, that they might not embrace the doctrines of it, nor submit to its ordinances: they, by their office, ought to have opened and explained the Scriptures, the prophecies of the Old Testament relating to the Messiah, and led the people into a knowledge of the mysteries of his kingdom, and encouraged them to enter into this new state of things; which, according to the true intent of Scripture, was to take place, and now did: but instead

1217

of this, they shut up the Scriptures, took away the key of knowledge, and laid it aside; and darkened the Scriptures by their false glosses, and obliged the people to observe the traditions of the elders, and which they call hrwtl gyo, “an hedge for the law” ¹²¹⁸; to which Beza thinks, the allusion is here, and by which men were shut up, and kept from the true knowledge both of law and Gospel:

for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in:

they neither believed in the Messiah themselves, nor embraced the doctrines relating to his person and office: have any of the Pharisees believed on him? No; they received him not, they rejected him, and also the counsel of God, against themselves, not being baptized with the baptism of John, the forerunner of Christ; nor would they suffer others, that were inclined to profess their faith in him, and be baptized, to do it; but discouraged them all they could, by their reproachful treatment of the person, miracles, and ministry of Christ, and by their threatenings and menaces, and by their excommunications of such as made a confession of him.

Matthew 23:14

Ver. 14. **Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites,**

The same character is given as before, and the same woe denounced, and a fresh reason given of it:

for ye devour widows’ houses;

that is, the goods in the houses of such as were left with fatherless children, and but little to support them; who being left alone, and none to advise them, and being weak, and prone to superstition; these greedy dogs, as Isaiah calls them, who could never have enough, easily imposed upon them, wormed them out of all their substance, stripped them bare of the necessaries of life, prevailed on them to sell their houses and goods, and bestow them on them; or got their little estates into their hands, pretending to take care, and dispose of them for them, to their advantage:

and for a pretence make long prayers:

as if they were very holy, good men; or pretended that the substance of these widows, which they got into their hands, was for their long prayers for them; or they made long prayers for them in return for their substance. Maimonides ¹²¹⁹ says, that

“the ancient saints, or good men, used to stay an hour before prayer, and an hour after prayer, hev

1218 Pirke Abot, c. 1. sect. 1.

1219 Hilch. Tephillah, c. 4. sect. 16.

וּמְאֵרֵיכָם בַּתְּפִלָּה and “prolonged”, or “held an hour in prayer”:

and this being three times a day, nine hours every day, as is observed in the Talmud ¹²²⁰, were spent in this manner; and on this account they got the character of very devout and religious men, and hereby covered all their avarice, rapine, and oppression of the poor: but God will not be mocked;

therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation;

both on account of their plundering and distressing the poor, the widows, and the fatherless; and also because of their hypocrisy in doing this under the cover of religion and holiness. Hence it appears, that there are degrees of punishment in hell, and that hypocrites, and all such who oppress the poor, under the mask of godliness, supposing gain to be that, will be partakers of the greatest degree of it. In Munster’s Hebrew Gospel it is called מִשְׁפַּט אֲרוּכָה, “a long judgment”, or “damnation”, in allusion to their long prayers: and is the very reverse of what they expect on account of them: they say ¹²²¹

“three things prolong a man’s days and years, הַמְאֵרֵיכָם בַּתְּפִלָּה, “he that is long in his prayer”

is the first mentioned; and he that is long at his prayer, it is an excellency, they say; but instead of a long and happy life, he shall have a long damnation. This verse is left out in some copies, and in others it stands before the former; in which order it is read in the Syriac, Arabic, Persian, and Ethiopic versions.

Matthew 23:15

Ver. 15. **Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites,**

The same character, and woe, are still continued, and a new reason added, confirming the justness of them, in order to awaken and convince them, or, however, to caution the people against them:

for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; that is, to the Jewish religion, and their particular sect. There were two sorts of proselytes among them; one was called bvwt rg, “a proselyte of the gate”, one that might dwell in any of their towns, and cities, and who is thus described ¹²²²;

“Who is a proselyte of the gate? whosoever takes upon him, before three neighbours, that he will not commit idolatry. R. Meir and the wise men

1220 T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 32. 2.

1221 Ib. fol. 54. 2.

1222 T. Bab. Avoda Zara, fol. 64. 2.

say, whosoever takes upon him the seven precepts which the sons of Noah took upon them: others say, these do not come into the general rule of a proselyte of the gate: who is then a proselyte of the gate? this is a proselyte, that eats what dies of itself, but takes upon him to fulfil all the commandments said in the law, except that which forbids the eating of things that die of themselves.”

But the usual account of such an one is, who agrees to the seven precepts commanded the children of Noah¹²²³, which were these¹²²⁴; the first forbad idolatry, the second blasphemy, the third murder, the fourth uncleanness, the fifth theft, the sixth required judgment, or punishment on malefactors, the seventh forbad eating the member of any creature alive. The other proselyte was called qdu rg, “a proselyte of righteousness”; and he was one that submitted to circumcision¹²²⁵, and the rest of the ceremonies of the law; and was in all respects as an Israelite himself; and of this sort is the text to be understood. The Ethiopic version reads the words, “baptize one proselyte, and when he is baptized”; referring to a custom among the Jews, who baptized; or dipped their proselytes in water, as well as circumcised them; about which there are great disputes in their writings; some alleging, that the dipping of them was necessary to the making them proselytes; others affirming, that it was not:

“a proselyte that is circumcised, and not dipped, dipped, and not circumcised, the whole follows after, or depends on circumcision, says R. Eliezer.”

R. Joshua says, even dipping delays it; (i.e. the want of it, hinders a man from being a proselyte;) but R. Joshua ben Levi says, it should go according to the tradition of Bar Kaphra; for the tradition of Bar Kaphra is,

“that he that is circumcised, and not dipped, lo! he is right; for there is no proselyte but what is dipped, because of the pollutions that happen to him¹²²⁶.”

And elsewhere¹²²⁷ this is debated in the following manner:

“a proselyte that is circumcised, and not dipped,

1223 Maimon. Hilch. Obede Cochabim, c. 10. sect. 6. & Maacalot Asurot, c. 11. sect. 7. & Issure Biah, c. 14. sect. 7.

1224 lb. Hilch. Melachim, c. 9. sect. 1.

1225 Zohar in Exod. fol. 36. 1.

1226 T. Hieros. Kiddushin, fol. 64. 4.

1227 T. Bab. Yebamot, fol. 46. 1, 2.

R. Eliezer says, lo! this is a proselyte; for so we find concerning our fathers, that they were circumcised, but not dipped. One that is dipped, and not circumcised, R. Joshua says, lo! this is a proselyte; for so we find concerning our mothers, that they were dipped, but not circumcised. The wise men say, one that is dipped, and not circumcised, or circumcised, and not dipped, is no proselyte, until he is both circumcised and dipped.”

So the dispute ended, and it became a settled point, that one should never be reckoned a proselyte, unless he was both circumcised and dipped. And after this it became customary to receive proselytes by circumcision, dipping, and sacrifice; and the manner was this¹²²⁸:

“a stranger that comes to be made a proselyte at this time, they say unto him, what dost thou see, that thou comest to be made a proselyte? dost thou not know that the Israelites at this time are miserable, banished, drove about, and plundered, and chastisements come upon them? If he says, I know this, but it does not satisfy me, they receive him immediately, and make known some of the light commands, and some of the heavy commands to him; and they acquaint him with the business gleanings, the forgotten sheaf, the corner of the field left standing, and the poor’s tithe: they also inform him of the penalties of the commands, and say unto him, know thou, that before thou camest into this way, thou didst eat fat, and was not punished with cutting off; thou didst profane the sabbath, and was not punished with stoning? but now if thou eatest fat, thou wilt be punished with cutting off; and if thou profanest the sabbath, thou wilt be punished with stoning: and as they inform him of the penalties of the precepts, so they acquaint him with the giving of the rewards of them; saying to him, know thou that the world to come is not made but for the righteous; and the Israelites at this time cannot receive neither much good, nor much punishment? but they do not multiply words, nor critically inquire of him; if he receives these things, they immediately circumcise him; and if there remain in him obstructions, hindering circumcision, they circumcise him a second time; and when he is healed they immediately dip him; and two disciples of the wise men stand over him, and

1228 lb. fol. 47. 1, 2.

acquaint him with some of the light commands, and some of the heavy commands; then he dips, and comes up, and is as an Israelite in all respects: if a woman, the women set her in water up to her neck, and two disciples of the wise men stand by her without, and inform her of some of the light commands, and some of the heavy commands.”

And, as Maimonides¹²²⁹ adds, who gives a larger account of this matter,

“she sits in the water, and after that dips herself before them; and they turn away their faces, and go out, so that they do not see her, when she comes out of the water.”

From all which it appears, that this affair was moved after our Lord’s time; was not a settled point till a good while after; and is a custom that has obtained since the Jews were drove out of their own land; though they pretend to say it was an ancient practice of their fathers, of which they can give no sufficient proof; wherefore there could be no regard had to it in this text, and consequently the Ethiopic version of it is not a right one; nor can the dipping of proselytes by the Jews be what Christian baptism takes its rise from, or in any respect be modelled according to it, between which, in many things, there is a wide difference. Now the Jews were very diligent and industrious, which is meant by compassing of sea and land: they used all kinds of methods, ways and means, to gain such a point, and sometimes very wicked ones.

“Rabbenu Tam¹²³⁰ allowed a daughter of Israel to change her religion, and a stranger to lie with her, that she might confirm it, when he became a proselyte.”

And this they were so exceeding fond of, not out of any regard to the glory of God, or the good of the souls of men; nor did they really love the proselytes: and it is often said by them¹²³¹, that

“proselytes are hard or uneasy to Israel, as the itch or scab.”

The gloss says, because they were not expert in the commandments, and were the cause of punishment, and the Israelites were apt to imitate their works; but they coveted to make them, because hereby either they strengthened their own party, or filled their purses with

1229 Hilch. Issure Biah, c. 14. sect. 6.

1230 Piske Toseph. Cetubot, art. 7.

1231 T. Bab. Yebamot, fol. 47. 2. & 109. 2. Kiddushin, fol. 70. 2. & Nidda, fol. 13. 2.

their substance, or got applause and credit among the common people; for the making a proselyte was reckoned a very great action, and is ascribed to the patriarchs Abraham and Jacob, and made equal to creation¹²³².

“Says R. Eliezer, in the name of R. Jose ben Zimra, if all that come into the world were gathered together to create even one fly, they would not be able to put breath into it: but you will object what he saith, “the souls they made in Haran”, Ge 12:5, but these are the proselytes whom Abraham proselyted; but why does he say “made”, and not proselyted? to teach thee, that whoever brings near a stranger, and proselytes him, “is as if he created him”. You will say Abraham made proselytes, but not Sarah: the text is, “the souls which they made in Haran”: which he made is not written, but which they made: Abraham proselyted the men, and Sarah proselyted the women.”

And a little after;”

Jacob made proselytes, as it is written, Ge 35:2 “Jacob said unto his household”,

And in imitation of these they might be fond of making proselytes, but no further than their own interest was some way or other concerned:

and when he is made, ye make him two fold more the child of hell than yourselves;

for to their former errors in heathenism, some of which they might still retain, they added new ones, they received from them, equally as bad, and were but more and more deserving of hell, and even more than their masters; and besides, were trained up by them in the most bitter prejudices against Christ, and his Gospel; and many of them proved more violent persecutors of the followers of Christ, than the original Jews themselves: see Ac 15:5 Our Lord here seems to oppose a common notion and saying of their’s¹²³³, that when

”one was made a proselyte, he became entirely like a new born babe;”

but so far from being like one in innocence and harmlessness, that he became a child of hell, filled with wrath and malice, and fitted for destruction; and so opposes another notion of their’s, that hellfire has no power

1232 Bereshit Rabba, sect. 39. fol. 35. 1. & sect. 84. fol. 72. 3, 4.

1233 T. Bab. Yebamot, fol. 22. 1. & 48. 2. & 62. 1. & 97. 2. Maimon. Hilch. Issure Biah, c. 14. sect. 11. & Eduth, c. 13. sect. 2.

over their disciples, nor even over the transgressors of Israel ¹²³⁴: but they will find it, by experience, that neither their descent from Abraham, nor their learning, nor their religion, will save them from the devouring flames, which their sins have made them so deserving of, and so are Mnhyg ynb, “children of hell” ¹²³⁵; a Talmudic phrase; the meaning of which they understood well enough, and which was applicable to them, and more so to their proselytes; and that as owing to them, which was an aggravation of their own guilt and condemnation.

Matthew 23:16

Ver. 16. **Woe unto you, you blind guides,**

Meaning the same persons, the Scribes and Pharisees, as before, though not named, who pretended to be “guides of the blind”, Ro 2:19 but were them selves blind, and so very unfit to be guides of others; they were as they were born, ignorant of divine things, of God in Christ, of the true Messiah, of the true meaning of the Scriptures, of the spirituality of the law, and of the Gospel of Christ; and the way of salvation by him; and their minds were blinded by the God of this world, and with a greedy, and insatiable covetousness after the things of it, of which Christ here gives an instance:

which say, whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing;

meaning either that it was no sin to use such an oath, or it was not binding upon a man: he might choose whether he would abide by what he swore by the temple he would do; and thus they ignorantly, and wickedly encouraged vain swearing and perjury. It was usual with them to swear by the temple: take an instance or two.

”Says R. Jochanan ¹²³⁶, הַיְכָלָא, “by the temple”, it is in our hands; but what shall I do?”

The gloss upon it is;

”it is an oath by the temple of God, that it is in our power to reveal the illegitimacy of the families of the land of Israel.”

”Says R. Zechariah ben Hakatzab ¹²³⁷, הַמִּוֶּנֶן הַזֶּה, “by this habitation” (meaning the temple), her hand was not removed from my hand from the time the Gentiles entered into Jerusalem, to the time they went out.”

Jarchi and Bartenora’s note on it is, this is an oath. Again,

”says R. Simeon ben Gamaliel ¹²³⁸, הַמִּוֶּנֶן הַזֶּה, “by this habitation”; I will not rest this night until they (doves) are sold for pence apiece.”

The gloss on it is, “he swore by the sanctuary.”

But whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is guilty;

or is bound, or is a debtor, to make good his oath; he cannot be excused, but must be obliged to fulfil it; or if he does not, he is guilty of perjury. This is to be understood not of the gold that covered any part of the temple; nor of the golden vessels in it; but of the gold, or money, or gifts which were offered for the service of the temple: and the sense is, that whosoever swore by “Korban”, and that this, or that should be as “Korban”, he should not go back from it; he was obliged to give it. This showed the covetous disposition of these men, who made nothing of oaths that were sworn by the temple; but those that were made by the “Korban”, or the gifts of it, were binding, because their interest was in it; it was for their gain.

Matthew 23:17

Ver. 17. **Ye fools, and blind,**

That argue after so ridiculous a manner, that make use of such thin sophistry, that everybody may see through it; who must be stupid and sottish to the last degree, and their minds foolishly blinded with avarice; as to please and satisfy themselves: with so poor a distinction; that would by no means serve them, but make against them:

for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?

The temple, to be sure: for that was the seat of the divine majesty; built for him to dwell in, and in which he took up his residence; and was dedicated to his service, and in it was divine worship performed unto him. The temple was sanctified by the presence of God in it; and the gold sanctified by the temple, being devoted to the service of it: whatever holiness it had, it had it from the temple, and therefore the temple must be greater than that; and consequently it must be most extravagantly ridiculous and foolish in them, to make oaths by the gold of the temple, and gifts dedicated to its service, and on that score sanctified by it, more binding and sacred than such as were by the temple itself.

Matthew 23:18

1238 T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol 166. 1. Misn. Ceritot, c. 1. sect. 7. Vid. c. 6. sect. 3.

Ver. 18. **And whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing,**

These are again the words or savings of the scribes and Pharisees, and express their sentiments and practice: it was usual with them to swear by the altar; and this was reckoned either no sin at all, or such an oath was not accounted binding on a man; he might break, or keep it as he thought fit: of this kind of swearing, we have the following instances. One said to another ¹²³⁹,

”swear to me that thou wilt not discover me, and he swore to him; by what did he swear? says R. Jose bar Chanina, בְּמִזְבַּח הַפְּנִימִי, “by the innermost altar”.

Again, it is said of Zedekiah ¹²⁴⁰,

”that he (Nebuchadnezzar) made him to swear; by what did he make him to swear? says R. Jose, by the covenant he made him to swear; Rabbi says בְּמִזְבַּח, “by the altar” he made him to swear.”

And elsewhere ¹²⁴¹ it is said of him,”

and he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who made him swear by God”, 2Ch 36:13. By what did he make him swear? says R. Jose bar Chanina, “by the horns of the innermost altar” he made him swear.”

But whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty:

of perjury, if he does not make good his oath; he is bound to perform it, it is obligatory; whatever he swore should be a gift for the altar, he was indispensably obliged to bring it; for whatever he swore by “Korban”, or the gift, could never be put to any other use.

Matthew 23:19

Ver. 19. **Ye fools, and blind,...** This is very justly repeated, since this is no less an instance of their folly, blindness, and stupidity. In three copies of Beza’s the word “fools” is not; nor is it in the Vulgate Latin, nor in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel; but the Syriac, Arabic, Persic, and Ethiopic versions have it:

for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?

The gift, or offering, before it was devoted to sacred use, and brought, and laid upon the altar, was common, had no ceremonial sanctity in it, and might be put to any use; but when it was brought, and laid upon the altar, it became holy; for, according to the law, whatever

1239 Echa Rabbati, fol. 54. 1.

1240 Midrash Kohelet, fol. 78. 1.

1241 Midrash Megillat Esther, fol. 89. 1.

touched the altar, and indeed all, or any of the vessels of the sanctuary, was holy, Ex 29:37. Christ speaks the sense of the law, and their own traditions, and in their own language, and argues from the same to the confutation of them: הַמִּזְבֵּחַ מִקְדָּשׁ, “the altar”, they say {u}, “sanctifies” that which is fit for it; that is, that which is proper to be offered up upon it:

”as the altar sanctifies that which is fit for it, so the ascent unto it sanctifies; and as the altar, and the ascent, sanctify what is fit for them, so the vessels sanctify; the vessels for liquids sanctify the liquids, and the dry measures sanctify the dry; the vessels for liquids do not sanctify the dry, nor the dry measures sanctify the liquids; the holy vessels, which are bored, (or broken,) when they do the service they used to do, when whole, sanctify, if not, they do not sanctify; nor does anything sanctify but in the sanctuary.”

Now, since this is a clear case, that the altar sanctifies the gift, and not the gift the altar, our Lord’s question is, which is the greater? A man that has the least share of common sense will easily see, that the altar must be the greater: wherefore these scribes and Pharisees must be wretchedly stupid to give out, that an oath made by the altar was not binding, when one that was made by the gift, or Korban, was binding; seeing the gift, or offering, received its sanctity from the altar: hence, of the two, an oath made by the altar should be more sacred and obligatory than one made by the gift. {u} Misn. Zebachim, c. 9. sect. 7.

Matthew 23:20

Ver. 20. **Whosoever therefore shall swear by the altar,**

Not that Christ allowed of swearing by the altar, or by the temple, or by heaven, or by any creature, animate or inanimate; for such swearing is elsewhere disapproved of by him, and forbid, but if a man did swear by the altar, he ought to know, and consider that he not only

sweareth by it,

but by all the gifts, and offerings that are brought, and laid upon it,

and by all things thereon;

whatever gifts and sacrifices are offered upon it; which, by being put there, become holy, as the altar itself: so that he that swears by the altar, swears also by the gifts of the altar; and consequently, according to their own traditions, such oaths must be binding.

1234 T. Bab. Chagiga, fol. 27. 1.

1235 T. Bab. Roshhashanah, fol. 17. 1.

1236 T. Bab. Kiddushin, fol. 71. 1.

1237 Misn. Cetubot, c. 2. sect. 9. Juchasin, fol. 56. 1.

Matthew 23:21

Ver. 21. **And whoso shall swear by the temple,**

As we have before seen they used to do, and as appears from what the poet says ¹²⁴²:

Ecce negas, jurasque mihi per templa tonantis Non credo: jura, verpe, per Anchialum.

In which he intimates, that if the Jew swore by the temple, he would not believe him; as well he might not, since such an oath was accounted nothing; but bids him swear by Anchialus, that is, by *היאלוה*, “Chi Eloah”, or *הי ל*, “Chi Alon”, or *הי הולמ*, “Chi Haolam, he that lives for ever” ¹²⁴³; and suggests, that he should then believe him. Now our Lord, though he did not allow of such swearing, yet justly argues, that he that sweareth by the temple, not only “sweareth by it”, which could not be a witness of what was sworn; but he must be interpreted to swear by the inhabitant of it, and by him that dwelleth in it; that is, God, for whom it was built, to whom it was dedicated; where he was worshipped, and where he vouchsafed to reside; taking up his dwelling between the cherubim upon the mercy seat, in the most holy place; from whence he communed with men, and gave tokens of his presence; and who only could be the proper witness of the truth, or falsehood, of what was sworn; and therefore an oath, by the temple, ought to be looked upon as if made by God himself, and so to be sacred and binding.

Matthew 23:22

Ver. 22. **And he that shall swear by heaven,**

As the Jews were wont to do in common, but did not look upon such an oath as obligatory on them; See Gill on “Mt 5:34”, though such an onesweareth by the throne of God; for heaven is God’s throne, where he sits, and, in an eminent manner, displays the glory of his majesty: and by him that sitteth thereon, by God himself. Thus swearing by anything that has any relation to God, is implicitly swearing by him; and therefore ought to be considered as binding, as if he was expressed in it; since an appeal cannot be made to things inanimate, nor indeed to any creature, but to God, the searcher of hearts.

Matthew 23:23

Ver. 23. **Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites,**

Christ returns to the former epithets he had very rightly given to these men, and very pertinently repeats them here; and which are confirmed by the instances

1242 Martial. Epigr. l. 11. Ep. 60.

1243 Vid. Selden. Prolegomena ad lib. de Successionibus.

of their conduct and practice here alleged, which abundantly show their hypocrisy and deceit; since they were very strict in observing some outward things, which gave them credit with the people, and especially the priests and Levites, some little trifling ceremonies and traditions of their elders, whilst they neglected internal religion, and those things which were of the greatest moment and importance:

for ye take tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin;

which ought not commanded by the law, they were obliged to by the traditions of the elders. Mint is an herb well known, and has its name in the Greek from its sweet smell; on account of which the Jews used to spread it on the floors of their synagogues ¹²⁴⁴. This was one of the herbs that was subject to the law of the seventh year ¹²⁴⁵, and is mentioned with those which were to be tithed ¹²⁴⁶. The Ethiopic version, instead of mint reads “hyssop”; and which also was an herb that was obliged to be tithed ¹²⁴⁷. “Anise” is a seed also well known, and which the Jews call *tbv*, and of which they often observe, that it is subject to tithing, both seed, herb, flowers, or stalks ¹²⁴⁸: instead of this Munster’s Hebrew Gospel has *פינימ*, “rue”; and which, in the Misna ¹²⁴⁹, is mentioned along with mint, as it is by Luke 11:42 and said to be one of the things the Pharisees gave tithe of; though in their oral law it is reckoned among the things that are free from tithe ¹²⁵⁰: and therefore this must be a sort of work of supererogation to give tithe of that, which they were not obliged to. “Cummin” is a sort of anise; its seed is much like fennel seed, and which pigeons are very fond of: mention is made of it in Isa 28:25 and is reckoned with figs, dates, carobes, or Egyptian figs, and rice, which were obliged to be tithed ¹²⁵¹, and was what was also bound to the offering of the first fruits to the priest ¹²⁵². Christ mentions these particular herbs and seeds, as a specimen of what they paid tithes of. In Luke, it is added, “and all manner of herbs”: for, according to the traditions of the elders, they were in general subject to tithes: and it is a common saying or maxim of the Jews, that the tithing of corn is from the

1244 Jarchi in Misn. Oketzim, c. 1. sect. 2.

1245 Misn. Sheviith, c. 7. sect. 1, 2.

1246 Hieros. Dermai, fol. 22. 3.

1247 Misn. Maaserot, c. 3. sect. 9.

1248 lb. c. 4. sect. 5. T. Hieros. Maaserot, fol. 51. 2.

T. Bab. Avoda Zara, fol. 7. 2. Jarchi & Maimon. in Misn. Oketzim, c. 3. sect. 4.

1249 Oketzim, c. 1. sect. 2.

1250 Misn. Sheviith, c. 9. sect. 1.

1251 Misn. Demai, c. 2. sect. 1.

1252 Misn. Trumot, c. 10. sect. 4.

law, but *מְשִׁירֵק דְּרַבְנָא* “the tithing of herbs is from the Rabbin” ¹²⁵³: it is a constitution of their’s, and not of Moses:

and have omitted the weightier matters of the law.

The distinction of the commandments of the law into lighter and heavier, or weightier, to which Christ here refers, is frequent with the Jews. When one comes to be made a proselyte, they acquaint him with some of *twlq twum*, “the light commands”, and some of *twrw-mx twum*, “the heavy”, or “weighty commands” ¹²⁵⁴. So again, they paraphrase the words in Isa 33:18 “where is the scribe?” he that numbers all the letters in the law. “Where is the receiver?” who weighs the “light” things, *והמורין שבתורה*, and “heavy”, or “weighty things in the law” ¹²⁵⁵. Again ¹²⁵⁶,

“in the words of the law there are some things “light”, and some things “heavy”, or “weighty”:

but those weighty things they omitted, and regarded those that were light; yea, that had no foundation in the law at all: and no wonder, since, in the place last cited, they say ¹²⁵⁷, that

“the words of the Scribes are all of them “weighty” and that the sayings of the elders are more “weighty” than the words of the prophets.”

The things our Lord refers to, and instances in, are as follow;

judgment, mercy, and faith.

“Judgment” may mean the administration of justice in courts of judicature; the putting in execution good judgments, righteous laws and statutes; protecting and relieving the injured and oppressed, and doing that which is right and equitable between man and man: but, on the contrary, these men devoured widows’ houses, and oppressed the poor and fatherless. “Mercy” includes all acts of compassion to the distressed, relieving the necessitous, distributing to their wants, and showing all kindness and beneficence to the poor and needy; which the scribes and Pharisees very little practised, being a set of cruel, hard hearted, and covetous persons. “Faith” may not only design faithfulness in a man’s keeping his word and promise, and fidelity to a trust reposed in him;

1253 T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 83. 2. & T. Hieros. Challah, fol. 60. 2. & Maaserot, fol. 48. 3.

1254 T. Bab. Yebamot, fol. 47. 1. Maimon. Hilch. Issure Bia, c. 14. sect. 2, 6, 9. Moses Kotsensis Mitzvot Tora, pr. neg. 116.

1255 T. Bab. Chagiga, fol. 15. 2. & Sanhedrin, fol. 106. 2.

1256 T. Hieros. Beracot, fol. 3. 2.

1257 Ib.

but also faith in God, as the God of providence, and as the God of grace and mercy; believing in his word and promises, and worshipping him, which the law requires; and the rather this seems to be intended, because Luke, instead of “faith”, puts “the love of God”, which faith includes, and works by, and is the end of the commandment, arising from faith unfeigned: so that Christ instances in the weightier matters of both tables of the law, which these men neglected, and the latter, as well as the former; not believing the revelation of the Gospel, nor the Messiah, who was promised, and prophesied of by God, in the writings of the Old Testament:

these ought ye to have done:

more especially, and in the first place, as being of the greatest use and importance:

and not to leave the other undone;

meaning either the lighter matters, and lesser commands of the law; or even their tithes of herbs: if they thought themselves obliged to them, Christ would not dispute the matter with them; if they thought fit to observe them, they might, so long as they did not interfere with, and take them off from things of greater moment. But alas! these men preferred the rituals of the ceremonial law, and the traditions of the elders, above the duties of the moral law; and reckoned that the latter were nothing, if the former were wanting; for they ¹²⁵⁸ Say, that

“the words of the Scribes, are more lovely than the words of the law.”

And also ¹²⁵⁹, that”

he that profanes the holy things, and despises the solemn feasts, and makes void the covenant of Abraham our father (circumcision), and behaves impudently towards the law (ceremonial), although the law and good works are in his hands, he has no part in the world to come.

“The Persic version renders the words thus; “these ought ye to do, and not them”; as if it was our Lord’s sense, that they ought to observe the weightier matters of the moral law, and not regard their tithing of herbs, and other traditions of, their fathers.

Matthew 23:24

Ver. 24. **Ye blind guides,**.... As in Mt 23:16 who strain at a gnat and swallow a camel: the Syriac and Persic versions read the words in the plural number, gnats and camels. The Jews had a law, which forbid them the eat-

1258 T. Hieros. Beracot, fol. 3. 2.

1259 T. Hieros. Pesachim, fol. 33. 2.

ing of any creeping thing, Le 11:41 and of this they were strictly observant, and would not be guilty of the breach of it for ever so much.

”One that eats a flea, or a gnat; they say ¹²⁶⁰ is *בזבור*, “an apostate”;

One that has changed his religion, and is no more to be reckoned as one of them. Hence they very carefully strained their liquors, lest they should transgress the above command, and incur the character of an apostate; and at least, the penalty of being beaten with forty stripes, save one; for,

“whoever eats a whole fly, or a whole gnat, whether alive or dead, was to be beaten on account of a creeping flying thing ¹²⁶¹.

Among the accusations Haman is said to bring against them to Ahasuerus, and the instances he gives of their laws being different from the king’s, this one ¹²⁶²; that

“if a fly falls into the cup of one of them, *דרקן ושותהו* “he strains it, and drinks it”; but if my lord the king should touch the cup of one of them, he would throw it to the ground, and would not drink of it.’

’Maimonides says ¹²⁶³,

”He that strains wine, or vinegar, or strong liquor, and eats “Jabchushin” (a sort of small flies found in wine cellars ¹²⁶⁴, on account of which they strained their wine), or gnats, or worms, which he hath strained off, is to be beaten on account of the creeping things of the water, or on account of the creeping flying things, and the creeping things of the water.’

’Moreover, it is said ¹²⁶⁵,

“a man might not pour his strong liquors through a strainer, by the light (of a candle or lamp), lest he should separate and leave in the top of the strainer (some creeping thing), and it should fall again into the cup, and he should transgress the law, in Le 11:41.”

To this practice Christ alluded here; and so very strict and careful were they in this matter, that to strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel, became at length a proverb,

¹²⁶⁰ T. Bab. Avoda Zara, fol. 26. 2. & Horaiot, fol. 11. 1.

¹²⁶¹ Mainon. Hilch. Maacolot Asurot, c. 2. sect. 22.

¹²⁶² T. Bab. Megilla, fol. 13. 2. Vid. T. Hietos. Sota, fol. 17. 1.

¹²⁶³ Ubi supra, (Mainon. Hilch. Maacolot Asurot, c. 2.) sect. 20.

¹²⁶⁴ Gloss. in T. Bab. Cholin, fol. 67. 1.

¹²⁶⁵ Ib.

to signify much solicitude about little things, and none about greater. These men would not, on any consideration, be guilty of such a crime, as not to pay the tithe of mint, anise, and cummin, and such like herbs and seeds; and yet made no conscience of doing justice, and showing mercy to men, or of exercising faith in God, or love to him. Just as many hypocrites, like them, make a great stir, and would appear very conscientious and scrupulous, about some little trifling things, and yet stick not, at other times, to commit the grossest enormities, and most scandalous sins in life.

Matthew 23:25

Ver. 25. **Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites,**

Our Lord cannot be thought to bear too hard upon these men, nor does he continue this character of them, and denunciations of woe against them, without a reason **for ye make clean the outside of the cup and platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.**

The allusion is to their traditions about washing their cups and pots, and brazen vessels; see Mark 7:4 which they strictly observed. In their oral law is a whole tract, called *האשכנז*, which gives rules about the places where they washed, the things to be washed, and the manner of washing them; about which they were very nice, pretending to much outward cleanness, but had no regard to inward purity. Christ’s sense is, that they took much pains, and were very careful, that the cup they drank out of, and the platter, or dish they ate out of, should be very clean; when at the same time, the food and drink that were within them, were got by oppression and rapine; by devouring widows’ houses, by making undue claims upon, and extorting unjust sums from the fatherless, the poor, and the needy; and were abused by them, to luxury and intemperance. In like manner the Jews themselves say of hypocrites ¹²⁶⁶,

”They make show of a pure and clean soul, but under it lies hid a leprosy: they are like to “vessels full of uncleanness”; they are outwardly washed with the water of fraud and craftiness; but whatsoever is within, in the midst or them, is unclean.”

The Vulgate Latin version of the text, instead of “excess”, reads “uncleanness”, and so does Munster’s Hebrew Gospel: many copies read “unrighteousness”. Excess is thought to be a sin the Pharisees were not guilty of, though they were of extortion, injustice, and unclean-

¹²⁶⁶ R. Sol Gabirol in Cether Malcuth apud L. Capell in loc.

ness.{w} R. Sol Gabirol in Cether Malcuth apud L. Capell in loc.

Matthew 23:26

Ver. 26. **Thou blind Pharisee,**

Well might Christ call such an one a blind Pharisee, who was so scrupulously careful to cleanse his cup and platter; and yet made no conscience of filling them with what was gotten in an unjust way, and so defiled himself and them:

cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also:

get food and drink in an honest way, remove all extortion and oppression out of thine hands, and luxury and intemperance from thy table; and so shall the outward cleanness of thy cup and dish, be no reproach unto thee, or testimony against thee, of thine hypocrisy. So the great concern of all men should be, inward purity; that their hearts be purified by faith in the blood of Christ, and sprinkled from an evil conscience by the same; that principles of grace and holiness be formed in them by the Spirit of God; and then their outward lives and conversations being influenced thereby, will be honourable and agreeable to their professions. Otherwise, an external reformation, or an outward show of holiness, and bare pretensions to it, without internal grace, will never be of any avail in the sight of God.

Matthew 23:27

Ver. 27. **Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites,**

It is much these men could bear to hear themselves so often called by this name; and it shows great courage in our Lord, so freely to reprove them, and expose their wickedness, who were men of so much credit and influence with the people:

for ye are like unto whited sepulchres;

or “covered with lime”, as the Syriac, Arabic, and Persic versions, render it. For the Jews used to mark their graves with white lime, that they might be known: that so priests, Nazarites, and travellers, might avoid them, and not be polluted with them. This appears from various passages in their writings:

”The vineyard of the fourth year, they marked with clods of earth, and an uncircumcised one with dust, *ושל קברות ביד*, “and graves with chalk”, mixed (with water) and poured (on them ¹²⁶⁷.)

”Of this marking of the graves, the reason of it, the

¹²⁶⁷ Misn. Maaser Sheni, c. 5. sect. 1.

time and manner of doing it, Maimonides ¹²⁶⁸ gives us this account:

”Whoever finds a grave, or a dead carcass, or anything for the dead that defiles, by the tent he is obliged to put a mark upon it, that it may not be a stumbling to others; and on the intermediate days of a feast, they go out from the sanhedrim, to mark the graves.--With what do they mark? *hxmm dyob*, “with chalk infused” in water, and poured upon the unclean place: they do not put the mark upon the top of the unclean place, (or exactly in it,) but so that it may stand out here and there, at the sides of it, that what is pure may not be corrupted; and they do not put the mark far from the place of the uncleanness, that they may not waste the land of Israel; and they do not set marks on those that are manifest, for they are known to all; but upon those that are doubtful, as a field in which a grave is lost, and places that are open, and want a covering.

”Now because when the rains fell, these marks were washed away, hence on the first of Adar (February) when they used to repair the highways, they also marked the graves with white lime, that they might be seen and known, and avoided; and so on their intermediate feast days ¹²⁶⁹: the reason why they made use of chalk, or lime, and with these marked their graves, was because it looked white like bones ¹²⁷⁰; so that upon first sight, it might be thought and known what it was for, and that a grave was there: hence this phrase, “whited sepulchres”:

which indeed appear beautiful outward;

especially at a distance, and when new marked:

but within are full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness;

worms and rottenness, which arise from the putrefied carcasses, and are very nauseous and defiling.

Matthew 23:28

Ver. 28. **Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous,**

By making broad their phylacteries, enlarging the borders of their garments, praying long prayers, compassing sea and land to make one proselyte, paying tithes of all manner of herbs, and cleansing the outside of the cup and platter, and doing all their works, prayers,

¹²⁶⁸ Hilch. Tumath Meth, c. 8. sect. 9.

¹²⁶⁹ Misn. Shekalim, c. 1. sect. 1. & Moed Katon, c. 1. sect. 2. Maimon. & Bartenora in lb.

¹²⁷⁰ Jarchi in Misu. Moed Katon, c. 1. sect. 2. & Bartenora in Misn. Maaser Sheni, c. 5. sect. 1.

fastings, and alms deeds, to be seen of men. This is the accommodation of the above simile; by reason of these things they looked like whited sepulchres, outwardly beautiful: so these appeared outwardly righteous, they looked like righteous persons, and were not; they were what Hagar, as the Jews say, charged her mistress with being; for so they interpret these words, “her mistress was despised in her eyes”, Ge 16:4 ¹²⁷¹.

”She said, this Sarah is not secretly, what she is openly; she appears כְּאִילוּ הִיא דְקָה “as if she was righteous” and she is not righteous.’

’The same they say of ¹²⁷² Leah. This was a misrepresentation; but the representation Christ gives of these men, is right; they were of that sort of the Pharisees, which they call הַדְּיָיִם, “the dyed”, or “coloured” ones: it is said of Jannai the king, that he should say to those of his family ¹²⁷³;

”Do not be afraid of them that are Pharisees, (that are truly so,) nor of them that are not Pharisees; but of them that are, Nyewbuh, “dyed”, for they are like to Pharisees; for their works are as the works of Zimri, (adulterers, as these were,) and they expect the reward as Phinehas.

”The gloss upon it is,

”the Pharisees hated him, because he had slain many of their wise men, and was turned Sadducee; and when he was dying, his wife was afraid of them, lest they should take away the kingdom from her sons, and she desired him to seek their favour for her; but he said unto her, do not be afraid of the Pharisees, for they are “righteous”, and will not render evil to thee, nor to thy sons; for they have not sinned against them; nor of them that are not Pharisees, for they are their friends; but of “the dyed ones”: as if he had said, their appearance is not according to their nature, but they are dyed without, וְאִינֵי הוֹכְמוֹ כְּבָרֵם, “and their inside is not as their outside”: for their works are as the work of Zimri, for they are ungodly; and they expect the reward as Phinehas, saying to men, to honour them as Phinehas.’

’But this outward show and appearance of righteousness, was only “unto men”, not unto God: they did

1271 Bereshit Rabba, sect. 45. fol. 40. 3. Jarchi in Gert. xvi. 4.

1272 Bereshit Rabba, sect. 71. fol. 63. 2.

1273 T. Bab. Sota, fol. 22. 2.

not appear so to him, who is the searcher of hearts, and knows what is in man, and knew all the secret wickedness that was in them; for though they imposed upon, and deceived men, they could not deceive God; nor was their iniquity hid from Christ, who adds, “but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity”: and which was evident from their ambition and vain glory, in desiring the uppermost rooms at feasts, the chief places in the synagogue, greetings in the markets, and titles of honour and grandeur; from their avarice and cruel oppression of the widows, and fatherless, under a pretence of long prayers; from their neglecting the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith, and practising extortion and excess: that saying of their’s ¹²⁷⁴, may be applied to themselves;

”every disciple of a wise man, שְׂאִינֵי הוֹכְמוֹ כְּבָרוֹ, “whose inside is not as his outside”, is no disciple of a wise man.

”And it is expressly ascribed by some of their writers to one sort of the Pharisees, of whom they say ¹²⁷⁵,

”they are desirous to appear to men to be holy, but their inside is not as their outside;’

which is much the same Christ here says of them. What our Lord charges these men with, is owned by their own doctors; they say ¹²⁷⁶, that

”the iniquity of those that were under the first temple, was open and manifest, but the iniquity of those that were under the second temple, was not open.’

But as the gloss says,”

the children of the second temple, הָיִים בְּהַר, “were secretly wicked”.

Matthew 23:29

Ver. 29. **Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites,**

This is the seventh and last time, in which these words are delivered in this exact form by our Lord, in this chapter; and expresses the certainty, both of their sin and punishment: and the instance annexed to it, no less discovers the hypocrisy of these persons, and supports the character given of them; as also furnishes out a sufficient reason, why a woe is denounced upon them;

because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and

1274 T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 72. 2.

1275 Bartenora in Misn. Sota, c. 3. sect. 4.

1276 T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 9. 2.

garnish the sepulchres of the righteous;

meaning by the “prophets” and “righteous” men, the same persons, the prophets, who were righteous men; or else the prophets, and also other righteous men besides them. Rightly is the word “build”, used of tombs and sepulchres; the Jews have a canon, which runs thus ¹²⁷⁷;

”they do not dig graves nor sepulchres, on a feast day.”

The commentators ¹²⁷⁸ on it say, that the graves are the holes which they dig in the earth, and the sepulchres are the buildings over the graves. In the Gemara it is asked ¹²⁷⁹,

”what are the graves? and what are the sepulchres? says R. Judah, the graves are made by digging and the sepulchres or tombs בְּבִינֵי “by building”;

and these edifices which they built over the graves of some of their prophets, and righteous men, were very grand and beautiful. The Cippi Hebmicci furnish us with many instances of this kind: in Hebron, in the land of Canaan, which is Kirjath Arba, is the cave of Machpelah; in which were buried the fathers of the world, Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Leah; and over it is a wonderful, וְנֹאֵה, “and beautiful” building and it is the building of David the king; and opposite the city, in the mountain, is a beautiful building, and there was buried Jesse, the father of David the king: in the way from Hebron to Jerusalem, is Chalchul, where Gad, David’s seer, was buried; and Tekoah, where Isaiah the prophet was buried, and over him a “beautiful” structure: at the Mount of Olives is a beautiful fabric, which they say is the sepulchre of Huldah, the prophetess; at the bottom of the mount is a very great cave, attributed to Haggai the prophet, and in the middle of it are many caves; near it, is the sepulchre of Zechariah the prophet, in a cave shut up, and over it is כִּיפָה נֹאֵה, “a beautiful arch”, or vault of one stone: between Rama and Jerusalem are caves ascribed to Simeon the just, and the seventy (elders of the) sanhedrim: at Rama, Samuel was buried, also his father Elkanah, and Hannah his mother, and in a cave shut up, and over the cave buildings: at Cheres, which is Timnath Cheres, in Mount Ephraim, are buried Joshua the son of Nun, and Nun his father, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and over them are trees. At Avarta is the school of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the priest, and Eleazar is buried upon the mountain; and

1277 Misn. Moed Katon, c. 1. sect. 6.

1278 Maimon. & Bartenora in ib.

1279 T. Bab. Moed Katon, fol. 8. 2.

below the village, between the olive trees, Ithamar, and over him a large monument: at the barns is a temple of the Gentiles, with a vault and a cave, where they say are buried seventy elders. At Belata, a village about a sabbath day’s journey from Shechem, Joseph the righteous was buried: at Mount Carmel, is the cave of Elijah the prophet, and there was buried Elisha, the son of Shaphat the prophet: at Jordan was buried Iddo the prophet, and over it is a great elm tree, and it is in the form of a lion; and there was buried Shebuel, the son of Gershom, the son of Moses, over whom is a great oak tree: at Geba, in Mount Lebanon, is buried Zephaniah the prophet, in the middle of a cave shut up. On a mountain, a sabbath day’s journey from Zidon, Zebulun was buried, in a beautiful vault; at Cephar Noah, was buried Noah the just; and at Kadesh Nephtalim, Barak the son of Abinoam, and Deborah his wife, and Jael; and at Timnath, Shamgar the son of Auath, over whom are two marble pillars. At Cephar Cana, is buried Jonah, the son of Amittai, on the top of a mountain, in a temple of the Gentiles, in a “beautiful” vault: at Jakuk, was buried in the way, Habakkuk the prophet; and at the north of the village of Raam, was buried Obadiah the prophet: at Susan the palace, was buried Mordecai the Jew, and over him a beautiful stone statue; and on it written, this is the sepulchre of Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a man of Jemini; and near the river Hiddekel, Ezekiel the prophet was buried. In this account, many things may be observed, which confirm and illustrate the words of the text. And certain it is, that it was accounted very honourable and laudable in persons, to beautify the sepulchres of the patriarchs and prophets. Among the excellent characters given of Benaah, R. Jochanan’s master, it is said ¹²⁸⁰,

that he was a very wise man, and a judge, and understood mysteries and parables; trem Nyyuw, “and painted the cave” of Adam the first, and the cave of Abraham.’

’Though perhaps this is to be understood of him in a figurative sense, but yet must allude to a literal one: the sepulchres of the prophets, were especially very sacred:”

all sepulchres (they say ¹²⁸¹ might be removed, but the sepulchres of a king, and the “sepulchres of a prophet”; they say unto him, were not the sepulchres of the sons of David removed? and the sepulchres of the sons of Huldah were in Jerusalem, and a man might not touch them, to remove

1280 Juchasin, fol. 86. 1.

1281 T. Hieros. Nazir, fol. 57. 4.

them for ever. R. Akiba replied to them because of decency it was forgiven (or allowed) there, and from thence the uncleanness being channelled, went out to the brook Kidron.’

Now our Lord must not be understood as blaming them for barely building the tombs of the prophets, and garnishing the sepulchres of the righteous, which they might have done without blame. But because they did all this, that they might be thought to be very innocent and holy men, and far from being guilty of the crimes their forefathers were; when they were of the very selfsame blood thirsty, persecuting spirit; and did, and would do the same things to the prophets and apostles of the New Testament, their fathers had done to the prophets of the Old. They have a saying ¹²⁸², that

”they do not erect monuments “for the righteous”; for their words are their memorial.

”But this can only mean, that there is no need of monuments for them; since their sayings are sufficient to keep up the memory of them. Hence Dr. Lightfoot thinks, that our Lord reproves them out of their own mouths, for despising the words of the prophets; imagining they performed piety enough, by bestowing cost in adorning their sepulchres; when they themselves own, their sayings are the best remembrances of them, and therefore ought to be regarded more than their tombs.

Matthew 23:30

Ver. 30. **And say, if we had been in the days of our fathers,**

Their ancestors and predecessors: signifying, that if they had lived in the times they did, or had been in the same post and office with them, they should have opposed, at least not consented to their measures:

we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets;

would not have joined them in persecuting the prophets, and in shedding their blood, and putting them to death; but would have received them as the prophets of the Lord, have hearkened to their advice and message, and have honoured and obeyed them as such; and this they thought they sufficiently declared, by building and adorning their tombs.

Matthew 23:31

Ver. 31. **Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, Or “against yourselves”,** as the Syriac reads; for what

¹²⁸² T. Hieros. Shekalim, fol. 47. 1.

they said was a plain acknowledgment, and a full confession, what their fathers had done, and whose offspring they were; and from whom better things were not to be expected; since they were their fathers’ own children, and of the same temper and disposition with them: that ye are the children of them that killed the prophets. They plainly owned, that their fathers killed the prophets, and that they descended from them; though they meant not so much to reproach, their ancestors, as to give themselves a greater character; yet it did not with those, that knew them; not with our Lord: for as their own words testified against them, that they were a seed of evildoers; their practices showed them to be of the same spirit and principles with their progenitors.

Matthew 23:32

Ver. 32. **Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.**

Of their sins; for there were bounds and limits set how far they should proceed, and no further; as yet they had not got to the end of their iniquity: their fathers had gone great lengths in sin, but their iniquity was not yet full, as is said of the Amorites, Ge 15:16 these their sons were to fill it up. They had shed the blood of many of the prophets; and indeed there were none of them but they had persecuted and abused, in one shape or another: some they entreated shamefully, others they beat: some they stoned, and others they put to death with the sword, or otherwise; and now their children were about to fill the measure brimful, by crucifying the Son of God, which they were at this time meditating and contriving; and by persecuting and slaying his apostles, and so would bring upon them the vengeance of God. The Jews well enough understood these words, which were spoken to them in an ironical way, and expressing what they were about, and what they would hereafter do, and what would be the issue and consequence of it: they have a saying ¹²⁸³, that

”the holy blessed God does not take vengeance on a man, *דְּשִׁחַתְמֵלָא אִתּוּ*, “until his measure is filled up”; according to Job 20:22.”

Which the Chaldee paraphrase renders,

”when his measure is filled up, then shall he take vengeance on him;

”and that this is Christ’s sense, appears from what follows.

Matthew 23:33

Ver. 33. **Ye servants, ye generation of vipers,**

¹²⁸³ T. Bab. Sota, fol. 9. 1.

The latter of these names, John the Baptist calls the Sadducees and Pharisees by, in Mt 3:7 and Christ, in Mt 12:34 both express their craft and subtlety, their inward poison, and venomous nature; their fair outside, and specious pretences; their hypocrisy, malice, and wickedness; in which they were like to the old serpent, their father the devil, and to their ancestors, that murdered the prophets; nor could any good thing be expected, from such a viperous generation:

how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

signifying, that it was impossible that they should; nor could they surely expect it themselves, who must be conscious to themselves of their wickedness, malice, and deceit. The Persic version reads it, “where can ye escape?” &c. and so Beza says it was read, in one ancient copy of his; and the sense is, whither can ye flee? to whom, or what can you have recourse to, to screen you from the wrath to come? Rocks and mountains, caves and dens, will be of no service. The phrase, *דְּיִהָנָם שֶׁל גֵּיהֵנָם*, “the judgment, or damnation of hell”, is a phrase often used in the Talmud ¹²⁸⁴, and Midrashes ¹²⁸⁵ of the Jews; and intends future torment, and the everlasting vengeance and wrath of God, the unquenchable fire prepared for the devil and his angels, and which impenitent unbelieving sinners cannot escape.

Matthew 23:34

Ver. 34. **Wherefore, behold I send unto you prophets,**

To try them, whether they would show the respect to prophets, they pretended to have for them; by building and beautifying their sepulchres; by exclaiming against their forefathers for shedding their blood; and by declaring, that had they lived in their days, they would not have joined with them in it; and to make it appear, that these were all empty words, and specious pretences; and that they had the same malicious and bloody principles in them; and would be guilty of the same practices, and so fill up the measure of their fathers’ sins; and bring upon them the punishment of everlasting burnings hereafter, as well as ruin and destruction on their nation, city, and temple now. Christ here speaks, as, one having power and authority, to qualify and send forth men, under the several characters here mentioned, and of what he should do after his resurrection: for notwithstanding

¹²⁸⁴ T. Bab. Berncot, fol. 61. 1. Erubin, fol. 18. 2. Yebamot, fol. 102. 2. Sota, fol. 4. 2. & 5. 1. & Bava Bathra, fol. 10. 1.

¹²⁸⁵ Bemidbar Rabba, fol. 203. 1. Shirhashirim Rabba, fol. 14. 2. & Midrash Kohelet, fol. 76. 1.

the people of the Jews would crucify him, and use him as they did, in a barbarous manner; yet after all this, he would send his ministers to them, to gather his elect out from among them, to render the rest inexcusable, and to show his longsuffering and patience. The persons designed by “prophets”, “wise men”, and “Scribes”, are his apostles: called “prophets”; because they were divinely inspired to write, and preach in his name; had the gift of foretelling future events, and of explaining with the greatest clearness and exactness, the prophecies of the Old Testament; showing their respect unto, and accomplishment in Christ: “wise men”; because they were made wise unto salvation, and capable of instructing others: they were filled with all spiritual and evangelical wisdom, and preached the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom: and Scribes; because they were well instructed in the kingdom of heaven, and had the true knowledge of the law, and could rightly interpret it, as well as make known the Gospel of the grace of God. Christ chooses to use these names and titles, because the Jews pretended to have great veneration for the ancient prophets, and these he should send, would not be a whit inferior to them, but in many things exceed them; and they had great esteem for their wise men and Scribes, who would be vastly exceeded by these ministers of his, and yet would be used very badly by them:

and some of them ye shall kill;

as Stephen, the first “martyr”, who was stoned to death by them; and James, the brother of John, whom Herod, to their good liking, killed with the sword; and the other James they threw headlong from off the pinnacle of the temple, and killed him with a fuller’s club ¹²⁸⁶.

And crucify;

so Simeon, the son of Cleophas, was crucified at the instigation of the Jews, as Eusebius relates ¹²⁸⁷.

And some of them ye shall scourge in your synagogues;

as John, Peter, and Paul:

and persecute them from city to city;

as they did Paul and Barnabas, as the Acts of the Apostles testify.

Matthew 23:35

Ver. 35. **That upon you may come all the righteous blood,**

Or “the blood of all the righteous men”, as the Syriac: Arabic, Persic, and Ethiopic versions read; for there is

¹²⁸⁶ Euseb. Eccl. Hist. l. 2. c. 23.

¹²⁸⁷ Ib. l. 3. c. 32.

no righteousness in blood, nor any conveyed by it: all men are of one blood, and that is tainted, they that are righteous, are not so naturally, nor by any righteousness of their own, but by the righteousness of Christ: and such were the persons here meant, whose blood being shed in the cause of righteousness, God would revenge; and the punishment for such a crime, and the vengeance of God for it, were to come upon the nation of the Jews by this means, through their crucifying of Christ, and killing, and persecuting his apostles; whereby they would make it manifest, that they approved of, and consented to, what others had done to all the righteous men, whose blood had been

shed upon the earth;

whether in Judea, or elsewhere; and continued in the same wicked practices, or committed worse, and so justly incurred the wrath of God to the uttermost; which would quickly come upon them, when the measure of their fathers' sin were filled up by them, from the beginning of time, to the present age: even

from the blood of righteous Abel:

who was the first person in the world that was killed, and that for righteousness sake too, because his works were righteous, his person being so; not by his works, but through the righteousness and sacrifice of the Messiah, which were to be brought in; in the faith of which he offered up his sacrifice, whereby he obtained a testimony from God, that he was righteous, having respect to his person in Christ, and so to his offering. This epithet of "righteous" seems to be what was commonly given him by the Jews: hence, with a peculiar emphasis, he is called, *הבֵּל הַרִּיק*, "Abel the righteous" ¹²⁸⁸; as he is also said to be *Mygrhnl var*, "the head of them that killed" ¹²⁸⁹; he being the first man that was slain; for which reason he is mentioned here by Christ; and also, because his blood cried for vengeance, and still continued to do, upon all such persons that should commit the like crime. It is an observation frequently made by the Jews, on those words in Ge 4:10 "the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me", that

"it is not said in the Hebrew text, the blood of thy brother, but the bloods of thy brother; his blood, and the blood of his seed ¹²⁹⁰; and that from hence may be learned, that the blood of his children, and of his children's children, and of all his off-

¹²⁸⁸ Tzeror Hammor, fol. 8. 2.

¹²⁸⁹ Juchasin, fol. 5. 2.

¹²⁹⁰ Bereshit Rabba, sect. 22. fol. 20. 1. Misn. Sanhedrin, c. 4. sect. 5. Moses Kotsensis Mitzvot Tora pr. affirm. 98.

spring, to the end of all generations, that should proceed from him, all stood and cried before the Lord ¹²⁹¹.

"The Jerusalem Targum paraphrases the words in this remarkable manner;"the price of the bloods of "the multitude of the righteous", that shall spring from Abel thy brother.

"And Onkelos thus,

"the voice of the blood of the seed that shall rise from thy brother,

unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.

Learned men are very much divided about this person, who he was. Some think our Lord speaks prophetically of Zechariah, the son of Baruch; who, as Josephus says ¹²⁹², was slain in the middle of the temple, just before the siege of Jerusalem; and who was, as he also relates, a rich man, of an illustrious family, a hater of wickedness, and a friend to liberty: and because, as Abel was the first man that was slain, and this man being killed in the temple, at the close of the Jewish state; and because the words may be rendered, "whom ye shall have slain", therefore he is thought to be intended: but there are several things that do not agree with him, besides its being a narration of a fact, as past, according to the usual rendering of the word: for this Zacharias was the son of Baruch, and not Barachias, which are two different names; he was killed in the middle of the temple, not between the temple and the altar; nor does he appear to be a man of such great character, as to be distinguished in this manner; and besides, his death was what the Jews did not consent to in general, and therefore could not be charged with it; he was acquitted by the sanhedrim of the charge of treachery laid against him, and was assassinated by two zealots. Others have thought that Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, is meant, who is supposed to be murdered by the Jews very lately; and it being a recent action, is mentioned by our Lord: the reason of it is a tradition, which several ancient writers ¹²⁹³ speak of, and is pretended to be this; that there was a place, in the temple appropriated to virgins, and that Mary, the mother of our Lord, after his birth, came and took her place here, as a virgin, when

¹²⁹¹ Abot. R. Nathan, c. 31.

¹²⁹² De Bello Jud. l. 5. c. 1.

¹²⁹³ Origen. in Matth. T. 3. Homil. 26. fol. 44. Greg. Nyssen. in diem nat. Christ. Vol. 2. p. 777. Basil. de human. gen. Christ. & Theophylact. in loc.

the Jews, knowing her to have a child, objected to it; but Zechariah, who was acquainted with the mystery of the incarnation, ordered her to keep her place, upon which the Jews slew him upon the spot: but this tradition is not to be depended on; nor does it appear that there ever was any such particular place in the temple assigned to virgins; nor that the father of this Zacharias was Barachias; or that the son was slain by the Jews, and in this place. Others have been of opinion, that Zechariah the prophet is designed; and indeed, he is said to be the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, Zec 1:1 and the Jewish Targumist speaks of a Zechariah, the son of Iddo, as slain by the Jews in the temple. His words are these ¹²⁹⁴;

"as ye slew Zechariah, the son of Iddo, the high priest, and faithful prophet, in the house of the sanctuary of the Lord, on the day of atonement; because he reprov'd you, that ye might not do that evil which is before the Lord."

And him the Jews make to be the same with Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah, in Isa 8:2 and read Berechiah ¹²⁹⁵; but the Targumist seems to confound Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, with him; for the prophet Zechariah was not an high priest, Joshua was high priest in his time; nor does it appear from any writings, that he was killed by the Jews; nor is it probable that they would be guilty of such a crime, just upon their return from captivity; and besides, he could not be slain in such a place, because the temple, and altar, were not yet built: it remains, that it must be Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada the priest, who was slain in the court of the house of the Lord, 2Ch 24:20 who, as Abel was the first, he is the last of the righteous men whose death is related in the Scriptures, and for whose blood vengeance was required, as for Abel's. He was slain in the court of the house of the Lord; and so the Ethiopic version here renders it, in the midst of the holy house. It is often said by the Jewish writer ¹²⁹⁶, that

"R. Joden (sometimes it is R. Jonathan) asked R. Acha, whether they slew Zechariah, in the court of the Israelites, or in the court of the women? he answered him, neither in the court of the Israelites, nor in the court of the women, but in the court of the priests

And elsewhere they say ¹²⁹⁷, that they

¹²⁹⁴ Targum in Lam. ii. 20.

¹²⁹⁵ T. Bab. Maccot, fol. 24. 2

¹²⁹⁶ T. Hieros. Tannioth, fol. 69. 1.

¹²⁹⁷ Echa Rabbati, fol. 55. 1.

"slew a priest and a prophet in the sanctuary; this is Zechariah the son of Jehoiada."

Now it should be observed, that the temple, or sanctuary, is sometimes put for the whole sacred building, with all its courts and appurtenances; and sometimes, as in this text, for that part of it that was covered, between which, and the altar of burnt offerings, in the court of the priests, which must he here meant, and not the altar of incense, in the most holy place, was a space of twenty two cubits ¹²⁹⁸, frequently called, in Jewish writings, the space between the porch and the altar; that is, the porch which led into the temple, and the brazen altar in the court of the priests, which was open to the air, and is the very spot here intended. Now this was a very sacred place, and is mentioned as an aggravation of the sin of the Jews, that they should enter where none but priests might; nor these neither that had any defect in them; and defile it also by shedding innocent blood.

"The court of the Israelites is holier than the court of the women; because those that wanted atonement might not enter there; and a defiled person that entered there, was obliged to be cut off: the court of the priests was holier than that, because the Israelites might not enter there, but in the time of their necessities, for laying on of hands for atonement, for killing and waving: the place between the porch and the altar was holier than that; for such that had any blemishes, or were bareheaded, or had their garments rent, might not enter ¹²⁹⁹."

'Hence they say ¹³⁰⁰, that

"the Israelites committed seven transgressions on that day: they slew a priest, and a prophet, and a judge; and they shed innocent blood, and they blasphemed God, and defiled the court, and it was a sabbath day, and the day of atonement."

The chief objections to its being this Zechariah are, that the names do agree; the one being the son of Jehoiada, the other the son of Barachias; and the killing of him was eight hundred years before this time; when it might have been thought our Lord would have instanced in a

¹²⁹⁸ Misn. Middot, c. 3. sect. 6.

¹²⁹⁹ Maimon. Beth. Habbechira, c. 7. sect. 18, 19, 20. Bemidbar Rabba, sect. 7. fol. 188. 4.

¹³⁰⁰ T. Hieros. Taanioth, fol. 69. 1. Echa Rabbati, fol. 53. 1. & 58. 3. Midrash Kobelet, fol. 68. 4.

later action: and this he speaks of, he ascribes to the men of that generation: to which may be replied, that as to the difference of names, the father of this Zechariah might have two names, which is no unusual thing; besides, these two names signify much the same thing; Jehoiada signifies praise the Lord, and Barachias bless the Lord; just as Eliakim and Jehoiakim, are names of the same person, and signify the same thing, 2Ch 36:4. Moreover, Jerom tells us, that in the Hebrew copy of this Gospel used by the Nazarenes, he found the name Jehoiada instead of Barachias: and as to the action being done so long ago, what has been suggested already may be an answer to it, that it was the last on record in the writings of the Old Testament; and that his blood, as Abel's, is said to require vengeance: and Christ might the rather pitch upon this action, because it was committed on a very great and worthy man, and in the holy place, and by the body of the people, at the command of their king, and with their full approbation, and consent: and therefore, though this was not done by the individual persons in being in Christ's time, yet by the same people; and so they are said to slay him, and his blood is required of them: and their horrible destruction was a punishment for that load of national guilt, which had been for many hundreds of years contracting, and heaping upon them.

Matthew 23:36

Ver. 36. **Verily I say unto you,**

An usual form of introducing something of moment to raise attention to it, and to ascertain the truth of it:

all these things shall come upon this generation;

all the things which Christ had foretold should come to pass in the present age; as that the apostles and ministers of the word he should send to them, some of them they would kill and crucify, and others they would scourge in their synagogues, or persecute from place to place; and all the horrible murders and bloodshed in any age, committed by that people, would be placed to the account of the men of that generation; and the guilt of them imputed to them, and the punishment due unto them be inflicted on them. And which came to pass, and had its full accomplishment about forty years after this, in the utter destruction of Jerusalem, and the whole nation; so that many now living were personally involved in that temporal ruin, as well as escaped not the damnation of hell, Mt 23:33.

Matthew 23:37

Ver. 37. **O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,**

The metropolis of Judea, the seat of the kings of Ju-

dah, yea, the city of the great king; the place of divine worship, once the holy and faithful city, the joy of the whole earth; wherefore it was strange that the following things should be said of it. The word is repeated to show our Lord's affection and concern for that city, as well as to upbraid it with its name, dignity, and privileges; and designs not the building of the city, but the inhabitants of it; and these not all, but the rulers and governors of it, civil and ecclesiastical; especially the great sanhedrim, which were held in it, to whom best belong the descriptive characters of killing the prophets, and stoning them that were sent by God unto them; since it belonged to them to take cognizance of such who called themselves prophets, and to examine, and judge them, and, if false, to condemn them¹³⁰¹; hence that saying of Christ, Luke 13:33 which goes before the same words, as here, "it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem": and who are manifestly distinguished from their "children": it being usual to call such as were the heads of the people, either in a civil or ecclesiastic sense, "fathers", and their subjects and disciples, "children": besides, our Lord's discourse throughout the whole context is directed to the Scribes and Pharisees, the ecclesiastic guides of the people, and to whom the civil governors paid a special regard.

Thou that killest the prophets;

that is, with the sword, with which the prophets in Elijah's time were slain by the children of Israel, 1Ki 19:10 and which was one of the capital punishments inflicted by the Jewish sanhedrim¹³⁰²; and also that which follows was another of them.

And stonest them which were sent unto thee;

as particularly Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, before mentioned. The Jews themselves are obliged to own, that this character belongs to them: say¹³⁰³ they,

"when the word of God shall come, who is his messenger, we will honour him. Says R. Saul, did not the prophets come, Μῶν γρηω, "and we killed them", and shed their blood, and how shall we receive his word? or how shall we believe?"

And a celebrated writer of their's, on those words¹³⁰⁴, "but now murderers", has this note;

"they have killed Uriah, they have killed Zechariah."

1301 Misn. Sanhedrin, c. 1. sect. 5.

1302 lb. c. 7. sect. 1.

1303 R. Isaac Arama in Gen. xlvi. apud Galatin. Arcan. Cath. ver. l. 3. c. 5.

1304 Jarchi in Isa. i. 21.

How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

Christ here speaks as a man, and the minister of the circumcision, and expresses an human affection for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and an human wish, and will for their temporal good; which he very aptly signifies by the hen, which is a very affectionate creature to its young, and which it endeavours to screen from danger, by covering with its wings. So the "Shekinah" with the Jews is called, αἰψυδθ αρπυ, "the holy bird"¹³⁰⁵; and that phrase, לחות חחה כנפי השכינה "to betake one's self, or to come to trust under the wings of the Shekinah", is often used¹³⁰⁶ for to become a proselyte to the true religion, and worship of God, as Jethro, and Ruth the Moabitess did. An expression much like to this here is used by an apocryphal writer of 2 Esdras:

I gathered you together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings: but now, what shall I do unto you? I will cast you out from my face." (2 Esdras 1:30)

It seems to be a simile much in use with that people. Our Lord is to be understood not of his divine will, as God, to gather the people of the Jews internally, by his Spirit and grace, to himself; for all those whom Christ would gather, in this sense, were gathered, notwithstanding all the opposition made by the rulers of the people; but of his human affection and will, as a man, and a minister, to gather them to him externally, by, and under the ministry of his word, to hear him preach; so as that they might be brought to a conviction of, and an assent unto him as the Messiah; which, though it might fall short of faith in him, would have been sufficient to have preserved them from temporal ruin, threatened to their city and temple, in the following verse. Instances of the human affection, and will of Christ, may be observed in Mark 10:21 which will of his, though not contrary to the divine will, but subordinate to it, yet not always the same with it, nor always fulfilled: whereas his divine will, or his will as God, is, always fulfilled: "who hath resisted his will?" this cannot be hindered, and made void; he does whatsoever he pleases: and further, that this will of Christ to gather the Jews to himself, is to be understood of his human, and not divine will, is manifest from

1305 Zohar in Numb. fol. 106. 3. & Imre binah in ib.

1306 Tzeror Hammor, fol. 77. 4. & 115. 2. Vid. Targum in Ruth ii. 12. Zohar in Exod. fol. 28. 3. & 29. 2.

hence, that this will was in him, and expressed by him at certain several times, by intervals; and therefore he says, "how often would I have gathered", &c. whereas the divine will is one continued, invariable, and unchangeable will, is always the same, and never begins or ceases to be, and to which such an expression is inapplicable; and therefore these words do not contradict the absolute and sovereign will of God, in the distinguishing acts of it, respecting the choice of some persons, and the leaving of others. And it is to be observed, that the persons whom Christ would have gathered, are not represented as being unwilling to be gathered; but their rulers were not willing that they should, and be made proselytes to him, and come under his wings. It is not said, "how often would I have gathered you, and you would not!" nor, "I would have gathered Jerusalem, and she would not"; nor, "I would have gathered thy children, and they would not"; but, "how often would I have gathered thy children, and ye would not!" Which observation alone is sufficient to destroy the argument founded on this passage in favour of free will. Had Christ expressed his desire to have gathered the heads of the people to him, the members of the Jewish sanhedrim, the civil and ecclesiastical rulers of the Jews: or had he signified how much he wished, and earnestly sought after, and attempted to gather Jerusalem, the children, the inhabitants of it in common, and neither of them would not; it would have carried some appearance of the doctrine of free will, and have seemed to have countenanced it, and have imputed the non-gathering of them to their own will: though had it been said, "they would not", instead of, "ye would not", it would only have furnished out a most sad instance of the perverseness of the will of man, which often opposes his temporal, as well as his spiritual good; and would rather show it to be a slave to that which is evil, than free to that which is good; and would be a proof of this, not in a single person only, but in a body of men. The opposition and resistance to the will of Christ were not made by the people, but by their governors. The common people seemed inclined to attend his ministry, as appears from the vast crowds, which, at different times and places, followed him; but the chief priests, and rulers, did all they could to hinder the collection of them to him, and their belief in him as the Messiah; by traducing his character, miracles, and doctrines, and by menacing the people with curses, and excommunications, making a law, that whoever confessed him should be turned out of the synagogue. So that the plain meaning of the text is the same with that of Mt 23:13 and consequently is

no proof of men's resisting the operations of the Spirit and grace of God; but only shows what obstructions and discouragements were thrown in the way of attendance on the external ministry of the word. In order to set aside, and overthrow the doctrine of grace, in election, and particular redemption, and effectual calling, it should be proved that Christ, as God, would have gathered, not Jerusalem, and the inhabitants of it only, but all mankind, even such as are not eventually saved, and that in a spiritual, saving way and manner, to himself; of which there is not the least intimation in this text: and in order to establish the resistibility of the grace of God, by the perverse will of man, so as to become of no effect; it should be shown that Christ would have savingly converted persons, and they would not be converted; and that he bestowed the same grace upon them, he does bestow on others, who are converted: whereas the sum of this passage lies in these few words, that Christ, as man, out of a compassionate regard for the people of the Jews, to whom, he was sent as the minister of the circumcision, would have gathered them together under his ministry, and have instructed them in the knowledge of himself, as the Messiah; which if they had only notionally received, would have secured them, as chickens under the hen, from impending judgments, which afterwards fell upon them; but their governors, and not they, would not; that is, would not suffer them to receive him, and embrace him as the Messiah. So that from the whole it appears, that this passage of Scripture, so much talked of by the Arminians, and so often cited by them, has nothing to do with the controversy about the doctrines of election and reprobation, particular redemption, efficacious grace in conversion, and the power of man's free will. This observation alone is sufficient to destroy the argument founded on this passage, in favour of free will.

Matthew 23:38

Ver. 38. **Behold your house is left unto you desolate.**

Signifying that the city in which they dwelt, where they had their ceiled houses, and stately palaces, would, in a little time, within the space of forty years, be destroyed, and become a desert; and the temple, formerly the house of God, but now only their's, and in which they trusted, would be abandoned by God, he would grant his presence no more in it; and the Messiah, the proprietor of it, and who was now in it, would then take his leave of it, and never more return to it; and that also should share the same fate as the city, and at the same time. Our

Lord seems to have in view those passages in Jer 12:7 and which the Jewish ¹³⁰⁷ writers understood of the temple. The author of the apocryphal the second book of Esdras has much such an expression as this: "Thus saith the Almighty Lord, Your house is desolate, I will cast you out as the wind doth stubble." (2 Esdras 1:33)

Matthew 23:39

Ver. 39. **For I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth,**

Meaning in a very little time after the passover, from the time of his crucifixion and death; otherwise they saw him many times after this, as in the palace of the high priest, in Pilate's judgment hall, and on the cross; but not after his resurrection. This shows the reason of their house being desolate, and in what sense it should be so, and immediately became so; namely, by being then directly, and ever after, destitute of his presence: and though they might afterwards seek for, and expect the Messiah in it, yet they would never be able to see him, nor throughout their long captivity: till ye shall say, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; that is, until the time comes, that the fulness of the Gentiles shall be brought in, and all Israel shall be saved, the Jews shall be converted, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; when they shall readily and cheerfully say these words to Christ, who will then appear in his glory; which they were now displeased at in the multitude that followed him, and the children in the temple. Though some think this is said by way of threatening, since the rest that is spoken to them by Christ is of that sort, and regards the men of that generation; and is given as a reason of their house being left desolate: and the sense is, that they should never see him with joy and pleasure; since, though they would be obliged to confess that he was Lord and Christ, they would never say the above words to him in faith, and holy reverence of him. The Cambridge exemplar of Beza's, and the Persic versions, read, "in the name of God."

Matthew Chapter 24

Matthew 24:1

Ver. 1. **And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple,**

He not only went out of it for that time, but took his final leave of it, never to return more to it; having foretold its desolation, which he, in part, by so doing, immediately fulfilled: this the disciples observing, and being intent on the outward splendour, and worldly grandeur

¹³⁰⁷ Targum & Kimchi in Jer. xii. 7.

of it, were concerned that so beautiful a structure should be deserted; and almost thought it incredible, that so strong, and firm a building could be destroyed.

And his disciples came unto him:

as he went, and as soon as he was come out of the temple, and whilst in view of it:

for to show him the buildings of the temple;

the walls of it, and courts adjoining to it, how beautiful and firm they were: whether this was done by them to raise in him admiration or commiseration, in hopes he might change the sentence he had passed upon it, is not easy to say; or whether this did not express their incredulity about the desolation of it; which Christ's answer, in the next verse, seems to imply. Mark says, it was "one of the disciples" that observed these to him, who might be accompanied with the rest, and in their name address him; and who, probably, might be Peter, since he was generally their mouth; and that he should speak to him in this manner: "master, see what manner of stones, and what buildings are here!" Luke says, "how it was adorned with goodly stones, and gifts." The Jews give very great encomiums of the second temple, as repaired by Herod; and it was undoubtedly a very fine structure. They say ¹³⁰⁸, that he built the house of the sanctuary, "an exceeding beautiful building"; and that he repaired the temple, in beauty "greatly exceeding" that of Solomon's ¹³⁰⁹. They moreover observe ¹³¹⁰, that

"he who has not seen the building of Herod, has never seen, בנייני נאה, "a beautiful building." With what is it built? says Rabbah, with stones of green and white marble. And there are others say, that it was built with stones of spotted green and white marble."

These, very likely, were the very stones the disciples pointed to, and admired; and were of a prodigious size, as well as worth. Some of the stones were, as Josephus ¹³¹¹ says,

"forty five cubits long, five high, and six broad."

Others of them, as he elsewhere affirm ¹³¹²,

"were twenty five cubits long, eight high, and twelve broad."

And he also tells us, in the same place, that there

¹³⁰⁸ Juchasin, fol. 139. 1.

¹³⁰⁹ Ganz Tzemach David, par. 1. fol. 24. 2.

¹³¹⁰ T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 4. 1. & Succa, fol. 51. 2.

¹³¹¹ De Bello Jud. l. 5. c. 5

¹³¹² Antiq. Jud. l. 15. c. 14.

were,

"in the porches, four rows of pillars: the thickness of each pillar was as much as three men, with their arms stretched out, and joined together, could grasp; the length twenty seven feet, and the number of them an hundred and sixty two, and beautiful to a miracle."

At the size of those stones, and the beauty of the work, it is said ¹³¹³, Titus was astonished, when he destroyed the temple; at which time his soldiers plundered it, and took away "the gifts", with which it is also said to be adorned. These were rich and valuable things which were dedicated to it, and either laid up in it, or hung upon the walls and pillars of it, as it was usual in other temples ¹³¹⁴. These may, intend the golden table given by Pompey, and the spoils which Herod dedicated; and particularly the golden vine, which was a gift of his ¹³¹⁵; besides multitudes of other valuable things, which were greatly enriching and ornamental to it. Now the disciples suggest, by observing these, what a pity it was such a grand edifice should be destroyed; or how unaccountable it was; that a place of so much strength, could easily be demolished.

Matthew 24:2

Ver. 2. **And Jesus said unto them, see ye not all these things?**

"These great buildings", as in Mark; all these goodly stones, so beautiful and large, and so firmly put together:

verily, I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down;

or broken, as Munster's Hebrew Gospel reads it: which prediction had a full and remarkable accomplishment; and which is not only attested by Josephus ¹³¹⁶, who relates, that both the city and temple were dug up, and laid level with the ground; but also by other Jewish writers; who tell us ¹³¹⁷ that

"on the ninth of Ab, a day prepared for punishments, Turnus Rufus the wicked, lkyhh ta vrx, "ploughed up the temple", and all round about it, to fulfil what is said, "Zion shall be ploughed as a field"

Yes, and to fulfil what Christ here says too, that not one stone should be left upon another, which a plough

¹³¹³ Egesippus, l. 5. c. 43.

¹²⁷⁵ Vid. Ryckium de Capitol. Rom. c. 21, &c.

¹³¹⁵ Joseph. Antiq. l. 15.

¹³¹⁶ De Bello Jud. l. 7. c. 7.

¹³¹⁷ Maimon. Hilch. Taaniot, c. 5. sect. 3. T. Bab. Taanith, fol. 23. 1. & Gloss. in ib.

would not admit of.

Matthew 24:3

Ver. 3. **And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives,**

Which was on the east of the city of Jerusalem ¹³¹⁸, “over against the temple”, as Mark says, and where he could sit and take a full view of it; for the wall on the east side was lower than any other, and that for this reason; that when the high priest burnt the red heifer on this mount, as he did, and sprinkled the blood, he might have a view of the gate of the temple. It is said ¹³¹⁹,

“all the walls which were there, were very high, except the eastern wall; for the high priest, when he burned the heifer, stood on the top of the mount of Olives, and directed himself, and looked to the gate of the temple, at the time he sprinkled the blood.”

This place, very probably, our Lord chose to sit in, that he might give his disciples an occasion to discourse more largely with him on this subject; and that he might take the opportunity of acquainting them with what would be the signs and forerunners of this desolation, and so it proved:

the disciples came to him privately;

these four at least, Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, as Mark relates; and that either separately from the rest of the disciples, or from the multitude: it might not be thought so proper, to ask the following questions before them, and they might suppose that Christ would not be so ready to give an answer to them plainly, before the common people; when they might hope to be indulged with one by him, in private:

saying, tell us, when shall these things be?

That this house will be left desolate, these buildings will be destroyed, and not one stone left upon another? This first question relates purely to the destruction of the temple, and to this Christ first answers, from Mt 24:4.

And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

Which two are put together, as what they supposed would be at the same time, and immediately follow the destruction of the temple. That he was come in the flesh, and was the true Messiah, they firmly believed: he was with them, and they expected he would continue with them, for they had no notion of his leaving them, and coming again. When he at any time spake of his dying and rising from the dead, they seemed not to understand

¹³¹⁸ Bartenora in Misn. Middot, c. 1. sect. 3.

¹²⁸⁰ Misn. lb. c. 2. sect. 4.

it: wherefore this coming of his, the sign of which, they inquire, is not to be understood of his coming a second time to judge the world, at the last day; but of his coming in his kingdom and glory, which they had observed him some little time before to speak of; declaring that some present should not die, till they saw it: wherefore they wanted to be informed, by what sign they might know, when he would set up his temporal kingdom; for since the temple was to be destroyed, they might hope a new one would be built, much more magnificent than this, and which is a Jewish notion; and that a new state of things would commence; the present world, or age, would be at a period; and the world to come, they had so often heard of from the Jewish doctors, would take place; and therefore they ask also, of the sign of the end of the world, or present state of things in the Jewish economy: to this Christ answers, in the latter part of this chapter, though not to the sense in which they put the questions; yet in the true sense of the coming of the son of man, and the end of the world; and in such a manner, as might be very instructive to them, and is to us.

Matthew 24:4

Ver. 4. **And Jesus answered and said unto them,....**

Not to indulge their curiosity, but to instruct them in things useful to be known, and which might be cautions to them and others, against deceivers; confirm them in the faith of himself, when they should see his predictions accomplished; and be directions to them, of what might shortly be expected.

Take heed that no man deceive you: by pretending to come from God with a new revelation, setting himself up for the Messiah, after my departure; suggesting himself to be the person designed by God to be the deliverer of Israel, and to be sent by him, to set up a temporal kingdom, in great worldly splendour and glory; promising great names, and high places of honour and trust in it; things which Christ knew his disciples were fond of, and were in danger of being ensnared by; and therefore gives them this suitable and seasonable advice, and caution.

Matthew 24:5

Ver. 5. **For many shall come in my name,**

by his orders, or with delegated powers and authority from him; but should assume the name of the Messiah, which was peculiarly his, to themselves; and take upon them his office, and challenge the honour and dignity which belonged unto him:

saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many. This is the first sign, preceding the destruction of the city

and temple of Jerusalem; as there was a general expectation among the Jews of a Messiah; that is, of one that should arise and deliver them from the Roman yoke, which was the common idea tacked to that word; in this period of time, many set up themselves to be deliverers and redeemers of the people of Israel: who had each of them their followers in great numbers, whom they imposed upon, and brought to destruction. Of this sort was Theudas, not he that Gamaliel speaks of, Ac 5:36 for he was before this time; but one that was in the time of Claudius Caesar, when Cuspius Fadus was governor of Judea; who persuaded a great number to follow him to the river Jordan, which he promised to divide, by a word of command, and give them a passage over; and thereby, as the historian observes ¹³²⁰, πολλοὺς ἠπατήσῃν, “he deceived many”; which is the very thing that is here predicted: but he and his company were routed Fadus, and his head cut off. There was another called the Egyptian, mentioned in Ac 21:38 who made an uproar, and led four thousand cut-throats into the wilderness; and this same man persuaded thirty thousand men to follow him to Mount Olivet, promising a free passage into the city; but he being vanquished by Felix, then governor of Judea; fled, and many of his followers were killed and taken ¹³²¹; and besides, there were many more magicians and impostors, that pretended to signs and wonders, and promised the people deliverance from their evils, by whom they were imposed upon to their ruin. There were others also besides these, that set up for deliverers, who called themselves by the name of the Messiah. Among these, we may reckon Simon Magus, who gave out that he was some great one; yea, expressly, that he was the word of God, and the Son of God ¹³²², which were known names of the Messiah; and Dositheus the Samaritan, asserted himself to be Christ ¹³²³; and also Menander affirmed, that no man could be saved, unless he was baptized in his name ¹³²⁴; these are instances before the destruction of Jerusalem, and confirm the prophecy here delivered.

Matthew 24:6

Ver. 6. **And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars,**

This is the second sign of the destruction of Jerusalem: it is observable that this, and some of the following signs, are given by the Jews, as signs of the Messiah's

¹³²⁰ Joseph. Antiq. l. 20. c. 2.

¹³²¹ Joseph. Antiq. l. 20. c. 6.

¹³²² Jerom in loc. Iren. adv. Haeres. l. 1. c. 20.

¹³²³ Origen contr. Cels. l. 1. p. 44.

¹³²⁴ Tertull. de prescript. Haeret. c. 46.

coming; whereas they were forerunners of their ruin, for the rejection of him who was already come. They suppose the Messiah will come in the seventh year, or the year of rest and release:

“On the seventh year (they say ¹³²⁵ will be מלחמות “wars”: and in the going out, or at the close of the seventh year, the son of David will come.”

Which wars, the gloss says, will be between the nations of the world, and Israel. Here wars may mean the commotions, insurrections, and seditions, against the Romans, and their governors; and the intestine slaughters committed among them, some time before the siege of Jerusalem, and the destruction of it. Under Cureanus the Roman governor, a sedition was raised on the day of the passover, in which twenty thousand perished; after that, in another tumult, ten thousand were destroyed by cut-throats: in Ascalon two thousand more, in Ptolemais two thousand, at Alexandria fifty thousand, at Damascus ten thousand, and elsewhere in great numbers ¹³²⁶. The Jews were also put into great consternation, upon hearing the design of the Roman emperor, to put up his image in their temple:

see that ye be not troubled;

so as to leave the land of Judea as yet, and quit the preaching of the Gospel there, as if the final destruction was just at hand;

for all these things must come to pass;

these wars and the reports of them and the panic on account of them; these commotions and slaughters, and terrible devastations by the sword must be; being determined by God, predicted by Christ, and brought upon the Jews by their own wickedness; and suffered in righteous judgment, for their sin:

but the end is not yet;

meaning not the end of the world, but the end of Jerusalem, and the temple, the end of the Jewish state; which were to continue, and did continue after these disturbances in it.

Matthew 24:7

Ver. 7 **For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom,**

This seems to be a distinct and third sign, foreboding the general calamity of the Jews; that there should be not only seditions and intestine wars, in the midst of their

¹³²⁵ T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 97. 1. & Megilia, fol. 17. 2. Zohar in Exod. fol. 3. 3, 4.

¹³²⁶ Vid. Joseph. Antiq. l. 20. c. 6. & de Bello Jud. l. 2, &c.

country, but there should be wars in other nations, one with another; and with the Jews, and the Jews with them: and this also is made a sign of the Messiah's coming by them, for so they say ¹³²⁷;

“when thou seest, מלכות מתגרות אלו באלו, “kingdoms stirred up one against another”, look for the feet of the Messiah: know thou that so it shall be; for so it was in the days of Abraham: by the means of kingdoms stirred up one against another, redemption came to Abraham.”

Poor blinded creatures! when these very things were the forerunners of their destruction. And so it was, the Jewish nation rose up against others, the Samaritans, Syrians, and Romans: there were great commotions in the Roman empire, between Otho and Vitellius, and Vitellius and Vespasian; and at length the Romans rose up against the Jews, under the latter, and entirely destroyed them; compare the writings in 2 Esdras:

“And one shall undertake to fight against another, one city against another, one place against another, one people against another, and one realm against another.” (2 Esdras 13:31)

“the beginning of sorrows and great mournings; the beginning of famine and great death; the beginning of wars, and the powers shall stand in fear; the beginning of evils! what shall I do when these evils shall come?” (2 Esdras 16:18)

“Therefore when there shall be seen earthquakes and uproars of the people in the world.” (2 Esdras 9:3)

And there shall be famines:

a fourth sign of the desolation of the city and temple, and which the Jews also say, shall go before the coming of the Messiah:

“in the second year (of the week of years) in which the son of David comes, they say ¹³²⁸, there will be “arrows of famine” sent forth; and in the third year, רב גדול, “a great famine”: and men, women, and children, and holy men, and men of business, shall die.”

But these have been already; they followed the Messiah, and preceded their destruction: one of these famines was in Claudius Caesar's time, was foretold by Agabus,

¹³²⁷ Bereshit Rabba, sect. 42. fol. 37. 1.

¹³²⁸ T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 97. 1. Misn. Sota, c. 9. sect.

15.

and is mentioned in Ac 11:28 and most dreadful ones there were, whilst Jerusalem was besieged, and before its utter ruin, related by Josephus.

And pestilences:

a pestilence is described by the Jews after this manner ¹³²⁹:

“a city that produces a thousand and five hundred footmen, as Cephars Aco, and nine dead men are carried out of it in three days, one after another, לו זה רבב! “this is a pestilence”; but if in one day, or in four days, it is no pestilence; and a city that produces five hundred footmen, as Cephars Amiko, and three dead men are carried out of it in three days, one after another, לו! this is a pestilence.”

These commonly attend famines, and are therefore mentioned together; and when the one was, the other may be supposed sooner or later to be:

and earthquakes in divers places

of the world; as, at Crete ¹³³⁰, and in divers cities in Asia ¹³³¹, in the times of Nero: particularly the three cities of Phrygia, Laodicea, Hierapolis, and Colosse; which were near to each other, and are all said to perish this way, in his reign ¹³³²;

“and Rome itself felt a tremor, in the reign of Galba ¹³³³.”

Matthew 24:8

Ver. 8. **All these are the beginning of sorrows,**

They were only a prelude unto them, and forerunners of them; they were only some foretastes of what would be, and were far from being the worst that should be endured. These were but light, in comparison of what befell the Jews, in their dreadful destruction. The word here used, signifies the sorrows and pains of a woman in travail. The Jews expect great sorrows and distresses in the times of the Messiah, and use a word to express them by, which answers to this, and call them, xyvmh ylbx, “the sorrows of the Messiah”; הבל, they say ¹³³⁴, signifies the sorrows of a woman in travail; and the Syriac version uses the same word here. These they represent to be very great, and express much concern to be delivered

¹³²⁹ T. Bab. Taanith, fol. 21. & 19. 1. Maimon. Hilch. Taaniot, c. 2. sect. 5.

¹³³⁰ Philostrat. in vit. Apollon. l. 4. c. 11.

¹³³¹ Sueton. in vit. Nero, c. 48.

¹³³² Orosius, l. 7. c. 7.

¹³³³ Sueton. in vit. Galba, c. 13.

¹³³⁴ Gloss. in T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 118. 2. {

from them. They ¹³³⁵ ask,

“what shall a man do, to be delivered from “the sorrows of the Messiah?” He must employ himself in the law, and in liberality.”

And again ¹³³⁶,

“he that observes the three meals on the sabbath day, shall be delivered from three punishments; from “the sorrows of the Messiah”, from the judgment of hell, and from Gog and Magog.”

But alas there was no other way of escaping them, but by faith in the true Messiah, Jesus; and it was for their disbelief and rejection of him, that these came upon them.

Matthew 24:9

Ver. 9. **Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted**,.... Our Lord proceeds to acquaint his disciples, what should befall them in this interval; and quite contrary to their expectations, who were looking for a temporal kingdom, and worldly grandeur, assures them of afflictions, persecutions, and death; that about these times, when these various signs should appear, and this beginning of sorrows take place; whilst these will be fulfilling in Judea, and other parts of the world; the Jews continuing in their obstinacy and unbelief, would deliver them up to the civil magistrates, to be scourged and imprisoned by them; either to their own sanhedrim, as were Peter and John; or to the Roman governors, Gallio, Festus, and Felix, as was the Apostle Paul.

And shall kill you;

as the two James', Peter, Paul, and even all the apostles, excepting John, who suffered martyrdom, and that before the destruction of Jerusalem:

and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake;

as the apostles and first Christians were, both by Jews and Gentiles; the latter being stirred up against them by the former, wherever they came, and for no other reason, but because they professed and preached in the name of Christ, as the Acts of the Apostles show: and their hatred proceeded so far, as to charge all their calamities upon them; as war, famine, pestilence, earthquakes, &c. as the apologies of the first Christians declare.

Matthew 24:10

Ver. 10. **And then shall many be offended**,.... That is, many who had been hearers of the apostles, and profes-

¹³³⁵ T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 98. 2.

¹³³⁶ T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 118. 2.

sors of the Christian religion; who were highly pleased with it, and were strenuous advocates for it, whilst things were tolerably quiet and easy; but when they saw the apostles, some of them beaten, and imprisoned; others put to death, and others forced to fly from place to place; and persecutions and affliction, because of Christ and his Gospel, likely to befall themselves, would be discouraged hereby, and stumble at the cross; and fall off from the faith of the Gospel, and the profession of it:

and shall betray one another;

meaning, that the apostates, who would fall off from the Christian religion, would prove treacherous to true believers, and give in their names to the persecutors, or inform them where they were, that they might take them, or deliver them into their hands themselves: these are the false brethren, the Apostle Paul was in perils among:

and shall hate one another;

not that the true Christians should hate these false brethren, any more than betray them; for they are taught to love all men, even their enemies; but these apostates should hate them, in whose communion they before were, and to whom they belonged; and even to a very great degree of hatred, as it often is seen, that such who turn their backs on Christ, and his Gospel, prove the most bitter enemies, and most violent persecutors of its preachers and followers.

Matthew 24:11

Ver. 11. **And many false prophets shall rise,**

Out of, from among the churches of Christ; at least under the name of Christians; for false teachers are here meant, men of heretical principles, pretending to a spirit of prophecy, and to new revelations, and a better understanding of the Scriptures; such as Simon Magus, Ebion, and Cerinthus, who denied the proper deity, and real humanity of Christ; Carpocrates, and the Gnostics his followers, the Nicolaitans, Hymeneus, Philetus, and others:

and shall deceive many:

as they all of them had their followers, and large numbers of them, whose faith was subverted by them; and who followed their pernicious ways, being imposed upon and seduced by their fair words, specious pretences, and licentious practices.

Matthew 24:12

Ver. 12. **And because iniquity shall abound,**

Meaning, either the malice and wickedness of outrageous persecutors, which should greatly increase; or the treachery and hatred of the apostates; or the errors and heresies of false teachers; or the wickedness that pre-

vailed in the lives and conversations of some, that were called Christians: for each of these seem to be hinted at in the context, and may be all included, as making up the abounding iniquity here spoken of; the consequence of which would be,

the love of many shall wax cold.

This would be the case of many, but not of all; for in the midst of this abounding iniquity, there were some, the ardour of whose love to Christ, to his Gospel, and to the saints, did not abate: but then there were many, whose zeal for Christ, through the violence of persecution, was greatly damped; and through the treachery of false brethren, were shy of the saints themselves, not knowing who to trust; and through the principles of the false teachers, the power of godliness, and the vital heat of religion, were almost lost; and through a love of the world, and of carnal ease and pleasure, love to the saints was grown very chill, and greatly left; as the instances of Demas, and those that forsook the Apostle Paul, at his first answer before Nero, show. This might be true of such, who were real believers in Christ; who might fall under great decays, through the prevalence of iniquity; since it does not say their love shall be lost, but wax cold.

Matthew 24:13

Ver. 13. **But he that shall endure to the end,**

In the profession of faith in Christ, notwithstanding the violent persecutions of wicked men; and in the pure and incorrupt doctrines of the Gospel, whilst many are deceived by the false teachers that shall arise; and in holiness of life and conversation, amidst all the impurities of the age; and shall patiently bear all afflictions, to the end of his life, or to the end of sorrows, of which the above mentioned were the beginning:

the same shall be saved;

with a temporal salvation, when Jerusalem, and the unbelieving inhabitants of it shall be destroyed: for those that believed in Christ, many of them, through persecution, were obliged to remove from thence; and others, by a voice from heaven, were bid to go out of it, as they did; and removed to Pella, a village a little beyond Jordan¹³³⁷, and so were preserved from the general calamity; and also with an everlasting salvation, which is the case of all that persevere to the end, as all true believers in Christ will.

Matthew 24:14

Ver. 14. **And this Gospel of the kingdom,**

Which Christ himself preached, and which he called

¹³³⁷ Euseb. Eccl. Hist. l. 3. c. 5.

and sent his apostles to preach, in all the cities of Judah; by which means men were brought into the kingdom of the Messiah, or Gospel dispensation; and which treated both of the kingdom of grace and glory, and pointed out the saints' meetness for the kingdom of heaven, and their right unto it, and gives the best account of the glories of it:

shall be preached in all the world;

not only in Judea, where it was now confined, and that by the express orders of Christ himself; but in all the nations of the world, for which the apostles had their commission enlarged, after our Lord's resurrection; when they were bid to go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature; and when the Jews put away the Gospel from them, they accordingly turned to the Gentiles; and before the destruction of Jerusalem, it was preached to all the nations under the heavens; and churches were planted in most places, through the ministry of it:

for a witness unto all nations;

meaning either for a witness against all such in them, as should reject it; or as a testimony of Christ and salvation, unto all such as should believe in him:

and then shall the end come;

not the end of the world, as the Ethiopic version reads it, and others understand it; but the end of the Jewish state, the end of the city and temple: so that the universal preaching of the Gospel all over the world, was the last criterion and sign, of the destruction of Jerusalem; and the account of that itself next follows, with the dismal circumstances which attended it.

Matthew 24:15

Ver. 15. **When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation,**

From signs, Christ proceeds to the immediate cause of the destruction of Jerusalem; which was, "the abomination of desolation", or the desolating abomination; or that abominable thing, which threatened and brought desolation upon the city, temple, and nation: by which is meant, not any statue placed in the temple by the Romans, or their order; not the golden eagle which Herod set upon the temple gate, for that was before Christ said these words; nor the image of Tiberius Caesar, which Pilate is said to bring into the temple; for this, if true, must be about this time; whereas Christ cannot be thought to refer to anything so near at hand; much less the statue of Adrian, set in the most holy place, which was an hundred and thirty years and upwards, after the destruction

of the city and temple; nor the statue of Titus, who destroyed both, which does not appear: ever to be set up, or attempted; nor of Caligula, which, though ordered, was prevented being placed there: but the Roman army is designed; see Luke 21:20 which was the כנף שקריף משממה, "the wing", or "army of abominations making desolate", Da 9:27. Armies are called wings, Isa 8:8 and the Roman armies were desolating ones to the Jews, and to whom they were an abomination; not only because they consisted of Heathen men, and uncircumcised persons, but chiefly because of the images of their gods, which were upon their ensigns: for images and idols were always an abomination to them; so the "filthiness" which Hezekiah ordered to be carried out of the holy place, 2Ch 29:5 is by the Targum called, ריחוקא "an abomination"; and this, by the Jewish writers¹³³⁸, is said to be an idol, which Ahaz had placed upon the altar; and such was the abomination of desolation, which Antiochus caused to be set upon the altar:

"Now the fifteenth day of the month Casleu, in the hundred forty and fifth year, they set up the abomination of desolation upon the altar, and builded idol altars throughout the cities of Juda on every side;" (1 Maccabees 1:54)

And so the Talmudic writers, by the abomination that makes desolate, in Da 12:11 to which Christ here refers, understand an image, which they say¹³³⁹ one Apostomus, a Grecian general, who burnt their law, set up in the temple. Now our Lord observes, that when they should see the Roman armies encompassing Jerusalem, with their ensigns flying, and these abominations on them, they might conclude its desolation was near at hand; and he does not so much mean his apostles, who would be most of them dead, or in other countries, when this would come to pass; but any of his disciples and followers, or any persons whatever, by whom should be seen this desolating abomination,

spoken of by Daniel the prophet:

not in Da 11:31 which is spoken of the abomination in the times of Antiochus; but either in

Da 12:11 or rather in Da 9:27 since this desolating abomination is that, which should follow the cutting off of the Messiah, and the ceasing of the daily sacrifice. It

¹³³⁸ R. David Kimchi, & R. Sol. ben Melech, in 2 Chron. xxix. 5.

¹³³⁹ T. Bab. Taanith, fol. 28. 2. & Gloss. in ib. {y} T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 94. 1. & Megilla, fol. 3. 1. & Tzeror Ham, mor, fol. 46. 4. Zohar in Num. fol. 61. 1.

is to be observed, that Daniel is here called a prophet, contrary to what the Jewish writers say¹³⁴⁰, who deny him to be one; though one of¹³⁴¹ no inconsiderable note among them affirms, that he attained to the end, הנבואה הגבול "of the prophetic border", or the ultimate degree of prophecy: when therefore this that Daniel, under a spirit of prophecy, spoke of should be seen,

standing in the holy place;

near the walls, and round about the holy city Jerusalem, so called from the sanctuary and worship of God in it; and which, in process of time, stood in the midst of it, and in the holy temple, and destroyed both; then

whoso readeth, let him understand:

that is, whoever then reads the prophecy of Daniel; will easily understand the meaning of it, and will see and know for certain, that now it is accomplished; and will consider how to escape the desolating judgment, unless he is given up to a judicial blindness and hardness of heart; which was the case of the greater part of the nation.

Matthew 24:16

Ver. 16. **Then let them which be in Judea,**

When this signal is given, let it be taken notice of and observed; let them that are in the city of Jerusalem, depart out of it; or who are in any other parts of Judea, in any of the towns, or cities thereof; let them not betake themselves to Jerusalem, imagining they may be safe there, in so strong and fortified a place, but let them flee elsewhere; see

Luke 21:21 and accordingly it is observed, that many did flee about this time; and it is remarked by several interpreters, and which Josephus¹³⁴² takes notice of with surprise, that Cestius Gallus having advanced with his army to Jerusalem, and besieged it, on a sudden, without any cause, raised the siege, and withdrew his army, when the city might have been easily taken; by which means a signal was made; and an opportunity given to the Christians, to make their escape: which they accordingly did, and went over Jordan, as Eusebius says¹³⁴³, to a place called Pella; so that when Titus came a few mouths after, there was not a Christian in the city, but they had fled as they are here bidden to

flee into the mountains;

or any places of shelter and refuge: these are men-

¹³⁴⁰ T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 94. 1. & Megilla, fol. 3. 1. & Tzeror Ham, mor, fol. 46. 4. Zohar in Num. fol. 61. 1.

¹³⁴¹ Jacchiades in Dan. i. 17.

¹³⁴² De Bello Jud. l. 2. c. 19. sect. 7.

¹³⁴³ Eccl. Hist. l. 3. c. 5. p. 75.

tioned particularly, because they are usually such; and design either the mountains in Judea, or in the adjacent countries. The Syriac and Persic versions read in the singular number, “into the mountain”; and it is reported that many of them did fly, particularly to Mount Libanus¹³⁴⁴.

Matthew 24:17

Ver. 17. **Let him which is on the housetop,**

Who should be there either for his devotion or recreation; for the houses of the Jews were built with flat roofs and battlements about them, which they made use of both for diversion and pleasure, and for private meditation and prayer, for social conversation, and sometimes for public preaching; see Mt 10:27

not come down to take anything out of his house:

that is, let him not come down in the inner way, but by the stairs, or ladder, on the outside of the house, which was usual. They had two ways of going out of, and into their houses; the one they call¹³⁴⁵ דֶּרֶב פְּחוּלִים “the way of the doors”; the other, דֶּרֶב גַּנִּי, “the way of the roof”: upon which the gloss is,

”to go up on the outside, דֶּרֶב פּוֹלֵם “by way” or “means” of a ladder, fixed at the entrance of the door of the upper room, and from thence he goes down into the house by a ladder;”

and in the same way they could come out; see Mark 2:4 and let him not go into his house to take any of his goods, or money, or food along with him necessary for his sustenance in his flight; lest, whilst he is busy in taking care of these, he loses his life, or, at least, the opportunity of making his escape; so sudden is this desolation represented to be.

Matthew 24:18

Ver. 18. **Neither let him which is in the field,**

Ploughing, or sowing, or employed in any other parts of husbandry, or rural business,

return back to take clothes;

for it was usual to work in the fields without their clothes, as at ploughing and sowing. Hence those words of Virgil¹³⁴⁶.

”Nudus ara, sere nudus, hyems ignava colono.”

Upon which Servius observes, that in good weather, when the sun warms the earth, men might plough

and sow without their clothes: and it is reported by the historian¹³⁴⁷ of Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus, that the messengers who were sent to him, from Minutius the consul, whom he had delivered from a siege, found him ploughing naked beyond the Tiber: not that he was entirely naked, but was stripped of his upper garments: and it is usual for people that work in the fields to strip themselves to their shirts, and lay their clothes at the corner of the field, or at the land’s end; and which we must suppose to be the case here: for our Lord’s meaning is not, that the man working in the field, should not return home to fetch his clothes, which were not left there; they were brought with him into the field, but put off; and laid aside in some part of it while at work; but that as soon as he had the news of Jerusalem being besieged, he should immediately make the best of his way, and flee to the mountains, as Lot was bid to do at the burning of Sodom; and he might not return to the corner of the field, or land’s end, where his clothes lay, as Lot was not to look behind; though if his clothes lay in the way of his flight, he might take them up, but might not go back for them, so sudden and swift should be the desolation. The Vulgate Latin reads, in the singular number, “his coat”; and so do the Syriac, Persic, and Ethiopic versions, and Munster’s Hebrew Gospel; and so it was read in four copies of Beza’s, in three of Stephens’s, and in others; and may design the upper coat or garment, which was put off whilst at work.

Matthew 24:19

Ver. 19. **And woe unto them that are with child,**

Not that it should be criminal for them to be with child, or a judgment on them; for it was always esteemed a blessing to be fruitful, and bear children: but this expresses the miserable circumstances such would be in, who, by reason of their heavy burdens, would not be able to make so speedy a flight, as the case would require; or would be obliged to stay at home, and endure all the miseries of the siege: so that these words, as the following are not expressive of sin, or punishment, but of pity and concern for their misery and distress: and to them that give suck in those days; whose tender affection to their infants will not suffer them to leave them behind them; and yet such their weakness, that they will not be able to carry them with them; at least, they must be great hindrances to their speedy flight. So that the case of these is much worse than that of men on the house top, or in the field, who could much more easily leave their goods and

¹³⁴⁷ Aurel Victor. de illustr. viris, c. 20.

clothes, than these their children, as well as had more agility and strength of body to flee. So twqynymw twrbwe, “women with child, and that give suck”; are mentioned together in the Jewish writings, as such as were excused from certain fasts, though obliged to others¹³⁴⁸.

Matthew 24:20

Ver. 20. **But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter,**

When days are short, and unfit for long journeys, and roads are bad, and sometimes not passable, through large snows, or floods of water; and when to dwell in desert places, and lodge in mountains, must be very uncomfortable: wherefore Christ directs to pray to God, who has the disposal of all events, and of the timing of them, that he would so order things in the course of his providence, that their flight might not be in such a season of the year, when travelling would be very difficult and troublesome. Dr. Lightfoot observes, from a Jewish writer¹³⁴⁹, that it is remarked as a favour of God in the destruction of the first temple, that it happened in the summer, and not in winter; whose words are these:”

God vouchsafed a great favour to Israel, for they ought to have gone out of the land on the tenth day of the month Tebeth; as he saith Eze 24:2 “son of man, write thee the name of the day, even of this same day”: what then did the Lord, holy and blessed? If they shall now go out in the winter, (saith he,) they will all die; therefore he prolonged the time to them, and carried them away in summer.”

And since therefore they received such a favour from him at the destruction of the first temple, there was encouragement to pray to him, that they might be indulged with the like favour when Jerusalem should be besieged again:

neither on the sabbath day:

the word “day” is not in the Greek text; and some¹³⁵⁰ have been of opinion, that the “sabbatical year”, or the seventh year, is meant, when no fruits would be found in the fields, and a great scarcity of provisions among people; who would not have a sufficiency, and much less any to spare to strangers fleeing from their native places; but rather the sabbath day, or “day of the sabbath”, as

¹³⁴⁸ T. Hieros. Taanioth, fol. 64. 3. Maimon. Hilch. Taanioth, c. 5. sect. 10.

¹³⁴⁹ Taachuma, fol. 57. 2.

¹³⁵⁰ Vid. Reland. Antiq. Heb. par. 4. c. 10. sect. 1. & Hammond in loc.

the Persic version reads it, is designed; and Beza says, four of his copies read it in the genitive case: and so four of Stephens’s. And the reason why our Lord put them on praying, that their flight might not be on the sabbath day, was, because he knew not only that the Jews, who believed not in him, would not suffer them to travel on a sabbath day more than two thousand cubits; which, according to their traditions¹³⁵¹, was a sabbath day’s journey; and which would not be sufficient for their flight to put them out of danger; but also, that those that did believe in him, particularly the Jerusalem Jews, would be all of them fond of the law of Moses, and scrupulous of violating any part of it, and especially that of the sabbath; see Ac 21:20. And though the Jews did allow, that the sabbath might be violated where life was in danger, and that it was lawful to defend themselves against an enemy on the sabbath day; yet this did not universally obtain; and it was made a question of, after the time of Christ, whether it was lawful to flee from danger on the sabbath day; of which take the following account¹³⁵².”Our Rabbins teach, that he that is pursued by Gentiles, or by thieves, may profane the sabbath for the sake of saving his life: and so we find of David, when Saul sought to slay him, he fled from him, and escaped.

Our Rabbins say, that it happened that evil writings (or edicts) came from the government to the great men of Tzippore; and they went, and said to R. Eleazar ben Prata, evil edicts are come to us from the government, what dost thou say? xrbn, “shall we flee?” and he was afraid to say to them “flee”; but he said to them with a nod, why do you ask me? go and ask Jacob, and Moses, and David; as it is written, of Jacob, Ho 12:12 “and Jacob fled”; and so of Moses, Ex 2:15 “and Moses fled”; and so of David, 1Sa 19:18 “and David fled, and escaped”: and he (God) says, Isa 26:20 “come my people, enter into thy chambers”.

From whence, it is plain, it was a question with the doctors in Tzippore, which was a town in Galilee, where there was an university, whether it was lawful to flee on the sabbath day or not; and though the Rabbi they applied to was of opinion it was lawful, yet he was fearful of speaking out his sense plainly, and therefore delivered it by signs and hints. Now our Lord’s meaning, in putting them on this petition, was, not to prevent the violation of the seventh day sabbath, or on account of the sacredness

¹³⁵¹ Maimon. Hilch. Sabbat, c. 27. sect. 1.

¹³⁵² Bemidbar Rabba, sect. 23. fol. 231. 4.

¹³⁴⁴ Joseph. ib.

¹³⁴⁵ T. Bab. Bava Metzia, fol. 117. 1.

¹³⁴⁶ Georgic. l. 1.

of it, which he knew would be abolished, and was abolished before this time; but he says this with respect to the opinion of the Jews, and “Judaizing” Christians, who, taking that day to be sacred, and fleeing on it unlawful, would find a difficulty with themselves, and others, to make their escape; otherwise it was as lawful to flee and travel on that day, as in the winter season; though both, for different reasons, incommodious.

Matthew 24:21

Ver. 21. **For then shall be great tribulation,**

This is urged as a reason for their speedy flight; since the calamity that would come upon those who should remain in the city, what through the sword, famine, pestilence, murders, robberies, &c. would

be such as was not since the beginning of the world, to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

The burning of Sodom and Gomorrha, the bondage of the children of Israel in Egypt, their captivity in Babylon, and all their distresses and afflictions in the times of the Maccabees, are nothing to be compared with the calamities which befell the Jews in the siege and destruction of Jerusalem. Great desolations have been made in the besieging and at the taking of many famous cities, as Troy, Babylon, Carthage, &c. but none of them are to be mentioned with the deplorable case of this city. Whoever reads Josephus’s account will be fully convinced of this; and readily join with him, who was an eyewitness of it, when he says ¹³⁵³, that

”never did any city suffer such things, nor was there ever any generation that more abounded in malice or wickedness.”

And indeed, all this came upon them for their impenitence and infidelity, and for their rejection and murdering of the Son of God; for as never any before, or since, committed the sin they did, or ever will, so there never did, or will, the same calamity befall a nation, as did them.

Matthew 24:22

Ver. 22. **And except those days should be shortened,**

That is, those days of tribulation which commenced at the siege of Jerusalem; and therefore cannot refer to the times before it, and the shortening of them by it, which were very dreadful and deplorable through the murders and robberies of the cut-throats and zealots; but to those after the siege began, which were very distressing to those that were within; and which, if they had not

been shortened, or if the siege had been lengthened out further,

there should no flesh be saved;

not one Jew in the city of Jerusalem would have been saved; they must everyone have perished by famine, or pestilence, or sword, or by the intestine wars and murders among themselves: nor indeed, if the siege had continued, would it have fared better with the inhabitants of the other parts of the country, among whom also many of the same calamities prevailed and spread themselves; so that, in all likelihood, if these days had been continued a little longer, there had not been a Jew left in all the land.

But for the elect’s sake;

those who were chosen in Christ, before the foundation of the world, to believe in him, and to be saved by him with an everlasting salvation; both those that were in the city, or, at least, who were to spring from some that were there, as their immediate offspring, or in future ages, and therefore they, and their posterity, must not be cut off; and also those chosen ones, and real believers, who were at Pella, and in the mountains, and other places, for the sake of these, and that they might be delivered from these pressing calamities,

those days shall be shortened:

for otherwise, if God had not preserved a seed, a remnant, according to the election of grace, that should be saved, they had been as Sodom and as Gomorrha, not one would have escaped. The shortening of those days is not to be understood literally, as if the natural days, in which this tribulation was, were to be shorter than usual. The Jews indeed often speak of the shortening of days in this sense, as miraculously done by God: so they say ¹³⁵⁴, that

”five miracles were wrought for our father Jacob, when he went from Beersheba to go to Haran. The first miracle was, that אַחַקְרָו לִיָּה שְׁנֵי דַיּוּמָא, “the hours of the day were shortened for him”, and the sun set before its time, because his word desired to speak with him.”

They also say ¹³⁵⁵,

”that the day in which Ahaz died, was shortened ten hours, that they might not mourn for him; and which afterwards rose up, and in the day that Hezekiah was healed, ten hours were added to it.”

¹³⁵⁴ Targum Jonathan ben Uzziel, & Targum Hieros. in Gem xxviii. 10.

¹³⁵⁵ R. Sol. Jarchi in Isa. xxxviii. 8.

¹³⁵³ De Bello Jud. l. 6. c. 11.

But the meaning here is, that the siege of Jerusalem, and the calamities attending it, should be sooner ended: not than God had determined, but than the sin of the Jews deserved, and the justice of God might have required in strict severity, and might be reasonably expected, considering the aggravated circumstances of their iniquities. A like manner of speech is used by the Karaite Jews ¹³⁵⁶, who say,

”if we walk in our law, why is our captivity prolonged, and there is not found balm for our wounds? and why are not Mhymy wjemtn, “the days” of the golden and silver kingdom “lessened”, for the righteousness of the righteous, which were in their days?”

Matthew 24:23

Ver. 23. **Then if any man shall say unto you,**

Either at the time when the siege shall be begun, and the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place; or during the days of tribulation, whilst the siege lasted; or after those days were shortened, and the city destroyed, and the Roman army was gone with their captives: when some, that were scattered up and down in the country, would insinuate to their countrymen, that the Messiah was in such a place: saying,

lo! here is Christ, or there, believe it not;

for both during the time of the siege, there were such that sprung up, and pretended to be Messiahs, and deliverers of them from the Roman power, and had their several abettors; one saying he was in such place, and another that he was in such a place; and so spirited up the people not to fly, nor to deliver up the city; and also, after the city was taken and destroyed, one and another set up for the Messiah. Very quickly after, one Jonathan, a very wicked man, led many into the desert of Cyrene, promising to show them signs and wonders, and was overthrown by Catullius, the Roman governor ¹³⁵⁷; and after that, in the times of Adrian, the famous Barcochab set up for the Messiah, and was encouraged by R. Akiba, and a multitude of Jews ¹³⁵⁸.

Matthew 24:24

Ver. 24. **For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets,**

Such as the above mentioned: these false Christs had their false prophets, who endeavoured to persuade the

¹³⁵⁶ Chilluk M. S. apud Trigland. de sect. Karaeorum, c. 9. p. 147.

¹³⁵⁷ Joseph. Antiq. l. 7. c. 12.

¹³⁵⁸ Ganz. Tzemach David, par. 1. fol. 28. 2.

people to believe them to be the Messiah, as Barcochab had Akiba, who applied many prophecies to him. This man was called Barcochab, which signifies the son of a star, in allusion to Nu 24:17 he was crowned by the Jews, and proclaimed the Messiah by Akiba; upon which a Roman army was sent against him, and a place called Bitter was besieged, and taken, and he, and a prodigious number of Jews were destroyed. This deceiver was afterwards, by them, called Barcoziba, the son of a lie:

and shall show great signs and wonders;

make an appearance of doing them, though they really did them not: so that Jonathan, before mentioned, pretended to show signs and sights; and Barcochab made as if flame came out of his mouth; and many of the Jewish doctors in these times, and following, gave themselves up to sorcery, and the magic art; and are, many of them, often said ¹³⁵⁹ to be מְלֻמְדֵימ בְּנִימ, “expert in wonders”, or miracles:

if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

By whom we are to understand, not the choicest believers, or the persevering Christians: not but that such who are truly converted, are choice believers in Christ, and persevering Christians are undoubtedly the elect of God; but then the reason why they are elect, and why they are so called, is not because they are converted, are choice believers, and persevering Christians; but, on the contrary, the reason why they are converted, become true believers, and persevere to the end, is, because they are elected; conversion, faith, and perseverance being not the causes or conditions, but the fruits and effects of election: besides to talk of the final seduction of a persevering Christian, is a contradiction in terms. Such an interpretation of the phrase must be absurd and impertinent; for who knows not that a persevering Christian cannot be finally and totally deceived? But by the elect are meant, a select number of particular persons of Adam’s posterity, whom God, of his sovereign goodwill and pleasure, without respect to their faith, holiness, and good works, has chosen, in Christ, before the foundation of the world, both to grace and glory: and to deceive these finally and totally, is impossible, as is here suggested; not impossible, considering their own weakness, and the craftiness of deceivers, who, if left to themselves, and the power of such deception, and the working of Satan with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, might easily be seduced; but considering the purposes and promises of God concerning them, the provisions of his grace for

¹³¹⁹ T. Bab. Meila, fol. 17. 2. Juchasin, fol. 20. 1, 2. & 42. 2. & 56. 2. & 77. 1. & 96. 2.

them, the security of them in the hands of Christ, and their preservation by the mighty power of God, their final and total deception is not only difficult, but impossible. They may be, and are deceived before conversion; this is one part of their character whilst unregenerate, “foolish, disobedient, deceived”, Tit 3:3 yea, they may be, and oftentimes are, deceived after conversion; but then this is in part only, and not totally; in some lesser, and not in the greater matters of faith; not so as to let go their hold of Christ their head, and quit the doctrine of salvation by him, or fall into damnable heresies: they may be seduced from the simplicity of the Gospel, but not finally; for they shall be recovered out of the snare of the devil, and not to be left to perish in such deceivings. This clause, as it expresses the power of deceivers, and the efficacy of Satan, so the influence and certainty of electing grace and the sure and firm perseverance of the saints, to the end, notwithstanding the cunning and craft of men and devils; for if these, with all their signs and wonders, could not deceive them, it may be pronounced impossible that they ever should be finally and totally deceived.

Matthew 24:25

Ver. 25. **Behold, I have told you before.**

Meaning not before in this discourse, though he had in Mt 24:5 signified also, that false Christs, and false prophets should arise, but before these things came to pass; so that they had sufficient notice and warning of them, and would be inexcusable if they were not upon their guard against them; and which, when they came to pass, would furnish out a considerable argument in proof of him, as the true Messiah, against all these false ones, showing him to be omniscient; and so would serve to establish their faith in him, and be a means of securing them from such deceivers.

Matthew 24:26

Ver. 26. **Wherefore if they shall say unto you,**

Any of the false prophets, or the deluded followers of false Christs:

behold, he is in the desert, go not forth:

that is, should they affirm, that the Messiah is in such a wilderness, in the wilderness of Judea, or in any other desert place, do not go out of the places where you are to see, or hear, and know the truth of things; lest you should, in any respect, be stumbled, ensnared, and brought into danger. It was usual for these impostors to lead their followers into deserts, pretending to work wonders in such solitary places: so, during the siege, Simon, the son of Giora, collected together many thousands in the moun-

tainous and desert parts of Judea¹³⁶⁰; and the above mentioned Jonathan, after the destruction of the city, led great multitudes into the desert:

behold, he is in the secret chambers, believe it not;

or should others say behold, or for certain, the Messiah is in some one of the secret and fortified places of the temple; where, during some time of the siege, were John and Eleazar, the heads of the zealots¹³⁶¹; do not believe them. Some reference may be had to the chamber of secrets, which was in the temple {w};

”for in the sanctuary there were two chambers; one was called Myavx tkvl, “the chamber of secrets”, and the other the chamber of vessels.’

’Or else some respect may be had to the notions of the Jews, concerning the Messiah, which they imbibed about these times, and ever since retained, that he was born the day Jerusalem was destroyed, but is hid, for their sins, in some secret place, and will in time be revealed¹³⁶². Some say, that he is hid in the sea; others, in the walks of the garden of Eden; and others, that he sits among the lepers at the gates of Rome¹³⁶³. The Syriac version here reads in the singular number, “in the bedchamber”; in some private apartment, where he remains till a proper time of showing himself offers, for fear of the Romans: but these are all idle notions, and none of them to be believed. The true Messiah is come, and has showed himself to Israel; and even the giving out these things discovers a consciousness, and a conviction that the Messiah is come.

Matthew 24:27

Ver. 27. **For as the lightning cometh out of the east,**

The eastern part of the horizon,

and shineth even unto the west;

to the western part of it, with great clearness; in a moment; in the twinkling of an eye, filling the whole intermediate space;

so shall also the coming of the son of man be;

which must be understood not of his last coming to judgment, though that will be sudden, visible, and universal; he will at once come to, and be seen by all, in the clouds of heaven, and not in deserts and secret chambers: nor of his spiritual coming in the more sudden, and clear, and powerful preaching of the Gospel all over the Gentile world; for this was to be done before the

¹³⁶⁰ Joseph de Bello. Jud. l. 5. c. 7.

¹³⁶¹ Ib. c. 6. l. 4. {w} Misn. Shekalim, c. 5. sect. 6.

¹³⁶² Aben Ezra in Cant. vii. 5. Targum in Mic. iv. 8.

¹³⁶³ Vid. Buxtorf. Synag. Jud. c. 50.

destruction of Jerusalem: but of his coming in his wrath and vengeance to destroy that people, their nation, city, and temple: so that after this to look for the Messiah in a desert, or secret chamber, must argue great stupidity and blindness; when his coming was as sudden, visible, powerful, and general, to the destruction of that nation, as the lightning that comes from the east, and, in a moment, shines to the west.

Matthew 24:28

Ver. 28. **For wheresoever the carcass is,**

Not Christ, as he is held forth in the Gospel, crucified and slain, through whose death is the savour of life, and by whom salvation is, and to whom sensible sinners flock, encouraged by the ministry of the word; and much less Christ considered as risen, exalted, and coming in great glory to judgment, to whom the word “carcass” will by no means agree, and but very poorly under the former consideration: but the people of the Jews are designed by it, in their fallen, deplorable, miserable, and lifeless state, who were like to the body of a man, or any other creature, struck dead with lightning from heaven; being destroyed by the breath of the mouth, and brightness of the coming of the son of man, like lightning, just as anti-christ will be at the last day:

there will the eagles be gathered together:

not particular believers here, or all the saints at the day of judgment; though these may be, as they are, compared to eagles for many things; as their swiftness in flying to Christ, their sagacity and the sharpness of their spiritual sight, soaring on high, and renewing their spiritual strength and youth: but here the Roman armies are intended, whose ensigns were eagles; and the eagle still is, to this day, the ensign of the Roman empire: formerly other creatures, with the eagle, were used for ensigns; but C. Marius, in his second consulship, banished them, and appropriated the eagle only to the legions: nor was it a single eagle that was carried before the army, but every legion had an eagle went before it, made of gold or silver, and carried upon the top of a spear¹³⁶⁴: and the sense of this passage is this, that wherever the Jews were, whether at Jerusalem, where the body and carcass of them was, in a most forlorn and desperate condition; or in any other parts of the country, the Roman eagles, or legions, would find them out, and make an utter destruction of them. The Persic version, contrary to others, and to all copies, renders it “vultures”. Though this creature is of the same

¹³⁶⁴ Plin. Nat. Hist. l. 10. c. 4. Alex. ab Alex. Genial. Dier. l. 4. c. 2.

nature with the eagle, with respect to feeding on carcasses: hence the proverb,

”cujus vulturis hoc erit cadaver?”

”what vulture shall have this carcass?” It has a very sharp sight, and quick smell, and will, by both, discern carcasses at almost incredible distance: it will diligently watch a man that is near death; and will follow armies going to battle, as historians relate¹³⁶⁵: and it is the eagle which is of the vulture kind, as Aristotle¹³⁶⁶ observes, that takes up dead bodies, and carries them to its nest. And Pliny¹³⁶⁷ says, it is that sort of eagles only which does so; and some have affirmed that eagles will by no means touch dead carcasses: but this is contrary not only to this passage of Scripture, but to others; particularly to Job 39:30 “her young ones also suck up blood, and where the slain are, there is she”: an expression much the same with this in the text, and to which it seems to refer; see also Pr 30:17. Though Chrysostom¹³⁶⁸ says, both the passage in Job, and this in Matthew, are to be understood of vultures; he doubtless means the eagles that are of the vulture kind, the Gypaetos, or vulture eagle. There is one kind of eagles, naturalists say¹³⁶⁹, will not feed on flesh, which is called the bird of Jupiter; but, in common, the eagle is represented as a very rapacious creature, seizing, and feeding upon the flesh of hares, fawns, geese, &c. and the rather this creature is designed here; since, of all birds, this is the only one that is not hurt with lightning¹³⁷⁰, and so can immediately seize carcasses killed thereby; to which there seems to be an allusion here, by comparing it with the preceding verse: however, the Persic version, though it is literally a proper one, yet from the several things observed, it is not to be overlooked and slighted.

Matthew 24:29

Ver. 29. **Immediately after the tribulation of those days,**

That is, immediately after the distress the Jews would be in through the siege of Jerusalem, and the calamities attending it; just upon the destruction of that city, and the temple in it, with the whole nation of the Jews, shall the following things come to pass; and therefore cannot

¹³⁶⁵ Aelian. de Animal. Natura, l. 2. c. 46.

¹³⁶⁶ De Hist. Animal. l. 9. c. 32.

¹³⁶⁷ Hist. Nat. l. 10. c. 3.

¹³⁶⁸ In Matt. Homil. 49.

¹³⁶⁹ Aelian. de Animal. l. 9. c. 10.

¹³⁷⁰ Plin. Nat. Hist. l. 2. c. 55.

be referred to the last judgment, or what should befall the church, or world, a little before that time, or should be accomplished in the whole intermediate time, between the destruction of Jerusalem, and the last judgment: for all that is said to account for such a sense, as that it was usual with the prophets to speak of judgments afar off as near; and that the apostles often speak of the coming of Christ, the last judgment, and the end of the world, as just at hand; and that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, will not answer to the word “immediately”, or show that that should be understood of two thousand years after: besides, all the following things were to be fulfilled before that present generation, in which Christ lived, passed away, Mt 24:34 and therefore must be understood of things that should directly, and immediately take place upon, or at the destruction of the city and temple.

Shall the sun be darkened:

not in a literal but in a figurative sense; and is to be understood not of the religion of the Jewish church; nor of the knowledge of the law among them, and the decrease of it; nor of the Gospel being obscured by heretics and false teachers; nor of the temple of Jerusalem, senses which are given into by one or another; but of the Shekinah, or the divine presence in the temple. The glory of God, who is a sun and a shield, filled the tabernacle, when it was reared up; and so it did the temple, when it was built and dedicated; in the most holy place, Jehovah took up his residence; here was the symbol of his presence, the mercy seat, and the two cherubim over it: and though God had for some time departed from this people, and a voice was heard in the temple before its destruction, saying, “let us go hence”; yet the token of the divine presence remained till the utter destruction of it; and then this sun was wholly darkened, and there was not so much as the outward symbol of it:

and the moon shall not give her light;

which also is to be explained in a figurative and metaphorical sense; and refers not to the Roman empire, which quickly began to diminish; nor to the city of Jerusalem; nor to the civil polity of the nation; but to the ceremonial law, the moon, the church is said to have under her feet, Re 12:1 so called because the observance of new moons was one part of it, and the Jewish festivals were regulated by the moon; and especially, because like the moon, it was variable and changeable. Now, though this, in right, was abolished at the death of Christ, and ceased to give any true light, when he, the substance, was come; yet was kept up by the Jews, as long as their tem-

ple was standing; but when that was destroyed, the daily sacrifice, in fact, ceased, and so it has ever since; the Jews esteeming it unlawful to offer sacrifice in a strange land, or upon any other altar than that of Jerusalem; and are to this day without a sacrifice, and without an ephod: and the stars shall fall from heaven; which phrase, as it elsewhere intends the doctors of the church, and preachers falling off from purity of doctrine and conversation; so here it designs the Jewish Rabbins and doctors, who departed from the word of God, and set up their traditions above it, fell into vain and senseless interpretations of it, and into debates about things contained in their Talmud; the foundation of which began to be laid immediately upon their dispersion into other countries:

and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken;

meaning all the ordinances of the legal dispensation; which shaking, and even removing of them, were foretold by Hag 2:6 and explained by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, Heb 12:26 whereby room and way were made for Gospel ordinances to take place, and be established; which shall not be shaken, so as to be removed, but remain till the second coming of Christ. The Jews themselves are sensible, and make heavy complaints of the great declensions and alterations among them, since the destruction of the temple; for after having taken notice of the death of several of their doctors, who died a little before, or after that; and that upon their death ceased the honour of the law, the splendour of wisdom, and the glory of the priesthood, they add ¹³⁷¹;

”from the time that the temple was destroyed, the wise men, and sons of nobles, were put to shame, and they covered their heads; liberal men were reduced to poverty; and men of violence and calumny prevailed; and there were none that expounded, or inquired, or asked. R. Elezer the great, said, from the time the sanctuary were destroyed, the wise men began to be like Scribes, and the Scribes like to the Chazans, (or sextons that looked after the synagogues,) and the Chazans like to the common people, and the common people grew worse and worse, and there were none that inquired and asked;

”that is, of the wise men there were no scholars, or very few that studied in the law.

Matthew 24:30

Ver. 30 **And then shall appear the sign of the son of**

¹³⁷¹ Misn. Sotah, c. 9. sect. 15.

man in heaven,

Not the sound of the great trumpet, mentioned in the following verse; nor the clouds of heaven in this; nor the sign of the cross appearing in the air, as it is said to do in the times of Constantine: not the former; for though to blow a trumpet is sometimes to give a sign, and is an alarm; and the feast which the Jews call the day of blowing the trumpets, Nu 29:1 is, by the Septuagint, rendered hmera shmasiav, “the day of signification”; yet this sign is not said to be sounded, but to appear, or to be seen, which does not agree with the sounding of a trumpet: much less can this design the last trumpet at the day of judgment, since of that the text does not speak; and, for the same reason, the clouds cannot be meant in which Christ will come to judgment, nor are clouds in themselves any sign of it: nor the latter, of which there is no hint in the word of God, nor any reason to expect it, nor any foundation for it; nor is any miraculous star intended, such as appeared at Christ’s first coming, but the son of man himself: just as circumcision is called the sign of circumcision, Ro 4:11 and Christ is sometimes called a sign, Luke 2:34 as is his resurrection from the dead, Mt 12:39 and here the glory and majesty in which he shall come: and it may be observed, that the other evangelists make no mention of the sign, only speak of the son of man, Mark 13:26 and he shall appear, not in person, but in the power of his wrath and vengeance, on the Jewish nation which will be a full sign and proof of his being come: for the sense is, that when the above calamities shall be upon the civil state of that people, and there will be such changes in their ecclesiastical state it will be as clear a point, that Christ is come in the flesh, and that he is also come in his vengeance on that nation, for their rejection and crucifixion him, as if they had seen him appear in person in the heavens. They had been always seeking a sign, and were continually asking one of him; and now they will have a sign with a witness; as they had accordingly.

And then shall the tribes of the earth,

or land, **mourn;**

that is, the land of Judea; for other lands, and countries, were not usually divided into tribes, as that was; neither were they affected with the calamities and desolations of it, and the vengeance of the son of man upon it; at least not so as to mourn on that account, but rather were glad and rejoiced:

and they shall see the son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.

The Arabic version reads it, “ye shall see”, as is ex-

pressed by Christ, in Mt 26:64. Where the high priest, chief priests, Scribes, and elders, and the whole sanhedrim of the Jews are spoken to: and as the same persons, namely, the Jews, are meant here as there; so the same coming of the son of man is intended; not his coming at the last day to judgment; though that will be in the clouds of heaven, and with great power and glory; but his coming to bring on, and give the finishing stroke to the destruction of that people, which was a dark and cloudy dispensation to them: and when they felt the power of his arm, might, if not blind and stupid to the last degree, see the glory of his person, that he was more than a mere man, and no other than the Son of God, whom they had despised, rejected, and crucified; and who came to set up his kingdom and glory in a more visible and peculiar manner, among the Gentiles.

Matthew 24:31

Ver. 31. **And he shall send his angels,**

Not the angels, i.e. ministering spirits, so called, not from their nature, but their office, as being sent forth by God and Christ; but men angels, or messengers, the ministers and preachers of the Gospel, whom Christ would call, qualify, and send forth into all the world of the Gentiles, to preach his Gospel, and plant churches there still more, when that at Jerusalem was broken up and dissolved. These are called “angels”, because of their mission, and commission from Christ, to preach the Gospel; and because of their knowledge and understanding in spiritual things; and because of their zeal, diligence, and watchfulness.

With a great sound of a trumpet,

meaning the Gospel; see Isa 27:13 so called in allusion either to the silver trumpets which Moses was ordered to make of one piece, and use them for the calling of the assembly, the journeying of the camps, blowing an alarm for war, and on their solemn and festival days, Nu 10:1. The Gospel being rich and precious, all of a piece, useful for gathering souls to Christ, and to his churches; to direct saints in their journey to Canaan’s land; to encourage them to fight the Lord’s battles; and is a joyful sound, being a sound of love, grace, and mercy, peace, pardon, righteousness, life and salvation, by Christ: or else so called, in allusion to the trumpet blown in the year of “jubilee”; which proclaimed rest to the land, liberty to prisoners, a release of debts, and restoration of inheritances; as the Gospel publishes rest in Christ, liberty to the captives of sin, Satan, and the law, a payment of debts by Christ, and a release from them upon that, and

a right and title to the heavenly inheritance. The Vulgate Latin reads it, “with a trumpet, and a great voice”; and so does Munster’s Hebrew Gospel; and so it was read in four of Beza’s copies:

and they shall gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other;

that is, by the ministration of the Gospel; the Spirit of God accompanying it with his power, and grace, the ministers of the word should gather out of the world unto Christ, and to his churches, such persons as God had, before the foundation of the world, chosen in Christ, unto salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth; wherever they are under the whole heavens, from one end to another; or in any part of the earth, though at the greatest distance; for in Mark 13:27 it is said,

“from the uttermost part of the earth, to the uttermost part of the heaven”. The Jews ¹³⁷² say, that”in the after redemption (i.e. by the Messiah) all Israel shall be gathered together by the sound of a trumpet, from the four parts of the world.”

Matthew 24:32

Ver. 32. **Now learn a parable of the fig tree,**

Take a similitude, or comparison from the fig tree, which was a tree well known in Judea; and the putting forth of its branches, leaves, and fruit, fell under the observation of everyone:

when its branch is yet tender;

through the influence of the sun, and the motion of the sap, which was bound up, and congealed in the winter season:

and putteth forth leaves;

from the tender branches, which swell, and open, and put forth buds, leaves, and fruit:

ye know the summer is nigh;

spring being already come: the fig tree putting forth her green figs, is a sign that the winter is past, the spring is come, and summer is at hand; see So 2:11.

Matthew 24:33

Ver. 33. **So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things,**

That are mentioned above, relating to the signs of the destruction of the temple and city, and the destruction itself, with all those several things that should directly take place upon it; this is an accommodation of the above parable, similitude, or comparison:

¹³⁷² Zohar in Lev. fol. 47. 1.

know that it is near, even at the doors;

meaning, either that “he is near”, as the Ethiopic version reads it, the son of man is near, even at the doors; or as the Vulgate Latin renders it, “in the gates”, or “doors”, and so does Munster’s Hebrew Gospel; and signifies, that he was already come; for to be in the doors, or within the gates, is more than to be at the doors, or at the gates: and thus the fig tree putting forth its leaves, is a sign that summer is not only nigh, but is already come, even that part of it we call spring; for the Scripture divides the whole year only into two parts, summer and winter; so these calamities and desolations on the Jews, were a sign that the son of man was come, was in the gates, displaying his power and his glory: or the redemption and deliverance of the people of God was at hand, from the persecutions of the Jews; for till the destruction of Jerusalem, the persecutions of the Christians were chiefly from the Jews, or occasioned by them; but now, they being destroyed, the summer of deliverance was at hand: or else the kingdom of God, or a more enlarged state of the Gospel dispensation was near; the winter of the legal dispensation was over, the spring of the Gospel dispensation was come, through the preaching of John the Baptist, Christ and his apostles; and now the summer of it was at hand, through the general spread of it, all over the Gentile world. So the second coming of Christ, will be a summer of joy and comfort to the saints: Christ will appear most lovely and amiable to them, he will be glorified by them, and admired in them; great grace will be brought unto them, and great glory will be put upon them; they will then enjoy full redemption and salvation: the winter of sorrows, afflictions, and persecutions, and of coldness, darkness, and desertion, will be over; the sun shall no more go down, nor the moon withdraw itself, but the Lord will be the everlasting light of his people.

Matthew 24:34

Ver. 34. **Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass,**

Not the generation of men in general; as if the sense was, that mankind should not cease, until the accomplishment of these things; nor the generation, or people of the Jews, who should continue to be a people, until all were fulfilled; nor the generation of Christians; as if the meaning was, that there should be always a set of Christians, or believers in Christ in the world, until all these events came to pass; but it respects that present age, or generation of men then living in it; and the sense is, that all the men of that age should not die, but some should

live

till all these things were fulfilled;

see Mt 16:28 as many did, and as there is reason to believe they might, and must, since all these things had their accomplishment, in and about forty years after this: and certain it is, that John, one of the disciples of Christ, outlived the time by many years; and, as Dr. Lightfoot observes, many of the Jewish doctors now living, when Christ spoke these words, lived until the city was destroyed; as Rabban Simeon, who perished with it, R. Jochanan ben Zaccai, who outlived it, R. Zadoch, R. Ishmael, and others: this is a full and clear proof, that not anything that is said before, relates to the second coming of Christ, the day of judgment, and end of the world; but that all belong to the coming of the son of man, in the destruction of Jerusalem, and to the end of the Jewish state.

Matthew 24:35

Ver. 35. **Heaven and earth shall pass away,**

This is either an assertion, which will be true at the end of time; not as to the substance of the heavens and earth, which will always remain, but as to the qualities of them, which will be altered: they will be renewed and refined, but not destroyed; the bad qualities, or evil circumstances, which attend them through the sin of man, will be removed and pass away, but they themselves will continue in being: or is a comparative expression, and the sense is, that the heavens and the earth, and the ordinances thereof, than which nothing can be more firm and strong, being fixed and supported by God himself, shall sooner pass away, than anything asserted and predicted by Christ shall:

but my words shall not pass away;

be vain and empty, and unaccomplished; which is true of anything, and everything spoken by Christ; and especially here regards all that he had said concerning the calamities that should befall the Jews, before, at, or upon the destruction of their nation, city, and temple; and the design of the expression, is to show the certainty, unalterableness, and sure accomplishment of these things; see Jer 31:36.

Matthew 24:36

Ver. 36. **But of that day and hour knoweth no man,**

Which is to be understood, not of the second coming of Christ, the end of the world, and the last judgment; but of the coming of the son of man, to take vengeance on the Jews, and of their destruction; for the words manifestly regard the date of the several things going before, which only can be applied to that catastrophe, and

dreadful desolation: now, though the destruction itself was spoken of by Moses and the prophets, was foretold by Christ, and the believing Jews had some discerning of its near approach; see Heb 10:25 yet the exact and precise time was not known: it might have been: calculated to a year by Daniel’s weeks, but not to the day and hour; and therefore our Lord does not say of the year, but of the day and hour no man knows; though the one week, or seven years, being separated from the rest, throws that account into some perplexity; and which perhaps is on purpose done, to conceal the precise time of Jerusalem’s destruction: nor need it be wondered at, notwithstanding all the hints given, that the fatal day should not be exactly known beforehand; when those who have lived since, and were eyewitnesses of it, are not agreed on what day of the month it was; for, as Dr. Lightfoot ¹³⁷³ observes, Josephus ¹³⁷⁴ says,

”that the temple perished the “tenth” day of “Lous”, a day fatal to the temple, as having been on that day consumed in flames, by the king of Babylon.

”And yet Rabbi Jochanan ben Zaccai, who was also at the destruction of it, as well as Josephus, with all the Jewish writers, say it was on the “ninth of Ab”; for of this day they ¹³⁷⁵ say, five things happened upon it:

”On the “ninth of Ab” it was decreed concerning our fathers, that they should not enter into the land (of Canaan), the first and second temple were destroyed, Bither was taken, and the city ploughed up.”

Though the words of R. Jochanan, cited by the doctor, refer to the first, and not to the second temple, and should have been rendered thus:

”If I had been in the generation (which fixed the fast for the destruction of the first temple), I would not have fixed it but on the tenth (of Ab); for, adds he, the greatest part of the temple was burnt on that day; but the Rabbins rather regarded the beginning of the punishment ¹³⁷⁶.

”And so the fasting of Rabbi, and R. Joshua ben Levi, on the “ninth” and “tenth” days, were on account of the

¹³⁷³ In Mark xiii. 32.

¹³⁷⁴ De Bello Jud. l. 6. c. 26.

¹³⁷⁵ Misu. Taanith, c. 4. sect. 7. T. Hieros. Taanioth, fol. 68. 3. & Maimon. Hilch. Taanioth, c. 5. sect. 2.

¹³⁷⁶ T. Bab, Taanith, fol. 29. 1. {n} T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 99. 1.

first temple; for they were under the same difficulty about the one, as the other:

no, not the angels of heaven;

who dwell there, always behold the face of God, stand in his presence ready to do his will, and are made acquainted with many of his designs, and are employed in the executing of them, and yet know not the time of God's vengeance on the Jews; to this agrees the sense that is given of the day of vengeance in Isa 63:4 it is asked ¹³⁷⁷,

"what is the meaning of these words, "the day of vengeance is in my heart?" Says R. Jochanan, to my heart I have revealed it, to the members I have not revealed it: says R. Simeon ben Lakish, to my heart I have revealed it; לְמַלְאכֵי הַשָּׁרָה לֹא נִלְחַח, "to the ministering angels I have not revealed it".

'The Ethiopic version adds here, "nor the son", and so the Cambridge copy of Beza's; which seems to be transcribed from Mark 13:32 where that phrase stands; and must be understood of Christ as the son of man, and not as the Son of God; for as such, he lay in the bosom of the Father, and knew all his purposes and designs; for these were purposed in him: he knew from the beginning who would betray him, and who would believe in him; he knew what would befall the rejecters of him, and when that would come to pass; as he must know also the day of the last judgment, since it is appointed by God, and he is ordained to execute it: but the sense is, that as he, as man and mediator, came not to destroy, but to save; so it was not any part of his work, as such, to know, nor had he it in commission to make known the time of Jerusalem's ruin:

but my Father only;

to the exclusion of all creatures, angels and men; but not to the exclusion of Christ as God, who, as such, is omniscient; nor of the Holy Spirit, who is acquainted with the deep things of God, the secrets of his heart, and this among others.

Matthew 24:37

Ver. 37. **But as the days of Noe were,**

So Noah is usually called Noe by the Septuagint: the sense is, as were the practices of the men of that generation, in which Noah lived, so will be the practices of the men of that age, in which the son of man comes; or as the flood, which happened in the days of Noah, was sudden and unexpected; it came upon men thoughtless about it, though they had warning of it; and was universal, swept them all away, excepting a few that were saved in the ark:

¹³⁷⁷ T. Bab. Taanith, fol. 29. 1.

so shall also the coming of the son of man be;

to take vengeance on the Jews, on a sudden, at an unawares, when they would be unthoughtful about it; though they were forewarned of it by Christ and his apostles, and their destruction be as universal; all would be involved in it, excepting a few, that were directed a little before, to go out of the city of Jerusalem to Pella; where they were saved, as Noah and his family were in the ark.

Matthew 24:38

Ver. 38. **For as in the days that were before the flood,**

Not all the days before the flood, from the creation of the world; but those immediately preceding it, a century or two before it: they were eating and

drinking, marrying and giving in marriage:

not that these civil actions of life were criminal in themselves, had care been taken that they were not abused. It is lawful to eat and drink, provided it be in moderation, and not to excess; and to marry, and give in marriage, when the laws, rules, and ends thereof, are observed: and therefore this must be understood, either of their wholly giving themselves up to the pleasures of life, and lusts of the flesh, without any concern about the affairs of religion, the worship and glory of God, the welfare of their souls and their approaching danger, of which Noah had given them warning; or of their luxury and intemperance, in eating and drinking, and of their libidinous and unlawful marriages; for the word here used for eating, signifies eating after the manner of brute beasts: they indulged themselves in a brutish way, in gluttony and drunkenness; and it is certain from the account given of them, in Ge 6:2 that they entered into unlawful marriages, and unclean copulations: wherefore these things may be spoken of them, as what were really sinful and wicked, and denote a course of sinning, a constant practice of these sins of intemperance and lust, and which is still more fully expressed in the next clause:

until the day that Noe entered into the ark.

The Arabic version renders it, "the ship"; the vessel which God directed him to make, for the saving of himself and family. Now the men of that generation persisted in their wicked course of living, after, and notwithstanding, the warning God had given them by Noah, of the flood that would come upon them; and all the while the ark was building, even to the very day that Noah and his family, by the order of God, went into the ark.

Matthew 24:39

Ver. 39. **And knew not until the flood came,**

That is, they did not advert or give heed to what Noah said to them about it: they slighted and despised his warnings; they did not believe, that what he said of the flood was true; they had notice of it, but they would not know it, and therefore God gave them up to judicial blindness and hardness of heart; and so they remained, until it came upon them at once:

and took them all away;

the whole world of the ungodly, every man, woman, and child, except eight persons only; Noah and his wife, and his three sons and their wives; for the deluge was universal, and reached to all the inhabitants of the world, who all perished in it, excepting the above persons. So shall also the coming of the son of man be: such shall be, as it was, the case of the Jews, before the destruction of Jerusalem: they gave themselves up to all manner of wickedness and uncleanness; they disregarded the warnings of Christ and his apostles; they were careless and secure of danger; they would not believe their ruin was at hand, when it was just upon them; they buoyed themselves up to the very last, that a deliverer would arise, and save them; they cried peace, peace, when sudden destruction was nigh; even of them all, their nation, city, and temple, a few only excepted, as in the days of Noah: and though they were so much like the men of that generation, yet they themselves say of them, that

"the generation of the flood have no part in the world to come, nor shall they stand in judgment, according to Ge 6:3 ¹³⁷⁸."

Matthew 24:40

Ver. 40. **Then shall two be in the field,**

About their proper business, of husbandry, ploughing, or sowing, or any other rural employment:

the one shall be taken;

not by the preaching of the Gospel, into the kingdom of God, or Gospel dispensation; though such a distinction God makes, by the ministry of the word, accompanied by his Spirit and power; nor by angels, to meet Christ in the air, and to be introduced into his kingdom and glory; but by the eagles, the Roman army, and either killed or carried captive by them:

and the other left;

not in a state of nature and unregeneracy, as many are, to whom the Gospel is preached; nor with devils at the last day, to be thrust down by them into the infernal regions; but by the Romans, being by some remarkable providence, or another, delivered out of their hands;

¹³⁷⁸ Misn. Sanhedrin, c. 11. sect. 3.

which was the case of some few, and these of the meaner sort; and therefore persons of a rural life and occupation are instanced in.

Matthew 24:41

Ver. 41. **Two women shall be grinding at the mill,**

Though the word women is not in the Greek text, yet it is rightly supplied by our translators, as it is in the Persic version; for the word rendered grinding, is in the feminine gender, and was the work of women, as appears both from the Scripture, Ex 11:5 and from several passages in the Jewish writings, concerning which their canons run thus ¹³⁷⁹;

"These are the works which a woman is to do for her husband, tnxwj, "she must grind", and bake, and wash, and boil, and make his bed, &c."

'And elsewhere it is asked ¹³⁸⁰,

"how does she grind? she sits at the mill, and watches the flour, but she does not grind, or go after a beast, that so the mill may not stop; but if their custom is to grind at a hand mill, she may grind. The sanhedrim order this to poor people; for if she brings one handmaid, or money, or goods, sufficient to purchase, she is not obliged to grind, &c."

"Frequent mention is made, of women grinding together at the same mill: a case is put concerning two women grinding at an hand mill ¹³⁸¹, and various rules are given about it; as, that ¹³⁸²

"a woman may lend her neighbour that is suspected of eating the fruits of the seventh year after time, a meal sieve, a fan, a mill, or a furnace, but she may not winnow, nor "grind with her"

'Which it supposes she might do, if she was not suspected: again ¹³⁸³,"

the wife of a plebeian, טוּחַמָּה, "may grind" with the wife of a learned man, in the time that she is unclean, but not when she is clean.

"Nor was this the custom of the Jews only, for women to grind, but also of other countries, as of the Abyssines

¹³⁷⁹ Misn. Cetubot, c. 5. sect. 5. Vid. T. Bab. Bava Kama, fol. 47. 9. & 48. 1.

¹³⁸⁰ Maimon. Hilch. Ishot. c. 21. sect. 5, 6.

¹³⁸¹ T. Bab. Nidda, fol. 60. 2.

¹³⁸² Misn. Sheviith, c. 5. 9. & Gittin, c. 5. sect. 9.

¹³⁸³ T. Hieros. Teruinos, fol. 46. 3. T. Bab. Gittin, fol. 61. 2. & Cholin, fol. 6. 2. Misn. Taharot, c. 7. sect. 4.

¹³⁸⁴, and of both Greeks and Barbarians ¹³⁸⁵:

the one shall be taken, and the other left;

as before, one shall be taken by the Romans, and either put to death, or carried captive; and the other shall escape their hands, through the singular providence of God. The Ethiopic version, and Munster's Hebrew Gospel add, "two shall be in one bed, one shall be taken, and the other left"; but these words are not in the copies of Matthew in common, but are taken out of Luke 17:34 though they are in the Cambridge copy of Beza's, and in one of Stephens's.

Matthew 24:42

Ver. 42. Watch therefore,.... Since the time of this desolation is so uncertain, and since it will come upon the Jews unawares, and some wilt escape, whilst others perish; for the words are plainly an inference from what precedes, and clearly relate to things going before, and are not a transition to a new subject: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come; to avenge himself of the unbelieving Jews, and fulfil what he in person, and by his apostles, had predicted and warned them of: though I will not deny, but that what follows may be much better accommodated and applied to the second coming of Christ, and the last judgment, and the behaviour of men with regard to both, than anything said before; and it may be our Lord's intention, to lead his disciples gradually, and as it were imperceptibly, to the last scene of things on earth, to make way for the parables and description of the future judgment, in the next chapter; still keeping in view, and having reference to, the subject he had been so long upon.

Matthew 24:43

Ver. 43. **But know this,**

Or you do know this: this may be illustrated by supposing a case well known to men, and in which common prudence would direct a man how to behave:

that if the good man of the house,

or householder, or master of the family,

had known in what watch the thief would come;

whether at the first, second, third, or fourth watch; for the night was divided into four watches; had he any previous notice given by any of the associates of the thief, or by those that had overheard, or by any means had got intelligence of his design and measures, and the time of his pursuing them,

he would have watched;

in every watch either in person, or by employing others, or both:

and would not have suffered his house to be broken up:

or "dug through"; see Job 24:16 concerning which, there is a law in Ex 22:2 and is explained by the Jewish canonists thus:

"He that comes in by digging, whether by day or by night, there is no blood for him (i.e. to be shed for him, if he is killed); but if the master of the house, or any other man kill him, they are free; and every man has power to kill him, whether on a weekday, or on a sabbath day; and with whatsoever death he can put him to, as it is said, there is no blood for him, Ex 22:2. And one that comes in בְּמַחְזְרָה "by digging", or a thief that is found in the midst of a man's roof, or in his court, or within his hedge, whether in the day or in the night, (may be killed;) and wherefore is it called digging? because it is the way of most thieves to come in by digging in the night ¹³⁸⁶."

'Wherefore no doubt since the master of the house had such a law on his side, he would never suffer, if possible, his house to be entered by digging, when he had, especially, any previous notice of it. Now the application of this case, or parabolical way of speaking, is to the coming of Christ, and the watchfulness of every good man who has notice of it, that he may not be surprised with it, but be in a readiness to receive him. The coming of the son of man, is here represented by the coming of the thief in the night: but when he is compared to a thief, this is not to be understood in a bad sense, in which Satan is called one, who comes to kill and to destroy the souls of men; and likewise heretics and false teachers, and everyone that climbs up, and gets into the church of God in a wrong way; but this only respects the manner of Christ's coming, which is like that of a thief, secretly, suddenly, and at unawares. The "good man of the house", or householder, is every Christian, or believer in Christ, who has a house to look after, his own soul, the spiritual affairs and everlasting salvation of it, things of moment and concern unto him: and as the Christians, before the destruction of Jerusalem, had notices of Christ's coming in that way, by our Lord's predictions, by the hints the apostles gave, to refresh their memories with them, and by the signs of the times and voices that were heard; so the saints have

¹³⁸⁶ Mairmon. Hilch. Genibah, c. 9. sect. 7, 8.

of Christ's coming to judgment: wherefore as it became the one, so it does the other, to watch, to be upon their guard, to be in a readiness, to have their loins girt about, and their lights burning, and they like men that wait for their Lord; that so when he comes, their houses may not be broken up, may not be surprised, and the several powers and faculties of their souls may not be thrown into disorder and confusion; wherefore it follows,

Matthew 24:44

Ver. 44. **Therefore be ye also ready,**

Or prepared for the coming of the son of man; which as it is said to be like a thief in the night, expresses the suddenness of it, may excite to watchfulness and readiness; which readiness is to be understood, not of a readiness to do the will and work of God, though this is absolutely necessary; as to watch and pray, to hear the word preached, to confess Christ, and give a reason of the hope that is in us, to communicate to the support of the cause and interest of Christ, and to suffer for his sake; but of a preparedness to meet the Lord in the way of his judgments, when desolating judgments are coming on the earth, such as these in Jerusalem; by faith and trust in the power, providence, and care of God; by humiliation before him, and resignation to his will: and if this can be applied to a readiness for a future state after death; for the second coming of Christ, and last judgment; this lies not in a dependence on the absolute mercy of God; nor in an external humiliation for sin; nor in an abstinence from grosser sins, or in mere negative holiness; nor in any outward, legal, civil, and moral righteousness; nor in a submission to Gospel ordinances; nor in a mere profession of religion; but in being in Christ, having on his righteousness, and being washed in his blood; and also in regeneration and sanctification, in having true knowledge of Christ, and faith in him; for all which it becomes men to be concerned, as also all believers to be actually, as well as habitually ready; being in the lively exercise of grace, and cheerful discharge of duty, though without trusting to either. And such a readiness in either branch of it, is not of themselves, but lies in the grace of God, which gives a meetness for glory; and in the righteousness of Christ, the fine linen, clean and white, which being granted by him, his people are made ready for him: and as for their faith, and the exercise of it, and their constant performance of duty, these are not from the strength of nature and the power of freewill, but from the Spirit of God and his grace; who makes ready a people prepared for the Lord, and all according to the ancient settlements

of grace, in which provision is made for the vessels of mercy, afore prepared for glory: though there should be a studious concern in men for such readiness, for nothing is more certain than death, and nothing more uncertain than when it will be; and after death, no readiness can be had, but he that is then righteous, shall be righteous still, and he that is filthy, shall be filthy still, and a death-bed is by no means to be trusted to; and though a person may not be snatched away suddenly, but may have space given him to repent, yet if grace is not given him, to repent and believe in Christ, he never will; the grave is ready for men, and in a little time all will be brought to this house, appointed for all living, where there is no wisdom, knowledge, and device; and therefore whatever we are directed to do, should be now done, with all that might, and strength, and grace, that is given us; to which may be added, that after death comes judgment; the day is fixed, the judge is appointed, and all must stand before his judgment seat; and nothing is more sure than that Christ will come a second time, to judge both quick and dead; and happy will those be that are ready; they will be received by Christ into everlasting habitations, and be for ever with him: and miserable will those be, who will not be ready, who will not have the oil of grace in their hearts with their lamps, nor the wedding garment on them; they will be shut out, and bid to depart into everlasting burnings: how fit and proper is such an advice and exhortation as this, "be ye also ready". A readiness the Jews report Bath Kol, or the voice from heaven, gave out concerning the Israelites.

"Bath Kol (say ¹³⁸⁷ they) went out, and said to them, כולכם מזורמני לחיי העולם הבא, "ye are all of you ready for the life of the world to come".

And elsewhere it is said of Bath Kol, that it went forth and affirmed of some particular Rabbins, that they were ready for eternal life; as of Ketiah bar Shalom, R. Eleazar ben Durdia, and R. Chanina ¹³⁸⁸:

for in such an hour as ye think not, the son of man cometh:

this is true of his coming in power to destroy Jerusalem, and of his second coming to judgment. The Jews say much the same of the coming of the Messiah, whom they expect:

"there are three things, they say ¹³⁸⁹, which come,

¹³⁸⁷ T. Bab. Moed Katon, fol. 9. 1.

¹³⁸⁸ T. Bab. Avoda Zara, fol. 10. 2. & 17. 1. & 18. 1. & Callah, fol. 17. 2. & Cetubot, fol. 103. 2.

¹³⁸⁹ T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 97. 1.

¹³⁸⁴ Ludolph. Hist. Ethiop. l. 4. c. 4.

¹³⁸⁵ Plutarch apud Beza. in loc.

בְּהִיחֻזְהָרָה, “without knowledge”, or unthought of, at an unawares; and they are these, the Messiah, anything that is found, and a scorpion.”

Matthew 24:45

Ver. 45. **Who then is a faithful and wise servant,**

The Vulgate Latin adds, “do you think?” and is a question put to the disciples, which they might apply to themselves: in Luke 12:42, it is spoken in answer to a question of Peter’s, in relation to the above exhortation, whether it was spoken to them, or to all; and by this answer, it looks as if it was more especially designed for them, though it may be applied to other. The “servant” is there called a “steward”, for such a servant is meant; and a name that is very proper for the apostles and ministers of the word, who are stewards of the mysteries of Christ, and of the manifold grace of God; and whose characters are, that they are “faithful”: for this is required in stewards, that they be faithful to the trust reposed in them; as ministers are, when they preach the pure Gospel of Christ, and the whole of it; conceal no part, nor keep anything of it; seek not to please men, but God; neither seek their own things, their ease, honour, and profit, but the glory of God, the honour of Christ, and the good of souls; and abide by the truths, cause, and interest of a Redeemer, at all hazards. And they are “wise”, who know and are well instructed in divine things; who make Christ the main subject of their ministry; who improve their talents and time for their master’s use, and the advantage of those that are under their care; who seek for, and deliver acceptable words and matter; and manage their whole trust, so as to be able to give in a good account of their stewardship another day. The post that such a person is put in, and the work he is to do, follow:

whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household;

or “family”, the church of God, which is the household of God, and of faith, in which are believers of various growths and sizes; some fathers, some young men, some children; and over these, the ministers are, by their Lord, made and placed as rulers; not as lords and tyrants over God’s heritage, to govern them in an arbitrary way, but as over them in the Lord, to rule them according to the word of God, and the laws of his house; by preaching the Gospel, administering ordinances, and keeping up his worship and the discipline of the church; and whose principal business it is,

to give them meat in due season;

even “their portion” of it, as in Luke 12:42: for the

word of God is to be cut and rightly divided, and everyone in the family, according to his age, appetite, and digestion, is to have his proper part and portion given him: it must be meat, proper food, such as is solid, substantial, and nourishing; even the wholesome words of Christ Jesus, that must be given them, and not husks and empty trash; and all in due season, in its proper time, as their cases and circumstances require, and call for; as whether weary, or uncomfortable, or in the dark, or under temptations and afflictions: for a word fitly and seasonably spoken, how useful is it!

Matthew 24:46

Ver. 46. **Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh,**

Whether in a way of judgment, as against Jerusalem; or at death, when he comes to remove him out of time, into eternity; or at the day of judgment, when he, the righteous judge, will give the crown of righteousness to him:

shall find so doing;

acting the faithful and wise part, ruling the household of God well; giving to all wholesome food, a proper portion of it, and that in the right time.

Matthew 24:47

Ver. 47. **Verily I say unto you,**

Nothing is a greater truth, more certain, or to be depended on, than this; all such wise, faithful, diligent, and industrious servants may expect it:

that he, shall make him ruler over all his goods;

will honour him with greater gifts, bestow a larger degree of Gospel light and knowledge on him, make him more useful in the church below, and at last cause him to inherit all things in the other world, all glory, happiness, and bliss.

Matthew 24:48

Ver. 48. **But and if that evil servant,**

Or should there be an evil servant, an unwise and faithless one, who though he may have gifts and talents, yet destitute of the grace of God; and though he may be in the highest post and office in the church of God for sometimes wicked and graceless men are in such places; yet if he

shall say in his heart;

secretly to himself, and with pleasure to his mind, and strengthen himself in a full persuasion of this,

my Lord delayeth his coming;

and begins to think that either he will not come at all, to call him to an account for the use of his time, gifts, and

talents; or if he does, it will be long first ere he will come, and visit the people of the Jews, by desolating calamities; or by death, to summon him to his bar; or at judgment, to give in his account of his stewardship.

Matthew 24:49

Ver. 49. **And shall begin to smite his fellow servants,**

By abusing the power lodged in him, usurping a dominion over their faith, and imposing on their consciences things which Christ has never commanded; vexing and burdening them with trifling rites and ceremonies, and other unnecessary things; wounding, grieving, offending weak minds by his conduct and example; or persecuting the saints, such of them as cannot come into everything in his way of believing and practising:

and to eat and drink with the drunken;

giving himself up to luxury and intemperance; feeding himself instead of the family; serving his own belly, and not his Lord and Master Christ; living an ungodly and licentious life, altogether unbecoming the Gospel of Christ: such servants and stewards have been, and are in the church of God; but sad will be their case, when their Lord comes, as follows. Respect seems to be had either to the ecclesiastical rulers among the Jews, who went under the name of the servants of the Lord, but persecuted the apostles, and those that believed in Christ; or the “Judaizing” Christians, and false teachers, that were for imposing the ceremonies of the law upon believers; or Simon Magus, and his followers, a set of licentious, men; or all of them; who lived in this period of time, between the death of Christ, and the destruction of the temple.

Matthew 24:50

Ver. 50. **The lord of that servant,**

Not by redemption and grace, but by creation and profession; shall

come in a day when he looked not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of:

suddenly and unexpectedly: such was his coming in wrath and vengeance on the Jewish nation; and such is his coming oftentimes by death; and such will be his coming at the day of judgment.

Matthew 24:51

Ver. 51. **And shall cut him asunder,**

The Persic version renders it, “he shall separate him from himself”: he shall separate soul and body by death; he shall take away all his gifts and talents from him; and remove him from his place and office, and from the church of God, and communion of the saints, and out of

this world. Some think the allusion is to the cutting up of the sacrifices, and dividing them into pieces; and the sense is, that this wicked servant should have no share in the sacrifice of Christ; but should fall himself a victim to divine justice, and be used as sacrifices were; or, in other words, be severely punished for his sins; though the allusion seems rather to be to the manner of punishing treacherous and unfaithful persons, by dismembering them, cutting them in pieces, or in two: and so the Arabic version renders it, “he shall cut him in the middle”: this was certainly a way of putting persons to death; though some say it was not known to the Jews; but the following instances show the contrary. Mention is made of some that were sawn asunder, Heb 11:37 and the Jews say ¹³⁹⁰, that Isaiah was sawn asunder by Manasseh; and such a kind of death is spoken of in the Targum ¹³⁹¹; where it is said, that

”the priests went before Mordecai, and proclaimed, saying, whoever does not salute, or wish prosperity to Mordecai, and to the Jews, מִיִּי יִהְיֶה הָרָה “he shall be cut into pieces”, and his house be made a dunghill.’

’And elsewhere ¹³⁹² it is said of a wicked man, that they put him upon a carpenter’s block, and wb Myronm, “sawed him asunder”; and he cried out, woe, woe, woe, that I have provoked my Creator. This was also a punishment used among the Heathens, as Gataker ¹³⁹³, and others out of Heathen writers, have shown. It must not here be understood literally, that this wicked servant should be put to such a corporeal death; but that he should be punished in the severest manner, and should be the object of the fierce wrath and sore displeasure of God;

and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites.

Luke says, “with the unbelievers” Luke 12:46: very likely both phrases were used by Christ; intimating, that such as make a profession of him, and have only a form of godliness, without the power of it, and are wicked and hypocritical men, will share the same fate with those that believe not; and the portion of these is the lake which burns with fire and brimstone; see Re 21:8 or all such persons are intended, who put on the mask of religion, and do not answer to the character they bear: and are unfaithful to the trust reposed in them, and therefore will

¹³⁹⁰ T. Hieros. Sanhedrin, fol. 28. 3. & T. Bab. Yebamot, fol. 49. 2.

¹³⁹¹ Targum in Esth. viii. 15.

¹³⁹² Bereshit Rabba, sect. 65. fol. 58. 4.

¹³⁹³ Adversaria, p. 455.

made examples of righteous judgment, and have their part in the lowest hell:

there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth:

See Gill on “Mt 13:42”

Matthew Chapter 25

Matthew 25:1

Ver. 1. **Then shall the kingdom of heaven,**

The Gospel church state; See Gill on “Mt 13:24” either as it would be a little before the coming of the son of man to take vengeance on the Jews; or as it will be a little before his second coming to judgment: for the parable is manifestly connected with, and refers to the preceding chapter, which chiefly treats of Jerusalem’s destruction: but though the Jews were in great security before their utter ruin, yet it does not appear that the Christian church was then in such a lukewarm, drowsy, and sleepy condition, as this parable represents; and since, in the latter part of the preceding chapter, there are some hints of Christ’s second and last coming; when the servant found doing his Lord’s will, will be greatly honoured, and the wicked, cruel, and licentious servant will be severely punished; and since, at the close of this and the following parable, there is a very lively description given of the last judgment; as also, because it appears elsewhere, that such will be the formal, lukewarm, cold, indifferent, secure, and sleepy state of the church, before the second coming of Christ: it seems right and best to understand this parable, and the following, as having respect to that: and that the design of it is to show, what will be the case of professors at that time; the difference between nominal and real Christians; how far persons may go in a profession of religion, and yet, at last, be shut out of heaven: as also the suddenness of Christ’s coming; the necessity of being ready for it; and how watchful the saints should be, that they be not surprised with it. Now some time before this, the Gospel church state, or the body of professing Christians, will

be likened unto ten virgins;

to “virgins” for quality; being betrothed ones to Christ, at least in profession; and because of the singleness of their love, and chaste adherence to him, however, as they will declare, and which, in some of them, will be fact; and for their beauty, comeliness, and gay attire, being, as they will profess, clothed with the righteousness of Christ; with that fine linen, clean and white, with cloth of gold, and raiment of needlework, and so perfectly comely through his comeliness: and for their purity and uncorruptness of doctrine, worship, and conversa-

tion, at least in appearance, and which will be true of many of them; and all, from their profession, will bear the same character: these for their quantity and number, are compared to “ten” virgins; which may, perhaps, denote the small number of professors at this time; see Ge 18:32 that there will be but few, that will then name the name of Christ, and fewer still who will not have defiled their garments, and be virgins indeed. The number “ten” was greatly taken notice of, and used among the Jews: a congregation, with them, consisted of ten persons, and less than that number did not make one ¹³⁹⁴: and wherever there were ten persons in a place, they were obliged to build a synagogue ¹³⁹⁵. Ten elders of the city were witnesses of Boaz’s taking Ruth to be his wife, Ru 4:2. Now it may be in reference to the former of these, that this number ten is here expressed, since the parable relates to the congregated churches of Christ, or to Christ’s visible church on earth: moreover, they say, that

“with less than ten they did not divide the “shema”,

(i.e. “hear O Israel”, and say any part of the blessings that went before it;) nor did (the messenger of the congregation) go before the ark (to pray); nor did (the priests) lift up their hands (to bless the people); nor did they read in the law (in the congregation); nor did they dismiss (the people) with (a passage out of one of) the prophets; nor did they make a standing, and a sitting (when they carried the dead to the grave, which used to be done seven times, to weep over the dead); nor did they say the blessing of the mourners, nor the comforts of the mourners (when they returned from the grave, and stood in a row to comfort the mourner; and there was no row less than ten); **וְבֵרַכְתָּ הַחַיִּים** “nor the blessing of the bridegrooms”,

which consisted of seven blessings, and this was not said but in the presence of ten persons ¹³⁹⁶: to which there may be an allusion here: for the whole alludes to the solemnities of a marriage among the Jews, when the bridegroom fetched home his bride from her father’s house, attended with his friends, the children of the bridechamber, and which was usually done in the night: and, at the same time, the bride was waiting for him, accompanied

¹³⁹⁴ Misn. Sanhedrin, c. 1. sect. 6. T. Hieros. Beracot, fol. 11. 3.

¹³⁹⁵ Maimon. Hilch. Tephillah, c. 11. sect. 1.

¹³⁹⁶ Misn. Megilla, c. 4. sect. 3. Maimon, Hilch. Tephilla, c. 8. sect. 4, 5.

with virgins, or bridemaids; see Ps 45:14 who, when they perceived the bridegroom coming, went out with lamps, or torches, to meet him, and conduct him to her; hence it follows,

which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

The Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Persic versions, add, “and the bride”, contrary to the “Greek” copies, excepting the Cambridge copy of Beza’s. Nor do the Arabic and Ethiopic versions so read; nor Munster’s Hebrew Gospel; nor does it agree with the above custom. By “the bridegroom” is meant Christ, who stands in this relation to his church and people; he saw them in the glass of the purposes and decrees of God, and loved them, and asked them of his father to be given him as his spouse and bride; and who did give them to him, when he secretly betrothed them to himself, in the everlasting covenant, as he does their particular persons at conversion, and will consummate the marriage of them all at the last day; and, in the mean while, acts the part of a bridegroom to them; he loves them as a bridegroom loves his bride, with a love prior to theirs, free and unmerited; with a love of complacency and delight, which is single and chaste, strong and affectionate; constant and perpetual, wonderful, matchless, and inconceivable: he sympathizes with them, nourishes, and cherishes them as his own flesh; providing spiritual food, and rich clothing for them; and indulging them with intimate communion with himself, and interests them in all he has; and when he comes again a second time, he will appear under this character. His first appearance was mean, in the form of a servant, in the likeness of sinful flesh, in garments rolled in blood; but when he comes a second time, he will appear as a bridegroom in his nuptial robes; all his elect will be prepared for him, beautified and adorned as a bride for her husband; when he will come and take them home to himself, and will avow them to be his before his Father, and his holy angels: and which will be a time of great glory, and great joy. Now these virgins are said to take their lamps, and go forth to meet him: by their lamps are meant, either the word of God, the Scriptures of truth, particularly the Gospel, and the doctrines of it; which, like a lamp, were lighted in the evening of the Jewish dispensation, and will shine the brightest towards the end of the world: these are like lamps both to walk by, and work by, and were a light to all these virgins; some were savingly enlightened into them, and by them; and others only notionally, but were taken up, owned, and professed, as the rule of faith and practice, by them all; and

that in order to meet and find the bridegroom, for they testify of him: or rather an external profession of religion is designed by the lamps, which is distinct from the oil of grace, and the vessel of the heart, in which that is; and is that into which the oil is put and burns, so as to become visible: and must be daily recruited, and trimmed with fresh supplies of grace from Christ, without which it cannot be kept up, nor will be of any use and service; and is what may go out, or be dropped and lost, as some of these lamps. Now this was what was taken up by them all; they all made a profession of Christ, and his Gospel: some of them took it up aright, upon an experience of the grace of God, and principles of grace wrought in their souls; others, without any experience, and without considering the nature, importance, and consequences of a profession: and so they all went forth to meet the bridegroom: some in the exercise of faith on him, and in his coming; in love to him, and his appearance; desiring, and longing to see him; expecting, and waiting for him: others only in a way of a visible profession of religion, and an outward attendance on ordinances. The custom here alluded to of meeting the bridegroom, and attending the bride home to his house in the night, with lighted torches, or lamps, and such a number of them as here mentioned, was not only the custom of the Jews, but of other eastern nations ¹³⁹⁷. Jarchi says ¹³⁹⁸, it was the custom of the Ishmaelites; his words are these:

“it was a custom in the land of Ishmael, to bring the bride from her father’s house to her husband’s house, hlylb, “in the night”, before she entered the nuptial chamber; and to carry before her Nyodnwq rvek, “about ten staves”; and upon the top of the staff was the form of a brazen dish, and in the midst of it, pieces of garments, oil, and pitch, which they set fire to, and lighted before her.”

Something like this is the custom of the East Indians now, which is thus related ¹³⁹⁹:

“on the day of their marriage, the husband and wife being both in the same “palki”, or “palanquin”, (which is the ordinary way of carriage in the country, and is carried by four men upon their shoulders,) go out between seven and eight o’clock “at night”, accompanied with all their kin-

¹³⁹⁷ Bartenora in Misn. Megilla, c. 4. sect. 3. T. Bab. Cetubot, fol. 8. 2.

¹³⁹⁸ In Misn. Celim, c. 2. sect. 8.

¹³⁹⁹ The Agreement of Customs between the East Indians and Jews, art. 17. p. 68, 69.

dred and friends; the trumpets and drums go before them; and they are "lighted" by a multitude of "massals", which are a kind of flambeaux; immediately behind the "palanquin" of the newly married couple, walk many "women", whose business is to sing verses, wherein they wish them all kind of prosperity.--The newly married couple go abroad in this equipage, for the space of some hours; after which they return to their own house, where the "women" and domestics wait for them: the whole house is enlightened with little lamps, and many of these "massals", already mentioned, are kept ready for their arrival, besides those that accompany them, and go before their "palanquin". This sort of lights are nothing else, but many pieces of old linen squeezed hard against one another, in a round figure, and forcibly thrust down into a mould of copper; those who hold them in one hand, have, in the other, a bottle of the same metal, with the mould copper, which is full of oil; and they take care to pour out of it, from time to time, upon the linen, which otherwise gives no light."

Matthew 25:2

Ver. 2. **And five of them were wise,**

The order of these words is inverted in some versions, as in the Vulgate Latin, Arabic, and Ethiopic, and in Munster's Hebrew Gospel, which read, "and five of them were foolish, and five of them were wise"; but this is of no great consequence. There is a parable of R. Jochanan ben Zaccai¹⁴⁰⁰, who lived before, and after the destruction of the second temple, which bears some likeness to this part of the parable, and others in it, and is this;

"a certain king invited his servants, but did not fix any time for them; those of them that were חכמים, "wise", adorned themselves, and sat at the gate of the king's house, and said, is there any want at the king's house? but those of them that were טפשיים "fools", went and did their work, and said, is there any feast without trouble? on a sudden, the king inquired after his servants: the wise went in before him, as they were, adorned; but the fools went in before him, as they were, filthy: the king rejoiced at meeting the wise, and was angry at meeting the foolish; and ordered, that those who had adorned themselves for the feast should sit

¹⁴⁰⁰ T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 153. 1. Vid. R. David Kimchi in Isa. lxx. 13.

and eat, and those that had not adorned themselves for the feast should stand."

The wise virgins are such, who are wise, not in their own conceits, which is the case of natural men, and empty professors; nor in the things of nature, or in the things of the world, of which the saints are oftentimes less knowing than others; nor in notional and speculative knowledge, much less in things that are evil: but they are such who are wise unto salvation; who not only know the scheme of it, but are sensible of their need of it; apply to Christ for it; venture their souls on him, and commit them to him: they trust in his righteousness for justification; in his blood for pardon; in his sacrifice for atonement; in his fulness for daily supplies; in his grace and strength to perform every duty; and expect eternal life in, and from him: they know him, prize him, and value him as their Saviour; rejoice in him, and give him all the glory; and they are such who are also wise in the business of a profession, as well as in the affair of salvation; they are such who take up a profession of religion aright, upon principles of grace, and after mature thought and deliberation; and when they have so done, hold it fast without wavering, walk becoming it in their lives and conversations; and yet do not depend on it, or trust to it:

and five were foolish;

not in their own apprehension, in which they might be wise enough; nor in the judgment of others; nor in natural knowledge; or with respect to the things of the world; nor in speculative notions of the Gospel; nor merely so called, because unconverted; every unconverted man being a foolish man: but they were so in the business of salvation; as all are who build their hopes of it on birth privileges; on a carnal descent from good men; on a religious education; on their own righteousness; or on the absolute mercy of God; and not on Christ, the one only, and sure foundation: they are such who know not themselves; the impurity of their hearts, and nature; their impotency to that which is spiritually good; and the imperfection and insufficiency of their own righteousness: they know not Christ, and his salvation, neither the worth, nor want of him, or that; and are altogether strangers to the power of godliness, and spiritual experience: and are also as foolish in the affair of a profession, which they take up without a work of the Spirit of God upon their souls, and without considering the cost and charge of it; and either in a little time wholly drop it, or, if they hold it, they foolishly depend upon it, or lead lives unsuitable to it. The number of wise and fool-

ish virgins being equal, does not imply that there will be just the same number of nominal, as of real believers in the churches, in the latter day, a little before the coming of Christ; only that there will be a large number of such among them.

Matthew 25:3

Ver. 3. **They that were foolish took their lamps,**

The Vulgate Latin, and Munster's Hebrew Gospel, read, "the five foolish", whose folly is here exposed; and which lay not merely, or only in taking up the lamps of a profession in a wrong way, and upon a wrong bottom, but chiefly in what follows;

and took no oil with them:

by oil is meant, not temporal blessings, nor spiritual ones, nor the Gospel, nor the gifts of the Spirit, all which are sometimes signified by oil; but either the Spirit of God himself, who is the oil of gladness, and the anointing which teacheth all things; or the regenerating and sanctifying grace of the Spirit, even all the graces which are implanted by him in conversion: this is so called, in allusion to the anointing oil under the law, in its excellent nature, its costly matter, its curious make, and particular application; and in the use of it to anoint both things, the tabernacle and its vessels, and persons, prophets, priests, and kings; see Ex 30:23, &c. The grace of the Spirit being of an holy and sanctifying nature, exceeding valuable and precious, and a curious piece of workmanship, and what is only applied unto, and bestowed on the elect of God; and with which all the vessels of mercy, small and great, are anointed, and are made prophets, priests, and kings, and is what is, as that was, lasting and abiding: or else with respect to the precious oil, or ointment poured on Aaron's head, which was emblematical of the grace of the Spirit, which was poured forth, without measure, on Christ, and from him descends to all his members: or to the lamp oil for the candlestick in the tabernacle, which was oil olive, pure, beaten, and was for light, to cause the lamp to burn always; and fitly represented grace, which comes from Christ, the true olive tree; is pure, and of a purifying nature; and comes through a bruised, crucified Christ; and being put into the heart, causes the light of good works, and a becoming conversation, to shine forth: or else to oil in common, which is of a cheering and refreshing nature; is beautifying and adorning, supplying and healing, feeding and fattening, searching and penetrating, and will not mix with any thing else; upon all which accounts grace may be compared to it. Now these foolish virgins, though they took up a lamp of a profession, yet were unconcerned for the oil of grace, to

fill, maintain, and trim this lamp: they were ignorant of the nature and use of true grace; they saw no need of it, and therefore did not ask for it, or about it; they neglected it, made light of it, and denied it as useless; and being destitute of it, took up their profession without it; and in this lay their folly.

Matthew 25:4

Ver. 4 **But the wise took oil**

They were concerned for the true grace of God, being enlightened by the Spirit of God; they saw their need of the grace of God, and being directed by him where it was to be had, went to Christ for it; and having received it from him, through the power of the Holy Ghost, exercised it on him; and herein lay their wisdom: for a stock of this in the heart, daily renewed by Christ, will supply the lamp of a profession well. This they had

in their vessels,

their oil vessels; by which are meant their hearts; so called in allusion either to the vessels in which the oil was put, when pressed out of the olives, Jer 40:10 or to the oil vessels of the candlestick, Nu 4:9. These are vessels of God's making, though through sin are become impure, and empty of all spiritual good: they are indeed large and capacious; here's room for Father, Son, and Spirit, and for abundance of grace; they are capable of comprehending much of the love of God, and besides natural, a great deal of spiritual knowledge: here, in these vessels, sanctified by the Spirit of God, the wise virgins had the oil of grace, which is an internal thing: it is nothing in the head, in the tongue, or in the hand, but something in the heart: it does not lie in notion, in talking, nor in doing; a man may know much, say a great deal, and do many external works, and yet be destitute of the grace of God; nothing external is that: it is not a mere outward reformation of life, an external humiliation for sin, an abstinence from the grosser sins of life, or a conformity to the ordinances of the Gospel, or a profession of religion: it is a principle of light, life, love, and holiness wrought in a man's heart; it has its seat in the mind, understanding, and judgment, in the will, conscience, and the affections. This oil of grace was not naturally in them; nor was it obtained by the power of their freewill; but was freely given unto them, and powerfully wrought in them: the case is this; all grace was put into Christ's hands for them; the Spirit of God was sent down to apply it to them, and work it in them; Which is generally done by means, which they made use of by his direction and assistance, and so may be said to take it:

with their lamps,

of an external profession; they did not take up a profession before they had grace, or without it; but when they received the one, they took up the other; and which was acting the wise part.

Matthew 25:5

Ver. 5. **While the bridegroom tarried,**

The space of time here referred to, is either from the ascension of Christ, to his coming to take vengeance on the Jews; or from thence to his second coming; or rather from the time of some general expectation by the saints, of the near approach of Christ, till such time he does come: for as there was a general expectation of the coming of Christ before he came in the flesh, so there will be a general expectation of Christ being near at hand some time before his second coming; and because such an expectation will not be answered, or Christ will not come so soon as was hoped for, and expected, a general drowsiness, and security, and unconcernedness, especially about the coming of Christ, will fall upon the churches. Thus, in the last century, there was among the people of God, in these kingdoms, a general expectation of Christ's speedy coming; but being in this disappointed, professors of all sorts are fallen asleep, and do not at all, or very little, at least very few, concern themselves about it: in a word, this interval of time seems to regard that period which is pointed out by the Laodicean church state, which will usher in the coming of Christ, and the last judgment. Now Christ, the bridegroom, may be said to tarry, not with respect to the time fixed by the Father and himself; for as this is settled, though unknown to man, it will not be passed by him; he does not, nor will he tarry beyond the appointed time: but either with respect to the time fixed by men; or with respect to the declaration of Christ, and his apostles, that he would come "quickly", and the length of time since; or rather with respect to the expectations of the saints, and their impatience. The reason why he tarries is, because his time is not come, and there are many things to be done first; there is to be a glorious spread of the Gospel all over the world; all the elect must be gathered in, both among Jews and Gentiles; and the man of sin must be destroyed; and the ungodly must fill up the measure of their iniquities; and Christ tarries to try the graces of his people, who should exercise faith in his coming, by looking, watching, and waiting for it, desirous of it, and hastening unto it; being ready for him, prepared to receive him, and to go with him to the nuptial-chamber; but instead of this

they all slumbered and slept:

which is not to be understood as if that one only slumbered, and the other slept; that is, that the wise virgins slumbered, and the foolish virgins slept; for the wise virgins, or true believers, are elsewhere said to sleep, and formal professors to slumber; but both these are spoken of them all: and by this slumber, and sleep, is not meant a natural death; though that is sometimes called a sleep, and to which true believers are subject, as well as others; yet all at the coming of Christ will not be asleep in this sense: and were this intended, their resurrection would be designed by their "arising", in the seventh verse; and so the resurrection of the saints, and of others, would be together, which is not true, for the dead in Christ will rise first; and would be also before the coming of Christ, whereas the resurrection of the saints is not till at his coming; and it would look, by the account in some following verses, as if grace might be had, or, at least, be thought to be had, after the resurrection: nor is this to be understood of the dead sleep of sin: a death in sin may be signified by sleeping, and be so called, and conviction be an awakening out of it; but the foolish virgins were always asleep in this sense, and were never truly and thoroughly awaked; and wise virgins never do, nor can, fall into this sleep; for being quickened by Christ, they never die again: nor of a judicial slumber and sleep, which the saints are never given up to; but a dead, lifeless, and sleepy frame of spirit in the wise virgins: which lies in grace not being in exercise; in a slothfulness to perform religious duties; in taking up a satisfaction with the outward parts of religion; in an indifference about the interest of Christ; in an unconcernedness at the omission of duty, or commission of sin; and in an entire ease of mind with regard to such a frame and state: the causes of it are a body of sin; an anxious care of the world; a being weary of spiritual exercises, and a leaving them off; abstaining from an awakening ministry, and spiritual conversation; and keeping company with sleepy and slothful professors, or the men of the world: and often it arises from ease, peace, and liberty; and sometimes from long watchfulness, and waiting for the bridegroom's coming; in which, being disappointed, such a frame of spirit ensues: and also in the foolish virgins it intends great carnal security in themselves; a rest and confidence in their external profession; and a laying aside all thoughts of Christ, and his coming to judgment: for a difference there is between the sleep and slumbering of the one and of the other; the wise virgins are children of the day, and not of the night; though they sleep, their hearts wake, and they sleep with

grace in their hearts; neither of which can be said of the foolish virgins, or formal professors: as to the phraseology here used, the Jews would distinguish upon it, for they make a difference between slumbering and sleeping:

"they do not dismiss (the company) after the passover with the sweet-meats: if some of them sleep, they may eat, but if all of them, they may not eat. R. Jose says, נרדמו, "if they slumber" they may eat; נרדמו "if they sleep they may not eat"¹⁴⁰¹: which Maimonides thus¹⁴⁰² explains, "if they slumber"; that is, if they begin to sleep, but are not yet overwhelmed with sleep, but bear when others speak to them, and answer immediately to them that call them: "if they sleep": if they are oppressed with a deep sleep."

Though the phrase נרדמו, which I should choose to render, "he slumbered and slept", is often said¹⁴⁰³ of the same person, without any distinction, as here.

Matthew 25:6

Ver. 6. **And at midnight there was a cry made;**

Which is no other than the following notice of the bridegroom's coming, expressed in these words:

behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him:

which supposes that then all things will be ready for his coming: all things respecting this world; all the strange and surprising events that were to come to pass, before the coming of Christ, will now be accomplished; an end put to all the monarchies of the earth; and all the preparations in nature, for the burning of the world finished: all things respecting the ungodly of the world: they will have filled up the measure of their iniquities, and finished their persecutions of the saints: and all things respecting the elect of God, they will be all born, and born again; they will have gone through all their sufferings for Christ, and have all their graces tried and perfected; for when the bridegroom comes, he will come to espouse them openly to himself, for which they must be prepared and adorned, and to take them to himself, that they may be for ever with him. It also supposes, that his coming will be very nigh at hand; it was so represented long ago; it is greatly desired by the saints to be quickly; and it will be in a very short time after this notice: and it signifies that there will be some notice given of it, a little before he

¹⁴⁰¹ Misn. Pesachim, c. 10. sect. 8. & Maimon. Hilch. Chametz Umetzah, c. 8. sect. 14.

¹⁴⁰² In Misn. ib.

¹⁴⁰³ T. Bab. Bava Kama, fol. 47. 2. & 65. 1. & 67. 2.

comes; and that partly for the glory of his majesty; and that his own people, the wise virgins, may be ready; and that the foolish ones may be left without excuse: and this being prefaced with a "behold", shows the certainty of his coming, than which nothing is more certain, and to be depended on; as appears from Enoch's prophecy, and others of the Old Testament; from Christ's own promise; from the testimony of angels: from the words of the apostles; and from the ordinance of the Lord's supper: and also the importance of it; for things of the greatest moment will follow on it; such as the resurrection of the dead, the judgment of the whole world, the complete happiness of the saints, and the destruction of the wicked: and likewise, that it will be wonderful and astonishing; Christ will come in amazing glory, in his own, in his Father's, and in the glory of the holy angels, and of his power and authority, as the judge of quick and dead. And in this notice advice is given to the virgins,

go ye out to meet him;

see So 3:11, and may intend either a going forth internally, as the wise virgins did in the exercise of grace, of faith in the coming of Christ, of love of his appearance, and earnest desire after it; or a going forth externally, as all the virgins did in a way of visible profession, taking up and trimming their lamps; or literally and corporeally, as the saints will, that will be found alive at Christ's coming. Now this notice is called "a cry"; and refers not to the voice of Christ in raising the dead, for this will be before the coming of Christ, whereas that will be when he is come; and for the same reason, not to the voice of the archangel, if he can be thought to be distinct from Christ. Some think it regards a secret general impulse, that will be upon the spirits of the people of God, with respect to the bridegroom's coming, but this does not seem to answer to a cry; rather it should intend some remarkable providence, as the earthquake in Re 11:13 when a tenth part of the city shall fall, seven thousand men of note be slain, and the rest affrighted; or the sounding of the seventh angel, Re 11:15, or, what is most likely, the voice of a great multitude, as of many waters, and of mighty thunderings, declaring, that the marriage of the Lamb was come, and the bride ready, Re 19:6, and will be a very loud one: it will awaken all the virgins, and will be the cry, not of one, but of many; and will be very sudden and surprising, though joyful to the saints: this cry will be made, not by the virgins, for they will be asleep; nor by Christ himself, for he will not be come; nor by the angels, for they will come with him, and not before; rather by the ministers of the Gospel, who are the angels so often

spoken of in the book of the Revelations, who sound the trumpets at different times, and on different occasions; who also will sound this trumpet, and give this last and general notice of Christ's coming; who will be all at once apprized of it, and give an universal alarm of it together in all the churches: thus, as the notice of Christ's first coming was made by the prophets, the notice of his second coming will be made by the ministers of the Gospel: and this will be at "midnight": which expresses the state of the church a little before the coming of Christ: it will be a night season with it, a time of darkness both with respect to Gospel light, and the presence of God with his people; a time of coldness and lukewarmness, as to zeal for God, love to his people, and concern for the interest of Christ; a time of drowsiness and sleep, of insensibility and security, of indolence and inactivity: so as the coming of Christ will be later than was first expected; it will be sudden, and at unawares, and like a thief in the night; but whether it will be literally in the night season, as his first coming, is not certain. The Jews expect ¹⁴⁰⁴, that at the end of the world Moses and Messiah will come in the night, the one from the wilderness, and the other from Rome: and they make frequent mention of God's going into the garden of Eden, or paradise, at midnight, and there rejoicing with good men. It is said ¹⁴⁰⁵, that R. Eliezer and R. Jose

"were sitting one night, and studying in the law, and about midnight, a man cried (or the cock crowed), bless ye the blessing; says R. Eliezer, now is, the time that the holy, blessed God goes into the garden of Eden, to rejoice with the righteous."

Matthew 25:7

Ver. 7. **Then all these virgins arose,**

Not out of their graves; for the righteous and wicked will not rise together; the dead in Christ will rise first, and this first resurrection will not be till Christ is come; nor will grace be to be had, or be thought to be had after the resurrection; nor will there be any trimming of lamps then, in order to meet the bridegroom, for he will be come: nor out of the graves of sin; for the wise virgins were not in such a state, and the foolish virgins were never brought out of it: but the meaning is, that they arose out of their sleepy and slumbering frame. True believers may fall into a very low condition, with respect to the ex-

¹⁴⁰⁴ Targum Hieros. in Exod xii. 42.

¹³⁶² Zohar in Exod. fol. 76. 4. & in Lev. fol. 21. 1. & 23.

ercise of grace, and discharge of duty; but they shall arise again, for they are held and upheld by the right hand of God: it is sometimes midnight with them, and they are fallen fast asleep, but they shall be awaked, and arise; which arising here, as it respects them, signifies, that they were thoroughly awaked, that they quitted their former place and posture, were upon their feet, and ready to meet the bridegroom. The foolish virgins also arose; which may intend some awakenings of conscience, and reformation of life, and a more diligent attendance on duties and ordinances; all which they did to make them meet for Christ, and to obtain salvation; but after all it appears, they were destitute of the oil of grace:

and trimmed their lamps: both wise and foolish: the former by removing what hindered the clear burning of them; by casting off the works of darkness, and causing the light of good works to shine before men, in the discharge of them, from a principle of grace; and chiefly by applying to Christ for fresh supplies of the oil of grace, to fill their lamps, revive their light and heat, and keep them burning: and the latter, only by a few outward decorations, and external performances; to make their outward profession of religion look as bright as possibly they could.

Matthew 25:8

Ver. 8. **And the foolish said unto the wise, give us of your oil,**

A graceless person may be able to see the grace of God in others, be convinced of it, and acknowledge it, as these foolish virgins did: they saw that the wise virgins had oil, that is, grace; this they knew by the bright burning of their lamps, by their readiness in trimming them, and that in a different way from them; by their sedate composure of mind, and confidence of soul, notwithstanding the midnight cry; and by their ardent and affectionate desire to meet the bridegroom. A graceless person may also see a need of grace: these foolish virgins had no such sense, when they first took up their profession; they went on a long time in a course of religion, without any thoughts of it; and the sense they had now was not of the need of it, in the vessels of their hearts, but in their lamps only; nor was it from the Spirit of God, but through the surprise and terror of the midnight cry. Such persons may also be desirous of the grace of God; not because of the intrinsic nature and worth of it, nor for the service and glory of God, but from a mere principle of self-love; and when they can go on no longer with the lamp of profession; and then they desire to have it any

where, rather than from Christ, as did these foolish virgins; and who betrayed their folly by applying to saints for it. Had they asked their advice in this their distress, it would have been wisely done; or had they desired their prayers for them; or that they would impart some spiritual instructions to them; but to ask their grace of them was exceeding foolish; when grace only comes from God, who is the God of all grace, through Christ as mediator, in whom the fulness of it dwells, and by the Spirit, who is a Spirit of grace and of supplication; but is never to be had from men, no, not from the best men on earth, nor from the angels in heaven. The reason of this their request follows,

for our lamps are gone out;

which may be said to be when professors neglect the duties of religion, drop, or deny the doctrines of the Gospel formerly professed by them, become bad in their principles, and scandalous in their lives, or withdraw themselves from the churches of Christ; though neither of these seem to be the case here: wherefore this going out of their lamps seems to intend the insufficiency of an external profession of religion to meet the bridegroom, and support a person with confidence and intrepidity in his presence: these foolish virgins now saw, when too late, that their lamps availed them nothing; they were gone out, and become useless and unprofitable, because they had not the oil of grace with them; or what they had was only counterfeit grace, or only an appearance of it; a mere form of godliness, without its power; or only gifts which are perishable, and now failed, ceased, and were vanishing away; wherefore this is no instance of the loss of true grace, nor at all militates against the perseverance of the saints.

Matthew 25:9

Ver. 9. **But the wise answered, saying, not so,....**

A flat denial; and which sprung not from want or compassion; for the saints are taught not only to compassionate one another, and to pity fallen professors, but even to regard their very enemies in distress: nor from a narrow, niggardly spirit, since such are directed and exhorted to communicate freely, both in things temporal and spiritual, they are capable of, to them that are in need, and even to lay down their lives for the brethren; nor from an uncivil, morose, and churlish disposition; or from a careless and indolent one, as being unconcerned what became of these persons; but from an indignation at the honour put upon them, and the slight put upon God and Christ, and the Spirit of grace: saints know that

all grace comes from Father, Son, and Spirit; and frankly own, that what they have is from thence; and they give God all the glory of it, and cannot bear any such application to them for it, as this; but show the same spirit, as Paul and Barnabas did, when the Lystrians were going to sacrifice to them. Moreover, this denial arose from a consciousness of insufficiency to help them in this respect: it is the saints' mercy that they cannot lose the grace they have, nor can any take it away from them, and it is not in their power to give it away; nor can any be sanctified, or justified, or saved, by another man's grace: the reason alleged by them is,

lest there be not enough for us and you;

saints have a large abundance of grace communicated to them; some have more, others less; at least it so appears, as to exercise; but they that have the most, have none to spare, and see their need of more; and ask for more, being sensible that present grace in them, is not sufficient for time to come, but grace in Christ only; wherefore their answer, and the reason of it, were like themselves, wise; and this destroys the notion of supererogation;

but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

This advice is thought by some, to be ironical and sarcastic; but it seems rather to be serious, and in good earnest; directing them to go to proper persons for grace; not to men, even ministers of the Gospel, nor to angels; but to God the Father, the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort, who sits on a throne of grace, and gives it liberally to them that come to him for it through Christ, and ask it of him; and to Christ the mediator, who is full of grace and truth, and counsels persons to buy of him gold tried in the fire, grace more precious than the purest gold; and to the Spirit of grace, who gives it to all severally as he will: who are said to "sell", and "men" to buy; not in a proper sense, by giving any valuable consideration for the grace of God, which is impossible to be done; but in an improper sense, without money and without price; or in other words, by giving and receiving freely.

Matthew 25:10

Ver. 10. **And while they went to buy,**

The foolish virgins so far took the advice of the wise, as to go forth to buy oil for themselves: they not only had some thoughts about it, and resolutions to do it, but they really did go out to buy; which may design their attendance on the word and ordinances, where they stopped: they did not go to Christ for grace, for if they had gone

directly to him, they had met him; but they went another way, and missed him; they took buying in a proper sense, and thought to have obtained grace by their own works: wherefore, though they went to buy, they did not, nor could they, their attempts were vain and fruitless; and while they were employing themselves in this way, to no purpose,

the bridegroom came;

in person, to raise the saints that were dead, to change the living ones, to espouse them all openly, and take them all to himself, and to judge the world; for this must be understood of his second and personal coming:

and they that were ready;

not by a mere profession of religion, or submission to Gospel ordinances, or by an external righteousness, or negative holiness, and abstinence from the grosser sins of life, or an outward humiliation for them, or by a dependence on the absolute mercy of God; but through being clothed with the wedding garment, washed in the blood of Christ, being regenerated and sanctified, and having the oil of grace in their hearts, a spiritual knowledge of Christ, faith in him, and interest in him: such are ready for every good work, and to give a reason of their faith and hope, to confess Christ, and suffer for his sake; and are ready for death and eternity, and to meet the bridegroom, and for the marriage of the Lamb, to enter into the new Jerusalem. The Jews say ¹⁴⁰⁶, that

“the Jerusalem of the world to come, is not as the Jerusalem of this world: the Jerusalem of this world, everyone may go into it that will; but the Jerusalem of the world to come, none may go into it, but הַמְּזוּמָנִי לָהּ “those that are prepared for it”.

And these

went in with him to the marriage:

the Syriac reads it, “into the wedding house”, and the Persic, “the nuptial parlour”; the marriage chamber, where the bridegroom and bride celebrated their marriage; kept their marriage feast; and where were received the bridemaids, and friends of the bridegroom, called in Talmudic language, בְּנֵי לַיְיָ “the children of the bride-chamber” ¹⁴⁰⁷. Such as were these that went in: and the marriage may here denote, either heaven, Christ’s Father’s house, and the mansions of glory in it, which the saints shall enter into along with Christ; or the act of celebrating the marriage between Christ and the Lamb, and the whole body of the elect; when these virgins will not

be bare spectators and witnesses, but parties concerned; and which will only be a publication before his Father and the holy angels, of what has been already done: for these were secretly betrothed to him from everlasting, and were particularly espoused to him, one by one, in conversion; but it now will be declared of them all together, that they are his spouse and bride: or the marriage feast, or supper, is here intended; and which designs not the provision of the Gospel in Christ’s house, or church on earth, in general, nor the ordinance of the Lord’s supper in particular, nor the feast in the latter day, but the heavenly glory; and happy are those, who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb, and who will be ready when he comes; these shall partake of it: they will go in with Christ, and be for ever with him, and never return more.

And the door was shut:

which expresses both the happy and comfortable case of the wise virgins, and the sad and miserable state of the foolish ones. The door being shut, the wise virgins will at once be freed from the disagreeable company of profane sinners, and formal professors; their state and condition will be everlastingly settled, their communion with Christ will be free and uninterrupted, and that, for ever; no enemy of their souls can follow them, to give them any disturbance; and they shall never return to a state of sin, sorrow, and imperfection: and it also represents, the woeful and miserable condition of the foolish virgins, in whatsoever sense the word “door” is taken. The church is a door, So 8:9, and an open one, to receive in proper persons, and will be so more especially in the latter day; but this will be shut, when all the elect of God are called and gathered in; there will be no longer a church state on earth, or ordinances. Christ himself is called a door, Joh 10:7, he is the door into the church and into the blessings of grace, and into heaven itself; and which stands open in the ministry of the word, to receive sinners, but will now be shut; Christ will be no more preached, and held forth in the word, as God’s salvation: and there is the door of faith, Ac 14:27, which is the Gospel, so called, because faith is hereby let into the soul, and souls are by it let into the doctrine of faith; and this is sometimes an open door, when ministers have a fair opportunity of preaching it, and have freedom and liberty in it; when attention is given to it, and many souls are gathered in by it; and this will be shut when Christ comes; there will be no more preaching; and there is also the door of hope, Ho 2:15, which now stands open, whilst the Gospel church state lasts: whilst Christ is preached, the word and ordinances

¹⁴⁰⁶ T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 75.2.

¹⁴⁰⁷ T. Bab. Succa, fol. 45. 2. & Sanhedrin, fol. 97. 2

administered, and whilst there is life, and Christ not yet come, there is hope of salvation, pardon, and eternal life; but when Christ comes, either by death, or at judgment, and finds persons in a graceless state, there is then no hope: add to all this, that the door of Christ’s heart is now open, to receive all coming sinners; but then will be shut, against all their cries, entreaties, and importunities: it will be shut by himself, who opens and no man shuts, shuts and no man opens; and that against all wicked and profane sinners, all hypocrites and formal professors; even all without his righteousness, and the grace of the Spirit of God.

Matthew 25:11

Ver. 11. **Afterwards came also the other virgins,**

The “other five virgins”, as the Persic version reads. The “other”; that were only virgins in name, not in reality; they were different from the wise, they were foolish ones; they were other than those that were ready, they were unprepared ones; and in another situation than those that entered in; they were without, they were now separated from the company of the wise virgins, with whom they had been so long; and what was worst of all, they were to be so for ever. These “also came”; from buying oil: they went about, and came just as they went without any; they came to the door of the bridechamber, being desirous to be let in, and hoping to partake of the marriage feast, and join in the solemnity: but alas! they came too late, they came “afterwards”; after the bridegroom was come, after they that were ready had entered in, and after the door was shut;

saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

They do not call him their Lord, for they had no interest in him, nor could they claim any; though the Syriac version reads it, “our Lord, our Lord”: they give him the title, and the bare title, without having yielded that obedience, which was due unto him. They double the word, to show their importunity, earnestness, sense of danger, and confusion: this title or character is the rather used, because Christ will then appear more clearly to be Lord and God, and every tongue shall confess him to be such: their request to him is, that he would “open” the door unto them, and let them in: they were sensible that the door was shut, and that none but Christ could open it; they did not at once conclude that their case was desperate, but were willing to hope the door might be opened, through their entreaties, and what they had to say for themselves; for though no pleas or arguments are here mentioned, yet, as elsewhere, such as these will be

made by the foolish virgins; namely, prophesying in the name of Christ, casting out devils in his name, doing many wonderful works in his name, hearing his word preached, and eating and drinking in his presence; but all in vain, and to no purpose.

Matthew 25:12

Ver. 12. **But he answered and said,**

The Lord and bridegroom from within, thought fit to give them an answer, but an unexpected and awful one to them:

verily I say unto you, I know you not;

which must be understood in consistence with the omniscience of Christ: he knew their persons, conduct, and state; he knew they were foolish virgins, graceless professors, who had made no account of him and his righteousness; but had trusted to, and depended upon, their external profession of religion: they were none of the people whom he foreknew, or knew as his own, and loved with an everlasting love; he never knew them as his father’s choice in him, or as this father’s gift to him; he never knew them in the everlasting covenant, or as his sheep, for whom he died; he never knew them to believe in him, or love him; nor ever exalt his person, blood and sacrifice, at his table, nor do any good work with a single eye to his glory; he never approved of them, liked their persons, or their conduct; or ever owned them as the true companions, either of his bride, or of himself: which answer implies, that as the door was shut, so it should remain; there was no admittance for them, nor any to be hoped for; and it is all one as if he had said, begone, and depart hence. The Persic version adds such a clause, “begone from my door”.

Matthew 25:13

Ver. 13. **Watch therefore,**

In ordinances, in prayer, public and private, in hearing the word, at the Lord’s supper, and in every religious exercise; over the heart, the thoughts and affections of it; over words, actions, life, and conversation; and against all sin and unbelief, Satan’s temptations, the world, and its charms and snares, false teachers, and their doctrines, and for the bridegroom’s coming. This is the use and application of the whole parable, and shows the general design of it; the reason to enforce watchfulness follows:

for ye know neither the day nor the hour;

of death, or of judgment, or of the coming of the son of man, of one or the other; for it is added,

wherein the son of man cometh:

that he will come is certain, and that quickly; the time

is fixed, but when it will be is unknown; and therefore it becomes us to be our watch and guard. This last clause is not in the Vulgate Latin, nor in the Syriac, Arabic, Persic, and Ethiopic versions, and was wanting in three of Beza's copies, but is in most Greek copies, and in Munster's Hebrew Gospel, and seems to be necessary.

Matthew 25:14

Ver. 14. **For [the kingdom of heaven] is as a man travelling,**

Our Lord adds another parable to illustrate the Gospel dispensation, or its visible church state; or the state of things respecting the church of Christ, before, and at his second coming, and during the interval between his ascension and that: for by the man here, is meant Christ, who in the everlasting covenant agreed to become man, was prophesied of as such, frequently appeared in human form, under the Old Testament dispensation; and in the fulness of time, really became man; though he was not a mere man, but was God as well as man; having all the perfections and fulness of the Godhead dwelling bodily in him: this man is said to travel

into a far country;

by which heaven is designed, and is so called, not only because of its great distance from the earth, and which is very great indeed; but because the better country and land afar off, is out of sight; and what views we have of it, are very distant ones; and is afar off, in respect of our state of pilgrimage in this world, in which, whilst Christ was here, he was a pilgrim and a stranger too; who might be said to be as a "man travelling", whilst he was in it, and when going out of it, and ascending to heaven: he came from thence, and stayed here a while, walking up and down, and doing good; and when he had finished what he came about, he ascended on high, went to his God and Father, entered into heaven, where he is received until the times of the restitution of all things:

who called his own servants;

before he took his journey, to commit some things to their trust and management; and to give them some instructions how to behave during his absence: for, according to the Jewish¹⁴⁰⁸ canons,

"a master that had a mind to go out of the land (of Israel) could not take his servant with him, unless he pleased; and this is a rule at all times, even at this time, that the land is in the hand of the Gentiles."

And here no mention is made of any going with him,

¹⁴⁰⁸ Maimon. Hilch. Abadim, c. 8. sect. 9.

only how they were to be employed whilst he was gone: by "his own servants" are meant, not all mankind; for though they are all in some sense his servants, or ought to be, yet they are not so called in Scripture, much less with such an emphasis, his own servants; and besides, more than what are in the kingdom of heaven, or Gospel church state, cannot be intended; since the parable reaches to, and concerns no other: nor all the elect of God only, or all are not the elect of God that are designed; for though these are the servants of Christ, and his own peculiarly, yet all intrusted with talents, are not such; one of these was wicked, slothful, graceless, and at last was eternally lost, and perished; which is not true of anyone of the elect: but ministers of the word are here meant, who are eminently the servants of Christ, his own, whom he has called, qualified, commissioned, and sent forth; for the ministers of the word, whether faithful or slothful, good or bad, are in a very lively manner described in this parable, which is a distinct one from the former; for whereas that gives an account of the different members of the visible church, this describes the several ministers of it: nor can it be any objection to this sense of it, that these servants are all of them said to be his own servants, and called, commissioned, and gifted by him; since Judas, as well as the rest, was called, ordained, qualified, and sent forth by Christ, as an apostle.

And delivered unto them his goods;

the Gospel, that rich treasure of divine truths, the dispensation of it, and gifts to preach it; all which are Christ's goods and his gifts, and not man's; and which was in a very eminent manner done, when Christ ascended on high, and received gifts for, and gave them unto men. Just before it, as he was ready to go, he gathered his disciples together; he renewed and enlarged their commission to preach the Gospel; and quickly after it, gave them greater and larger gifts of the Spirit than before; and has been ever since giving ministerial gifts to men, to some more, others less, and which are signified by the talents following.

Matthew 25:15

Ver. 15. **And unto one he gave five talents,**

A "talent" with the Jews, is of silver, was, according to Brerewood¹⁴⁰⁹, of the value of £375 of our money; according to Bishop Cumberland, £353 11 s. 10 1/2 d.; and if of gold, was equal to £4500 and, according to the latter, £5075 15 s. 7 1/2 d.: so that five of these talents, if of silver, were £1875 and if of gold, £22,500 according to Bre-

¹⁴⁰⁹ De Nummis Jud. c. 4.

rewood; a very large sum for one servant to be intrusted with. The Persic version reads "pounds", as in Luke 19:13. By these talents, special grace is not meant; for the parable speaks not of what was wrought in these servants, but of what was committed to their trust, and of what might lie useless by them, and be taken away from them; whereas special grace is internal, something, implanted in man, and is an incorruptible seed, that can never be lost, or will be taken away; and it is certain, that one of these servants had not special and saving grace, but was wicked, slothful, and unprofitable, and was cast into utter darkness: but outward gifts are designed by the talents; and these not merely the gifts of natural knowledge and riches, the gifts of nature and of providence; nor the external ministry of the word, Gospel ordinances, and opportunities of enjoying them; but ministerial gifts, such as fit and qualify men to be preachers of the Gospel, as appears from their name, "talents": they being the greatest gifts for usefulness and service in the church, as talents were the greatest of weights and coins among the Jews; from the nature of them, being what may be improved or lost, and for which men are accountable; from the persons to whom they were delivered, the servants of Christ; from the time of their delivery, when Christ went into a far country, to heaven, when he ascended on high, and received gifts for men, and gave them to them; and from the unequal distribution of them, being given to some more, and others less; all which perfectly agree with ministerial gifts: for it follows,

to another two, and to another one;

and these were given

to every man, according to his several ability,

or "according to his own power"; his proper power that belonged to him, as the Lord of these servants: for the sense is, not that he gave these talents, or gifts, according to the different capacities, abilities, stations, and employments of these men; but according to that power and authority which he, as Mediator, had, to dispense these gifts to each as he would; to some more, others less, as he knew would best serve his interest and kingdom:

and straightway took his journey;

after he had signified, that all power in heaven and earth was given to him, by virtue of which he ordered them to go into all the world, and preach his Gospel, and administer his ordinances; for which he had, and would abundantly qualify them; with a promise of his presence with them to the end of the world; he took his leave of them, blessed them, and was parted from them, and went up into heaven.

Matthew 25:16

Ver. 16. **Then he that had received the five talents,**

The largest measure of gifts; an account is first given of him, how he behaved, and conducted in his Lord's absence, and what use he made of the gifts bestowed upon him: this must be understood, not of a single man, but of that sort of the servants of Christ, who have the greatest ministerial gifts: he

went;

it denotes immediate application to business, and signifies that such servants went according to their commission, preached the Gospel to every creature, and administered the ordinances to proper subjects; they went directly, as soon as they had their talents; they did not stay to consult with flesh and blood, whether it would be for their interest and credit or not; they did not stick at any difficulties and discouragements, nor were deterred by the cross, reproaches, and persecutions; but went forth with courage and boldness, not in their own name and strength, but in the name and strength of Christ, who sent them, and promised them his presence and assistance, on which they depended:

and traded with the same:

with the five talents, or their ministerial gifts. The ministers of the Gospel are traders, not in their own name, nor on their own stock, and for themselves, but for Christ, and for the good of immortal souls: they closely attend unto, and work at, their business and employment; by constant reading, and diligent search into the word of God; by studious meditation on it; by frequent prayer; and continual preaching the Gospel, and administering ordinances; and their success follows:

and made them other five talents;

that is, increased in spiritual knowledge; gifts were improved and enlarged; a greater stock of divine things were laid in; and many souls gained to Christ: such are they whom Christ has ordained to go forth, and bear and bring forth fruit in their ministry, and whose fruit remain.

Matthew 25:17

Ver. 17 **And likewise he that received two,**

Talents, or a lesser measure of ministerial gifts:

he also gained other two;

he worked and laboured, and traded, in proportion to the gifts he had received; and his improvements and success, under a divine blessing, were answerable.

Matthew 25:18

Ver. 18. **But he that received one,**

Talent, or the least degree of gifts, for the ministry of the word:

went and digged in the earth, and hid his Lord's money.

The Syriac and Arabic versions read, "silver", and the Ethiopic, "gold"; but whether these talents were silver or gold, is not certain. Where he buried it; that is, he neglected the gift that was in him, he made no use of it, either to his own advantage, or to the good of others, and the interest of his Lord; he either never went into the ministry, or if he did, he left it as Demas did, having too great affection for the world, and the things of it: he minded earth and earthly things, and employed himself in them, and not in his master's work and service. The phrase seems to point out the earthly mindedness of the man, his worldly disposition, and his eager pursuit after the things of life; which were the reason why he disregarded his talent, and made no use of his ministerial gifts: he could not deny worldly self, nor leave all to follow Christ; but rather than drop the world, he chose to bury his talent in it: it was his Lord's money and not his own, and he was accountable to him for it, and should have used it in another manner.

Matthew 25:19

Ver. 19. **After a long time, the Lord of these servants cometh,**

Either in a providential way, by a fit of illness, or in a time of persecution, and awakens the conscience, and calls them to give an account of their stewardship; or by death, when their trading or working time is over, and they become accountable for their whole conduct, throughout their ministrations; or rather, at the last judgment, when all must appear before the judge of quick and dead, ministers as well as others, and give an account of their gifts, and the use of them, to their Lord, from whom they have received them, and whose servants they profess to be. Which coming of his is after a long time; for seventeen hundred years are now past, and he is not yet come; which is a long time in man's account, though not in God's account, with whom a thousand years are as one day; and in the apprehension of the saints, who love long for, and hasten to, the coming of Christ, are desirous of it, and impatient for it. But though it may seem long, he will certainly come: he stays long, to give time to his laborious ministers to exercise all those gifts he has bestowed upon them, and to leave slothful ones without excuse. It is not to be inferred from his delay, that he will not come: he is not unmindful of his prom-

ise, or slack concerning it; though he tarries long, he will not tarry beyond the appointed time; at the end he will come, though it is long first:

and reckoneth with them;

what talents they received from him, what they had done with them, and what they had gained by them. The things that ministers of the word are intrusted with, are things of value; the Gospel is a pearl of great price, or rich treasure, that is put into their earthen vessels; it is the unsearchable riches of Christ; gifts to preach it are spiritual, and preferable to gifts of nature, and providence; and the souls of men committed to their care, are of great worth and esteem with Christ; nor are any of these their own, but Christ's, and therefore must give an account of them: this shows both the awfulness and usefulness of the Gospel ministry.

Matthew 25:20

Ver. 20. **And so he that had received five talents,**

Or the greatest gifts: as this man is the first to whom his Lord gave any talents, and the first that went and traded with them; he is also the first that is reckoned with; who

came and brought other five talents:

he came freely and cheerfully, with a holy confidence and intrepidity of mind, and gave in his account very readily, both of what he had received, and of what he had gained;

saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents, behold I have gained besides them five talents more.

True ministers of the Gospel frankly own, that what gifts they have are delivered to them by Christ; and such are willing that he should have all returned to him, principal and increase: it is not to be imagined that this will be said in so many express words by them, nor will there be any need thereof; for Christ will not be ignorant of what they have been doing, and of what use they have been of; but the sense is, that as all will be manifest to Christ the searcher of hearts, with whom they have to do, so the account will stand fair and open; and it will be seen and known by all, that such and such faithful ministers of Christ have behaved in this agreeable manner, and have been thus and thus serviceable in his interest.

Matthew 25:21

Ver. 21. **His Lord said unto him, well done,**

Gospel ministers do not say so to themselves; they know they can do nothing well of themselves, and when they have done all they can, they own they are but unprofitable servants; they acknowledge all they do is ow-

ing to the grace of God, and strength of Christ, and that no praise is due to them; nor do they expect or seek for such eulogies from men: but this is said, to show how acceptable a diligent laborious ministry is to Christ, and to encourage industry in the preachers of the word, whose works will follow them, though not go before them:

thou good and faithful servant:

such may be said to be good, who have the grace of God implanted in them, some good thing in them towards the Lord God; a good work begun in their hearts, without which men can never be good ministers of Christ; and who have good abilities, not only natural and acquired parts, but ministerial gifts; which are the good things committed to them, and that dwell in them, which they are to keep by the Holy Ghost; and who make a good use of them, and freely communicate and impart their spiritual gifts, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God; and who being employed in a good work, as that of the ministry is, do it well, and abide in it: and such may be said to be "faithful", who preach the pure Gospel of Christ, and the whole of it; who neither mix it with the inventions of men, nor keep back any part of it from the saints; who seek not to please men, but their Lord and Master; and not their own honour and applause, but his glory; and who abide by him and his cause, notwithstanding all reproaches, afflictions, and persecutions. In such language as this, the Jews used to praise their servants,

"הוי איש טוב ונאמן" "O man! good and faithful", and from whose labour one had ¹⁴¹⁰ profit.

"Thou hast been faithful over a few things:

not as considered in themselves; for the truths of the Gospel which ministers are intrusted with, and in which they are faithful, are neither few, nor inconsiderable; they are the manifold grace of God, and the unsearchable riches of Christ: nor are their gifts mean and despicable; nor are their labours worthless, and of no account; but in comparison of the unseen and eternal things of glory, which are prepared and laid up for them; so that there is no proportion between their works, and the glory that shall be revealed in them:

I will make thee ruler over many things;

either on earth, where they shall reign with Christ a thousand years; and when the kingdom, and the dominion, and the greatness of it, will be given to the saints of the Most High; and when they who have turned many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars in that kingdom:

¹⁴¹⁰ T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 16. 2.

or else in heaven, where as kings, they shall inherit the kingdom prepared for them, sit down with Christ in his throne, and wear the never fading crown of glory, life, and righteousness;

enter thou into the joy of our Lord;

not their own, or what was of their own procuring, but their Lord's; which Jehovah the Father has prepared for his people, and gives unto them; which the son possesses for them, and will bestow on them; and which the Holy Spirit makes them meet for; and which will chiefly lie in the enjoyment of Christ their Lord: this happiness of theirs is expressed by "joy", which will be full and perfect, and without any interruption or mixture; will be unspeakable and glorious, and continue for ever; for when the saints shall enter into it, as into an house or mansion, they shall take possession of it, and abide in it for ever. It was usual with the Jews to express the, happiness of the world to come by "joy"; not only that which is from the Lord, but that with which he himself rejoices with his people: for they say ¹⁴¹¹,

"there is no joy before, or in the presence of the holy blessed God, since the world was created, hxm v htwak, "like that joy", with which he will rejoice with the righteous, in the world to come."

Matthew 25:22

Ver. 22. **He also that had received two talents,**

A lesser degree of ministerial gifts; and who as he received next to the other, and was the next, who in proportion to what he had received, had traded and gained, he is mentioned in the next: place, as giving in his account; who

came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents, behold I have gained two other talents besides them:

his account, abating the sum and gains, is given in, in the same form as the other.

Matthew 25:23

Ver. 23. **His Lord said unto him,**

The same words as he did to the other servant, **well done good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord:**

where the same commendation is made, and the same characters are given, as before; for a man that has lesser gifts, and is of less usefulness, may be as good and as faithful in his service, and as praise worthy, as a man

¹⁴¹¹ Midrash Haneelam in Zohar in Gen. fol. 69. 4.

of greater gifts, and more extensive usefulness; and the same happiness is bestowed on one, as the other, which in neither is of merit; but of grace; and whatever difference may be made between the saints, or between one minister and another in the Millennium state, yet in the ultimate glory, their joy, bliss, and happiness, will be alike. It is not to be established from this parable, that man has a power to improve the stock of sufficient grace given him, and by his improvement procure eternal happiness to himself; since such a stock of grace is not designed by the talents; nor is that either gotten or improved, by the industry of man; nor does the parable suggest, that men by their improvement of the talents committed to them, do, or can, procure eternal happiness: “good and faithful” servants are indeed commended by Christ, and he graciously promises great things to them, which are not proportioned to their deserts; for whereas they have been “faithful over a few things”, he promises to make them “rulers over many things”; and bids them “enter into the joy of their Lord”; into the joy, which of his grace and goodness, he has provided for them, and not which they have merited and procured for themselves: nor is it to be inferred from hence, that true grace once given, or implanted, may be taken away or lost; for the parable speaks not of what is wrought in men, but of goods and talents bestowed on them, and committed to their trust; which may be lost or taken away, or be wrapped up in a napkin, and lie useless by them; when true grace is the incorruptible seed which never dies, but always remains; that good part which shall never be taken away nor lost, but is inseparably connected with eternal glory.

Matthew 25:24

Ver. 24. **Then he which had received the one talent came,**

For he that has the least gifts, is accountable for them; and therefore ought to make use of them to the good of his fellow creatures, and the interest of his Lord and Master; though these often lie neglected, and frivolous, and even wicked pretences are formed to excuse such neglect, as here:

and said, Lord, I knew that thou art an hard man;

he calls him “Lord”, though he had not served him, and pretends he knew him; but if he had, he would have had a true affection for him, faith in him, and would have observed his commands; and he would also have appeared altogether lovely to him, and of an amiable character, and not in such a light as he represents him; which makes it a clear case, that he was ignorant of him,

or he would never have said, that he was an hard, severe, or austere man; one very difficult of being pleased, cruel and uncompassionate to his servants, unjustly withholding from them what was due unto them, and rigorously exacting service that could not be performed by them: all which is the reverse of Christ’s true character; who accepts of the meanest services of his people: and takes what is done, though ever so little, as even a cup of cold water, given to the least of his disciples, as done to himself; is merciful and compassionate, both to the bodies and souls of men; and is not unrighteous to forget any labour of love, shown to him or his; and makes his strength perfect in the weakness of his servants, and his grace always to be sufficient for them: but this wicked servant goes on to traduce him, and adds,

reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed:

which seem to be proverbial expressions; see Joh 4:37, describing either a covetous man, that is desirous of that which does not belong to him; or an hard master that requires work to be done, and gives neither tools nor matter to work with; like the Egyptian task masters, who demanded the full tale of bricks, but gave no straw: whereas Christ is neither niggardly, nor exacting; he requires nothing that is not his, and gives his grace, and bestows his gifts liberally, and upbraids not; nor does he call any to service, of whatsoever sort, but he gives them grace, strength, and abilities, proportionate to it; and as he has promised, he makes it good, that as their day is, so shall their strength be.

Matthew 25:25

Ver. 25. **And I was afraid,**

The Persic version adds, “to negotiate with thy money”: he was afraid, lest by trading he should not gain what his Lord expected; and most of all, lest he should lose the talent itself; and dreaded his Lord’s austerity, should that be the case, fearing that he would have no mercy on him. This was his pretence; but the true causes were sloth and earthly mindedness:

and went and hid thy talent in the earth;

that it might not be lost, though it lay useless, and turned to no account. The Arabic version renders it, “and buried thy goods in the earth”: he owned the money to be his Lord’s, and thought he did very well, and enough, that he preserved it, though he had not improved it; and this he hoped would be a sufficient excuse, and on which he laid the greatest stress:

lo! there thou hast that is thine:

he again acknowledges, that the gifts he had were not his own, but his master’s; and whereas he had kept them entire, as he had received them, and there was the full sum he was intrusted with, he hoped no more would be required: but it is not sufficient to retain what is given, it must be made use of and improved; for every spiritual gift is given to profit with: and besides, there seems to be a degree of rudeness in these words; he does not bring the talent with him, and return it, but only signifies that he had hid it in the earth, in such a place, and “there” it was, where his Lord might take it, and have it again, if he pleased.

Matthew 25:26

Ver. 26. **His Lord answered and said unto him,**

Resenting, as he well might, not only his indolence and sloth, his neglect of his duty, and his worldly disposition, but the abusive character he had given of him, in order to cover his own wickedness:

thou wicked and slothful servant;

a very just character of him: he was a “wicked” servant; all men in a state of nature are wicked; they lie in wickedness, and are under the power of the wicked one; and there are many wicked men among professors of religion, and many wicked ministers, who, though not openly profane, yet either trusting to their works, or doing the work of the Lord deceitfully, or wholly neglecting it, justly merit this character. This man’s wickedness lay in his slothfulness, in not doing the good he might, and had gifts and abilities for; and in entertaining wrong thoughts of, and in bringing false charges against his Lord: and he might be truly said to be “slothful”; since he took no pains to improve in spiritual knowledge; and instead of digging for that, as for silver and hid treasure, dug in the earth, and hid his talent there: he neglected the gift that was in him; did not stir it up, or study to show himself a workman that needeth not to be ashamed; did not give himself up to reading, meditation, and prayer; but trusted to, and depended on what other men had done; stole away his neighbour’s words, reaped that for which he had not laboured, and entered into the labours of others; and being afraid of difficulties, indulged himself in ease and pleasure, served his own belly, and not the Lord Jesus; he gratified his worldly lusts, and had no regard to his master’s interest.

Thou knowest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed:

not granting that he was such an one, and that his servant knew him to be such, and had given a true char-

acter of him; but supposing he was such a person he had wickedly represented him to be; he turns the argument upon him, that therefore he must needs know, that he expected to have had his money improved, and to have received it with an increase; and that upon such a consideration he ought to have been the more diligent and industrious, in using and improving his talent, and not to have indulged sloth, and idleness; and thus he convicts, judges, and condemns him, as a wicked, slothful servant, by his own words.

Matthew 25:27

Ver. 27. **Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers,**

“Trapezites”, or “tablets”, the same whom the Jews ¹⁴¹² call טרפזיטין, and is the same word which is here used in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel; who were so called from the table that stood before them, on which they told, and paid their money, and the exchange and use: hence all the Oriental versions here read, “thou shouldest have put my money to, or on the table”; put it into the hand of these bankers, where it would have been not only safe, as in the earth, where it was hid, but also would have made some increase, and would have been returned with profit;

and then at my coming I should have received my own with usury:

this is said not so much to encourage usury, though it may be lawful; and it seems to have been a practice in those times to put money out to use upon a reasonable interest; but to reprove the sloth and inactivity of this servant, upon his own reasonings, and the character he had given of his master.

Matthew 25:28

Ver. 28. **Take therefore the talent from him,....** This shows it was not special grace, which is intended by the talent; for the gift and calling of special grace are without repentance, and are that good part which shall not be taken away: but gifts may fail, cease, and vanish; they may be taken away from men, and men from them; a right arm may be clean dried up, and a right eye be utterly darkened:

and give it unto him which hath ten talents;

for to diligent and laborious ministers of the word, more spiritual light and knowledge is given: but this is not to be understood, as though other men’s gifts are, properly speaking, taken away from them, and bestowed

¹⁴¹² Maimon. Hilch. Shekalim, c. 1. sect. 9. & c. 2. sect. 1.

on them; but that their gifts appear the more illustrious through the slothfulness of others.

Matthew 25:29

Ver. 29. **For unto everyone that hath shall be given,**

This seems to be a frequent saying of Christ's, or a common maxim of his, which he made use of on different occasions; See Gill on "Mt 13:12", and accords with some usual sayings, and proverbial expressions of the Jews; who say ¹⁴¹³, that "the blessed God does not give wisdom, but to him that has wisdom"; and of a man, in other respects, they use this is a common proverb ¹⁴¹⁴,

"if he adds or increases, they add unto him, and if he lessens, they lessen to him:"

and so here; he that has gifts; and talents, shall have an addition to them.

And he shall have abundance

of spiritual gifts and knowledge;

but from him that hath not, shall be taken away, even that which he hath.

The Vulgate Latin reads, "that which he seemed to have", and so reads Munster's Hebrew Gospel, and so it is read in some Greek copies; though it seems to be taken out of Luke 8:18.

Matthew 25:30

Ver. 30. **And cast ye the unprofitable servant,**

All the servants of Christ are unprofitable with respect to God; for no man can be profitable to him, as he that is wise may be profitable to himself, or others; or in a way of merit, since when they have done the most and best, they have done but their duty: but this man was unprofitable with respect to himself, having not improved the gift and talent bestowed on him; and with respect to men, being of no use for the conversion of sinners, or the comfort of saints, or the edifying of the body of Christ; and brought no honour to his master, and was of no service for the spreading of his Gospel, and the enlargement of his kingdom and interest; and therefore, as one good for nothing, the ministering angels are bid to take him, and cast him

into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth:

he shall be turned out of doors into outer darkness, to be a companion of other unhappy creatures; who are also without, bewailing their miserable condition, and reflecting on their past conduct; whilst faithful, diligent, and laborious servants will be within, partaking of a rich

¹⁴¹³ T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 55. 1. Zohar in Exod. fol. 89. 4.

¹⁴¹⁴ Vajikra Rabba, sect. 30. fol. 170. 2.

entertainment, prepared by their Lord, accompanied with joy unspeakable, and full of glory: See Gill on "Mt 8:12".

Matthew 25:31

Ver. 31. **When the son of man shall come in his glory,...** What is before signified in the two preceding parables, is here clearly and distinctly represented without a parable: and it should be observed, that as the foregoing parables only regard the Gospel church state, and the ministers and members of it, good and bad, or all sorts of Christian professors; so this account of the last judgment only concerns them; for though all men that ever have been, are, or shall be in every nation under heaven, from Adam to the last man that will be born, will be judged; yet the part or it here described, though it gives a general and lively idea of the whole, only regards the judgment and final state of such who have made a profession of the Christian religion. The judge himself is first described, who is said to be "the son of man"; a name by which Christ is frequently called, and by which he styles himself in his state of humiliation; expressing both the truth of his human nature, and the meanness of it in that state: but as despicable as he appeared then in human nature, in the form of a servant, a man of sorrows, despised by men, and subject to sufferings and death; yet when he comes again, it will be in another guise manner: he will appear "in his glory"; in the glory of the only begotten of the Father, in the glory of his proper deity, in the glory of all the perfections of the divine nature; which glory was, in a great measure, and from most persons, hid in the days of his flesh, though he was in the form of God, and equal with him. He will also come in his mediatorial glory, which he had with the Father before the world was, and with all the honour, power, and authority of the judge of the whole earth, to execute judgment upon men; and in the glory of his human nature, of which his transfiguration on the mount was a pledge and emblem.

And all the holy angels with him;

which splendid retinue will add to the glory of his appearance; and who will accompany him not merely, or only as his attendants, to make the solemnity more grand, pompous, and magnificent; but as ministering spirits, who will be employed by him in gathering all before him, separating the wicked the good, and conducting each to their several apartments of bliss or woe: and when he thus appears,

then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory;

or glorious throne, upon the clouds of heaven, where

he will sit as judge, and be visible to all.

Matthew 25:32

Ver. 32. **And before him shall be gathered all nations.**

That is, all that have professed the Christian religion in all the nations of the world, whether Jews or Gentiles, high or low, rich or poor, wise and foolish, such as have had greater or lesser talents; though it is also true of every individual of mankind of every nation, tribe and family, of every sex, age, and state, that ever has been, is, or will be. Yet Christian professors seem only here intended, as the following distinction of them, their final state, and the reasons of it show. This collection of them before Christ, the righteous judge, will be made by the holy angels, who will come with him for this purpose; and being mighty, as they are, will be able to accomplish great a work; and especially as being under the direction, influence, and authority of so divine, glorious, and illustrious a person, as the son of man will then to all appear to be.

And he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

they shall be gathered before him, as they were together in their visible church state, as being all under a profession of religion; some wise, some foolish virgins; some sheep, and others goats; some industrious, diligent, faithful, and laborious servants; others wicked, slothful, and unprofitable ones; many of whom pass undistinguished and undiscovered now: but then the judge, who is of quick understanding, will easily discern the one from the other; such as have the oil of grace in the vessels of their hearts, together with their lamps, from such as have only the outward visible lamp of a profession, but destitute of the grace of God; and good and faithful servants, who have made a right use of their gifts, from such who have been negligent, careless, and remiss; and though these have been folded together, sheep and goats, in the sheepfold of the church, where they have all bore the character of the sheep of Christ; yet now when the chief shepherd appears, who knows his own sheep, and calls them by name, he will as easily separate the one from the other, and more so, than any shepherd, among men, can part a flock consisting of sheep and goats. Hypocrites in Zion shall now be no more, nor sinners stand any longer in the congregation of the righteous, nor both together as one body, and on one side in judgment.

Matthew 25:33

Ver. 33. **And he shall set the sheep on his right hand,**

That is, the elect of God, and true believers, such as have the grace of God truly implanted in them; the sheep the Father gave unto Christ, and made his care and charge, whom he, as the good shepherd, laid down his life for; and who know his voice in effectual calling, and follow him in the way of his ordinances and appointments; and are comparable to sheep for their meekness and innocence, their simplicity and usefulness, and their harmless and inoffensive lives, and conversations: these Christ will set on his right hand, as a token of his affection for them, and a mark of respect and honour shown them, and as a pledge of that exaltation and glory he will be about to raise them to.

But the goats on the left;

that is, the foolish virgins, wicked, and slothful servants, graceless professors, who, because of the impurity of their hearts, the filthiness of their lives, and their offensiveness to Christ, are compared to goats: these he will place at his left hand, in token of his disaffection for them, as a brand of disgrace upon them, and as an intimation of that dishonour, and miserable condition they will quickly be in. These different situations plainly pre-signify how things will go with each, that one will be acquitted, and made happy, the other will be condemned, and become miserable. Agreeable to which the Jews say ¹⁴¹⁵, that there is a right hand and a left hand with the Lord: they that are on the right hand, are such as have done well, and are לְיָמִי "for absolution"; and they that are on the left hand are criminals, and are הַבְּיָמָה "for condemnation". Some think the allusion is to the two Scribes in the sanhedrim, who stood before the judges, one on the right hand, and the other on the left, and wrote the sentences; the one of those that were acquitted, and the other of those that were condemned ¹⁴¹⁶.

Matthew 25:34

Ver. 34. **Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand,**

Before Christ is called "the son of man", now "the king"; who is not only king of saints, but king of the whole world; the king of kings, and lord of lords, the judge of all the earth; he appearing in glory and majesty, sitting on a throne of glory, being attended with his glorious angels, and all nations gathered before him, waiting for the final sentence to be pronounced upon them

¹⁴¹⁵ Jarchi in Gen. i. 26. Kimchi in 1 Kings xxii. 19. Lex. Cabalist. p. 132. Zohar in Numb. fol. 93. 4.

¹⁴¹⁶ Misn. Sanhedrin, c. 4. sect. 3. Maimon. Hilch. Sanhedrin, c. 1. sect. 9. Moses Kotsensis Mitzvot Tora pr. affirm. 97.

by him; and who accordingly begins with those on his right hand, his sheep, the chosen, redeemed, and called of God, saying to them,

come.

The Arabic version adds, “to me”: by such a phrase he sometimes had invited, and encouraged poor sensible sinners: to come and partake of his grace: and here by it he calls the righteous, and bespeaks them in the most tender and endearing manner, and yet with the majesty of a king, and the authority of a judge, to come near unto him, with intrepidity and confidence, and take possession of a glorious kingdom; bestowing on them this high and illustrious character,

ye blessed of my Father:

so called, partly because they were his Father’s, not only by creation, but by his choice of them to grace and glory, and therefore most happy and blessed; and partly, because, as such a choice shows, they were dear unto him, highly in his favour, and loved by him with an everlasting love; as also, because they were blessed by him as the Father of Christ, and theirs, with all the spiritual blessings of the everlasting covenant in him; with the pardon of their sins, the justification of their persons, the sanctification of their nature, with adoption, and a right unto, and meetness for the eternal inheritance: hence it follows,

inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

The happiness of the saints, in the other world, is here expressed by a “kingdom”, because of the glory, riches, grandeur, and magnificence of it; as it is sometimes by a crown, for the same reason, suitable to their character and dignity, who are made kings and priests by Christ: and is likewise represented as an “inheritance”, as it is elsewhere, being not acquired by industry, or obtained by merit; but is the gift of their heavenly Father, and in right of adoption, as the children of God, being made such by his free grace and favour, and denotes the stability and perpetuity of it: and this is said to be prepared, not only appointed and designed in the council purposes, and decrees of God, but got ready; it is a kingdom erected, an inheritance reserved, and a crown of righteousness laid up in heaven; a glory really provided and secured in an everlasting covenant, and that for you: for some, and not others; for the sheep on the right hand, and not the goats on the left; for the peculiar favourites of God, the objects of his love and choice, the redeemed of the Lamb, and that are born of the Spirit; and that for them,

from the foundation of the world.

The place itself, where this happiness is to be enjoyed, was actually made on the first day of the creation, when the heavens were formed, and the foundations of the earth were laid, and the glory itself long before. The Ethiopic version here reads, “before the world”; and the Persic, “before the foundation of the world was laid”; and Grotius himself owns, that the phrase is the same as “before the foundation of the world”; and Dr. Hammond’s paraphrase is, “before all eternity”: for as early were these persons, the beloved, the chosen, and blessed of the Father: so that this glory must be of free grace, and not merit, or owing to any works of righteousness done by men; since it was not only designed and appointed, but prepared and laid up for persons before they had a being, and had done neither good nor evil. The Jews ¹⁴¹⁷ speak of the law being an inheritance for all Israel, from the six days of the creation; but a much more glorious one is here spoken of: nearer to this is what they say ¹⁴¹⁸ that Bathsheba was appointed to be David’s wife from the day that the world was created; and add, but the mystery of the thing is, מלכותא דלילא, “the kingdom that is above”, which is called by her name. So in 2 Esdras, “the kingdom is already prepared for you”:

”Go, and ye shall receive: pray for few days unto you, that they may be shortened: the kingdom is already prepared for you: watch.” (2 Esdras 2:13)

Matthew 25:35

Ver. 35. **For I was an hungered and ye gave me meat.....** This, and the following, are not mentioned as causes of the kingdom being prepared for them, or of their being entitled to it, or of their being put into the possession of it; but as descriptive of their characters, and as testimonies and evidences of the grace of God in them; by which it appeared, that they were the blessed of his Father, having his special grace vouchsafed unto them; and that they were the children of God, to whom the inheritance of the kingdom belonged, and for whom it was prepared: for what was done by them in time, could never be the cause of what was done for them in eternity, or before, or from the foundation of the world; nor is there any proportion between a kingdom, and such services as here mentioned: and besides, this kingdom is by inheritance, and not, merit; is prepared by God, and not procured by men, and was got ready for them before they had a being; and therefore could not be caused by any actions of theirs: what is here, and in the following in-

¹⁴¹⁷ T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 91. 2.

¹⁴¹⁸ Zohar in Exod. fol. 44. 3.

stances, said to be done to Christ, is not to be understood of him personally, but mystically, of the members of his body, as he himself explains it, Mt 25:40, and the sense is, that when some of the servants of Christ, ministers, or private Christians, were in distress for want of the necessities of life, these gracious souls supplied them with food; which to do, especially in a time of persecution, showed not only love to Christ, but great faith in him, and that they were not ashamed of him, and their profession of him, nor of his poor ministers and members; for this was done by them, not as the effect of mere humanity to the poor in general, but as an instance of affection to Christ’s poor; and was done for his sake, and because they belonged to him, were preachers of his Gospel, and professors of his name; and therefore was considered as if done to himself personally:

I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink;

not gall and vinegar, as the Jews did, but a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, prophet, and righteous person, and because belonging to Christ: this is taken notice of with acceptance by him; and such shall not lose the reward of grace. The Targumist ¹⁴¹⁹ has a passage which may be compared with this:

”Solomon said, by a spirit of prophecy from before the Lord; the Lord of the world shall say to all the righteous in the presence of everyone, go taste, with joy, thy bread which is returned unto thee, for thy bread which thou hast given to the poor and needy, who were hungry; and drink with a good heart the wine which is laid up for thee in paradise, instead of thy wine, which thou hast mingled for the poor and needy, who were thirsty; for, lo! now are thy works accepted before the Lord.”

I was a stranger, and ye took me in,

or “gathered me”: an Hebraism; see 2Sa 11:27, and the Septuagint there. Such servants of Christ as were obliged to quit their habitations through the violence of persecution, and were scattered abroad, or went about preaching the Gospel; such were by these righteous ones taken into their houses, and provided for with food and lodging, and every convenience of life; as they were by Gaius, and others.

Matthew 25:36

Ver. 36. **Naked, and ye clothed me,**

For in such a condition sometimes are the dear children of God, and members of Christ; see 1Co 4:11, when

¹⁴¹⁹ Zohar in Eccl. ix. 7.

others, who, Dorcas like, have made coats and garments for them, and clothed them with them; and which will be shown another day, or taken notice of as the fruits, and so evidences of the grace of God in them.

I was sick, and ye visited me,

or “looked after me”, or “over me”: or, as the Persic version renders it, ye had the care of me; and which is the true sense and import of the word: for it not only intends visits paid to sick persons in a Christian manner, relieving them with their substance, giving good advice, or speaking comfortable words to them; but attending them, and waiting on them, and doing such things for them which, in their weak state, they are not capable of doing for themselves. Visiting of the sick was reckoned, by the Jews, a very worthy action: they speak great things of it, and as what will be highly rewarded hereafter.

”Six things, (they say ¹⁴²⁰,) a man eats the fruit of them in this world, and there is a stable portion for him in the world to come: ”

and the two first of them are, הכנת אורחני “the taking in of travellers”, or “strangers”, which is mentioned in the preceding verse, and ביקור חולימי, “visiting the sick”. One of their Rabbins ¹⁴²¹ says, “he that does not visit the sick, is as if he shed blood: says another, he that visits the sick is the cause of his living; and he that does not visit the sick, is the cause of his death: and, says a third, whoever visits the sick shall be preserved from the damnation of hell.” I was in prison, and ye came unto me: which has been often the lot of the saints, as it was frequently of the Apostle Paul, who had this respect shown him by many of the people of God, as by the house of Onesiphorus, and by Epaphroditus, who brought him a present from the Philippians, when in bonds; and which will be remembered another day.

Matthew 25:37

Ver. 37. **Then shall the righteous answer him,**

From whence it appears, that only such shall be at the right hand of Christ, who are righteous persons, who have the righteousness of Christ imputed to them; and, in consequence of which, are created anew unto righteousness and true holiness; and, under the influence of divine grace, live soberly, righteously, and godly: and those, upon hearing such works ascribed unto them, will, with wonder and astonishment, reply,

saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and

¹⁴²⁰ T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 127.

¹⁴²¹ T. Bab. Nedarim, fol. 40. 1. Vid. Maimon. Hilch. Ebel, c. 14. sect. 4, 5, 6.

fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

which answer arises partly from not attending to, or thoroughly understanding the words of Christ, which they seem to take in such sense, as if he meant these things were personally done to him; whereas the far greater part of them had never seen him in the flesh, and much less in such circumstances as required such things to be done to him; and partly from surprise and astonishment, that he should take notice of such mean actions, and so highly extol them, and graciously reward them; as also from a forgetfulness of them, their left hand not knowing what their right hand had done: which shows, that they had put no confidence in their works, or depended upon them for their justification before God, and acceptance, with him; these were out of sight, and mind; their only trust being in the person, blood, righteousness, and sacrifice of Christ.

Matthew 25:38

Ver. 38. **When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in?**

As they had never seen him hungry and thirsty, in his own person, though he was both in the days of his flesh, and were ministered to, both by angels, and by good women out of their substance; so they had never seen him a stranger, and took him into their houses; yet they had, seen him hungry and thirsty, and as a stranger in his members, and had done these good offices to him in them, and to them for his sake:

or naked, and clothed thee?

for so Christ in person never was, until stripped of his raiment by the soldiers, and officers; but they had seen many of his poor saints without clothing, and had covered their nakedness.

Matthew 25:39

Ver. 39. **Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?**

For though he bore the sicknesses of his people, yet we never read of his being sick himself, nor was he ever cast into prison; but this has been the case of many of his servants, as John the Baptist, Peter, and Paul, and multitudes of others, who have been tenderly and affectionately used by their fellow Christians.

Matthew 25:40

Ver. 40. **And the king shall answer, and say unto them,**

Christ, though a king, and now appearing in great glory and majesty, yet such will be his goodness and condescension, as to return an answer to the queries of

his people; blushing and astonished at his notice of their poor services, which they know to be so imperfect, and are always ready to own themselves unprofitable servants; and this he will do in the following manner:

verily I say unto you;

a way of speaking often used by him, when here on earth, when he, in the strongest manner, would asseverate anything as truth, and remove all doubt and hesitation about it.

Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me:

which is to be understood, not in so limited a sense, as to regard only the apostles, and the least of them, for these were not the only brethren of Christ; nor in so large a sense, as to include all in human nature; but the saints only, the children of God, and household of faith: for though acts of charity and humanity are to be done to all men, yet especially to these; and indeed, these only can be considered as the brethren of Christ, who are born of God, and do the will of Christ; for such he accounts his mother, brethren, and sisters; and who are not only of the same human nature, but in the same covenant with him, and the sons of God, not by nature, as he is the Son of God, but by adoption, and so are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ: now he that does any of the above acts of kindness to these “brethren” of Christ, and because they stand in such a relation to him, even the “least” of them: though he is not an apostle, or a martyr, or a preacher of the Gospel, or has any considerable gifts and abilities for usefulness, but is a weak believer in spiritual things, as well as poor in temporal things; and though it is but to “one” of these opportunity and circumstances not allowing it to be done to more; yet as such is the humility and condescension of this great king, as to account such mean persons his brethren; such also is his grace and goodness, as to reckon every instance of kindness and respect shown to them, as done to himself in person; and will take notice of it, accept and reward it, as if it had been so done.

Matthew 25:41

Ver. 41. **Then shall he also say unto them on his left hand,**

The goats, the foolish virgins, and slothful and wicked servants,

depart from me:

a like expression is used by him to preachers of the word, and professors of religion, that are mere nominal ones. Mt 7:23 and such are intended here, who professed

to be on Christ's side, had been in his visible church, and hoped to have been with him for ever; but having nothing but the lamp of a profession, and some external works to trust to, they are bid to be gone from him; they are banished his presence, which is what is commonly called the punishment of loss; the loss of the presence of God, Father, Son, and Spirit, angels, and saints; and is thought to be greater than the punishment of sense, hereafter expressed. The character given of them, which is the reverse of the former, is,

ye cursed;

for having sinned against God, and his righteous law, they are cursed by it, which curses everyone that is under its works, as these were, and do not perfectly fulfil whatsoever it requires; and so were justly rejected of God, and hated by him: and therefore are condemned and sent,

into everlasting fire:

by which is meant, the wrath of God; and the phrase expresses the intolerable fierceness of it, and its perpetual continuance; the sense of which, without intermission, will ever be felt in the conscience; and is the punishment of sense, the wicked will for ever endure: it may also intend the pit and prison of hell, where these torments will be for ever inflicted; and so hell is called by the Jews ¹⁴²², the hell לִמְנוּחַ, “eternal fire”, or “everlasting burning”: and is here said to be

prepared for the devil and his angels;

for Satan, or Beelzebub, the prince of devils, and all his principalities and powers under him: it is not said to be prepared for these persons, though it was, and who were foreordained to this condemnation, but for the devil and his angels; showing, that the same punishment will be inflicted on hypocrites and carnal professors, as on the devils themselves; and it is indeed of such, that the devouring fire, and everlasting burnings are spoken, in Isa 33:14, to which this passage seems to have some respect; for no where else is mention made of this everlasting fire: it is not said neither when it was prepared. It is a notion of the Jews ¹⁴²³, that the angels were created on the second day; and it should seem by them, that they fell the same day; hence it is a prevailing opinion among them ¹⁴²⁴, that hell was made on the second day of the creation;

¹⁴²² Targum in Isa. xxxiii. 14.

¹⁴²³ Targum Jon. in Gen. i. 26. Pirke Eliezer, c. 4.

¹⁴²⁴ Targum in Cant. viii. 6. T. Bab. Pesach. fol. 54. 1. Zohar in Gen. fol. 13. 3. & 30. 2. & in Exod. fol. 61. 4. & in Deut. fol. 120. 1. Bereshit Rabba, sect. 4. fol. 4. 1. & sect. 21. fol. 19. 1. Shemot Rabba, sect. 15. fol. 101. 4. Tzeror Hammor, fol. 1. 2. & 121. & 1. 2. & 130. 3.

though at, other times, they reckon hell among the seven things which were created before the world was ¹⁴²⁵, and which may be reconciled together: for as heaven, the place of the saints' happiness, was prepared from the foundation of the world, or on the first day of its creation, though the happiness itself was provided long before; so hell, the place of the torments of the devils and wicked, though it was not made or prepared until the second day of the creation, when, according to this opinion, the angels were made and fell; yet the punishment they were to endure there, was appointed before the world was; and so hell is said to מְדֻרָה מִן לְמִינֵי “be ordained from eternity”, because of their sins ¹⁴²⁶.

Matthew 25:42

Ver. 42. **For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat,**

Hence it appears, that these were such as dwelt among Christians, and professed the Christian name, and yet disregarded the poor members of Christ in distress, when it was in the power of their hands to help them; but when they were hungry and ready to starve for want of food, did not communicate to them for Christ's sake; which showed I that they had no true faith in him, and love to him, and therefore are justly condemned by him; whereas such who never knew Christ, nor any of his people, or any obligation they were under to regard any for Christ's sake, these will never be condemned for the non-performance of these things:

I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink;

as not the least morsel of bread to eat, so not so much as a cup of cold water to drink; which with what follows, are manifest tokens and evidences, that they did not belong to Christ, were not true believers in him, nor had they any real love to him: the grace of God was not in them, and therefore had neither right unto, nor meetness for, the kingdom of heaven; but were righteously banished from the presence of the Lord, and sent to dwell among everlasting burnings; for righteous it was, that such as they who would not show any love to him here, should not dwell with him for ever hereafter.

Matthew 25:43

Ver. 43. **I was a stranger, and ye took me not in,**
Did not take the poor members of Christ into their houses, and take care of them in their families, when they were obliged to flee from their places of abode, or wan-

¹⁴²⁵ T. Bab. Pesach. fol. 54. 1. & Nedar. fol. 39. 2. Zokar in Lev. fol. 14. 4. Targum Jon. in Gen iii. 24.

¹⁴²⁶ Targum in Isa. xxx. 33.

dered about preaching the Gospel; and who must have perished in the streets, if others, that bore the Christian name; had not been more compassionate than they:

naked, and ye clothed me not: sick and in prison, and ye visited me not:

their conduct, behaviour, and character, are just the reverse of the righteous, and therefore it is no wonder that their sentence is different.

Matthew 25:44

Ver. 44. **Then shall they also answer him,**

As well as the righteous, being likewise astonished at what he had said, but on a different account;

saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister to thee?

Hence it is clear again, that these men were nominal Christians, who had made a profession of Christ: they own him as Lord; and suggest that they had seen him, and known him, though never in such circumstances; for if they had, such was their love to him, and great respect and veneration for him, as they pretend, they would, to be sure, have ministered unto him; and if ever they had seen him in such a case, which they could not call to mind, they could not believe, but they must have supplied him with all things necessary and convenient.

Matthew 25:45

Ver. 45. **Then shall he answer them,**

With a stern countenance, in great resentment, as one highly offended, and with the authority of a judge:

saying, verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not unto me:

since they had given no food not to the least of his brethren and friends that stood at his right hand, no not to anyone of them; not so much as the least bit of bread to them when hungry, nor a drop of water to them when thirsty; had not taken them into their houses, nor provided the meanest lodging for them, when they were exposed in the streets to the inclemency of the weather, and insults of men; nor gave them the least rag to cover them, when they were almost naked, and ready to perish; nor did they minister to their wants, either physical, or food, or give attendance, when on sick beds, and in prison houses; therefore he reckoned this neglect of them, and want of compassion to them, all one as if he himself in person had been so treated: and if then judgment will righteously proceed against men for sins of omission, much more for sins of commission; and if such will be dealt with in this manner, who have taken no notice, and

shown no respect to the members of Christ; what will the end be of those, who are injurious to them, their persons, and properties, and persecute and kill them?

Matthew 25:46

Ver. 46. **And these shall go away into everlasting punishment,**

Their excuses will not be regarded, their pleas will be of no avail, their pretensions to interest in Christ, and love to him, will be set aside; the sentence will remain irrevocable, and there will be no appeal from it, for there is no higher tribunal to bring the cause before; judgment having passed, the execution of it immediately follows: these goats, or formal professors, shall be obliged, whether they will or not, to depart from the presence of Christ; the angels will be ordered to take and cast them into everlasting burnings; they will be driven by them into hell, the place appointed for them; where they shall endure עוֹשׁ נֶקְמָה “everlasting punishment”, as the Jews¹⁴²⁷ also express it; and that both in soul and body, as the just desert of sin; which being committed against an infinite God, cannot be satisfied for by a finite creature; who therefore must ever bear the punishment of it, because its pollution and guilt will always remain:

but the righteous into life eternal;

such as are justified by the righteousness of Christ, and who, though they have done works of righteousness under the influence, and by the assistance of the grace of God, yet have not depended upon them, but upon Christ, for life and salvation: these shall go into heaven, the place appointed for them, to enjoy that eternal life in soul and body, which is the free gift of God, through Christ; and will be a life free from all the sorrows of the present one; a life of perfect holiness and knowledge, and inconceivable pleasure; a life of vision of God, and communion with him, and which will continue for ever; and which ascertains the eternity of the punishment of the wicked: for as the happiness of the righteous will be eternal, the punishment of the wicked will be so too; for no reason can be given why the word which is the same in both clauses, should be taken in the one for a limited time, and in the other for an eternal duration. The Jews have a saying¹⁴²⁸ which agrees with this last clause, “the world to come is not made but for the righteous”.

Matthew Chapter 26

Matthew 26:1

Ver. 1. **And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished**

¹⁴²⁷ Caphtor, fol. 113. 1. Shalshet Hakabala, fol. 71. 1.

¹⁴²⁸ T. Bab. Yebamot, fol. 47. 1.

all these sayings,.... Meaning either all that are recorded by this evangelist, all the sermons and discourses of Christ, delivered both to the people of the Jews, and to his disciples; his conversation with the former, and his divine instructions and prudent advice to the latter, together with all his excellent parables, which are largely related in this book; or else what is said in the two preceding chapters, concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, and the end of the world, the state of the church, and conduct of his servants to the end of time, expressed in the parables of the virgins and talents, and concerning the last judgment and final state of all men:

he said unto his disciples;

who now were alone with him: having finished his prophetic, and being about to enter on his priestly office, he gives his disciples some intimations of its near approach.

Matthew 26:2

Ver. 2. **Ye know that after two days is [the feast of] the passover,**

Which was kept in commemoration of the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt; and was typical of Christ the passover, who was now to be sacrificed for his people. This was said on Tuesday, and on the Thursday following, the passover began. Christ speaks of this as a thing well known to the disciples, as it must be, since it always began on a certain day, the fourteenth of the month Nisan; which month answered to part of our March, and part of our April; and though there was very frequently an intercalation of a whole month in a year, made by the sanhedrim, to keep their festivals regularly in the proper season of the year; yet previous public notice was always given of this, either by fixing a paper upon the door of the sanhedrim¹⁴²⁹, signifying such an intercalation made, which served for the inhabitants of Jerusalem; or by sending messengers with letters into all distant places {s}, acquainting them with it. So that the times of these festivals were always well known; even to the common people:

and the son of man is betrayed to be crucified;

it must not be thought that this was equally known by the disciples, as the former; for though they might know, or at least remember, that Christ had told them that he should suffer many things of the priests, Scribes, and elders, who would deliver him to the Gentiles, to be crucified; yet might not understand that this passover

¹⁴²⁹ Targum in Cant. vii. 4. {s} Maimon Hilch. Kiddush Hachodesh, c. 4. sect. 17.

was to be the time, when this should be done: by “the son of man”, Christ means himself, who was truly and really man, the seed of the woman, the son of Abraham and of David; a character by which the Messiah is described in the Old Testament, Ps 80:17 Da 7:13, and hence frequently used by Christ of himself; which, as it expresses the truth of his human nature, so the weaknesses and infirmities he bore in it; and is very properly used here, when he is speaking of his being to be betrayed and crucified. What he says of himself is, that he is “betrayed”; that is, is to be betrayed, or will be betrayed, meaning at the passover, which was to be in two days time. Christ speaks of his being betrayed, as if it was already done; not only because it was so near being done, there being but two days before it would be done; but because it was a sure and certain thing, being determined in the purpose of God, and foretold in prophecy that it should be; and besides, Judas had now resolved upon it within himself, and was forming a scheme how to bring it about. And this respects not only the act of Judas in betraying him into the hands of the chief priests, but also the delivery, as the word here used signifies, of him by them, to the Roman governors; for they, as Stephen says, were also his betrayers and murderers; yea, it may include the delivery of him by Pilate, to the Jews and Roman soldiers; and the rather, because it follows, “to be crucified”; which was a Roman, and not a Jewish punishment. This was typified by the lifting up the brazen serpent on a pole, and foretold by the prophets of the Old Testament, Ps 22:16, and predicted by Christ himself, sometimes more covertly, Joh 12:32, and sometimes in express words, Mt 20:19, and was a very painful and shameful death, and which showed him to be made a curse for his people. It appears from hence; that the crucifixion and death of Christ, were not casual and contingent events, but were determined by the counsel of God, with all circumstances attending: the betraying and delivery of him were by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God; and not only his death, but the manner of it by crucifixion, was pointed out in prophecy, and was a certain thing; and the very time of his death was fixed; which shows the early concern of God for the salvation of his people, and his wonderful grace and mercy to them: and it is clear from hence, that Christ had perfect knowledge of all this: he knew not only that he should be betrayed, but he knew from the beginning who would betray him; he not only knew that he should die, but he knew what kind of death he should die, even the death of the cross; and he knew the exact time when he should die, that it would be at the

following passover, which was just at hand; and he had suggested this to his disciples, and therefore he speaks of it as a thing known unto them; at least what they might have known, and concluded from what he had said to them, Mt 20:18, and the whole is a considerable proof of his being God omniscient. And he thought fit to put his disciples in mind of it, because the time drew nigh; that their memories being refreshed with it, they might be prepared for it, and not be surprised, shocked, and offended at it, when it came to pass; which shows the tender concern our Lord had for them.

Matthew 26:3

Ver. 3. **Then assembled together the chief priests,**

About the same time, two days before the passover, that Jesus said these things to his disciples, as is plain from Mark 14:1. By “the chief priests” are meant, either such who had been high priests, or such as were the heads of the twenty four courses of the priests; or rather, the principal men of the priesthood, who were chosen out of the rest, to be members of the great sanhedrim:

and the Scribes;

the doctors, of the law, who wrote out copies of the law for the people, and interpreted it to them in a literal way: this clause is left out in the Vulgate Latin, and in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel, and in the Arabic and Ethiopic versions, and in the Alexandrian copy, and some others, but is retained in, the Syriac version; and no doubt, but these men had a place in this grand council:

and the elders of the people;

these were the civil magistrates; so that this assembly consisted both of ecclesiastics and laymen, as the sanhedrim did, of priests, Levites, and Israelites¹⁴³⁰: these came

unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas;

his name was Joseph, but his surname Caiaphas; a word not of the same original with Cephias, as Camero thought; for these two words begin with different letters, nor are the rest the same. Now, though a king of Israel might not sit in the sanhedrim, yet an high priest might, provided he was sufficiently qualified with wisdom¹⁴³¹. The president of this grand council at this time, should be Rabban Gamaliel, Paul’s master; unless it was Caiaphas, at whose house they were: how they came to meet at the high priest’s palace, deserves inquiry; since their proper and usual place of meeting, was a chamber in the temple, called Gazith¹⁴³², or the paved chamber:

¹⁴³⁰ Maimon. Hilch. Sanhedrin, c. 2. sect. 1.

¹⁴³¹ lb. sect. 4.

¹⁴³² Misn. Middot c. 5. sect. 3.

now let it be observed, that according to the accounts the Jews themselves give, the sanhedrim removed from this chamber, forty years before the destruction of the temple¹⁴³³; and which, as Dr. Lightfoot conjectures, was about a year and a half before the death of Christ; and as others say¹⁴³⁴, four years; at least three years and a half before that time: but then, though the sanhedrim removed from the paved chamber, they met at Chanoth, “the sheds”, which was a place within the bounds of the temple, in the mountain of the house; and the question still returns, how came it to pass they did not meet there? To me the reason seems to be, that they chose not to meet there, but at the high priest’s palace, because of privacy, that it might not be known they were together, and about any affair of moment; and particularly this: the high priest’s house was always in Jerusalem, and he never removed from thence; nor did he go from the temple thither only in the night, or an hour or two in the day; for he had an apartment in the temple, which was called the chamber of the high priest, where he was the whole day¹⁴³⁵.

Matthew 26:4

Ver. 4. **And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtlety,**

The Jews had often attempted his life, but he escaped out of their hands; they had sent officers to apprehend him, but to no purpose; they therefore meet and consult together, to form some scheme, and make use of some stratagem, that they might lay hold on him, and keep him; they were for doing this in the most private manner they could:

and kill him;

not with their own hands, nor privately; but their scheme was to apprehend him privately, by some secret artifice, and then deliver him to the Roman governor; to put him to death according to law, publicly, for crimes they had to charge him with; hereby Ps 2:2, had its accomplishment, at least in part.

Matthew 26:5

Ver. 5. **And they said, not on the feast day,**

Upon mature deliberation, it was an agreed point with them, at least it was carried by a majority, that nothing of this kind should be attempted to be done on the feast day, on any of the days of the feast of passover,

¹⁴³³ T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 15. 1. Avoda Zara, fol. 8. 2. Sanhedrin, fol. 41. 1. Maimon. Hilch. Sanhedrin, c. 14. sect. 13. Juchasin, fol. 21. 1.

¹⁴³⁴ Edzard. not. in Avoda Zara, c. 1. p. 236.

¹⁴³⁵ Maimon. Cele Hamikdash, c. 5. sect. 7.

which was now at hand; though this was contrary to their common rules and usages: for, a person that sinned presumptuously, and such an one they accounted Jesus to be, they say¹⁴³⁶,

“they do not put him to death by the order of the sanhedrim of his own city, nor by the sanhedrim of Jabneh; but they bring him up to the great sanhedrim at Jerusalem, and keep him “until the feast”, and put him to death, lgrb, “on a feast day”; as it is said, De 17:13, “and all the people shall hear and fear”, &c.”

But what influenced them at this time to take another course, is the reason following;

lest there be an uproar among the people:

they had no fear of God before their eyes, or in their hearts, only the fear of the people; many of whom believed in Christ, and others that did not, yet had a great veneration for him, having seen his miracles, and received favours from him; themselves, or their friends and relations, being cured by him of various diseases: besides, at the feast, people from all parts came up to Jerusalem; and they knew that large numbers from Galilee, where he had the greatest interest, would be present; and they feared, should they attempt anything of this nature at this time, the people would rise, and rescue him out of their hands. But God had determined otherwise, and his counsel shall stand; it was his pleasure, that he should be put to death at this feast, that the truth might answer the type of the passover lamb; and that all Israel, whose males now met together, might be witnesses of it: and so it was, that though these men had concluded otherwise in their council; yet an opportunity offering by Judas, to get him into their hands, they embrace it; and risk the danger of the people’s uprising, who they found compliant enough to their wishes.

Matthew 26:6

Ver. 6. **Now when Jesus was in Bethany,**

Which was about fifteen furlongs from Jerusalem, Joh 11:18, or about two miles from it. The time of Christ’s death being at hand, he keeps nigh to Jerusalem, where he was to suffer and die, in the room and stead of sinners:

in the house of Simon the leper;

so called, to distinguish him from others of the name. This epithet was either a family one, some person of note in it having been a leper; or else he is so named, because he himself had been one, but was now cured; though the

¹⁴³⁶ Misn. Sanhedrin, c. 10. sect. 4. Maimon. Hilch. Memarim, c. 3. sect 8.

reason interpreters give for this, that otherwise he would not have been suffered to live in a town, is not a good one; for lepers, according to the Jewish¹⁴³⁷ canons, were only forbid Jerusalem, and towns and cities that were walled round, and not others, such as the village of Bethany. There were many lepers healed by Christ, which, among other things, was an evidence of his being the Messiah, and a proof of his deity, and this Simon was one of them; whether the same mention is made of in Mt 8:1, is not certain, nor very probable; since that man lived in Galilee, at, or near Capernaum; this at Bethany, near Jerusalem: however, he was one of those lepers that had a sense of his mercy, and was grateful for it, as appears by his entertaining Christ at his house; and may teach us thankfulness to Christ, who has healed all our diseases; and particularly, the spreading leprosy of sin, with which all the powers and faculties of our souls were infected; and which was not in our own power, or any creature’s, to cure, but his blood cleanses from it: and it may be observed, that Christ goes in and dwells with such whom he heals, and with such he is always welcome.

Matthew 26:7

Ver. 7. **There came unto him a woman,**

By some thought to be the same that is spoken of in Luke 7:37, and by most, to be Mary, the sister of Lazarus, Joh 12:3, which may be true; for it is possible that one and the same woman, might perform a like action at different times; for to neither of the above, at the same time, will the following agree: not to the former, for though that was done in the house of one Simon, yet not Simon the leper, but Simon the Pharisee; who though he had a particular respect for Christ, which few of that sect had, yet appeared to be then of a Pharisical spirit; that was done in Galilee, this near Jerusalem in Bethany; the woman there anointed the feet of Christ, but this woman poured the ointment on his head; nor did any such conversation as here follow upon it, between Christ and his disciples; but what discourse was had on that occasion, was between Simon and Christ. Not to the latter, for that does not appear to be done in Simon’s house, but rather in the house of Lazarus; no mention is made of the alabaster box, nor was the ointment poured on his head, but on his feet; besides, that was done six days before the passover, whereas this was but two; moreover, Judas only objected to that, but the disciples in general had indignation at this; and though the objections to it, and Christ’s

¹⁴³⁷ Misn. Celim, c. 1. sect. 7. Maimon. Beth Hamikdash, c. 3. sect. 8.

defence of it, are much in the same language, in one place as in the other, yet it was no unusual thing with Christ, to make use of the same words on a like incident, or when the same objections were made. The fact here recorded, is the same as in Mark 14:3, where it stands in the same order as here, and seems to have been done at the supper, of which mention is made,

Joh 13:2, when Satan entered into Judas, and put it into his heart to betray his master, the account of which follows this here:

having an alabaster box of very precious ointment;

Mark calls it, "ointment of spikenard", Mark 14:3, which was very odorous, and of a very fragrant smell; see So 1:12. Some there render it, "pure nard"; unadulterated, unmixed, sincere and genuine; others, "liquid nard", which was drinkable, and easy to be poured out; and some "Pistic" nard, so called, either from "Pista", the name of a place in India, from whence it was brought, as some think; or as Dr. Lightfoot, from *aqtoyp*, "Pistaca", which is the maste of a tree ¹⁴³⁸, and of which, among other things, Pliny says ¹⁴³⁹, the ointment of nard was made. The Persic version in both places read it, "ointment of Gallia"; and the just now mentioned writer ¹⁴⁴⁰, speaks of "nardum Gallicum", "Gallic nard", which is what may be meant by that interpreter; but be it what ointment it will; it was ointment, very precious: very costly, and of a very great price; for the disciples observe, it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence: and for the better preserving of such ointments incorrupt, they used to be put into vessels made of "alabaster" ¹⁴⁴¹; though some think not the matter, but the form of these vessels is referred to; and observe, that vessels of gold, silver, and glass, for this use, being made in the form of "alabasters", were called by that name; and that this might be made of the latter, since Mark says, that she brake the box; not into pieces, for then she could not be said to pour it out; but either the top, or side of it: though some critics observe, that the word signifies no more, than that she shook it, that the thicker parts of the ointment might liquify, and be the more easily poured out. The Arabic version has omitted that clause, and the Syriac, Persic, and Ethiopic, read it, "she opened it"; that is, as the Persic adds, "the top of the vessel": she took off the covering of the box, or took out the stopple,

and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat:

1438 T. Bab. Gittin, fol. 69. 1. Gloss. in ib.

1439 Hist. Nat. l. 13. c. 1.

1440 Ib. c. 2. & l. 12. c. 12.

1441 Plin. Nat. Hist. l. 13. 2. & 36. 8.

which was usually done at festivals, or at any considerable entertainments, as at weddings, &c.

"Says Rab, they "pour ointment on the heads of the doctors"; (the gloss is, the women put ointment on the heads of the scholars;) says R. Papa to Abai, does the doctor speak of the ointment of the bridechamber? He replies, thou orphan, did not thy mother cause for thee, that "they poured out ointment on the heads of the doctors", at thy wedding? for lo! one of the Rabbins got a wife for his son, in the house of R. Bar Ula; and they say, that R. Bar Ula got a wife for his son in the house of one of the Rabbins, *Nnbrd avyra axvym gydrdw*, "and poured ointment on the head of the doctors" ¹⁴⁴²."

to this custom are the allusions in Ps 23:5. The pouring of this ointment on the head of Christ was emblematical of his being anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows; of his having the holy Spirit, and his gifts and graces without measure; which, like the ointment poured on Aaron's head, that ran down to his beard, and the skirts of his garments, descends to all the members of his mystical body: and was a symbol of the Gospel, which is like ointment poured forth; and of the sweet savour of the knowledge of Christ, which was to be diffused, throughout all the world, by the preaching of it; and was done by this woman in the faith of him, as the true Messiah, the Lord's anointed, as the prophet, priest, and king of his church.

Matthew 26:8

Ver. 8. **But when his disciples saw it,**

What the woman did, what a costly box of ointment it was, and with what profusion she used it,

they had indignation:

Mark says, "within themselves", Mark 14:4; either among themselves, or their indignation was secret in their breasts; their resentment was private, though it might be betrayed by their looks, and afterwards showed itself in words. This indignation was either at the woman, for the Evangelist Mark observes, that "they murmured against her", Mark 14:5, that she should act such an imprudent part, and be guilty of such extravagance; or at Christ himself, for suffering such an action to be done unto him; for so the Syriac version reads the above clause in Mark, and "they murmured *wb*, against him"; so De Dieu observes it should be rendered; though Tremellius, Boderianus, and others, translate it, "against her": or

1442 T. Bab. Cetubot, fol. 17. 2.

else their indignation was neither at Christ, whom they dearly loved; nor at the woman, they being taught to love their enemies, and much more the friends of Christ; but at the action, which they looked upon as an ill judged thing, that sprung from misguided zeal, and which they thought could never be acceptable to their master, who was not used to encourage such profuseness and extravagance.

Saying, to what purpose is this waste,

or "loss?" They call that waste, or loss, which was spent on Christ himself; whereas, whatever is laid out for the honour of Christ, or the good of his interest, ought not to be reckoned loss, for it will be returned with great increase and advantage; but they could not see what end was to be answered by this expense. It is easy to observe the variableness and inconstancy of the disciples: one time, because the inhabitants of a certain village did not receive Christ, they were for calling for fire from heaven to destroy them; and here is a poor woman that exceeds, as they thought, in her respects to him, and they are filled with indignation.

Matthew 26:9

Ver. 9. **For this ointment might have been sold for much,**

Mark says, "for more than three hundred pence", Mark 14:5: now if this is to be understood of Roman pence, each penny being seven pence half penny of our money, three hundred pence come to nine pounds, seven shillings, and six pence; but if it is to be understood of the penny of the sanctuary, which was one shilling and three pence, they come to just as much more: it might well be called very precious and costly ointment; and this was the reason of the disciples indignation, that so much cost and expense should be thrown away, as they thought, in such a manner, which might have been applied, in their opinion, to a better purpose. For had it been sold for its worth, so much might have been had for it,

and given to the poor;

which was a very plausible objection to the action; and which they seem to have taken from Judas, who had made the same, on a like occasion, about four days before this, and he might instigate the disciples now: which shows what mischief an hypocrite may do in a church, and what influence he may have over good men to draw them into his measures, under the specious pretences of carefulness, frugality, and doing good to the poor. It seems our Lord inured his disciples to this good work of relieving the poor: they kept one common purse, and

one of them, who was Judas, was appointed the bearer of it; whatever they collected, or was made a present to them, they put into this purse; out of which they were provided with the necessaries of life; and the rest expended on the poor.

Matthew 26:10

Ver. 10. **When Jesus understood it,**

The indignation of his disciples at this action of the woman's; which he might know, as man, partly by their looks, and partly by their words; though without these, as God, he knew the secret indignation, and private resentment of their minds:

he said unto them, why trouble ye the woman?

by blaming her, and censuring the action she had done; as it must, no doubt, greatly trouble her to meet with such treatment from the disciples of Christ: had any of the Pharisees blamed her conduct, it would have given her no pain or uneasiness; but that Christ's own disciples should show indignation at an action done by her from a sincere love to Christ, and to do honour to him, must cut her to the heart: and so it is when either ministers of the Gospel, or private believers, are blamed for their honest zeal in the cause of Christ, by any that profess to love him; this grieves them more than all the enemies of religion say or do unto them:

for she hath wrought a good work upon me;

upon his body, by pouring the ointment on it: the Persic version reads it, "according to my mind": it was done, in the faith of him, as the Messiah; it sprung from real and sincere love to him, and was designed for his honour and glory; and so had the essentials of a good work in it. This is the first part of our Lord's defence of the woman: he goes on in the next verse.

Matthew 26:11

Ver. 11. **For ye have the poor always with you,**

This is said in answer to the objection of the disciples, that the ointment might have been sold, and the money given to the poor. Christ seems to have respect to De 15:11, and which, agreeably to the sense of the Jews, refers to the times of the Messiah: for they say ¹⁴⁴³,

"there is no difference between this world (this present time) and the times of the Messiah, but the subduing of kingdoms only; as it is said, De 15:11, "for the poor shall never cease out of the land": the gloss on it is, from hence it may be concluded, that therefore, *יש ניות*, "for ever there will be poverty, and riches"

1443 T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 63. 1.

Our Lord's words also show, that there will be always poor persons in the world; that there will be always such with his people, and in his churches; for God has chosen, and he calls such by his grace; so that men may always have opportunities of showing kindness and respect to such objects: in Mark it is added, "and whensoever ye will ye may do them good", Mark 14:7; by relieving their wants, and distributing to their necessities:

but me ye have not always;

referring not to his divine and spiritual presence, which he has promised to his people, churches, and ministers, to the end of the world, but to his corporeal presence; for he was to be but a little while with them, and then go to the Father; be taken up to heaven, where he now is, and will be until the restitution of all things; so that the time was very short in which any outward respect could be shown to him in person, as man.

Matthew 26:12

Ver. 12. **For in that she hath poured this ointment, Which was so very precious, and cost so much, upon my body:**

for being poured on his head, it ran down all over his body.

She did it for my burial;

not for the interment of his body, but for the embalming of it, previous to it: the Jews used to embalm their dead, to show their constant respect to the deceased, and their belief of the resurrection; at least not only used to wash them, but anoint them with oil; for so runs one of their canons¹⁴⁴⁴:

"they do all things necessary to the dead, (i.e. on the sabbath day,) כִּי, "they anoint him": that is, as Bartenora adds, "with oil"; and they wash him;"

but the body of Christ, when dead, was not to be so used: the women intended it, and prepared materials for it, but the sabbath coming on, they rested according to the commandment; though, according to this canon, they might have anointed him, but they waited till the sabbath was over; and early on the first day, in the morning, they came to the sepulchre, in order to do it, but it was too late, Christ was risen; see Luke 23:56. Now either this woman had some revelation made to her, that the death of Christ was near at hand, and she feared, or knew, she should not be able to anoint him when dead; and therefore, as Mark has it, "she hath done what she could; she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying";

¹⁴⁴⁴ Misn. Sabbat, c. 23. sect. 5.

Mark 14:8: or if she had no knowledge of all this, nor any such intention, yet the Holy Ghost directed her to this action, with this view, as it were, for the performing of these funeral rites before he was dead; and so the Syriac version renders it, "she hath done it, אֵיךְ דְּלִמְקַבְּרֵי, as it were, to bury me".

Matthew 26:13

Ver. 13. **Verily I say unto you,**

The following words are prefaced in this manner, to excite attention, and command belief:

wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world.

The Syriac version reads it, כְּרֵחִי "my Gospel"; and so the Persic version; and has respect chiefly to the doctrine of his death, burial, and resurrection, which this action of the woman had relation to; for though the incarnation of Christ, and all the actions of his life, and whatsoever he did for the good, and in the room and stead of his people, are good news and glad tidings to the sons of men, and so the Gospel; yet his dying for sin, and making atonement for it, thereby satisfying justice, fulfilling the law, destroying death, and him that had the power of it, and his lying in the grave, and leaving the sins of his people behind him, and rising again for their justification, which were the ends of his coming into the world, make up the most glorious and principal part of the Gospel: and these words of Christ show that "this" Gospel should be preached; for which purpose he gave a commission and gifts to his disciples, and has done so, more or less, to men, ever since, for the conversion of sinners, and the edification of saints, and the glory of his name; and that this Gospel shall be preached all over the world, as it was by the apostles, agreeably to the commission; and will be again, towards the close of time, when the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord and then

there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her;

of her faith, love, and gratitude; for the memory of the just is blessed, and the righteous are had in everlasting remembrance. Christ suggests, that, though the disciples blamed this action, it should be spoken of by others to her praise and commendation, in all succeeding ages, throughout the world: "a good name", the wise man says, "is better than precious ointment", Ec 7:1. This woman got a good name, and obtained a good report by her precious ointment; and if this woman's action was to be told for a memorial of her, much more what Christ has done and suffered should be told as a memorial of

him.

Matthew 26:14

Ver. 14. **Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot,**

Who was provoked and exasperated, to the last degree, by this action of the woman, and Christ's defence of it, and because the ointment was not sold, and the money put into his hand; and being instigated by Satan, who had now entered into him, formed a scheme in his mind to betray his master, and was resolved to put it in execution, whereby he might, in some measure, satisfy both his avarice and revenge; and, as an aggravation of this his wickedness, he is described, as "one of the twelve": of his twelve disciples; so the Persic and Ethiopic versions: this is a way of speaking used by the Jews¹⁴⁴⁵; they call the twelve lesser prophets, שְׁרָר שְׁנֵימָר "the twelve", without any other word added thereunto. He was not an open enemy, nor one of Christ's common hearers, nor one of the seventy disciples, but one of his twelve apostles, whom he made his intimates and associates; whom he selected from all others, and called, qualified, and sent forth to preach his Gospel, and perform miracles: it was one of these that meditated the delivery of him into the hands of his enemies, and never left pursuing his scheme till he had effected it, even Judas Iscariot by name; so called, to distinguish him from another disciple, whose name was also Judas. This

man went to the chief priests;

of his own accord, unasked, from Bethany, to Jerusalem, to Caiaphas's palace, where the chief priests, the implacable enemies of Christ, with the Scribes, and elders of the people, were met together, to consult his death: Mark adds, "to betray him unto them", Mark 14:10, which was manifestly his intent in going to them; and Luke, that he "communed" with them "how he might betray him unto them", Luke 22:4; in the safest, and most private manner; and both observe that they were glad; for nothing could have fallen out more to their wishes, who were met together on this design. The Jews, in their blasphemous account of Jesus¹⁴⁴⁶, say as much: they own, that Judas, or Juda, as they call him, offered to betray him into the hands of the wise men, saying to them, almost in the words expressed in the following verse,

"if you will hearken unto me, wtwa rwoma, "I will deliver him into your hands tomorrow";

and which agrees very well with the time also: for it

¹⁴⁴⁵ T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 14. 2. & 15. 1.

¹⁴⁴⁶ Toldos Jesu, p. 16.

was two days before the passover that Jesus was in Bethany, where he supped with his disciples, and washed their feet, and had the box of ointment poured on his head; and on the night of the day after all this was done, Judas set out from thence to Jerusalem; see Joh 13:30, so that it must be the next day before he could meet the high priests, and on the morrow, at night, he delivered him into their hands; on the proposal of which, they say, that Simeon ben Shetach, whom they make to be present at this time, and all the wise men and elders, שְׂמוּחָה נְדוּלָה, שמחו "rejoiced exceedingly".

Matthew 26:15

Ver. 15. **And said [unto them],**

Though the words, "to them", are not in the original text, they are rightly supplied; as they are by the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, Arabic, Persic, and Ethiopic versions, and in Munster's Hebrew Gospel; and mean the chief priests to whom Judas went, and to whom he made the following proposal;

what will ye give me, and I will deliver him to you?

They did not ask him to do it, he first made the motion; a barbarous and shocking one! to deliver his Lord and Master, with whom he had familiarly conversed, and from whom he had received so many favours, into the hands of those that hated him; nor was he concerned what they would do to him, or what would become of him, when in their hands: all his view, and what he was intent upon, was, what they would give him for doing it. They did not tempt him, by first offering him so much money, if he would betray him; but he himself first moves it to them, and tempts them with it to offer him an handsome reward: and it is to be observed, that he does not mention the name of Jesus, either because they might be talking of him, when he came into their company; or else as suiting his language to theirs, who, when they spake of him, usually said, "he", or "that man", or "this fellow". And in the same rude way Judas now treats his master:

and they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver;

that is, thirty shekels of silver; for it is a rule with the Jews, that when mention is made in Scripture of pieces of silver, without expressing the species, shekels are meant: so Onkelos, and Jonathan ben Uzziel, in their Targums on Ge 20:16, render pieces of silver, by shekels of silver; so pieces of gold signify shekels of gold: thus the 1700 pieces of gold in Jud 8:26, are, in the Septuagint, Arabic, and Vulgate Latin versions, called so many shekels of gold; and our version supplies the word "shekels" also,

as it does in 2Ch 9:15, and yet some learned men have asserted ¹⁴⁴⁷, that there were no shekels of gold among the Jews, though express mention is made of them in 1Ch 21:25. The value of a shekel of gold, according to Brerewood ¹⁴⁴⁸, was, of our money, “fifteen shillings”; and some make it to come to a great deal more; to “one pound sixteen shillings and sixpence” sterling; had these thirty pieces been pieces, or shekels of gold, they would have amounted to a considerable sum of money; but they were pieces of silver, and not talents, or pounds, but shekels. The silver shekel had on one side stamped upon it the pot of manna, or, as others think, “a censer”, or incense cup, with these words around it, in Samaritan letters, “shekel Israel”, “the shekel of Israel”; and, on the other, “Aaron’s rod” budding, with this inscription about it, “Jerusalem Hakedushah”, “Jerusalem the holy” ¹⁴⁴⁹. As for the weight and value of it, R. Gedaliah says ¹⁴⁵⁰, we know by tradition that the holy shekel weighs 320 grains of barley of pure silver; and the same writer observes ¹⁴⁵¹, that the “selah”, or holy shekel, is four “denarii”, or pence; that is, Roman pence, each being of the value of seven pence halfpenny of our money: and to this agrees what Josephus ¹⁴⁵² says, that a “shekel” is a coin of the Hebrews, which contains four Attic drachms, or drams; and an Attic dram is of the same value with a Roman penny: so that one of these shekels was worth about “half a crown”; and it usually weighed half an ounce, as not only some Jewish writers affirm, who profess to have seen them, and weighed them themselves, as Jarchi ¹⁴⁵³, Gerundensis ¹⁴⁵⁴, Abarbinel ¹⁴⁵⁵, and Gedaliah ben Jechaiah ¹⁴⁵⁶, but other writers also, as Masius ¹⁴⁵⁷ Arias Montanus ¹⁴⁵⁸, Waserus ¹⁴⁵⁹ and Bishop Cumberland. Now thirty shekels of silver were the price of a servant, Ex 21:32. So ¹⁴⁶⁰ Maimonides observes, that the atonement of “servants”, whether

great or small, whether male or female, the fixed sum in the law is “thirty shekels of good silver”, whether “the servant” is worth an hundred pound, or whether he is not worth but a farthing; and which was in value of our money about “three pounds fifteen shillings”. This was the “goodly price”, which Christ, who appeared in the form of a servant, was prized at, according to the prophecy in Zec 11:12, and which the high priests thought a very sufficient one; and the wretch Judas, as covetous as he was, was contented with.

Matthew 26:16

Ver. 16. **And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.**

Luke adds, “in the absence of the multitude”, Luke 22:6; in the most private manner, when he was alone, and in some solitary place, that no tumult might arise, and that there might be no danger of a rescue: for so he, and the chief priests, had consulted, and settled it, as what would be most prudent and advisable; and therefore, from that time forward, being prompted on by Satan, and the lucre of the money he was to receive, he narrowly watched, and diligently observed, the best and most fitting season to perform his enterprise, and quickly offered.

Matthew 26:17

Ver. 17. **Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread,**

There were seven of these days, and this was the first of them, in which the Jews might not eat leavened bread, from the fourteenth, to the twenty first of the month Nisan; in commemoration of their being thrust out of Egypt, in so much haste, that they had not time to leaven the dough, which was in their kneading troughs: wherefore, according to their canons ¹⁴⁶¹, on the night of the fourteenth day; that is, as Bartenora explains it, the night, the day following of which is the fourteenth, they search for leaven in all private places and corners, to bring; it out, and burn it, or break it into small pieces, and scatter it in the wind, or throw it into the sea. Mark adds, “when they killed the passover”, Mark 14:12; and Luke says, “when the passover must be killed”, Luke 22:7; which was to be done on the fourteenth day of the month Nisan, after the middle of the day; and this was an indispensable duty, which all were obliged to: for so they say ¹⁴⁶²,

“every man, and every woman, are bound to ob-

¹⁴⁶¹ Misn. Pesach. c. 1. sect. 1. Maimon. Chametz Umetzah, c. 2. sect. 3, 4. & 3. 11.

¹⁴⁶² Maimon. Hilch. Korban Pesaeh. c. 1. sect. 1. 2.

serve this precept; and whoever makes void this commandment presumptuously, if he is not defiled, or afar off, lo! he is guilty of cutting off.”

The time of killing the passover was after the middle of the day; and it is said ¹⁴⁶³ that

”if they killed it before the middle of the day it was not right; and they did not kill it till after the evening sacrifice, and after they had offered the evening incense; and after they had trimmed the lamps, they began to slay the passovers, or paschal lambs, unto the end of the day; and if they slayed after the middle of the day, before the evening sacrifice, it was right.”

The reason of this was, because the lamb was to be slain between the two evenings; the first of which began at noon, as soon as ever the day declined: and this was not done privately, but in the temple; for thus it is ¹⁴⁶⁴ affirmed,

”they do not kill the passover but in the court, as the rest of the holy things.”

The time and manner of killing the lamb, and by whom, of the sprinkling of the blood, and of their flaying it, and taking out the fat, and burning it on the altar, may be seen in the Misna ¹⁴⁶⁵.

The disciples came to Jesus;

that is, Peter and John, as may be learnt from Luke 22:8, for these only seem to have had any notion of Judas’s betraying Christ, from what had been said at the supper in Bethany, two days before; the rest thought he was gone to prepare for the feast, and therefore were under no concern about it; but these two judged otherwise, and therefore came to Christ to know his mind concerning it; for it was high time that a preparation should be made; for this was Thursday morning, and the lamb was to be killed in the afternoon, and ate at even.

Saying unto him, where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover?

This question in Luke follows upon an order which Christ gave to these disciples; “saying, go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat”, Luke 22:8: for masters used to give their servants orders to get ready the passover for them; and which were expressed in much such

¹⁴⁶³ Ib. sect. 4. Moses Kotsensis Mitavot Tora pr. affirm. 39.

¹⁴⁶⁴ Maimon. lb. sect. 3.

¹⁴⁶⁵ Pesachim, c. 5. sect. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10.

language as this ¹⁴⁶⁶:

”he that says to his servant, אַ שְׂפֹחַ לִי אֶת פֶּחַח, “go and slay the passover for me”: if he kills a kid, he may eat of it.”

It is reported ¹⁴⁶⁷ of

”Rabban Gamaliel, that he said to his servant Tabi, hlw au, “go and roast” the passover for us upon an iron grate.” The disciples having received such an order from their master, inquire not in what town or city they must prepare the passover, for that was always ate in Jerusalem; see De 16:5, where they were obliged, by the Jewish canon ¹⁴⁶⁸, to lodge that night; though they might eat the unleavened bread, and keep the other days of the feast any where, and in every place ¹⁴⁶⁹; but they inquire in what house he would have it got ready; for they might make use of any house, and the furniture of it, where they could find room, and conveniency, without any charge; for they did not let out their houses, or any of their rooms, or beds, in Jerusalem; but, at festivals, the owners of them gave the use of them freely to all that came ¹⁴⁷⁰: and it is ¹⁴⁷¹ observed among the wonders and miracles done at Jerusalem, that though there were such multitudes at their feasts, yet

”a man could never say to his friend, I have not found a fire to roast the passover lambs in Jerusalem, nor I have not found a bed to sleep on in Jerusalem, nor the place is too strait for me to lodge in, in Jerusalem.”

Matthew 26:18

Ver. 18. **And he said, go into the city to such a man,**

That is, to such a man in the city of Jerusalem, for, as yet, they were in Bethany, or at the Mount of Olives however, without the city; he does not mention the man’s name, but describes him, as Mark and Luke say, and tells them, “there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house, where he entereth in”, Mark 14:13; who seems to be not the master of the house, but a servant, that was sent on such an errand. This is a very considerable instance of our Lord’s prescience of future contingencies; he knew beforehand, that exactly at the time that the disciples would enter Jerusalem, such

¹⁴⁶⁶ Ib. c. 8. 2.

¹⁴⁶⁷ Ib. c. 7. sect. 2.

¹⁴⁶⁸ T. Bab. Pesach. fol. 95. 2. & Gloss in ib.

¹⁴⁶⁹ Maimon. Hilch. Chametz Umetzah, c. 6. sect. 1.

¹⁴⁷⁰ T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 12. 1. Megilia, fol. 26. 1. & Gloss. in ib. Maimon Hilch. Beth Habbechira, c. 7. sect. 14. & Ceseph Misna in ib.

¹⁴⁷¹ Abot R. Nathan, c. 35. Pirke Abot, c. 5. sect. 5.

a man, belonging to such a house, would be returning with a pitcher of water in his hand; and they should meet him; and follow him, where he went, which would be a direction to them what house to prepare the passover in; **and say unto him;**

not to the man bearing the pitcher of water; but, as the other Evangelists say, to the good man of the house, the owner of it, who probably might be one of Christ's disciples secretly; for many of the chief rulers in Jerusalem believed on Christ, though they did not openly confess him, for fear of the Pharisees, as Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathea; and this man might be one of them, or some other man of note and wealth; since they were to find, as they did, a large upper room furnished and prepared. For, it seems, that without mentioning his name, the man would know him by their language, he dictates to them in the following clause, who they meant;

the master saith;

the Syriac and Persic versions read, our master; thine and ours, the great master in Israel, the teacher sent from God:

my time is at hand;

not of eating the passover, as if it was distinct from that of the Jews, and peculiar to himself, for he ate it at the usual time, and when the Jews ate theirs; and which time was fixed and known by everybody, and could be no reason to move the master of the house to receive him: but he means the time of his death, that he had but a little while to live; and that this instance of respect would be the last he would have an opportunity of showing him whilst living, and the last time Christ would have an opportunity of seeing him; and he might say this to prepare him to meet the news of his death with less surprise: I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples; not with him and his family, but with his disciples, who were a family, and a society of themselves, and a sufficient number to eat the passover together; for there might be two companies eating their distinct passovers in one house, and even in one room: concerning which is the following rule,

”שתי חברות שהיו אוכלים בבית אחד” “two societies that eat in one house”; the one turn their faces this way and eat, and the other turn their faces that way and eat, and an heating vessel (in which they heat the water to mix with the wine) in the middle; and when the servant stands to mix, he shuts his mouth, and turns his face till he comes to his company, and eats; and the bride turns her

face and eats ¹⁴⁷².”

Matthew 26:19

Ver. 19. **And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them,**

They went into the city of Jerusalem; they met the man carrying a pitcher of water home; they followed him into the house he entered; they addressed the master of the house, in the manner Christ directed, who showed them a large upper room, prepared with all proper furniture for such an occasion, as Christ had foretold:

and they made ready the passover;

they went and bought a lamb; they carried it to the temple to be slain in the court, where it was presented as a passover lamb for such a number of persons; they had it flayed, cut up, the fat taken out, and burnt on the altar, and its blood sprinkled on the foot of it: they then brought it to the house where they were to eat it; here they roasted it, and provided bread, and wine, and bitter herbs, and a sauce called “Charoseth”, into which the herbs were dipped: and, in short, everything that was necessary.

Matthew 26:20

Ver. 20. **Now when the even was come,**

The second evening, when the sun was set, and it was dark, and properly night; for

”on the evenings of the passovers near the Minchah, a man might not eat ^ל שחושב, “until it was dark” ¹⁴⁷³.

”This was according to the rule, Ex 12:8,

he sat down with the twelve,

his twelve disciples; so the Vulgate Latin, and all the Oriental versions, and Munster's Hebrew Gospel; and which also adds, “at table”; even all the twelve apostles, who were properly his family, and a sufficient number for a passover lamb ¹⁴⁷⁴: for

”they do not kill the passover for a single man, according to the words of R. Judah, though R. Jose permits it: yea, though the society consists of an hundred, if they cannot eat the quantity of an olive, they do not kill for them: nor do they make a society of women, servants, and little ones?”

Judas was now returned again, and took his place among the disciples, as if he was as innocent, and as

¹⁴⁷² Misn. Pesachim, c. 7. sect. 13.

¹⁴⁷³ Ib. c. 10. sect. 1.

¹⁴⁷⁴ Ib. c. 8. sect. 7.

friendly, as any of them: this he might choose to do, partly to avoid all suspicion of his designs; and partly that he might get intelligence where Christ would go after supper, that he might have the opportunity he was waiting for, to betray him into the hands of his enemies. “He sat, or lay down with them”, as the word signifies; for the posture of the Jews, at the passover table especially, was not properly sitting, but reclining, or lying along on coaches, not on their backs, nor on their right side, but on their left; See Gill on “Joh 13:23”. The first passover was eaten by them standing, with their loins girt, their shoes on, and staves in their hands, because they were just ready to depart out of Egypt: but in after passovers these circumstances were omitted; and particularly sitting, or lying along, was reckoned so necessary to be observed, that it is said ¹⁴⁷⁵, that

”the poorest man in Israel might not eat, ^ל שיב, “until he lies along”, or leans;”

that is, as some of their commentators ¹⁴⁷⁶ note, either upon the couch, or on the table, after the manner of free men, and in remembrance of their liberty: and another of them ¹⁴⁷⁷ says,

”we are bound to eat, ^ל בהבה, “lying along”, as kings and great men eat, because it is a token of liberty.”

Hence they elsewhere say ¹⁴⁷⁸,

”it is the way of servants to eat standing; but here (in the passover) to eat, ^ל מויני, “sitting”, or “lying along”, because they (the Israelites) went out of bondage to liberty. Says R. Simon, in the name of R. Joshua ben Levi, that which a man is obliged to in the passover, though it be but the quantity of an olive, he must eat it, bowm, “lying along”.

The account Maimonides gives of this usage, is in these words ¹⁴⁷⁹:

”even the poorest man in Israel may not eat until he “lies along”: a woman need not lie; but if she is a woman of worth and note, she ought to lie: a son by a father, and a servant before his master ought to lie: “but a disciple before his master does not lie, except his master gives him leave” (as Christ did his); and lying on the right hand is not lying; and so he that lies upon his neck, or upon

¹⁴⁷⁵ Misn. Pesachim, c. 10. sect. 1.

¹⁴⁷⁶ Jarchi & Bartenora in ib.

¹⁴⁷⁷ Maimonides in ib.

¹⁴⁷⁸ T. Hieros. Pesach. fol. 37. 2.

¹⁴⁷⁹ Hilch. Chametz Umetzah, c. 7. sect. 8.

his face, this is not lying; and when ought they to lie? at the time of eating, the quantity of an olive, of unleavened bread, and at drinking of the four cups; but at the rest of eating and drinking, if he lies, lo! it is praiseworthy: but if not, there is no necessity.”

This custom was so constantly and uniformly observed at the passover, that it is taken particular notice of in the declaration, or showing forth of the passover by the master of the family, when he says ¹⁴⁸⁰, “how different is this night from all other nights”, &c. and among the many things he mentions, this is one;

”in all other nights we eat either sitting, or lying along; that is, which way we please, but this night all of ^ל מויניס, “lie along”.

Matthew 26:21

Ver. 21. **And as they did eat,**

The passover lamb, the unleavened bread, and bitter herbs: he said it was usual, whilst they were thus engaged, to discourse much about the reason and design of this institution. What they talked of may be learnt from what follows ¹⁴⁸¹:

”it is an affirmative precept of the law, to declare the signs and wonders which were done to our fathers in Egypt, on the night of the fifteenth of Nisan, according to Ex 13:3, “remember this day”, &c. and from whence on the night of the fifteenth? from Ex 13:8, “and thou shalt show thy son”, &c. at the time that the unleavened bread, and bitter herbs lie before thee. And though he has no son, or though they are wise, and grown up, they are bound to declare the going out of Egypt; and everyone that enlarges, or dwells long on the things that happened and came to pass, lo! he is praiseworthy. It is a command to make known to children, even though they do not ask; as it is said, “and thou shalt show thy son”: according to the son's knowledge, his father teaches him; how if he is a little one, or foolish? he says to him, my son, all of us were servants, as this handmaid, or this servant, in Egypt; and on this night the holy, blessed God redeemed us, and brought us into liberty: and if the son is grown

¹⁴⁸⁰ Maimon ib. c. 8. 2. Haggadah Shel Pesach. p. 5.

¹⁴⁸¹ Maimon. ib. c. 7. sect. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Vid. c. 8. 2, 3, 4, 5. & Haggadah Shel. Pesach. p. 5, 6, 7, 8.

up and a wise man, he makes known to him what happened to us in Egypt, and the wonders which were done for us by the hands of Moses, our master; all according to the capacity of the son. And it is necessary to make a repetition on this night, that the children may see, and ask, and say, how different is this night from all other nights? until he replies to them, and says to them, so and so it happened, and thus and thus it was.--If he has no son, his wife asks him; and if he has no wife, they ask one another, how different is this night? and though they are all wise men, everyone asks himself alone, how different is this night? and it is necessary to begin with reproaches, and end with praise, how? he begins and declares, how at first our fathers were in the days of Terah, and before him, deniers (of the divine being), and wandering after vanity, and following idolatrous worship; and he ends with the law of truth, how that God brought us near to himself, and separated us from the nations, and caused us to draw nigh to his unity; and so begins and makes known, that we were servants to Pharaoh in Egypt, and all the evils he recompensed us with; and ends with the signs and wonders which were wrought for us, and with our liberties: and he that expounds from--"a Syrian was my father, ready to perish": till he has finished the whole section: and every one that adds and enlarges in expounding this section, lo! he is praiseworthy. And everyone that does not say these three words on the night of the fifteenth, cannot be excused from blame; and they are these, the passover, the unleavened bread, and the bitter herbs: "the passover", because God passed over the houses of our fathers in Egypt, as it is said, Ex 12:27, "the bitter herbs", because the Egyptians made bitter the lives of our fathers in Egypt: "the unleavened bread", because they were redeemed: and these things all of them are called the declaration, or showing forth."

Christ now took up some part of the time, at least, whilst they were eating, in discoursing with his disciples about the traitor: he said, verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me; meaning to the chief priests and Scribes, who should condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles, to be mocked, scourged, and crucified, as he had told them some time before, Mt 20:18, though he did not tell them as now, that it should be

done by one of them; he had indeed signified as much as this two days before, at the supper in Bethany, but none seemed to understand whom he meant, but Peter and John, and the thing wore off their minds; and therefore he mentions it again to them, with great seriousness, and in the most solemn manner, declaring it as a certain and undoubted truth.

Matthew 26:22

Ver. 22. **And they were exceeding sorrowful,**

Partly that Christ should be betrayed at all, into the hands of his enemies, by whom they knew he would be ill used; and partly, that so vile an action should be done, by one from among themselves; and greatly, because they knew not, nor could not conceive, who of them could be guilty of such an horrid sin:

and began everyone of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?

excepting Judas, who afterwards spoke for himself. This they said, though conscious to themselves the thing had never entered into their hearts; nor had they taken any step towards it, but with their whole souls abhorred it; yet, as knowing the treachery and deceitfulness, of their hearts, which they could not trust to; and fearing lest should they be left thereunto, they might commit such a dreadful iniquity; and as desirous of being cleared by Christ from any such imputation, and even from all suspicion of anything of this kind.

Matthew 26:23

Ver. 23. **And he answered and said,**

In order to make them easy, and point out the betrayer to them,

he that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.

This seems to refer to the dipping of the unleavened bread, or bitter herbs, both, into the sauce called "Charoseth", which the Jews ¹⁴⁸² say,

"was made of figs, nuts, almonds, and other fruits; to which they added apples; all which they bruised in a mortar, and mixed with vinegar; and put spices into it, calamus and cinnamon, in the form of small long threads, in remembrance of the straw; and it was necessary it should be thick, in memory of the clay."

The account Maimonides ¹⁴⁸³ gives of it is,

¹⁴⁸² Bartenora in Misn. Pesach. c. 10. sect. 3. Vid. Maimon. & Yom Tob, in ib. & Piske Tos. Pesach. art. 322.

¹⁴⁸³ Hilch. Chametz Umetzah, c. 7. sect. 11.

"the "Charoseth" is a precept from the words of the Scribes, in remembrance of the clay in which they served in Egypt; and how did they make it? They took dates, or berries, or raisins, and the like, and stamped them, and put vinegar into them, and seasoned them with spices, as clay in straw, and brought it upon the table, in the night of the passover."

And in this he says, the master of the family dipped both the herbs, and the unleavened bread ¹⁴⁸⁴, and that both separately and conjunctly; for he says ¹⁴⁸⁵, that

"he rolled up the unleavened bread and bitter herbs together, ונטבל and dipped them in the Charoseth."

And this was twice done in eating the passover; for so it is observed ¹⁴⁸⁶ among the many things, which distinguished this night from others: "in all other nights we dip but once, but in this night twice". By this action, Christ gave his disciples a signal, whereby they might know the betrayer: for this is not the general description of one, that sat at the table, and ate of his bread with him, and so fulfilled the prediction, in Ps 41:9, though this is too true; but then, this was saying no more than he had before done, when he said, "one of you shall betray me"; though the phrase is so ¹⁴⁸⁷ used; for instance,

"if a man goes and sits at table with them, בל מהו ונטו, and "dips with them", though he does not eat the quantity of an olive, they bless for him.

"But this refers to a particular action then performed by Judas, just at the time Christ spoke these words; and who might sit near him, and dip into the same dish he did; for since there were thirteen of them, there might be more dishes than one; and two or three might have a dish to themselves, and Judas dip in the same dish with Christ.

Matthew 26:24

Ver. 24. **The son of man goeth,**

Meaning himself, not to the Mount of Olives, or Gethsemane, or the garden, whither he went a little after this, but out of the world, to his Father: the phrase is expressive of his death, as in Jos 23:14, and denotes the voluntariness of it, and which is no ways inconsistent

¹⁴⁸⁴ Ib. c. 8. sect. 2. 8.

¹⁴⁸⁵ Ib. sect. 6. & T. Bab. Pesach. fol. 115. 1.

¹⁴⁸⁶ Misn. Pesach. c. 10. sect. 4, Maimon. Chametz Umetzah, c 8. sect. 2. Haggadah Shel Pesach, p. 5.

¹⁴⁸⁷ Bereshit Rabba, sect. 91. fol. 78. 4.

with the divine determinations about it: nor the violence that was offered to him by his enemies.

As it is written;

in the book of God's eternal purposes and decrees; for Luke says, "as it was determined" Luke 22:22: or as it was recorded in the books of the Old Testament; in Ps 22:1, Isa 53:1 and Da 9:1 for Christ died for the sins of his people, in perfect agreement with these Scriptures, which were written of him:

but woe unto that man by whom the son of man is betrayed;

for God's decrees concerning this matter, and the predictions in the Bible founded on them, did not in the least excuse, or extenuate the blackness of his crime; who did what he did, of his own free will, and wicked heart, voluntarily, and to satisfy his own lusts:

it had been good for that man if he had not been born.

This is a Rabbinical phrase, frequently, used in one form or another; sometimes thus; as it is said ¹⁴⁸⁸ of such that speak false and lying words, and regard not the glory of their Creator, אמלל ליהוה שבו לונדלא, it would have been better for them they had never come into the world; and so of any other, notorious sinner, it is at other times said ¹⁴⁸⁹, נודה לו שלא נברא, or שבו ליה דלא אברי, "it would have been better for him if he had not been created"; signifying, that it is better to have no being at all, than to be punished with everlasting destruction; and which was the dreadful case of Judas, who fell by his transgression, and went to his own place.

Matthew 26:25

Ver. 25. **Then Judas, which betrayed him,....** Or that was about to betray him, as the Ethiopic version reads it: he had taken a step towards it, was seeking an opportunity to do it, and at length effected it: the Persic version reads, Judas Iscariot; who after all the rest had put the question,

answered and said, Master, is it I?

Who though he knew what he had been doing, and what he further resolved to do, and was conscious to himself he was the man; nay, though he had been pointed out as the person, and the most dreadful woe denounced on him, that should be the betrayer, in his hearing; yet all

¹⁴⁸⁸ Zohar in Gen. fol. 41. 1. Vid. Misn. Chagiga, c. 2. sect. 1. T. Bab Chagiga, fol. 16. 1.

¹⁴⁸⁹ Zohar in Gen. fol. 46. 4. & in Exod. fol. 1. 4. & 36. 3. & 62. 3. & 66. 3. & 105. 4. & 106. 1.

¹⁴⁹⁰ T. Hieros. Sabbat, fol. 3. 2. T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 17. 1. & Erubin, fol. 13. 2. Midrash Kobelet, fol. 79. 1.

this did not at all affect his marble heart; but in the most audacious manner, and without any concern of mind, or show of guilt, asks if he was the person; suggesting, that surely he could, not mean him. It is observed by some, that the word Rabbi, used by Judas, is a more honourable name than that of Lord, used by the disciples; thereby reigning to give Christ more honour, and exceed in his respect to him, than the rest of the disciples; in order, if he could, to cover his wicked designs:

he said unto him, thou hast said:

that is, it is as thou hast said; thou hast said right, thou art the man; a way of speaking used, when what is asked is assented to as truth: thus it being

”said to a certain person, is Rabbi dead? He replied to them, אחרת אמריתו, “ye have said”; and they rent their clothes ¹⁴⁹¹.”

Taking it for granted, by that answer, that so it was.

Matthew 26:26

Ver. 26. **And as they were eating,**

The paschal lamb, and just concluding the whole solemnity, which was done by eating some of the ¹⁴⁹² lamb: for

”last of all he (that kept the passover) eats of the flesh of the passover, though it be but the quantity of an olive, and he does not taste anything after it; and at the same time he eats the quantity of an olive of unleavened bread, and does not taste anything after it; so that his meal endeth, and the savour of the flesh of the passover, or of the unleavened bread, is in his mouth; for the eating of them is the precept.”

So that the paschal supper was now concluded, when Christ entered upon the institution of his own supper:

Jesus took bread;

which lay by him, either on the table, or in a dish. Though this supper is distinct from the “passover”, and different from any ordinary meal, yet there are allusions to both in it, and to the customs of the Jews used in either; as in this first circumstance, of “taking” the bread: for he that asked a blessing upon bread, used to take it into his hands; and it is a rule ¹⁴⁹³, that

”a man does not bless, עד שיחפוּ הלהט בידו, “until he takes the bread into his hand”, that all may see that he

¹⁴⁹¹ T. Hieros Kilaim, fol. 32. 2.

¹⁴⁹² Maimon. Hilch. Charnetz Umetzah, c. 8. sect. 9. Vid. Bartenora in Misn. Pesach. c. 10. sect. 8.

¹⁴⁹³ Levush hattecheleth Num. 167. sect. 3. & Shlchan Aruch in Buxtorf. Exercit. de Coena Dominic. Thes. 45.

blesses over it.”

Thus Christ took the bread and held it up, that his disciples might observe it:

and blessed [it];

or asked a blessing over it, and upon it, or rather blessed and gave thanks to his Father or it, and for what was signified by it; and prayed that his disciples, whilst eating it, might be led to him, the bread of life, and feed upon him in a spiritual sense; whose body was going to be broken for them, as the bread was to be, in order to obtain eternal redemption for them: so it was common with the Jews, to ask a blessing on their bread: the form in which they did it was this ¹⁴⁹⁴.

”Blessed art thou, O Lord, our God, the king of the world, that produceth bread out of the earth.”

What form our Lord used, is not certain; no doubt it was one of his composing, and every way suitable to the design of this ordinance. It was customary also when there were many at table, that lay down there, however, as Christ and his disciples now did, for one to ask a blessing for them all; for so runs the rule ¹⁴⁹⁵;”if they sit to eat, everyone blesses for himself, but if they lie along, לכלם אחד מברכ

Moreover, they always blessed, before they brake:

”Says Rabba ¹⁴⁹⁶, he blesses, and after that he breaks:” this rule Christ likewise carefully observes, for it fol-

lows,

and brake it.

The rules concerning breaking of bread, are these ¹⁴⁹⁷;

”The master of the house recites and finishes the blessing, and after that he breaks:--no man that breaks, is allowed to break, till they have brought the salt, and what is to be eaten with the bread, before everyone--and he does not break neither a small piece, lest he should seem to be sparing; nor a large piece, bigger than an egg, lest he should be thought to be famished;--and on the sabbath day he breaks a large piece, and he does not break, but in the place where it is well baked: it is a principal command to break a whole loaf.

”Christ broke the bread, as the symbol of his body, which was to be broken by blows, and scourges, thorns,

¹⁴⁹⁴ Haggadah Shel. Pesach. fol. 249. 2. Ed. Basil. Misn. Beracot, c. 6. sect. 1.

¹⁴⁹⁵ Ib. sect. 6. T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 42. 2. & 43. 1.

¹⁴⁹⁶ T. Bab. Berncot, fol. 39. 2.

¹⁴⁹⁷ Maimon. Hilch. Beracot, c. 7. sect. 2, 3, 4. T. Bab. Berncot, fol. 47. 1.

nails, and spear, and to be separated from his soul, and die as a sacrifice for the sins of his people: and having so done,

he gave it to the disciples;

which being a distinct act from breaking the bread, shows that the latter does not design the distribution of the bread, but an act preceding it, and a very significant one: and which ought not to be laid aside: according to the Jewish ¹⁴⁹⁸ usages,

”He that broke the bread, put a piece before everyone, and the other takes it in his hand; and he that breaks, does not give it into the hand of the eater, unless he is a mourner; and he that breaks, stretches out his hand first and eats, and they that sit, or lie at the table, are not allowed to taste, until he that blesses, has tasted; and he that breaks, is not allowed to taste, until the Amen is finished out of the mouth of the majority of those that sit at table.”

And said, take, eat, this is my body;

in Luke it is added, “which is given for you”, Luke 22:19; that is, unto death, as a sacrifice for sin; and by the Apostle Paul, 1Co 11:24, “which is broken for you”; as that bread then was, and so expressive of his wounds, bruises, sufferings, and death, for them. Now when he says, “this is my body”, he cannot mean, that that bread was his real body; or that it was changed and converted into the very substance of his body; but that it was an emblem and representation of his body, which was just ready to be offered up, once for all: in like manner, as the Jews in the eating of their passover used to say ¹⁴⁹⁹ of the unleavened bread,”

הא לחמא דניא, this is “the bread of affliction”, which our fathers ate in the land of Egypt.”

Not that they thought that was the selfsame bread, but that it resembled it, and was a representation of the affliction and distress their fathers were in at that time: to which some think our Lord here alludes: though rather, the reference is to the passover lamb, which is frequently, in Jewish writings, called “the body” of the lamb: thus mention being made of the bringing of the herbs, the unleavened bread, and the sauce “Charoseth”, with other things to the master of the house, it is added ¹⁵⁰⁰:

”and in the sanctuary (whilst that stood) they

¹⁴⁹⁸ Ib. sect. 5.

¹⁴⁹⁹ Haggadah Shel Pesach, p. 4. Ed. Rittangel. fol. 242. 2. Ed. Basil.

¹⁵⁰⁰ Misn. Pesach, c. 10. sect 3.

bring unto him, גופו של פה, “the body of the lamb”.

”Again, elsewhere ¹⁵⁰¹ it is said,

“they bring a table furnished, and on it the bitter herbs and other greens, and the unleavened bread, and the sauce, וגופו של כבש הפח “and the body of the paschal lamb”.

”And a little further ¹⁵⁰²,

”he recites the blessing, blessed art thou O Lord, &c. for the eating of the passover, and he eats, פה של גופו של “of the body of the passover”.

”And now it is, as if Christ had said, you have had “the body” of the lamb set before you, and have eaten of it, in commemoration of the deliverance out of Egypt, and as a type of me the true passover, quickly to be sacrificed; and this rite of eating the body of the paschal lamb is now to cease; and I do here by this bread, in an emblematical way, set before you “my body”, which is to be given to obtain spiritual deliverance, and eternal redemption for you; in remembrance of which, you, and all my followers in successive generations, are to take and eat of it, till I come. The words, “take, eat”, show that Christ did not put the bread into the mouths of the disciples, but they took it in their hands, and ate it; expressive of taking and receiving Christ by the hand of faith, and feeding on him in a spiritual manner.

Matthew 26:27

Ver. 27. **And he took the cup and gave thanks,**

For the Jews blessed, or gave thanks for their wine, as well as for their food, and generally did it in this form ¹⁵⁰³:

”Blessed art thou, O Lord, our God, the king of the world, who hast created the “fruit of the vine”.

”Hence the phrase, “the fruit of the vine”, in Mt 26:29, not that we are to suppose, that Christ used or confined himself to this form of words: and it is to be observed, that they not only gave thanks for their wine before food, and whilst they were eating ¹⁵⁰⁴, but also after meat; and as this relates to the blessing of the cup after eating, or as the Apostle Paul says, “when he had supped”, 1Co 11:25. I shall only transcribe what the Jews say ¹⁵⁰⁵ concerning that:

¹⁵⁰¹ Maimon. Chametz Umetzah, c. 8. sect. 1.

¹⁵⁰² Ib. sect. 7.

¹⁵⁰³ Haggadah Shel Pesach. fol. 241. 1.

¹⁵⁰⁴ Vid. Misn. Beracot, c. 6. sect. 1. 6.

¹⁵⁰⁵ Ib. c. 8. sect. 8.

“When wine is brought to them after food, if there is but that cup there, the house of Shammai say, מברך לֹ הַיַּיִן, “he blesses”; or gives thanks “for the wine”; and after that gives thanks for the food: the house of Hillell say, he gives thanks for the food, and after that gives thanks for the wine.”

And as this was usual at ordinary meals, to bless or give thanks for the wine, so at the passover; and which our Lord continued in his supper, and is to be practised by us. It should be further known, that the wine at the passover, and so what Christ used at his supper, was red.

”Says R. Jeremiah ¹⁵⁰⁶ it is commanded to perform this duty, בֵּינֵי אֲרוֹמֵי “with red wine”.

‘And elsewhere it is said ¹⁵⁰⁷,

“that it is necessary, that there should be in it (the wine) taste and look.”

“The gloss on it is, שִׁיְהֵא אֲרוֹמֵי, “that it should be red”: and which, as it most fitly represented the blood sprinkled on the door posts of the Israelites, when the Lord passed over their houses; so the blood of Christ, shed for the remission of the sins of his people. It is scarcely worth observing the measure of one of the cups, that was used at such a time: they say ¹⁵⁰⁸, that the four cups which were drank at this feast, held an, Italian quart of wine, so that one cup contained half a pint. More particularly, they ask how much is the measure of a cup? the answer is, two fingers square, and a finger and a half and the third part of a finger deep; or as it is elsewhere ¹⁵⁰⁹, the fifth part of a finger:

and gave it to them, saying, drink ye all of it;

for this is not to be restrained from one sort of communicants, and only partook of by another; but all are to drink of the cup, as well as eat of the bread: whether here is not an allusion to the custom of the Jews at the passover, when they obliged all to drink four cups of wine, men, women, and children, and even the poorest man in Israel, who was maintained out of the alms dish ¹⁵¹⁰, may be considered.

Matthew 26:28

Ver. 28. **For this is my blood of the New Testament,....** That is, the red wine in the cup, was an emblem

¹⁵⁰⁶ T. Hieros. Pesach. fol. 37. 3. & Sabbat, fol. 11. 1.

¹⁵⁰⁷ T. Bab. Pesach. fol. 108. 2. & R. Samuel ben Meir in ib.

¹⁵⁰⁸ T. Hieros. Sabbat, fol. 11. 1.

¹⁵⁰⁹ T. Bab. Pesach. fol. 109. 1.

¹⁵¹⁰ Misn. Pesach. c. 10. sect. 1. T. Bab. Pesach. fol. 108. 1. Mitzvot Torah, pr. affirm. 41.

and representation of his precious blood, whereby was exhibited a new dispensation, or administration of the covenant of grace; and by which it was ratified and confirmed; and whereby all the blessings of it, such as peace, pardon, righteousness, and eternal life, come to the people of God: the allusion is to the first covenant, and the book of it being sprinkled with the blood of bulls, and therefore called the blood of the covenant, Ex 24:8. But the second covenant, or the new administration of the covenant of grace, for which reason it is called the New Testament, is exhibited and established in the blood of Christ the testator. It was usual, even among the Heathens, to make and confirm their covenants by drinking human blood, and that sometimes mixed with wine ¹⁵¹¹.

Which is shed for many, for the remission of sins;

that is, was very shortly to be shed, and since has been, for all the elect of God; for the many that were ordained to eternal life, and the many that were given to Christ, the many that are justified by him, and the many sons he will bring to glory: whereby the full forgiveness of all their sins was procured, in a way consistent with, and honourable to the justice of God; full satisfaction being made to the law of God, for all their transgressions.

Matthew 26:29

Ver. 29. **But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth,**

From whence it seems natural to conclude, that Christ had drank of the cup in the supper, as well as at the passover; and it is reasonable to believe, that he also ate of the bread; since it appears from what has been observed before, See Gill on “Mt 26:26”, that none might eat, till he that blessed and brake the bread had tasted of it ¹⁵¹²: the reason why wine is here called the fruit of the vine, and not wine, See Gill on “Mt 26:27”. The design of this expression is to show, that his stay would be very short: the cup he had just drank of, was the last he should drink with them: he should drink no more wine at the passover; he had kept the last, and which now of right was to cease; nor in the Lord’s supper, for though that was to continue to his second coming, he should be no more present at it corporeally, only spiritually; nor in common conversation, which is not contradicted by Ac 10:41. Since, though the apostles drank with him in his presence, it does not necessarily follow, that he drank with them; and if he did, it was not in a mortal state, nor in the ordinary manner and use of it, but to confirm his

¹⁵¹¹ Alex. ab Alex. Genial. Dier. l. 5. c. 3.

¹⁵¹² Maimon. Chametz Umetzah, c. 8. sect. 10. Piske Toseph. Pesach. art. 328.

resurrection from the dead, nor can it be proved that he drank of the fruit of the vine: the design of the phrase, as before observed, is to signify his speedy departure from his disciples. The allusion is to an usage at the passover, when after the fourth cup, they tasted of nothing else all that night, except water; and so Christ declares, that he would drink no more, not only that night, but never after.

Until the day I drink it new with you, in my Father’s kingdom:

Mark says, “in the kingdom of God”, Mark 14:25; and Luke, “until the kingdom of God come”, Luke 22:18; and both the Syriac and Persic versions read it here, “in the kingdom of God”; by which is meant, something distinct from the kingdom of the Son, or of the Messiah, which was already come; and appeared more manifestly after the resurrection of Christ, upon his ascension to heaven, and the effusion of the holy Spirit, and the success of the Gospel, both among Jews and Gentiles; and which will be more glorious in the latter day: and when all the elect of God are gathered in, and have been presented to Christ by himself, he will then deliver up the kingdom to the Father, and God shall be all in all; and then the kingdom of the Father will take place here mentioned, and which is no other than the ultimate glory; so called, because it is of the Father’s preparing and giving, and in which he will reign and dwell, and the saints with him, to all eternity; which must not be understood to the exclusion of Christ, for it is called his kingdom also, Luke 22:30, in this state, Christ will drink new wine, not literally, but spiritually understood; and which designs the joys and glories of heaven, the best wine which is reserved to the last: which is sometimes signified by a feast, of which wine is a principal part; by sitting down as at a table, in the kingdom of heaven, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Mt 8:11, and expressed by “wine”, because of its refreshing and exhilarating nature, in God’s presence is “fulness of joy”; and by “new wine”, because these joys are the most excellent, because they are always new, and never change; they are “pleasures for evermore”: to “drink” hereof, denotes the full enjoyment of them, which Christ, as man and mediator, and his people with him, shall be possessed of; and is different from the superficial “taste of the powers of the world to come”, Heb 6:5, which hypocrites have, and those real prelibations of glory which saints have in this life; there being a difference between drinking and tasting, Mt 27:34, and this will be social; Christ and his true disciples shall be together; and drink this new wine together; or enjoy the same glory and felicity in the highest measure and degree, they are capable of; and which soci-

ety therein will yield a mutual pleasure to each other, as the words here suggest. The Jews often express the joys of the world to come, by such like figurative phrases: they make mention of, יַיִן דְּלִמָּא דְּאַחַי, “the wine of the world to come” ¹⁵¹³; and of, שְׂכַר רוּחַי, “a spiritual drink”, in the last days, which is called the world to come ¹⁵¹⁴: and so they explain {i} after this manner, Isa 64:4. “Neither hath the eye seen, O God”, &c., זֶה יַיִן, “this is the wine”, which is kept in the grapes from the six days of the creation; of which they often speak in their writings ¹⁵¹⁵

Matthew 26:30

Ver. 30. **And when they had sung an hymn,**

The “Hallel”, which the Jews were obliged to sing on the night of the passover; for the passover, they say ¹⁵¹⁶, was שִׁנֵּי הַלֵּל “bound to an hymn”. This “Hallel”, or song of praise, consisted of six Psalms, the 113th, 114th, 115th, 116th, 117th, and 118th ¹⁵¹⁷: now this they did not sing all at once, but in parts. Just before the drinking of the second cup and eating of the lamb, they sung the first part of it, which contained the 113th and 114th Psalms; and on mixing the fourth and last cup, they completed the “Hallel”, by singing the rest of the Psalms, beginning with the 115th Psalm, and ending with the 118th; and said over it, what they call the “blessing of the song”, which was Ps 145:10, &c., and they might, if they would, mix a fifth cup, but that they were not obliged to, and say over it the “great Hallel”, or “hymn”, which was the 136th Psalm ¹⁵¹⁸. Now the last part of the “Hallel”, Christ deferred to the close of his supper; there being many things in it pertinent to him, and proper on this occasion, particularly Ps 115:1, and the Jews themselves say ¹⁵¹⁹, that שֵׁל מִשִּׁיחַ הַבְּלוֹי, “the sorrows of the Messiah” are contained in this part: that this is the hymn which Christ and his disciples sung, may be rather thought, than that it was one of his own composing; since not only he, but all the disciples sung it, and therefore must be what they were acquainted with; and since Christ in most things conformed to the rites and usages of the Jewish nation; and he did not rise up from table and go away, until this concluding circumstance was over; though it was allowed to finish the “Hallel”, or hymn, in any place they pleased, even though it

¹⁵¹³ Zohar in Lev. fol. 17. 2.

¹⁵¹⁴ Tzeror Hammor, fol. 3. 4. En Israel, fol. 30. 1.

¹⁵¹⁵ Targum in Cant. viii. 2. Zohar in Gen. fol. 81. 4. Tzeror Hammor, fol. 30. 3.

¹⁵¹⁶ Misn. Pesach. c. 9. 3. T. Bab. Pesach. fol. 95. 1, 2.

¹⁵¹⁷ Seder Tephillot, fol. 101, &c. Ed. Amstelod.

¹⁵¹⁸ Maimon. Hilch. Chametz Umetzah, c. 8. sect. 5. 10.

¹⁵¹⁹ T. Bab. Pesachim, fol. 118. 1.

was not the place where the feast was kept ¹⁵²⁰ however, as soon as it was over,

they went out to the Mount of Olives;

he and his disciples, excepting Judas: first he himself alone, and then the disciples followed him, according to Luke 22:39, and the Persic version here reads it, “he went out”. This seems to be contrary to a Jewish canon; for the passover was *לילה לינה*, “bound to lodging a night” ¹⁵²¹; that is, as the gloss explains it,

”the first night (i.e. of the passover) a man must lodge in Jerusalem; thenceforward it was lawful to dwell without the wall, within the border.”

And a little after, the same phrase, being bound to lodge, is explained, one night in the midst of the city: but Christ had more important business to attend unto, than to comply with this rule, which was not obligatory by the word of God, though the Jews pretend to found it on De 16:7 ¹⁵²². The place where he went with his disciples, was the Mount of Olives, which was on the east side of Jerusalem; and was the place where the high priest stood, and burnt the red heifer, and sprinkled its blood ¹⁵²³: now from the temple, or from the mountain of the house, there was a causeway, or bridge on arches, made to the Mount of Olives, in which the high priest and the heifer, *hydeom lkw*, “and all his assistants”, (the priests that helped him in this service,) went to this mount ¹⁵²⁴: in this same way it is very probable, went Christ the great high priest, who was typified by the red heifer, and his companions the disciples, to the same place, where he had his bloody sweat, and where his sorrows and sufferings began.

Matthew 26:31

Ver. 31. **Then saith Jesus unto them,**

Either before they went out of the house, where they had been eating the passover, and the supper; or as they were going along to the Mount of Olives; which latter rather seems to be the case:

all ye shall be offended because of me this night.

The words are spoken to the eleven disciples; for Judas was now gone to the high priests, to inform them where Jesus was going that night, and to receive of them

¹⁵²⁰ Maimon. ut supra. (Hilch. Chametz Umetzah, c. 8. sect. 5. 10.)

¹⁵²¹ T. Bab. Pesach. fol. 95. 2.

¹⁵²² Talmud ib. & Jarchi in Dent. xvi. 7.

¹⁵²³ Misn. Middot, c. 2. sect. 4. T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 16. 1.

¹⁵²⁴ Misn. Parah, c. 3. sect. 6. & Middot, c. 1. sect. 3. & Maimon. & Bartenora in ib.

a band of men and officers to apprehend him; which is what would be the occasion of all the rest of the disciples being offended: for when they should see their master betrayed by one of themselves, and the officers seize him and bind him, and lead him away as a malefactor, our Lord here suggests, that they would be filled with such fear and dread, that everyone of them would forsake him and run away, and provide for their own safety; yea, would be so stumbled at this unexpected event, that they would begin to stagger and hesitate in their minds, whether he was the Messiah, or not, as the two disciples going to Emmaus, seem to intimate; they would be so shocked with this sad disappointment, and so offended, or stumble, as to be ready to fall from him: and their faith in him must have failed, had he not prayed for them, as he did for Peter; for they thought of nothing else but a temporal kingdom, which they expected would now quickly be set up, and they be advanced to great honour and dignity; but things taking a different turn, it must greatly shock and affect them; and it was to be the case not of one or two only, but of all of them: and that because of him, whom they dearly loved, and with whom they had been eating the passover, and his own supper, and had had such a comfortable opportunity together; and because of his low estate, his being seized and bound, and led away by his enemies; as the Jews were before offended at him, because of the meanness of his parentage and education: and this was to be that very night; and it was now very late, it may reasonably be supposed to be midnight: for since the last evening, or sun setting, they had ate the passover, the ceremonies of which took up much time, and after that the Lord's supper; then the Hallel, or hymn was sung, when Christ discoursed much with his disciples, and delivered those consolatory and instructive sermons, about the vine and other things, occasioned by the fruit of the vine, they had been just drinking of, recorded in the 15th and 16th chapters of John; and put up that prayer to his Father for them, which stands in the 17th chapter; and indeed within an hour or two after, see Mark 14:37, this prediction of Christ's had its accomplishment, and which he confirms by a prophetic testimony:

for it is written,

in Zec 13:7,

I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered.

This text is miserably perverted by the Jewish writers; though they all agree, that by “the shepherd”, is meant some great person, as a king; so the Targum renders it,

“kill the king, and the princes shall be scattered”: one ¹⁵²⁵ of them says, that a wicked king of Moab is designed; another ¹⁵²⁶, a king of the Ishmaelites, or of the Turks; and a third ¹⁵²⁷, that any, and every king of the Gentiles is meant; a fourth says ¹⁵²⁸, it is a prophecy of the great wars that shall be in all the earth, in the days of Messiah ben Joseph; and a fifth ¹⁵²⁹, after having taken notice of other senses, mentions this as the last: that

”the words “my shepherd, and the man my fellow”, in the former part of the verse, are to be understood of Messiah, the son of Joseph; and because he shall be slain in the wars of the nations, therefore the Lord will whet his glittering sword against the nations, to take vengeance on them; and on this account says, “awake, O sword! for my shepherd, and for the man my fellow”: as if the Lord called the sword and vengeance to awake against his enemies, because of Messiah ben Joseph, whom they shall slay; and who shall be the shepherd of the flock of God, and by reason of his righteousness and perfection, shall be the man his fellow; and when the nations shall slay that shepherd, the sword of the Lord shall come and smite the shepherd; that is, every shepherd of the Gentiles, and their kings; for because of the slaying of the shepherd of Israel, every shepherd of their enemies shall be slain, and their sheep shall be scattered; for through the death of the shepherds, the people that shall be under them, will have no standing.

”Now though this is a most wretched perversion of the passage, to make the word “shepherd” in the former part of it, to signify one person, and in the other part of it another; yet shows the conviction of their minds, that the Messiah is not be excluded from the prophecy, and of whom, without doubt, it is spoken, and rightly applied by him, who is concerned in it, the Lord Jesus Christ; who feeds his flock like a shepherd, is the great shepherd of the sheep, the chief shepherd, the good shepherd, that laid down his life for the sheep; which is intended by the smiting of him: in the text in Zec 13:7 it is read, “smite the shepherd”; being an order of Jehovah the Father's, to Justice, to awake its sword, and sheath it in his son, his

¹⁵²⁵ R. Sol. Jarchi, in Zech. xiii. 7.

¹⁵²⁶ Isaac Chizzuk Emuna, par. 1. c. 37. p. 310.

¹⁵²⁷ R. David Kirachi, in Zech. xiii. 7.

¹⁵²⁸ R. Aben Ezra in ib.

¹⁵²⁹ Abarbitnel, Mashmia Jeshua, fol. 74. 4.

equal by nature, his shepherd by office; and here, as his own act, and what he would do himself, “I will smite the shepherd”; for his ordering Justice to smite, is rightly interpreted doing it himself. The Jews cannot object to this, when their own interpreters in general explain it thus, *ה'שם יכרייה* “God shall cut off the shepherd” ¹⁵³⁰. The sufferings of Christ, which are meant by the smiting him, were according, not only to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, the will of his good pleasure, but according to his will of command; which justice executed, and Christ was obedient to, and in which Jehovah had a very great hand himself: he bruised him, he put him to grief, he made his soul an offering for sin; he spared him not, but delivered him up into the hands of men, justice, and death, for us all: the latter clause, “and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered”, respects the disciples, and their forsaking Christ, and fleeing from him, when he was apprehended; for then, as was foretold in this prophecy, and predicted by Christ, they all forsook him and fled, and were scattered every man to his own, and left him alone. In Zechariah it is only said, “the sheep shall be scattered”, Zec 13:7: here, the sheep of the flock; though the Evangelist Mark reads it, as in the prophet, Mark 14:27, and so the Arabic here, and the sense is the same; for the sheep are the sheep of the flock, Christ's little flock, the flock of slaughter, committed to his care; unless it may be thought proper to distinguish between the sheep and the flock; and by “the flock” understand, all the elect of God, and by “the sheep”, the principal of the flock; “the rams of his sheep”, or “flock”, as the Syriac version renders it; the apostles of Christ, who are chiefly, if not solely intended; though others of Christ's followers might be stumbled, offended, and staggered, as well as they; as Cleophas was, one of the two that went to Emmaus.

Matthew 26:32

Ver. 32. **But after I am risen again,**

This he says for their comfort, that though he, their shepherd, should be apprehended, condemned, and crucified, should be smitten with death, and be laid in the grave, yet he should rise again; and though they should be scattered abroad, yet should be gathered together again by him, their good shepherd; who would after his resurrection, appear to them, be at the head of them, and go before them, as a shepherd goes before his sheep: for it follows, I will go before you into Galilee; the native place of most, if not all of them. This the women that came to

¹⁵³⁰ R. Aben. Ezra, R. David Kimchi, & Miclol Yophi in loc.

the sepulchre after Christ's resurrection, were bid, both by the angel, and Christ himself, to remind the disciples of, and ordered them to go into Galilee, where they might expect to see him: accordingly they did go thither, and saw and worshipped him; see Mt 28:7.

Matthew 26:33

Ver. 33. **Peter answered and said unto him,**

Who was always a forward man, free to speak his mind, and was often the mouth of the rest; observing what Christ had affirmed concerning all of them, that that very night, in a very short space of time, they would be offended because of him; and knowing the strong love he had for Christ, and being persuaded it could never be his case, thus addresses him;

though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended:

his sense is, that though all the men in the world, friends, and foes, though even all the rest of the disciples, who were his most intimate friends, most closely attached to him, and who dearly loved him, and sincerely believed in him, should be so stumbled at what should befall him, as to flee from him, and be tempted to relinquish his cause, and interest; yet nothing should ever cause him, in the least, to stumble and fall, to desert him, or hesitate about him, or cause him to take the least umbrage and offence at what might come upon him; and this he was positive of would be the case, not only that night, but ever after. No doubt he said this in the sincerity of his heart, and out of his great fervour of affection for Christ; but what he failed in, was trusting to his own strength, being self-confident; and in entertaining greater opinion of himself, and his steady attachment to Christ, than of the rest of the disciples; and in contradicting what Christ had so strongly affirmed of them all, without any exception, and so of himself, and had confirmed by so glaring a prophecy concerning this matter.

Matthew 26:34

Ver. 34. **Jesus said unto him, verily I say unto thee,**

Christ, the more strongly to asseverate what he was about to say, uses the word verily, or prefixes his "Amen" to it, as being a certain truth, and what Peter might assure himself of would certainly come to pass:

that this night before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice;

which is, as if he should say, thou wilt not only be offended because of me, and flee from me, and be scattered with the rest, as will be the case of all of you; but thou wilt deny that thou knowest me, that thou belongest to me, or

hast any concern with me; and this thou wilt do not only once, but again and again, even three times, one after another, and that this very night, before the cock has done crowing. In Mark it is said,

"that this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice,

thou shalt deny me thrice", Mark 14:30; which may be reconciled with the words of Matthew, and the other evangelists, by observing, that the word "twice" is not in Beza's ancient copy, which he gave to the university of Cambridge, nor is it in the Ethiopic version; which if allowed to be the true reading, the difficulty is removed at once; but whereas it is in other copies, no stress must be laid on this, nor is there any need of it: for whereas the cock crows twice in the night, once at midnight, and again near break of day; and which latter crowing being louder, and more welcome, and most taken notice of, is, by way of eminence, called the cock crowing; and is what Matthew here has respect to, and so designs the same as Mark does; and the sense of both is, that before the cock crow a second time, which is most properly the cock crowing, Peter should three times deny his master, as he did; see Mark 13:35, where cock crowing is distinguished from midnight, the first time the cock crows, and means the second time of crowing; and where Mark is to be understood in the same sense as Matthew, and both entirely agree. So cock crowing and midnight are distinguished by the Jews, who say ¹⁵³¹,

"that on all other days they remove the ashes from the altar, בקריאת הנובר, "at cock crowing", or near unto it, whether before or after; but on the day of atonement, twuhm, "at midnight":

"and who also speak of the cocks crowing a first and second, and even a third time ¹⁵³².

"Says R. Shila, he that begins his journey before cock crowing, his blood be upon his head. R. Josiah says, he may not proceed שישוב ד"ר "until he repeats"; that is, until he crows twice: and there are, who say, until he trebles it, or crows a third time: of what do they speak? of a middling one, i.e. which neither crows too soon, nor too late."

Matthew 26:35

Ver. 35. **Peter saith unto him,**

Mark says, "he spake the more vehemently", Mark 14:31; his spirits were raised to a greater pitch of resent-

¹⁵³¹ Misn. Yoma, c. 1. sect. 8.

¹⁵³² T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 21. 1.

ment, and he expressed himself in stronger terms, and in more peremptory and self-confident language;

though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee:

he seems to have understood Christ, that he should suffer death, and that he would be in great danger himself, and therefore rather than lose his life would deny his master; wherefore he most confidently affirms, that should this be the case, should he be called to suffer death for his sake, or along with him, he would most cheerfully embrace it, rather than be guilty of so dreadful a crime, which he could not look upon but with the utmost detestation and abhorrence, as to deny his dear Lord and Saviour:

likewise also said all the disciples;

that they would never be offended because of him, and would die with him rather than deny him. This they said, being also self-confident and ignorant of their own weakness, and drawn into these expressions through Peter's example; and that partly to show their equal abhorrence of so horrible an iniquity, as denying Jesus; and partly to remove all suspicion from them, lest they should be thought to have less love and zeal for Christ than Peter had.

Matthew 26:36

Ver. 36. **Then cometh Jesus with them,**

The eleven disciples,

unto a place called Gethsemane;

the Syriac version calls it Ghedsiman; the Persic, Ghesmani, so the Arabic; the Vulgate Latin, and the Ethiopic, Gethsemani: in Munster's Hebrew Gospel, and in the Vulgate Latin, and Arabic versions, it is called a "village"; and in the Ethiopic version, "a village of wine"; and in the Syriac and Persic versions, a place. Here, according to an Ethiopic writer, the Virgin Mary was buried by the apostles ¹⁵³³. Its etymology is very differently given: some read, and explain it, as if it was גי שמנימ, "a valley of fatness", or "of olives", as it is called in Munster's Hebrew Gospel; see Isa 28:1; others as if it was גי דימני, "a valley of signs", or a very famous valley; so Mount Sinai is called ¹⁵³⁴ אַנְאִמְסְרָאָה הַר יִמְנָאִי, the mountain of signs: but, to take notice of no more; the true reading and signification of it is, גתשמני, "an olive press", or a press for olives: so we read ¹⁵³⁵ of a chamber in the temple which is called "the chamber", בֵּית שְׂמֹנִיָּא "Beth Semania", or "Bethsemani", where they put their wine and oil for temple service.

¹⁵³³ Ludolph. Lex. Ethiop. p. 554.

¹⁵³⁴ T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 89. 1.

¹⁵³⁵ T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 16. 1.

It is very probable that at, or near this place, was a very public olive press, where they used to squeeze the olives, for the oil of them, which they gathered in great plenty from off the Mount of Olives; at the foot of which this place was; and a very significant place it was for our Lord to go to at this time, when he was about to tread the wine press of his Father's wrath, alone, and of the people there were none with him: for it follows,

and saith unto the disciples, sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder:

perceiving a time of distress was coming upon him, he betakes himself to prayer, an example worthy of our imitation; in the performance of which duty he chose to be retired and solitary, and therefore left eight of his disciples at a certain place, whilst he went to another at some distance, convenient for his purpose; who perhaps might be the weakest of the disciples, and not able to bear the agonies and distress of their Lord and Master.

Matthew 26:37

Ver. 37. **And he took with him Peter, and the two sons of Zebedee,**

James and John, who perhaps were the strongest, and best able to bear the shocking sight, and were his favourite disciples; who were admitted to be with him at other times, when the rest were not; as at the raising of Jairus's daughter, Mark 5:37, and moreover, these were at his transfiguration on the mount, Mt 17:1, which was a representation and presage of his glory; and so were very proper persons to be witnesses of his sorrows and agonies, which were the way to it; and three of them were taken by him for this purpose, being a sufficient number to bear testimony, since by the mouth of two or three witnesses everything is established:

and began to be sorrowful;

his soul was troubled on the same account six days before, Joh 12:27, but was now sorrowful. He was a man of sorrows all his days, and acquainted with griefs, being reproached and persecuted by men: but now a new scene of sorrows opened; before he was afflicted by men, but now he is bruised, and put to grief by his Father: his sorrows now began, for they did not end here, but on the cross; not that this was but a bare beginning of his sorrows, or that these were but light in comparison of future ones; for they were very heavy, and indeed seem to be the heaviest of all, as appears from his own account of them; his vehement cry to his Father; his bloody sweat and agony; and the assistance he stood in need of from an angel; and the comfort and strength he received from

him in his human nature: all which, put together, the like is not to be observed in any part of his sufferings:

and to be very heavy;

with the weight of the sins of his people, and the sense of divine wrath, with which he was so pressed and overwhelmed, that his spirits were almost quite gone; he was just ready to swoon away, sink and die; his heart failed him, and became like wax melted in the midst of his bowels, before the wrath of God, which was as a consuming fire: all which shows the truth, though weakness of his human nature, and the greatness of his sufferings in it. The human nature was still in union with the divine person of the Son of God, and was sustained by him, but left to its natural weakness, without sin, that it might suffer to the utmost, and as much as possible for the sins of God's elect.

Matthew 26:38

Ver. 38. **Then saith he unto them**

The three disciples, Peter, James, and John, who, by his looks and gestures, might know somewhat of the inward distress of his mind; yet he choose to express it to them in words, saying,

my soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.

That Christ had an human soul, as well as an human body, is clear from hence; and which was possessed of the same passions as ours are, but without sin, such as joy, love, grief, sorrow and at this time its sorrows were exceeding great: his soul was beset all around with the sins of his people; these took hold on him, and encompassed him, which must, in the most sensible manner, affect his pure and spotless mind; the sorrows of death and hell surrounded him on every side, insomuch that the least degree of comfort was not let in to him; nor was there any way open for it, so that his soul was overwhelmed with sorrow; his heart was ready to break; he was brought even, as it were, to the dust of death; nor would his sorrows leave him, he was persuaded, until soul and body were separated from each other; see a like phrase in (Judges 16:16) ,

tarry ye here.

The Ethiopic adds, "till I shall return", for he was going a little further from them, to vent his grief, and pour out his soul unto God. Munster's Hebrew Gospel reads it, "expect me", or "wait for me here", signifying, that he should return to them shortly;

and watch with me.

It was night, and they might be heavy and inclined to sleep: he knew it would be an hour of temptation both

to him and them, and therefore advises them to watch against it; and to observe how it would go with him, and what should befall him, that they might be witnesses of it, and be able to testify what agonies he endured, what grace he exercised, and how submissive he was to his Father's will.

Matthew 26:39

Ver. 39. **And he went a little further**

Luke says, (Luke 22:41) , "about a stone's cast", about fifty or sixty feet from the place where they were,

and fell on his face, and prayed;

partly to show his great reverence of God, the sword of whose justice was awaked against him, the terrors of whose law were set in array before him, and whose wrath was pouring down upon him; and partly to signify how much his soul was depressed, how low he was brought, and in what distress and anguish of spirit he was, that he was not able to lift up his head, and look up. This was a prayer gesture used when a person was in the utmost perplexity. The account the Jews give of it, is this ¹⁵³⁶,

״כשנפלין ל פניהם״ , "when they fall upon their faces", they do not stretch out their hands and their feet, but incline on their sides."

This was not to be done by any person, or at any time; the rules are these ¹⁵³⁷:

״לִּפְּנֵי ה' לֹא יִפֹּל אִישׁ״ , "to fall upon his face", but he that knows in himself that he is righteous, as Joshua; but he inclines his face a little, and does not bow it down to the floor; and it is lawful for a man to pray in one place, and to "fall upon his face" in another: it is a custom that reaches throughout all Israel, that there is no falling upon the face on a sabbath day, nor on feast days, nor on the beginning of the year, nor on the beginning of the month, nor on the feast of dedication, nor on the days of "purim", nor at the time of the meat offering of the eves of the sabbath days, and good days, nor at the evening prayer for every day; and there are private persons that fall upon their faces at the evening prayer, and on the day of atonement only: they fall upon their faces because it is a time of supplication, request, and fasting."

Saying, O my father;

or, as in Mark, "Abba, Father", (Mark 14:36) ; "Abba"

¹⁵³⁶ Gloss. in T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 34. 2.

¹⁵³⁷ Maimon. Hilch. Tephilla, c. 5. sect. 14, 15.

being the Syriac word he used, and signifies, "my father"; and the other word is added for explanation's sake, and to denote the vehemency of his mind, and fervour of spirit in prayer. Christ prayed in the same manner he taught his disciples to pray, saying, "our Father"; and as all his children pray under the influence of the spirit of adoption, whereby they cry "Abba, Father". God is the Father of Christ, not as man, for as such he was without father, being the seed of the woman, and made of a woman, without man; nor by creation, as he is the Father of spirits, of angels, and the souls of men, of Adam, and all mankind; nor by adoption, as he is the Father of all the chosen, redeemed, and regenerated ones; but by nature, he being the only begotten of the Father, in a manner inconceivable and inexpressible by us. Christ now addresses him in prayer in his human nature, as standing in this relation to him as the Son of God, both to express his reverence of him, and what freedom and boldness he might use with him; what confidence he might put in him; and what expectation he might have of being heard and regarded by him; and what submission and resignation of will was due from himself unto him.

If it be possible, let this cup pass from me;

meaning not only the hour, as it is called in Mark, the present season and time of distress, and horror; but all his future sufferings and death, which were at hand; together with the bearing the sins of his people, the enduring the curse of the law, and the wrath of God, all which were ingredients in, and made up this dreadful bitter cup, this cup of fury, cursing, and trembling; called a cup, either in allusion to the nauseous potions given by physicians to their patients; or rather to the cup of poison given to malefactors the sooner to dispatch them; or to that of wine mingled with myrrh and frankincense to intoxicate them, that they might not feel their pain, (See Gill on Mark 15:23), or to the cup appointed by the master of the family to everyone in the house; these sorrows, sufferings, and death of Christ being what were allotted and appointed by his heavenly Father: and when he prays that this cup might pass from him, his meaning is, that he might be freed from the present horrors of his mind, be excused the sufferings of death, and be delivered from the curse of the law, and wrath of God; which request was made without sin, though it betrayed the weakness of the human nature under its insupportable load, and its reluctance to sufferings and death, which is natural; and yet does not represent him herein as inferior to martyrs, who have desired death, and triumphed in the midst of exquisite torments: for their case and his were widely dif-

ferent; they had the presence of God with them, Christ was under the hidings of his Father's face; they had the love of God shed abroad in them, he had the wrath of God poured out upon him; and his prayer bespeaks him to be in a condition which neither they, nor any mortal creature were ever in. Moreover, the human nature of Christ was now, as it were, swallowed up in sorrow, and intent upon nothing but sufferings and death; had nothing in view but the wrath of God, and the curse of the law; so that everything else was, for the present, out of sight; as the purposes of God, his counsel and covenant, his own engagements and office, and the salvation of his people; hence it is no wonder to hear such a request made; and yet it is with this condition, "if it be possible". In Mark it is said, "all things are possible unto thee", (Mark 14:36) ; intimating, that the taking away, or causing the cup to pass from him, was: all things are possible to God, which are consistent with the perfections of his nature, and the counsel of his will: and all such things, though possible in themselves, yet are not under such and such circumstances so; the removal of the cup from Christ was possible in itself, but not as things were circumstanced, and as matters then stood; and therefore it is hypothetically put, "if it be possible", as it was not; and that by reason of the decrees and purposes of God, which had fixed it, and are immutable; and on account of the covenant of grace, of which this was a considerable branch and article, and in which Christ had agreed unto it, and is unalterable; and also on the score of the prophecies of the Old Testament, in which it had been often spoken of; and therefore without it, how should the Scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be? they would not have been the Scriptures of truth. Besides, Christ had foretold it himself once and again, and therefore consistent with the truth of his own predictions, it could not be dispensed with: add to all this, that the salvation of his people required his drinking it; that could not be brought about no other way in agreement with the veracity, faithfulness, justice, and holiness of God. This condition qualifies and restrains the above petition; nor is it to be considered but in connection with what follows:

nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt;

which shows that the request was far from being sinful, or contrary to piety to God, or love to men, or to true fortitude of mind; the pure natural will of Christ, or the will of Christ's human nature, being left to act in a mere natural way, shows a reluctancy to sorrows, sufferings, and death; this same will acting on rational principles, and in a rational way, puts it upon the possi-

bility the thing, and the agreement of the divine will to it. That there are two wills in Christ, human and divine, is certain; his human will, though in some instances, as in this, may have been different from the divine will, yet not contrary to it; and his divine will is always the same with his Father's. This, as mediator, he engaged to do, and came down from heaven for that purpose, took delight in doing it, and has completely finished it.

Matthew 26:40

Ver.40. **And he cometh unto the disciples**

The three he took with him, Peter, James, and John, after he had finished his prayer;

and findeth them asleep:

many things might contribute to, and bring this drowsiness upon them; as the great fatigue they had had in preparing the passover in the day, the plentiful meal they had eaten at night, though without excess, and the lateness of the night, it being now probably midnight; but the chief reason of their sleepiness was their sorrow, as is expressed in (Luke 22:45) , what Christ had said to them of his soul troubles, and what they saw in him, had filled their hearts with sorrow, which brought on them an amazement and stupidity of mind; and this issued in sleep. We have other instances of persons in excessive grief and trouble falling asleep, as Elijah in (1 Kings 19:4 1 Kings 19:5) , and Jonah in (Jonah 1:5) , so that this did not arise from a secure, lazy, indolent frame of spirit; or from any disregard to Christ, and neglect of him, and unconcernedness for him; but from their great sorrow of heart; for, the trouble and distress that he was in, added to the causes above mentioned. Though some have thought, that Satan might be, concerned in it, who induced this sleepiness, or increased it, that he might the more easily surprise them with his temptations, he was preparing for them, which I will not deny. Now, though this sleep was natural bodily sleep, which the disciples fell into, yet was an emblem of, and carried in it a resemblance to, the spiritual sleep and drowsiness of the people of God; for as this was after a delightful entertainment and conversation with Christ at the passover and Lord's supper, so it sometimes is, that the children of God fall into a sleepy frame of soul, after much communion with Christ, as the church did in (Song of Solomon 5:1 Song of Solomon 5:2) , and as this sleep befell them, when Christ was withdrawn a little space from them; so it was with the church, when her beloved was absent from her, (Song of Solomon 3:1) (5:2) , and with the wise virgins when the bridegroom tarried, (Matthew 25:6) , and as this was not an entire thorough sleep; they

knew all the while what Christ was doing, and could relate, as they have done, the circumstances of it; so the children of God, when asleep, they are not like unregenerate persons, in a dead sleep of sin, that hear, and see, and feel, and know nothing; but though they are asleep, their hearts are awake, as was the church's, (Song of Solomon 5:2) , yet as the disciples were so much asleep, that the bare words of Christ did not arouse them from it for a while; so such is the sleep of the saints sometimes, that they are not to be aroused by the bare ministry of the word, though the most powerful arguments, and the most moving and melting language are made use of, as were with the church, (Song of Solomon 5:2-4) ,

and saith unto Peter, what! could ye not watch with me one hour?

This was said particularly to Peter, because he had so lately, in such a confident manner, declared, that he would not be offended with Christ, but abide with him, stand by him, and even die with him, was there an occasion for it; and yet, in so short a space of time, was fallen asleep, as were the rest who said the same things also: and it is as if Christ should say, how will you be able to stand by me throughout this night, when ye cannot watch with me so much as one hour, though I so earnestly desired you to tarry here, and watch with me, and you saw in what distress I was in? how will you be able to withstand the temptations that will beset you quickly, and perform your promises of love, fidelity, constancy, and close attachment to me, in the greatest dangers, when you cannot keep yourselves awake one hour for my sake?

Matthew 26:41

Ver.41. **Watch and pray**

These two are very justly put together. There is, and ought to be, a watching before prayer, and "unto" it; a watching all opportunities, the most suitable and convenient to perform it; and there is a watching in it, both over our hearts, thoughts, words, and gestures, and after it, for a return of it, and answer to it: the reason of this exhortation follows,

that ye enter not into temptation;

not that they might not be tempted at all; for none of the saints have been, or are without temptations; and they are needful for them; and it is the will of God they should be attended with them; and he has made gracious provisions for their help and relief under them; but that they might not enter into them, throw themselves in the way of temptation, be surprised by them at an unawares, fall into them headlong, be immersed in them,

fall by them, and be overcome with them, so as to forsake Christ, or to deny him:

the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak:

meaning either that the evil spirit Satan was very desirous of having them in his hands; very forward and ready to make the onset upon them; was cheerful, alert, and confident of victory; and was strong, robust, and powerful; and they were but flesh and blood, very weak and infirm, and unequal to the enemy; which is a sense not to be despised, seeing it carries in it a very strong reason why they ought to watch and pray, lest they fall into the temptations of such a powerful adversary; see (Ephesians 6:12) (1 Peter 5:8) , or else by "spirit" may be meant the soul, as renewed and regenerated by the spirit of God; particularly the principle of grace in it, which is born of the Spirit, and is called by the same name, and which lusts against the flesh, or corrupt nature: this was willing to watch and pray, and guard against falling into temptations; was willing to abide by Christ, and express its love to him every way; but "the flesh", or "body", so the Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions read, is "weak" and infirm, prone to sleep, indulges ease, and unfit to bear trouble, but ready to sink under it, and is for fleeing from it: and so the words contain our Lord's excuse of his disciples in their present circumstances. Munster's Hebrew Gospel reads the words thus, and "indeed the spirit is שׁוֹקֵדָה , watchful, but the flesh is weak". The Ethiopic version after this manner, "the spirit desires, and the body is fatigued". The Persic version, contrary both to the letter and sense of the words, renders them, "my spirit is firm, but my body is infirm".

Matthew 26:42

Ver. 42. **He went away again the second time**

To the same place as before, or at some little distance; after he had reproofed his disciples for their sleeping, and had exhorted them to watchfulness and prayer, suggesting the danger they were liable to, and the condition they were in:

and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, thy will be done.

The sense of this prayer to his God and Father is, that if his sufferings and death could not be dispensed with; if it was not consistent with the decrees of God, and the covenant of grace, that he should be excused from them; or if the glory of God, and the salvation of his people required it, that he must drink up that bitter cup, he was content to do it; desiring in all things to submit unto, and

to fulfil his Father's will, though it was so irksome and disagreeable to nature.

Matthew 26:43

Ver.43. **And he came and found them asleep again**

For they were aroused and awaked, in some measure, by what he had said to them; but no sooner was he gone but they fell asleep again, and thus he found them a second time; or, "he came again and found them asleep"; so read the Vulgate Latin, the Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions, and Munster's Hebrew Gospel:

for their eyes were heavy;

with sleep through fatigue, sorrow Mark adds, "neither wist they what to answer him", (Mark 14:40) ; they were so very sleepy, they knew not how to speak; or they were so confounded, that he should take them asleep a second time, after they had had such a reproof, and exhortation from him, that they knew not what answer to make him; who probably rebuked them again, or gave them a fresh exhortation.

Matthew 26:44

Ver.44. **And he left them, and went away again**

At some little distance from them; they being so overpowered with sleep, that he could have no conversation with them:

and prayed the third time;

as the Apostle Paul did, when under temptation, he prayed thrice that it might depart from him, (2 Corinthians 12:8) ,

saying the same words:

the Arabic version renders it, "in the words which he before expressed"; and Munster's Hebrew Gospel reads, "he said the same prayer"; not in the selfsame words, or in the express form he had before delivered it; for it is certain, that his second prayer is not expressed in the same form of words as the first: but the sense is, that he prayed to the same purpose; the matter and substance of his prayer was the same, namely, that he might be exempted from suffering; but if that could not be admitted of, he was desirous to be resigned to the will of his heavenly Father, and was determined to submit unto it.

Matthew 26:45

Ver.45. **Then cometh he to his disciples..**

The three that were nearest to him, "the third time", as Mark says, (Mark 14:41) , and as it was;

and saith unto them, sleep on now, and take your rest.

The Evangelist Mark adds, "it is enough", (Mark

14:41) ; which has induced some interpreters to think, that these words were spoken seriously by Christ: though the sense cannot be that they had watched sufficiently, and now might sleep, and take their rest, for they had not watched at all; but rather, that he had now no need of them, or their watching with him; the conflict was over for the present; or, as the Syriac version renders it, “the end is come”; and so the Arabic; and to the same purpose the Persic, “the matter is come to an end”, or to an extremity; the sense being the same with what is expressed in the following clause, “the hour is at hand”; and shows, that the words are to be understood in an ironical sense, sleep on and take your rest, if you can: I have been exhorting you to watchfulness, but to no purpose, you will be alarmed from another quarter; a band of soldiers is just at hand to seize and carry me away, and now sleep if you can: that this is the sense appears from the reason given, and from the exhortation in the following verse, and the reason annexed to that:

behold the hour is at hand, and the son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners:

by the son of man Christ means himself, and under this diminutive title expresses his Messiahship, this being a character of the Messiah in the Old Testament; and the truth of his human nature, and the weakness and infirmities of it: by the “betraying”, or delivery of him, is intended either the betraying of him by Judas into the hands of the high priest, Scribes, and Pharisees; or the delivery of him, by them, into the hands of Pilate, and by him to the Roman soldiers; all which were by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. The high priest, elders, Scribes, and Pharisees, notwithstanding all their pretensions to religion, righteousness, and holiness, were very wicked persons; though the Gentiles, the band of Roman soldiers, Judas brought with him to take Christ, are here rather meant, it being usual to call the Gentiles sinners. This betraying and delivery of Christ into the hands of these, was determined by God; the time, the very hour was fixed, and was now approaching; the last sand in the glass was dropping; for as soon as Christ had said these words, Judas, with his band of soldiers, appeared.

Matthew 26:46

Ver. 46. **Rise, let us be going**

Not to run away from the enemy, but to meet him: this was said, partly to arouse his sleepy disciples; and partly to show his love to his Father, and his submission to his will; as also to express the fortitude of his mind as man; he was now rid of his fears, and free from those

agonies and dreadful apprehensions of things, he was but a little while ago possessed of; and likewise, to signify his willingness to be apprehended, and to suffer, and die, in the room of his people:

he is at hand that doth betray me.

This shows his omniscience: he not only knew, as he did from the beginning, who should betray him; but he knew when he would do it; and he knew where the betrayer now was, that he was just now coming upon him, in order to deliver him the hands of sinful men. And this he spake with trepidity of soul, with greatness of mind, being no more concerned at it, than when he gave him the sop, and bid him do what he did quickly: he does not mention his name; nor did he ever, when he spoke of him as the betrayer; either because the disciples, as yet, did not fully and certainly know who should betray him, and he would not now surprise them with it; or because they did, and therefore it was needless to mention his name; or rather, because he was unworthy to be mentioned by name: a “behold” is prefixed to this, partly to awaken the attention of his disciples; and partly to express what an horrid, insolent, and unparalleled action that was, Judas was now about to be guilty of.

Matthew 26:47

And while he yet spake

While he was thus speaking to his disciples, before the last words, he is at hand that doth betray me, were well out of his mouth; such an exact knowledge had Christ of every motion of Judas, of what he was about, and where he was:

lo! Judas, one of the twelve, came.

The Persic version adds, “in sight”; of Christ, and the disciples; they saw him, and knew him, though some little distance: he came to Gethsemane, and into the garden, where they were, with a design to betray his master. He is described by his name Judas; as in (Matthew 26:14) , for there was another Judas among the apostles; the Syriac and Persic read, Judas the betrayer, to distinguish him from the other: and also by his office, “one of the twelve”; i.e. apostles, whom Christ called from the rest of his disciples and followers, and bestowed extraordinary gifts upon, and sent forth to preach the Gospel, cast out devils, and heal all manner of diseases; and “lo!”, one of these betrays him! an apostle, and yet a devil! one of the twelve, one of his select company, and bosom friends, and yet a traitor!

and with him a great multitude, with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders the people.

Judas was at the head of them, went before them to show them where Christ was, and to deliver him into their hands: he had not been asleep, he had been with the chief priests, and acquainted them with the opportunity he had of making good his agreement with him: he had got the band of soldiers, and other persons together, in order to make sure work of it. Thus we see how diligent wicked men are in the accomplishment of their evil designs, whilst good men are asleep and indifferent to godly and spiritual exercises. Judas is here described by his company; he who but a few hours ago was at table with his Lord, and the rest of the apostles, is now at the head of band of Roman soldiers, and other miscreants, and blood thirsty wretches, intent upon the death of his master. They may well be called a “multitude”, because made up of various sorts of persons, and these, many of them; of Roman soldiers, of the officers and servants of the chief priests; yea of the chief priests themselves, captains of the temple, and elders of the people, who were so eager upon this enterprise, that they could not forbear going in company with them, to see what would be the issue of it. And “a great one”; for the “band” of soldiers, if it was complete, consisted of a thousand men itself; and besides this, there were many others, and all to take a single person, and who had no more about him than eleven disciples; though the ¹⁵³⁸ Jews pretend he had two thousand men with him: and who came also “with swords and staves, or clubs”; the Roman soldiers with their swords, and the servants of the chief priests with their clubs: the reason of this posse, and of their being thus armed, might be either for fear of the people, who, should they be alarmed, and have any notice of their design, might rise and make an uproar, and attempt to rescue him; or that by having a Roman band with them, and the chief priests and their officers, it might appear, that what they did they did by authority; and that they seized him as a malefactor, as one guilty either of sedition, or heresy, or both. And this account is confirmed by the Jews themselves, who say ¹⁵³⁹, that the citizens, of Jerusalem were (Mynwzm) , “armed”, and equiped, and so took Jesus: and this multitude also came “from the chief priests and elders of the people”. Mark joins the Scribes with them, (Mark 14:43) : these composed the sanhedrim, or great council of the nation, who had been consulting the death of Christ; had agreed to give Judas thirty pieces of silver to betray him into their hands; had obtained a band of soldiers of the Roman governor to apprehend him, and

¹⁵³⁸ Toldos Jesu, p. 16

¹⁵³⁹ Ib.

sent their officers and servants to assist herein; these all acted under their direction, influence, and authority. The Vulgate Latin, and Munster’s Hebrew Gospel read, “sent”, from them.

Matthew 26:48

Ver. 48. **Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign**

By which it might be known who he was; for it being night, though they had lanterns and torches, as John says, (John 18:3) , yet Judas himself might not be able to discern, him, so as to point him out, until he came very near him: moreover, Christ and his apostles might be clothed alike, so that a mistake might be easily made, and one of them be took for him: and so the Jews say ¹⁵⁴⁰, that the two thousand men, they pretend were with him, were clothed with the same apparel; which story may take its rise from hence: add to this, that James, the son of Alphaeus, called the brother of our Lord, is reported to be very like unto him. Besides, it is very likely that the Roman soldiers, who were to be the principal persons in apprehending, binding, and carrying him away, might never have seen him, and so could not know him without some sign was given them; and which Judas gave them before he came out with them: and is as follows:

saying, whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he, hold him fast.

Judas might the rather pitch upon this to be the sign, partly because it might be what had been usual with the disciples, when they had been at any time absent from Christ, and which he admitted of; and partly because he might think this would best cover his treacherous designs, who, with all his wickedness, had not effrontery enough to come sword in hand and seize him in a violent manner, and besides, might not judge such a method advisable, had he impudence enough to prosecute it, lest this should put Jesus upon taking some measures to make his escape. The reason of his advice, “hold him fast”, was, because he knew that once and again, when attempts were made to seize him, he easily disengaged himself, passed through the midst, and went his way; see (Luke 4:30) (John 8:59) (John 10:39) ; and therefore gave them this caution, and strict charge, lest, should he slip from them, he should lose his money he had agreed with the chief priests for; or to let them know, that when he was in their hands, he had made good his agreement, and should expect his money: and that it lay upon them then to take care of him, and bring him before the sanhedrim. The account the Jews themselves give of the

¹⁵⁴⁰ Toldos Jesu, p. 16.

directions of Judas, is not very much unlike this; who represent him advising in this manner, only as on the day before:

“gird yourselves ready about this time tomorrow, and the man whom shall worship and bow to, the same is he; behave yourselves like men of war, fight against his company, and lay hold on him”¹⁵⁴¹.

Matthew 26:49

Ver. 49. **And forthwith he came to Jesus**

As soon as ever he appeared, before the rest could come up; for, he went before them, as Luke says, and that not only as, their guide to direct them to the person they wanted, but he separated himself from them, that it might not be thought that he came with them, or belonged to them:

and said, hail, master; and kissed him.

Just as Joab asked Amasa of his health, and took him by the beard to kiss him, and smote him under the fifth rib, (2 Samuel 20:9) . The salutation he gave him was wishing him all health, prosperity, and happiness. The Syriac version renders it, “peace, Rabbi”; and the Persic, “peace be upon thee, Rabbi”; which was the very form of salutation the disciples of the wise men gave to their Rabbins.

”Says¹⁵⁴² Aba bar Hona, in the name of R. Jochanan, in what form is the salutation of a disciple to his master? (שלום ליב רבי) , “peace be upon thee, Rabbi”

In (Mark 14:45) , the word “Rabbi” is repeated, this being usual in the salutation of the Jewish doctors; and the rather used by Judas under a pretence of doing him the greater honour, and of showing the highest respect, and strongest affection for him. So this deceitful wretch still addresses him as his master, though he was now serving his most implacable enemies; and wishes him all peace and joy, when he was going to deliver him into the hands of those that sought his life; and to cover all, kissed him, as a token of his friendship and the sincerity of it. It is rightly observed by Dr. Lightfoot, that it was usual for masters to kiss their disciples, particularly their heads; but then not for disciples to kiss their masters: of the former there are many instances in the Jewish writings, but not of the latter: yet, I can hardly think that this was done out of open contempt and derision; but under a pretence of respect and love; and even as being concerned for his present case, and as condoling him under the circum-

¹⁵⁴¹ Ib.

¹⁵⁴² T. Hieros. Shebuot. fol. 34. 1.

stances he was now likely to be in, through an armed hand, which was just upon him; and which he, by this artifice, would have suggested he had no concern with.

Matthew 26:50

Ver.50. **And Jesus said unto him, friend**

Not in an ironical and sarcastic way, but because he pretended to be his friend, by saluting and kissing him, in the manner he had done; or rather, because Christ had always used him as his friend, his familiar friend, who had been of his councils, and had ate at his table; and therefore this carried in it something very cutting, had Judas had any conscience, or sense of gratitude:

wherefore art thou come?

The Ethiopic version reads, “my friend, art thou not come?” that is, art thou come as my friend? is thy coming as a friend, or as an enemy? if as a friend, what means this company with swords and staves? if as an enemy, why this salutation and kiss? or what is thine end in coming at this time of night? what is thy business here? thou hast left my company, and my disciples, what dost thou do here? The Syriac version reads it, “to that”; and the Arabic, “to this art thou come?” to kiss me, and by a kiss to deliver me into the hands of my enemies? to which agrees what is said in Luke, “Judas, betrayest thou the son of man with a kiss?” (Luke 22:48) . This he said, to let him know he knew him, and therefore he calls him by name; and that he knew his design in kissing him, and that what he was doing was against light and knowledge; he, at the same time, knowing that he was the son of man, the true Messiah.

Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him;

that is, the multitude, the Roman band, the captains and officers of the Jews, when Judas had given the sign; though not till Christ had given them a specimen of his power, in striking them to the ground; to let them know, that Judas could never have put him into their hands, nor could they have laid hold on him, had he not thought fit to surrender himself to them. The seizing and apprehending him is related by Luke and John as after the following circumstance; though the Ethiopic version here reads, “they lift up their hands, and did not lay hold on the Lord Jesus”.

Matthew 26:51

Ver. 51. **And behold one of them which were with Jesus**

Either one of the three that Jesus took with him whilst he was in his agony, leaving the other eight at some dis-

tance; or of the eleven, who might now be all with him: however, it is certain, Peter is the person meant; for though he is not named here, nor by Mark, nor Luke, he is by John, (John 18:10) ; whose Gospel being wrote last, and many years after the rest, there was no danger like to accrue, by telling who it was that did the following action: he being now thoroughly awaked with the rest, by what Christ had said to him; and more so by the surprise of the multitude of armed men about him; and remembering his solemn protestations of abiding by his master; and seeing him just now ready to be seized, and carried away; without knowing his master’s mind, or waiting his answer to the question the other disciples put,

stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest’s, and smote off his ear.

It seems he had a sword by his side, upon what account is not certain; this he drew, and struck at a servant of the high priest’s, who might show great malignity against Christ, and was foremost, and most busy in apprehending him. The blow was levelled at his head, and with an intention, no doubt, to have, cleaved him down, but sloping on one side took off his ear. The servant’s name was Malchus, as John says; and it was his right ear that was cut off, as both he and Luke relate, (John 18:10) (Luke 22:50) .

Matthew 26:52

Ver.52. **Then said Jesus unto him**

That is, unto Peter,

put up again thy sword into its place,

or sheath. This Christ said not only to rebuke Peter for his rashness, but to soften the minds of the multitude, who must be enraged at such an action; and which was still more effectually done by his healing the man’s ear: and indeed, had it not been for these words, and this action of Christ’s; and more especially had it not been owing to the powerful influence Christ had over the spirits of these men, in all probability Peter, and the rest of the apostles, had been all destroyed at once.

For all they that take the sword, shall perish with the sword.

This is not to be understood of magistrates who bear not the sword in vain, are ministers of God for good, and revengers of evil works; but of private persons that use the sword, and that not in self-defence, but for private revenge; or engage in a quarrel, to which they are not called; and such generally perish, as Peter must have done, had it not been for the interposition of almighty

power. Though this seems to be spoken not so much of Peter, and of the danger he exposed himself to, by taking and using the sword, and so to deter him from it, but rather of these his enemies: and as an argument to make and keep Peter easy and quiet, and exercise patience, since, in a little time, God would avenge himself of them; and that the Jews, who now made use of the sword of the Roman soldiers, would perish by the sword of the Romans, as in a few years after the whole nation did.

Matthew 26:53

Ver. 53. **Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father**

Meaning, if he thought proper, or that there was any necessity for it, or that he was desirous of being rescued out of such hands he was falling into. This must be understood of him as man: for, as God, the angels were his creatures and ministering servants, whom he had the command of himself, and so had no need, as such, to pray to his Father to detach a number of them to his assistance, and which, as man, he could only want.

And he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels.

A Roman legion consisted of about six thousand soldiers, or upwards; some add six hundred sixty six; and others make the number far greater. Twelve are mentioned, either with respect to the twelve apostles; or in allusion, as others think, to the Roman militia; a proper and full army with them consisting of such a number of legions: and that there is an innumerable company of angels, thousand thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand, is certain; and the Persic version here reads; “twelve myriads” of legions; and that these are at the command of God, and he can dispatch them at once, on any emergent occasion, is very evident; and what is it that such a company of angels is not capable of, when a single angel slew in one night an hundred, fourscore, and five thousand men, (2 Kings 19:35) , wherefore had Christ had any inclination to have been rescued from the present danger, he stood in no need of Peter’s sword.

Matthew 26:54

Ver. 54. **But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled**

That is, should Christ make such a request to his Father, and he should grant it, and an host of angels should be sent to rescue him, and he should be rescued by them; how then should the Scriptures, which speak of Christ’s being taken, and led as a lamb to the slaughter, and of his various sufferings, and the circumstances of them, have

their accomplishment? “declaring”, as the Arabic version supplies, or as the Ethiopic version, “which say”,

that thus it must be;

that the Messiah must be apprehended, and suffer, and die. The several parts of the sufferings of the Messiah are foretold in the writings of the Old Testament; the spirit of Christ, in the prophets, testified before hand of them; as that he should be reproached and despised of men, (Psalms 22:6-8) (Isaiah 53:3) , be spit upon, smote, and buffeted, (Isaiah 1:5 Isaiah 1:6) (Micah 5:1) , be put to death, (Psalms 22:15) (Isaiah 53:12) , and that the death of the cross, (Psalms 22:15 Psalms 22:16) (Zechariah 12:10) , and be buried, (Isaiah 53:9) , and also the several circumstances of his sufferings, which led on to them, or attended them; as the selling him for thirty pieces of silver, (Zechariah 11:12 Zechariah 11:13) , the betraying him by one of his familiar friends, (Psalms 41:9) , the seizing and apprehending him, and which is particularly referred to here, (Isaiah 53:7 Isaiah 53:8) , his disciples forsaking him, (Zechariah 13:7) , and even his God and Father, (Psalms 22:1) , his suffering between two thieves, (Isaiah 53:12) , the parting of his garments, and casting lots on his vesture, (Psalms 22:18) , the giving him gall and vinegar when on the cross, (Psalms 69:21) , and not breaking any of his bones, (Psalms 34:20) , yea, the Scriptures not only declared, that these things should be; but the necessity of them also, that they must be; because of the purposes and decrees of God, which are eternal, immutable, and unfrustrable; for as God had determined on his salvation of his people by Christ, and that through his sufferings and death, these were determined by him also, even the time, nature, manner, and circumstances of them; and which the Scriptures declare, and therefore must be likewise; and because of the covenant of grace, which is sure, unalterable, and unchangeable; in which Christ agreed to assume human nature, to obey, suffer, and die in it, and so do his Father’s will, which was to bear the penalty of the law, and undergo the sufferings of death, and which therefore must be, or Christ’s faithfulness fail. Moreover, on account of the law and justice of God, which required his bearing the curse, as well as fulfilling the precept of the law: and especially on account of the salvation of his people, which could not be effected without them, they must be. Christ, in these words, discovers a very great concern for the fulfilling of Scripture; and that because it is the word of God, which must not be broken; and because throughout it he is spoken of, in the volume of it, it is written of him, to do the will of God; even in the

law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms: and besides, he was the minister of the circumcision, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers; and even agreeably to them, and upon the foundation of them, he had himself predicted his own sufferings: and as those were to be the rule of the faith and practice of his people in all ages, he was concerned for their accomplishment in every point; and which may teach us to value the Scriptures, and to be confident of the fulfilment of them in things yet future.

Matthew 26:55

Ver. 55. **In that same hour said Jesus to the multitude**

That is, to the heads and chief of them, the chief priests, captains of the temple, and elders, as Luke says, (Luke 22:52) , for though it was in the dead of the night, and the company such, as they would not have chose to have been seen in at another time; yet so intent were they upon this affair, that they could not satisfy themselves without being in it, and seeing the issue of it; and this the Jews themselves confirm in their account; for they say ¹⁵⁴³, that the elders of Jerusalem took Jesus, and brought him to the city. Now in that same hour, immediately, that very moment, that Christ had made an end of rebuking Peter for his rash action, and reasoning with him upon it, he turned and addressed himself to these men, saying;

are ye come out as against a thief, with swords and staves, for to take me?

as an highwayman, or notorious robber, that had done great mischief to the country; and being armed, and having associates, was not easy to be taken: the Syriac renders it, as a cut-throat: and the Persic, as a robber, and a cut-throat; a desperate villain, that would by no means yield, unless overpowered by numbers, by force of arms, by the dint of the sword, by knocks and blows: but how different from this, was the character of Jesus! who never did any injury to any man’s person or property, but saved both; was meek, lowly, and humble in his deportment, throughout the whole of his life; never strove with men, or cried, and caused his voice, in any riotous manner, to be heard in the streets; and even when reviled, reviled not again, but took every insult patiently; and was now unarmed, and ready to submit at once; nay, before they could well come up to him, he asked them who they sought; and on mentioning his name, declared he was the person; and signified he was ready to surrender himself, only desired his disciples might have leave to go

¹⁵⁴³ Toldos Jesu, p. 17.

away: he adds,

I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me.

The business he was employed was not thieving and stealing, but teaching; and that wholesome doctrine, which he, as man, had received from his Father, and as the great prophet in Israel taught; and with such power and authority, as the Scribes and Pharisees did not: the place where he taught, was the temple; not a corner, or a private place, but a place of public worship, and of public resort: the time when he taught there, was the daytime, and day by day; for some days past, it had been his custom in the daytime to teach in the temple, and at night to go out, and abide in the Mount of Olives; and his continuance day by day in the temple, or his constant teaching there, is signified by sitting daily there, and teaching; unless it should be thought rather to have regard to the posture in which he taught; see (Matthew 5:1) . And yet, though this had been his common practice for some days past, and at other times before, yet no man laid hands on him then; which was not wanting to a good will in them, who were very desirous of it, and sought every opportunity to do it, but were prevented; either through fear of the people, or through Christ’s making his escape from them; and particularly, by the singular providence and power of God, which restrained them, because his time was not yet come. However, Christ suggests by this, that they had no need to take such extraordinary methods to apprehend him, as to make use of one of his disciples to betray him; to come in the middle of the night to take him, and that in such great numbers, and with swords and staves, when he was every day with them in the temple.

Matthew 26:56

Ver. 56. **But all this was done, that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled**

Some have thought these to be the words of the evangelist, making this remark upon what was said and done; but by what both Mark and Luke record, (Mark 14:49) (Luke 22:53) , they appear to be the words of Christ himself; who observes this, partly to make himself, as man, easy under the treatment he met with; and partly, to fortify the minds of his disciples against offence at it; and also to throw conviction, or confusion, into the minds of his enemies. The Scriptures of the prophets he refers to, as having, or about to have, by this conduct, their accomplishment, were such, as regarded the betraying him by Judas, the taking him in this secret, private, insidious, yet

violent manner; in all which he showed great meekness, calmness, and submission, as (Psalms 41:9) (Lamentations 4:20) (Isaiah 53:7 Isaiah 53:8) . As also what respected the scattering, and hasty flight of his disciples from him, (Zechariah 13:7) , which in the next clause is shown to be accomplished.

Then all the disciples forsook him and fled;

not only went away from him, and left him alone, as he foretold they would, (John 16:32) , but they ran away from him in a precipitant manner, like timorous sheep, the shepherd being about to be smitten; and they fearing, lest Peter’s rash action should be imputed to them all, and they suffer for it; or lest they should be laid hold on next, and bound, as their master was, or about to be. Every thing in this account is an aggravation of their pusillanimity, and ingratitude; as that they were the “disciples” of Christ that forsook him, whom he had called, and sent forth as his apostles to preach his Gospel; and to whom he had given extraordinary gifts and powers; who had forsaken all and followed him, and had been with him from the beginning; had heard all his excellent discourses, and had seen all his miracles, and yet these at last forsake him, and even “all” of them: John the beloved disciple, that leaned on his bosom, and Peter, that professed so much love to him, zeal for him, and faith in him; the three that had just seen him in his agony and bloody sweat, and everyone of them left him; not one stood by him, and this too, after they had had a fresh instance of his power, in striking the men to the ground, that came to take him; and when he was suing for them with their enemies, to let them go peaceably and safely: so that they had no need to have fled in such haste; and to leave him “then”, in the midst of his enemies, in his great distress and trouble, was very unkind and ungrateful: and to this account of the evangelist, pretty much agrees what the Jews themselves say of it; for they report ¹⁵⁴⁴, that

“when his disciples saw that he was taken, and that they could not fight against them, (ברנליהם) , “they ran away on foot”, and lift up their voice and wept greatly.”

Though they also pretend, that the citizens of Jerusalem killed many of them, and that the rest “fled” to the mountain, which is false.

Matthew 26:57

Ver. 57. **And they that had laid hold on Jesus Who were the band, and the captain, and the officers**

¹⁵⁰¹ Toldos Jesu, p. 16, 17.

of the Jews, as (John 18:12) , or as the Jews themselves say ¹⁵⁴⁵, the elders of Jerusalem; who not only laid fast hold on him, but bound him; and that both for greater security of him, some of them perhaps knowing how he had made his escape from them formerly; or at least taking the hint from Judas, to hold him fast, and lead him away safely; and by way of reproach and contempt, thereby showing that he was a malefactor, and had done some crime worthy of bonds; and having him thus in fast and safe custody, they

led him away to Caiaphas, the high priest;

who was high priest that year; for the priesthood was frequently changed in those times, and men were put into it by the Roman governor, through favour or bribery. The year before this, Simeon, or Simon ben Camhith, was high priest; and the year before that, Eleazar, the son of Ananus; and before him, Ishmael ben Phabi, who were all three, successively, made high priests by the Roman governor: as was also this Caiaphas, this year; and who by Josephus ¹⁵⁴⁶, and in the Talmud ¹⁵⁴⁷ likewise, is called Joseph. From whence he had his name Caiaphas, is not certain: Jerom ¹⁵⁴⁸ says, it signifies “a searcher”, or “a sagacious person”; but may be better interpreted, he adds, “one that vomits at the mouth”; deriving the word, as I suppose, from (awq) , “to vomit”, and (yp) , “the mouth”; (See Gill on Matthew 26:3). It was to the house, or palace of this man, the high priest, that Jesus was led;

where the Scribes and elders were assembled:

a council was held about a week before this, in which Caiaphas assisted, and then gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient, that one man should die for the people, (John 11:47 John 11:49 John 11:50) , whether that was held at his house, or elsewhere, is not certain, very probably it might; however, it is clear from (Matthew 26:2 Matthew 26:3) , that two days ago, the chief priests, Scribes, and elders, were assembled together in his palace, to consult about putting Jesus to death; and here they were again met together on the same account, waiting to have him brought before them.

Matthew 26:58

Ver.58. **But Peter followed him afar off**

The Ethiopic version adds, alone; and which seems to be the true case; for though there was another disciple who also followed Jesus, and is thought to be John, yet it looks as if they followed him separately, and not together;

¹⁵⁴⁵ Toldos Jesu, p. 16, 17.

¹⁵⁴⁶ Antiq. l. 18. c. 14.

¹⁵⁴⁷ T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 47. 1.

¹⁵⁴⁸ De Heb. nominibus, fol, 104. col. 4. Tom. 3.

for the other disciple went into the palace with Jesus, but Peter not till afterwards, being espied by his fellow disciple standing without. These two it seems, having a little recovered themselves from the fright they had been put into, stopped and turned back, and followed after Jesus, to see what would be the issue of things. Peter’s following Christ, showed love to him; he was lothe to leave him, his bowels moved towards him, and he wanted to know how it would fare with him, and what would become of him; and yet keeping at a distance, following him afar off, betrayed fear, lest he should be observed, and taken up, and come into danger: however, he proceeded on his way in a slow pace, till he came

unto the high priest’s palace, and went in and sat with the servants, to see the end;

of the matter, or business, as the Ethiopic and Persic versions add; to see how it would go with him, whether he would exert his divine power, and deliver himself out of their, hands, which he knew he was able to do, when he would again join him; or what punishment they would inflict upon him, whether they would scourge him, and then let him go; or whether they would sentence him to death; that so he might know how to provide for his own safety: all which was indulging curiosity, and the carnal reasonings of his mind; and it showed want of integrity at that time, and some degree of hypocrisy, in placing himself among the servants of the high priest, as if he was none of the followers of Jesus, but was of the same complexion and cast with them: he had got into bad company, and was in the way of temptation; and though he had no design in following Jesus, and in going into the high priest’s palace, and seating himself among the servants to deny his Lord, yet all this led on to it; for which reason these several circumstances are taken notice of, the account of which denial of his, is afterwards related.

Matthew 26:59

Ver. 59. **Now the chief priests and elders, and all the counsel**

Or sanhedrim, which consisted, as the Jewish writers say ¹⁵⁴⁹, of priests, Levites, and Israelites, of both ecclesiastics and laics; the ecclesiastics were the priests and Levites, and the laics the Israelites, or elders of the people; for if priests and Levites could not be found, a sanhedrim might consist of those only; and so those words in (Deuteronomy 21:2) , “thy elders”, are thus interpreted ¹⁵⁵⁰, (זה בית דיני הגדול) , this is the great sanhedrim; and though

¹⁵⁴⁹ Maimon. Hilch. Sanhedrin, c. 2. sect. 1, 2. Abarbinel in Tora, fol. 366. 2.

¹⁵⁵⁰ T. Hieros. Sota, fol. 23. 3.

a king of Israel might not sit in the sanhedrim, yet an high priest might, if he was a man of wisdom ¹⁵⁵¹, and it seems as if Caiaphas was now at the head of this council, by its being assembled at his palace; which though it was not the usual place where they met, yet might be chose at this time for greater secrecy. Now these thus assembled together,

sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death;

they first take him up, and then seek out for witnesses against him; being determined, right or wrong, to put him to death, if possible; and false witnesses too, even those whose business it was, to examine and detect false witnesses, and to inflict the same punishment upon them, which they by their false testimony intended to have brought on another, (Deuteronomy 19:18 Deuteronomy 19:19) . And besides, it was in the night, when it was forbid by their canons to begin the trial of capital causes, or to receive and admit of witnesses ¹⁵⁵². Indeed the Syriac and Persic versions read, only witnesses, or witness, and leave out the word “false”; perhaps imagining, that men could never be so wicked, to seek out for false witnesses: but this need not be wondered at, when these men were bent upon the death of Christ at any rate; and were aware that nothing true could be objected to him, that would legally take away his life; and besides, their manner of procedure in judgment against a false prophet, a deceiver, and one that enticed to idolatry, and such an one they would have Jesus to be, was quite different from what they took with other persons: their canon runs thus ¹⁵⁵³:

“the judgment of a deceiver, is not as the rest of capital judgments; his witnesses are hid; and he has no need, or ought not to have any premonition, or warning, as the rest of those that are put to death; and if he goes out of the sanhedrim acquitted, and one says I can prove the charge against him, they turn him back; but if he goes out condemned, and one says I can prove him innocent the do not return him.”

So in the Misna ¹⁵⁵⁴ it is said,

“of all that are condemned to death in the law, none have their witnesses hidden but this (the deceiver, or one that entices to idolatry)--and

¹⁵⁵¹ Maimon. ib. sect. 4.

¹⁵⁵² Maimon. ib. c. 3. sect. 3, 4.

¹⁵⁵³ lb. c. 11. sect. 5.

¹⁵⁵⁴ Sanhedrin, c. 7. sect. 10.

they hide his witnesses behind a wall, or hedge; and he (whom he endeavoured to seduce) says to him, say what thou hast said to me privately; and if he repeats it to him, he must say, how shall we leave our God that is in heaven, and go and serve stocks and stones! if he repents, it is well; but if he should say, so we are bound to do, and so it becomes us, they that stand behind the wall, or hedge, shall carry him to the sanhedrim and stone him.”

In the Gemara it is thus expressed ¹⁵⁵⁵,

“they light up a lamp in the innermost house, and set the witnesses in the outermost house, so that they can see him and hear his voice, and he cannot see them.”

And then follows what is said before, to which is added, “so they did to Ben Stada”; by whom they mean Jesus of Nazareth. Moreover, this need not seem strange, that they took such a course with Christ, when in the case of Stephen, they suborned and set up false witnesses against him. The sanhedrim cannot be thought to do this in person, but they sent out their officers to seek for such men, as could or would produce anything against him, and no doubt promised them an handsome reward.

Matthew 26:60

Ver. 60. **But found none**

That were fit for their purpose;

yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none;

whose testimonies were sufficient to put him to death, which was what they were resolved upon, or whose witness were not alike and agreed; for according to their law, a man must not die by the mouth of one witness only, but by the mouth of two or three witnesses agreed in a point; and though they might be willing enough to dispense with the law in this case, yet might have some regard to their own character and reputation; and especially as they meant to deliver him to the Roman governor, in order to be condemned by him; they knew they must have a charge, and this supported with a proper evidence, or they could not hope to succeed; for which reason, they could not put up, as they otherwise willingly would, with any sort of witnesses:

at the last came two false witnesses;

who were agreed in a point, and whose testimonies were alike; at least, had a greater appearance of truth and

¹⁵⁵⁵ T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 67. 1.

agreement than the rest; though Mark says, “neither so did their witnesses agree together”, (Mark 14:59) , as to prove the point, for which it was given.

Matthew 26:61

Ver.61. **And said, this fellow said**

Or saith, as De Dieu observes, the Syriac version of this place should be rendered; that is, he has not only said in times past, referring to (John 2:19) , but continues to say it, and glory in it:

I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three

days;

in which they did injury, both to his words and sense: he did not say, “I am able to destroy the temple”, but only said, “destroy this temple”; signifying neither his power, nor his will and inclination to it; but put it upon the Jews, and left it to them to do it: nor did he say one word about the temple of God, or as it is in (Mark 14:58) , “this temple that is made with hands”; the temple at Jerusalem, which was made by the hands of men, and devoted to the worship of God; but only “this temple”, referring to his body, or human nature; in which he, the Son of God, dwelt, as in a temple; nor did he say that he was able to “build” it in three days, but that he would “raise it up” in three days; intending the resurrection of his body by his own power, after it had been dead three days; and so they perverted his sense, as well as misquoted his words; applying that to the material temple at Jerusalem, what he spoke of the temple of his body, and of its resurrection from the dead, on the third day; designing hereby to fix a charge, both of sacrilege and sorcery upon him: of sacrilege, in having a design upon the temple of God to destroy it; and of sorcery, or familiarity with the devil, and having assistance from him, or knowledge of the magic art, that he could pretend in three days to rebuild a temple, which had been forty and six years in building; and was what could never be done, but by help of Beelzebub, the prince of devils, by whom it was insinuated he did all his miracles.

Matthew 26:62

Ver. 62. **And the high priest arose and said unto him**

He rose up from his seat in great wrath and anger; partly being vexed, that they could get no other and better testimony; and partly because of Christ’s contemptuous silence, giving no answer to the witnesses, as judging they deserved none; and which highly provoked the high priest, and therefore in passion said,

answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?

Is it true or false, right or wrong? The Vulgate Latin renders it, “dost thou answer nothing to those things which these witness against thee?” To which agree the Arabic version, and Munster’s Hebrew Gospel.

Matthew 26:63

Ver. 63. **But Jesus held his peace**

Knowing it would signify nothing, whatever he should say, they being set upon his death, the time of which was now come; and therefore he quietly submits, and says nothing in his own defence to prevent it. To be silent in a court of judicature, Apollonius Tyanaeus¹⁵⁵⁶ says, is the fourth virtue; this Christ had, and all others:

and the high priest answered and said unto him;

though Christ had said nothing, a way of speaking very frequent among the Jews, and in the sacred writings:

I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God;

the Christ; the anointed, that David speaks of in the second Psalm, and who is there said to be the Son of God, (Psalms 2:2 Psalms 2:7) , to which the high priest seems to have respect; since there is no other passage, in which both these characters meet; and which was understood by the ancient Jews of the Messiah, as is owned by modern ones¹⁵⁵⁷. Jesus was given out to be the Messiah, and his disciples believed him to be the Son of God, and he had affirmed himself to be so; wherefore the high priest, exerting his priestly power and authority, puts him upon his oath; or at least with an oath made by the living God, charges him to tell the truth, and which when ever any heard the voice of swearing, he was obliged to do, (Leviticus 5:1) .

Matthew 26:64

Ver. 64. **Jesus saith unto him, thou hast said**

That is, thou hast said right; or as Mark expresses it, “I am”, (Mark 14:62) , the Christ, the anointed of God, who was so from everlasting, and in time; being before the world was, installed into, and invested with the office of mediator; and in the fulness of time, anointed with the holy Spirit without measure: he might truly say he was the Messiah, since all the characters of him in the books of the prophets, met in him; and all the miracles he was to work in proof of his Messiahship were wrought by him: as also that he was the Son of God, not by cre-

¹⁵⁵⁶ Philostrat. Vita Apollouii, l. 8. c. 1.

¹⁵⁵⁷ Jarchi & Aben Ezra in Psal. ii. 1. & Kimchi in ver. 12.

ation, as angels and men; nor by adoption, as saints; nor as man, or in the human nature, in which he was the son of man, and not the Son of God; nor was he begotten as man, whereas he is called the only begotten Son, and the begotten of the Father; and was he the Son of God as man not the first, but the third person must be his Father; besides, he was the Son of God before his incarnation: nor as mediator neither; he was the Son of God, antecedent to his office as mediator; his sonship is distinct from it, is an illustration of it, and what puts virtue into it; but he is so as God, as a divine person, by natural and eternal filiation; being begotten of the Father in the divine essence, and of the same nature; and having the same perfections with him, and in all things equal to him; and is the sense in which he always affirmed God to be his Father, and himself to be his Son. For this phrase, “thou hast said”, as answering to an affirmation, “I am”, (See Gill on Matthew 26:25). Now, though Christ had so fully answered to the adjuration, and so strongly affirmed himself to be the Messiah, the Son of God, yet he knew they would not believe; and therefore refers them to an after proof thereof, which whether they would or not, would oblige them to acknowledge the whole:

nevertheless, I say unto you, hereafter shall ye see the son of man, sitting at the right hand of power:

the Vulgate Latin, and Munster’s Hebrew Gospel, read “the power of God”, as in (Luke 22:69) , though it is not absolutely necessary; for “power” designs God himself, who is all powerful; as appears by the creation of all things out of nothing, the upholding of all things in their being, the redemption of men, the conversion of sinners, and the preservation of his saints. In the Jewish writings¹⁵⁵⁸, God is frequently called, (הַגְבוּרָה) , “the power”: such a thing, say they, we have heard, (מִפִּי הַגְבוּרָה) , “from the mouth of power”, or might; that is, from God himself: and so he is by the Grecians called (שְׁמֵאֵנָה) , “power”¹⁵⁵⁹: by “the son of man”, is meant Christ in the human nature; who then appeared at their bar as a mere man, in a very despicable form and condition, but hereafter they should see him in a more glorious one, and at “the right hand of God”: a phrase expressive of his exaltation, above all creatures whatever: respect is had to the prophecy of him in (Psalms 110:1) . “Sitting” there, denotes his having done his work; and his continuance in his exalted state, until all enemies are subdued under him: and when he

¹⁵⁵⁸ T. Bab. Maccot, fol. 24. 1. & Horayot, fol. 8. 1.

Debarim Rabba, fol. 245. 4. Maimon. Hilch. Memarim, c. 5. sect. 15. & Melacim, c. 8. sect. 10. & alibi passim.

¹⁵⁵⁹ Sententiae Secundi, p. 21. Ed. Gale.

says they should “see” him, his meaning is not, that they should see him at the right hand of God with their bodily eyes, as Stephen did; but that they should, or at least might, see and know by the effects, that he was set down at the right hand of God; as by the pouring forth of the holy Spirit upon his disciples, on the day of pentecost; by the wonderful spread of his Gospel, and the success of it, notwithstanding all the opposition made by them, and others; and particularly, by the vengeance he should take on their nation, city, and temple; and which may be more especially designed in the next clause;

and coming in, the clouds of heaven.

So Christ’s coming to take vengeance on the Jewish nation, as it is often called the coming of the son of man, is described in this manner, (Matthew 24:27 Matthew 24:30) . Though this may also be understood of Christ’s second coming to judgment, at the last day; when as he went up to heaven in a cloud, he will return, and come also in the clouds of heaven; see (Acts 1:9 Acts 1:11) (Revelation 1:7) , when he will be seen by the eyes of all, good and bad; and when this sanhedrim, before whom he now was, will see him also, and confess that he is Lord and Christ, and the Son of God. Though the former clause seems to have regard to what would quickly come to pass, and what they should soon observe, and be convinced of; for (ap’ arti) , rendered “hereafter”, may be translated “henceforwards”; or as it is in the Syriac, Persic, and Ethiopic versions, “from this time”; meaning, that in a very little while, they should begin to see the effects of his being set down at the right hand of God, and which would be full proofs of it, and should see him come in the clouds of heaven, at the last day: reference seems to be had to (Daniel 7:13) , where one like unto the son of man is said to come in the clouds of heaven, and which is understood of the Messiah by many, both of the ancient and modern Jews¹⁵⁶⁰: with whom one of his names is “Anani”¹⁵⁶¹, which signifies “clouds”.

Matthew 26:65

Ver. 65. **Then the high priest rent his clothes**

Both his outer and inner garments. This he did, to show his zeal for the honour and glory of God, his grief and concern at the profanation of his holy name by a false oath, and his abhorrence of, and indignation at the blasphemy he supposed Christ to be guilty of, in assert-

¹⁵⁶⁰ Zohar in Gert. fol. 85. 4. Bemidbar Rabba, sect. 13. fol. 209. 4. R. Jeshuah in Aben Ezra, in Dan. vii. 13. & Jarchi & Saadiah Gaon in loc.

¹⁵⁶¹ F8 Targum in 1 Chron. iii. 24. & Beckius in ib. Midrash Tillim apud Galatin. de arcan. Cathol. ver. l. 10. c. 1.

ing himself to be the Son of God. Some have thought, that Caiaphas in this action, transgressed the law, in (Leviticus 21:10) , where it is said, that “the high priest-- shall not uncover his head, nor rend his clothes”: and it is one of the Jews’ negative precepts ¹⁵⁶², that

“an high priest is prohibited, (לֹלֵב) , “ever” to rend his garments:”

and that therefore being transported with passion at the greatness of the supposed crime, could not forbear expressing his detestation of it in this manner, though it was forbidden him: but it does not appear to have been unlawful: as for the law in Leviticus, it only regards the rending of garments at funerals, or in mourning for the dead, as the context shows; and so Jonathan ben Uzziel paraphrases the text, “nor rent his clothes”: (בִּשְׂמֵת אֲנִיקִי) “in the time of mourning”; and so the Jewish ¹⁵⁶³ interpreters, in general, expound it; and besides, this prohibition, according to them, only regards the manner of rending: their rule is this ¹⁵⁶⁴,

“an high priest rends below, and a common person above:” the sense of which, according to their commentators, is ¹⁵⁶⁵,

“that if anyone dies for whom an high priest is obliged to rend his garments, he must rend below, at the extreme part of his garment, near his feet; and as for what is written, nor rend his clothes; the meaning is, he shall not rend as other men do, above, over against the breast, near the shoulder, as the rest of the people.”

Moreover, a priest might not go into the sanctuary, nor perform any part of service with his clothes rent; the canon runs thus ¹⁵⁶⁶,

“the judgment, or the law of them that rend their garment, and of those that uncover the head, is one and the same, as it is said, (Leviticus 10:6) , lo! if he is in service, and rends his garments, he is guilty of death by the hands of heaven, though his service is right, and not profaned.”

And indeed no man, whether a priest or an Israelite, might go into the temple with his clothes rent; and a priest might not rend his sacerdotal garments, on any account; yet such were not these that Caiaphas now had on;

1562 Moses Kotsensis Mitzvot Tora, pr. neg. 302.

1563 Jarchi, Aben Ezra in loc.

1564 Misn. Horayot, c. 3. sect. 5.

1565 Bartenora & Maimon. in ib.

1566 Maimon. Hilch. Biath Hamikdash, c. 1. sect. 14, 17.

but in case of hearing blasphemy, everyone, be he what he would, was obliged to rend his garments ¹⁵⁶⁷:

“Whosoever hears the cursing of the name (of God) is obliged to rend, even at the cursing of the surnames he is obliged to rend; and he that hears it from an Israelite, both he that hears, and he that hears from the mouth of him that hears, he is obliged to rend; but he that hears from the mouth of a Gentile, is not obliged to rend; and Eliakim and Shebna would not have rent, but because Rabshakeh was an apostate.”

So when witnesses expressed the blasphemy of such they testified against, the judges were obliged to rise up and rend their garments; concerning which, take the following rule ¹⁵⁶⁸:

“a blasphemer is not guilty, unless he expresses the name (of God); says R. Joshua ben Korcha, all the day the witnesses are examined by the surnames; but when the cause is finished, they do not put to death because of the surnames, but they bring every man out, and ask the chief among them, and say to him, say expressly what thou hast heard, and he says it: then the judges stand upon their feet, (וְקוּרִינֵי) , “and rend their garments”, and do not sow them up again; and then the second and the third say, I have heard the same as he.”

From all which it appears, that Caiaphas did what was the custom of the nation to do in such a case. The observation, that some learned men have made, that the high priest’s rending his garments, was, though without his intention, an emblem and presage, of the rending of the priesthood from him, and his brethren, and the entire change of it; as the abolition of the whole ceremonial law, was signified by the rending of the vail of the temple in twain; and as the removing of the kingdom from Saul, was represented by Samuel’s rending his mantle; and the revolt of the ten tribes to Jeroboam, by Abijah’s rending his garment into twelve pieces, and giving ten to him; would have had a much better foundation to be built on, were these clothes that Caiaphas rent, his priestly ones: but such they were not; for both the high priest, and the other priests, only wore their sacerdotal garments in the temple; nor was it lawful for them to go out in them else-

1567 Maimon. Hilch. Obede Cochabim, c. 2. sect. 10.

Vid. T. Hieros. Sanhedrin, fol. 25. 1.

1568 Misn. Sanhedrin, c. 7. sect. 5.

where; for so the Jews say ¹⁵⁶⁹;

“it is forbidden to go out into the province; city, or country, in the garments of the priesthood; but in the sanctuary, whether in the time of service, or not in the time of service, it was lawful.”

In the temple, there were chests on purpose for the garments of the priests ¹⁵⁷⁰; from whence they took them, and where they laid them up when they had performed their service: of these there were ninety six in number; for as there were twenty four courses, there were four chests for every course; in which the garments were put by themselves, the breeches by themselves, the girdles by themselves, the bonnets by themselves, and the coats by themselves; sealed up with an inscription on them, showing what was in them: and when the men that belonged to such a course, came to perform their service in turn, they opened these chests, and clothed themselves: and when they went out of their service, they put them up in them again, and sealed them; and as for

“the high priest, he left his golden garments, (wlv hkvlb) , “in his chamber”, (an apartment in the temple, peculiar to him, and for this use,) in the night, and at whatsoever time he went out of the sanctuary ¹⁵⁷¹”

Nor might he go abroad with them, unless (lwdg Krwul) , “in great necessity” ¹⁵⁷²; as Simeon the Just went out in priestly garments to meet Alexander the Great, to appease him, being warned of God so to do: hence the Apostle Paul knew not Ananias the high priest, (Acts 23:5) , which he must have done, had he had on his priestly garments: for when the priests were not in the temple, and out of service, they wore no distinguishing habits, but were dressed as laics, and as the common people were ¹⁵⁷³. The reason of Caiaphas’s rending his clothes, is expressed in, the next clause,

saying, he hath spoken blasphemy:

not only because Jesus asserted that he was the Messiah, but also the Son of God; hereby making himself equal with God, which is the sense in which the Jews always understood this phrase; and he appearing to them to be but a mere man, they charged it as blasphemy against God, to assume such a character and relation to himself:

1569 T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 69. 1. & Tamid, fol. 27. 2.

1570 Misn. Tamid, c. 5. sect. 3.

1571 Maimon. Hilch. Cele Hamikdash, c. 8. sect. 8, 9, 10.

1572 Moses Kotsensis Mitzvot Tora, pt. affirm. 173.

1573 Maimon. ib. c. 10. sect. 4. Joseph. de Bello Jud. l. 6. c. 15.

what further need have we of witnesses?

of seeking after others, as they had done: or of further examining and taking the depositions of those, who were before them: he was for putting a stop to the process, and bringing the cause at once to an issue: and therefore addresses the court in the following manner;

behold now, ye have heard his blasphemy:

out of his own mouth, as (Luke 22:71) , expresses it; and with their own ears, and at that very time; so that they had no need of recourse to things past, or examine witnesses about what they had heard from him formerly: and therefore he proposes, that they would attend to, and take notice of his present words; and which, as he suggests, were shocking and astonishing: for the word, “behold!” may not only be a note of attention, but of astonishment.

Matthew 26:66

Ver.66. **What think ye?**

&c.] Of the words just now spoken by him; do not they in your opinion amount to a charge of blasphemy and what punishment do you think ought to be inflicted on him? is he guilty of death, or not? This question he put, as being president of the court:

they answered and said, he is guilty of death;

they were unanimous in their vote, for Mark says, “they all condemned him to be guilty of death”; only Joseph of Arimathea must be excepted, who consented not to their counsel and deed, (Luke 23:51) , and so must Nicodemus, if he was present; who seeing what they were determined to do, withdrew themselves before the question came to be put, and so it passed “nemine contradicente”; and indeed, if he had been guilty of blasphemy, as they charged him, the sentence would have been right. Now this was in the night, in which they begun, carried on, and finished this judicial procedure, quite contrary to one of their own canons ¹⁵⁷⁴ which runs thus:

“pecuniary causes they try in the day, and finish in the night; capital causes (such was this) they try in the day, and finish in the day; pecuniary causes they finish the same day, whether for absolution, or condemnation; capital causes they finish the same day for absolution, and the day following for condemnation; wherefore they do not try causes neither on the sabbath eve, nor on the eve of a feast day”

1574 Misn. Sanhedrin, c. 4. sect. 1. Maimom. Hilch. Sanhedrin, c. 11. sect. 1, 2. T. Hieros. Yom Tob, fol. 63. 1.

But in this case, they begun the trial in the night, examined the witnesses, finished it, and passed the sentence of condemnation, and that in the eve of a grand festival, their Chagigah.

Matthew 26:67

Ver. 67. **Then did they spit in his face**

Not the judges, the members of the sanhedrim, but the servants of the high priest, and the officers that had Jesus in hold, and were the guard upon him; see (Luke 22:63) , who seeing him condemned as guilty of death, thought they might insult him at pleasure, and use him in the most indecent and barbarous manner; and therefore, in a way of contempt, spit in his face; than which nothing was more reproachful and disgraceful: the Jews ¹⁵⁷⁵ say, that he that spits before, or in the presence of his master, is guilty of death, so nauseous and filthy was it accounted; and how much more must it be so, to spit in the face of anyone? hereby a prophecy was fulfilled, (Isaiah 50:6) , “I hid not my face from shame and spitting”: and hereby, together with his sweat and blood, his visage was more marred than any man’s, and his form than the sons of men:

and buffeted him;

cuffed, or boxed him with their double fists:

and others smote him, with the palms of their hands;

gave him many a slap on the face with their open hands, or struck him on the face with rods, as the word will bear to be rendered: they rapped him with the wands they had in their hands, and struck him on the head with the rods or staves they had with them; whereby was accomplished the prophecy, in (Micah 5:1) , “they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek”. This was very injurious treatment, the Jews themselves being witnesses; who have in their canons enjoined {y}, that

“if a man strikes his neighbour with his double fist, he must give him a shekel; R. Judah says, on account of R. Jose the Galilean, a pound: if he gives him a slap of the face, he must pay him two hundred zuzims, or pence; and if with the back of his hand (which was accounted ¹⁵⁷⁶ the more ignominious) four hundred zuzims: if he plucked him by his ear, or plucked off his hair, or spit, so as that the spittle came upon him, or took away his cloak--he must pay four hundred zuzims, and

¹⁵⁷⁵ T. Bab. Erubin, fol. 99. 1.F25 Misn. Bava Kama, c. 8. sect. 6.

¹⁵⁷⁶ Maimon. & Bartenora in ib.

all according to his honour or dignity.”

All these indignities were done to Christ; see (Isaiah 50:6) .

Matthew 26:68

Ver. 68. **Saying, prophesy unto us, thou Christ**

Not that they owned him to be the Messiah; but because he asserted himself to be the Messiah, and his followers believed in him as such, they call him so; and in an ironical and sarcastic way, call upon him to divine, and tell them who the persons were, that used him in this manner; suggesting, that if he was the Christ, or Messiah, he would know all things, and what were done to him:

who is he that smote thee?

for they had covered his face, or blindfolded him, as the other Evangelists say, (Mark 14:65) (Luke 22:64) , and then bid him tell them who smote him last. Christ did not think fit to give them an answer to this question, but he will let them know hereafter, who the particular person, or persons were, that smote him; and when it will appear to all the churches, and to all the world, that he is the Lord God omniscient. Some learned men have observed ¹⁵⁷⁷, that there was a play formerly used, called by the ancients, (שניסבאליכ) , at which, one person having his face covered, the rest smote him; or one put his hands over his eyes, and another smote, and asked him who it was that smote? and such an exercise is yet in being among us, which is commonly called Blindman’s Buff; and such pastime as this the Jews had with Christ; in this ludicrous way did they use him, and made him their sport and diversion, as the Philistines did Samson; but it will cost them dear another day.

Matthew 26:69

Ver. 69. **Now Peter sat without in the palace**

Peter’s denial of his Lord, the account of which follows, is related among the sufferings of Christ; and indeed, the ill usage he met with from his enemies, their spitting in his face, buffeting him with their fists, smiting him on the cheeks with their hands, and rods, did not give him so much pain and grief, as to be denied by his own disciple: we are before told, (Matthew 26:58) , that Peter followed Christ afar off, and went into the high priest’s palace, and sat with the servants there, to see what would be the end and issue of these things: and here now he was in the apartment, where the council sat, and were examining and trying Jesus; though, as Mark says, “beneath in the palace”, (Mark 14:66) ; in the lower

¹⁵⁷⁷ Braunii Select. Sacr. l. 5. Exerc. 2. sect. 38. p. 622, 623. & Capelt. in loc. e Polluce, l. 9. c. 7.

part of the room, in the great hall, in the midst of which the servants had made a fire: the Arabic version reads it, “in the area of the court”: here Peter had placed himself, and here he sat making his observations:

and a damsel came unto him;

one of the maids of the high priest, as Mark says, (Mark 14:66) ; and according to the Evangelist John, was she that kept the door, and had let him in, (John 18:16 John 18:17) ,

saying, thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee.

The Arabic and Persic versions read, Jesus the Nazarene, or of Nazareth, as below. So she called him, not so much to distinguish him from any other of that name, as by way of reproach; suggesting, that he could not be the Messiah, or that prophet; since Christ comes not out of Galilee, nor does any prophet arise from thence: and when she charges him with being “with” him, her meaning is not, that he was with him in the garden, when he was taken; where it cannot be thought she was to see him; nor with him in the temple, or in any part of Jerusalem, where she possibly might have seen him; but that he was a disciple of his, one that believed in him, embraced him as the Messiah, had imbibed his principles and doctrines, and was of his party; and was only come thither as a spy, to see what would be done to him.

Matthew 26:70

Ver. 70. **But he denied before them all**

Which was a very great aggravation of his sin; for, as it is to a man’s commendation to profess a good profession of Christ before many witnesses, so it is to his disgrace, and is resented by Christ, to deny him before men: he did not deny that Christ was God, or the Son of God, or that he was come in the flesh, or that Jesus was the Christ, or that he was the only Saviour of sinners; but that he was with him, or one of his disciples;

saying, I know not what thou sayest:

which was a very great falsehood; he knew the sense and import of her words; he denied that which was most true; he had been with him from the beginning, had heard all his discourses, and seen his miracles; he had been with him at particular times, and in particular places, when and where some others of the disciples were not admitted, as at the raising of Jairus’s daughter, at the transfiguration in the mount, and in the garden, very lately; and yet, O base ingratitude! now denies that he had been with him; or that he knew what was meant by such an expression. He denied that he was a disciple of Christ, which was his greatest character, and highest

glory; and this denial did not arise from any diffidence of his being one, or from a sense of his unworthiness to be one, but from the fear of man, which brought this snare upon him: and the more his weakness is discovered in it, that he should be intimidated by a servant maid into such a denial, who but a few hours before had confidently affirmed, that though he should die with Christ, he would not deny him; and who had so courageously drawn his sword in his master’s cause, in the face of a band of soldiers, and a multitude of armed men with swords and staves. This was his first denial; a second follows.

Matthew 26:71

Ver. 71. **And when he was gone out into the porch**

The Vulgate Latin, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions read, “the gate”: and so does Munster’s Hebrew Gospel; but more rightly it is rendered, “the porch”: he did not attempt to go out at the door, and run away, though he could gladly have done it; but he feared to do this, lest, as this would discover him, they should pursue him, and overtake him, and bring him before the sanhedrim: he chose rather to keep his ground, but was very uneasy; and therefore moved into the porch, where he sat very pensive, considering what was proper for him to do; when

another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, this[fellow] was also with Jesus of Nazareth:

she speaks of Christ in the same contemptuous manner, as her fellow servant had done; for this appellation of Christ was commonly, if not always used by way of contempt; and she means the same thing by his being with him, the other did, and is rather more spiteful, and bent on mischief; for, the other addressed him alone, and what she said, said to himself; but this directs her speech to the servants and officers that were near at hand, and uses him in a very scurrilous manner: this sorry fellow, that is sauntering and lurking about here, is certainly one of this man’s disciples.

Matthew 26:72

Ver. 72. **And again he denied with an oath**

He denied a second time, that he had ever been with Jesus, or was a disciple of his; and to put it out of all doubt, and an end to all dispute about it, and further charge of this kind, as he hoped, he annexed an oath to it: he swore by the God of truth; made a solemn appeal to the omniscient God, the searcher of hearts, that he was so far from being ever with Jesus of Nazareth, or a disciple of his, that, says he,

I do not know the man:

meaning not only that he had no personal knowledge of him, or acquaintance with him; but that he had never seen the man in his life, nor did he know what manner of man he was. This, as it was a downright falsehood, it was what he had no need to have said; for there were multitudes that knew Christ in this sense, who never joined with him, or became his disciples. This was so much overdoing it, that it was much it had not given them a suspicion of him. Those that would excuse Peter's sin, by supposing that he meant, that he knew Christ to be God, and did not know him as a mere man, have no foundation for such a supposition; and indeed, such an ambiguous expression, and mental reservation, is no other than dealing fallaciously. Peter knew Christ in every sense; he knew him spiritually, whom to know is life eternal: and he valued the knowledge of him above all things else: he knew him to be God, and the Son of God; he knew him as mediator, and the Saviour of lost sinners; he knew him as man, and had had personal intimacy and conversation with him of a long time, and yet now denies he knew him; and that with an oath, adding perjury to lying; and so it is, that one sin leads on to another. This instance of Peter's shows the wickedness and deceitfulness of man's heart; and what the best of men are, or would be, when left to themselves, and of God: they become like other men, even like the men of the world, whose mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.

Matthew 26:73

Ver. 73. **And after a while**

Mark says, "a little after", (Mark 14:70) , and Luke observes, that it was "about the space of one hour after", (Luke 22:59) : so that here was time to reflect upon what he had been saying, and to guard against another temptation, should he be attacked; but, alas! as yet he was unmindful of his Lord's words, and persists in the denial of him, and that with greater aggravation, than at his first surprise: and indeed his temptation was now more violent: for there

came unto him they that stood by;

the officers and servants of the high priest, his attendants that waited upon him, and who stood by the fire, where Peter was warming himself: before he was attacked by single maidservants, now by a body of men, and one of them the kinsman of the man whose ear he had cut off, and who challenged him, as having seen him in the garden: and another confidently affirmed, and swore to it, that he was with Jesus, and was a Galilean; and all of

them agreed in this,

and said to Peter, surely thou also art one of them, for thy speech betrayeth thee:

not his spiritual speech, for he had not been speaking in the language of a disciple of Christ, like one that had been with Jesus; nor his swearing neither, for this rather showed him to be one of them; but his country language, the brogue of his speech, the Galilean dialect which he spoke: for in Mark it is said, "thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereunto", (Mark 14:70) : for though the same language was spoken in Galilee as at Jerusalem, yet it was not so accurate and polite in Galilee, nor so well pronounced; words of different signification were confounded together. Hence the Talmudists say ¹⁵⁷⁸, that

"the men of Judah, who were careful of their language, their law was confirmed in their hands; the men of Galilee, who were not careful of their language, their law was not confirmed in their hands--the men of Galilee, who do not attend to language, what is reported of them? a Galilean went and said to them, (Naml rma Naml rma) , they said to him foolish Galilean, (חמור) , "Chamor" is to ride upon, or "Chamar" is to drink, or "Hamar" is for clothing, or "Immar" is for hiding for slaughter."

By which instances it appears, that a Galilean pronounced "Chamor", an ass, and "Chamar", wine, and "Hamar", wool, and "Immar", a lamb, all one, and the same way, without any distinction; so that it was difficult to know which of these he meant. Many other instances of the like kind are given in the same place, which show the Galilean to be a more gross, barbarous, and impolite language, than what was spoken at Jerusalem; and Peter using this dialect, was known to be a Galilean: just as the Ephraimites were known by their pronouncing Shibboleth, Sibboleth.

Matthew 26:74

Ver. 74. **Then began he to curse, and to swear**

He swore before, and now he began "to curse"; not Christ, as Saul compelled some to blaspheme him, who professed him, and as the Jews formerly cursed Christ, and his followers, in their synagogues: for Peter's crime was bad enough, it need not be made worse than it was: he could never call Jesus accursed; in so doing he would have sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost; but he cursed himself; "he began to imprecate himself", as the Arabic

¹⁵⁷⁸ T. Bab. Erubin, fol. 53. 1, 2. Vid. Buxtorf. Lex. Talmud. in rad. (לל)

version renders it; he made dreadful imprecations and wishes; wished that all the miseries and calamities he could think of might fall upon him, if he was one of the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, or knew anything of him: saying,

I know not the man;

if I do, God do so to me, or more also: let vengeance light upon me; may I be the most miserable creature in the world, if I know anything of him;

and immediately the cock crew:

as he was swearing and cursing in this manner; as soon as ever the words were out of his mouth, and he had in this sad and solemn manner three times denied that he knew Christ, or was ever with him, or a disciple of his. It is forbid, by a Jewish canon, to keep cocks at Jerusalem; it runs thus ¹⁵⁷⁹:

"they do not bring up cocks in Jerusalem, because of the holy things, neither do the priests in all the land of Israel, because of the purifications."

Whether this canon was then in being, or how it was dispensed with, or whether there was any particular providence in the cock being here now, and so nigh the high priest's palace, is not certain; but one there was: nor can the Jews deny that there were cocks at Jerusalem; for they themselves speak of a cock, (שנקל בירושלים) ¹⁵⁸⁰, "that was stoned at Jerusalem".

Matthew 26:75

Ver. 75. **And Peter remembered the words of Jesus**

Forgetfulness of God, of his works, of his words, and of his law, of his revealed mind and will, is often the cause of sin; and a remembrance of things is necessary to the recovery of a fallen or backsliding professor; as, of what he is fallen from, of the love and kindness of God formerly shown to him, of his evil ways and works he is fallen into, and of the words and truths of Christ he has been very indifferent unto and lukewarm about:

which said unto him, before the cock crew,

or is done crowing,

thou shalt deny me thrice;

which he was put in mind of on hearing the cock crew. So by one means, or another, sometimes by some remarkable providence, and sometimes by the ministry of the word, God is pleased to alarm and awaken sleepy professors, backsliding believers, and remind them of

¹⁵⁷⁹ Misn. Bava Kama, c. 7. sect. 7. T. Bab. Bava Kama, fol. 82. 2. Abot R. Nathan, c. 35. Maimon. Hilch. Beth Hachirah, c. 7. sect. 14. Shalshet Hakabala, fol. 9. 2.

¹⁵⁸⁰ T. Hieros Erubin, fol. 26. 1. Caphtor, fol. 42. 1.

their condition and duty, and restore them by repentance, as he did Peter:

and he went out;

of the high priest's palace, either through fear, lest he should be seen weeping, and be suspected; or rather through shame, not being able to continue where his Lord was, when he had so shamefully denied him; as also to leave the company he had got into, being sensible he was wrong in mingling himself with such, and thereby exposed himself to these temptations; as well as to vent his grief in tears privately:

and wept bitterly;

being thoroughly sensible what an evil and bitter thing the sin was, he had been guilty of: his repentance sprung from Christ's looking upon him, and from his looking to Jesus, and was truly evangelical: it was a sorrow after a godly sort, and was increased by the discoveries of Christ's love unto him; and was attended with faith in him, and views of pardon through him: the Persic version adds, "and his sin is forgiven"; which, though not in the text, yet is a truth; for Peter's repentance was not like Cain's, nor Esau's, nor Judas's; it was not the repentance of one in despair, but was a repentance unto life and salvation, which needed not to be repented of.

Matthew Chapter 27**Matthew 27:1**

Ver. 1. **When the morning was come,**

Or, as soon as it was day, as Luke says, Luke 22:66. The sanhedrim had been up all night, which, after eating the passover, they had spent in apprehending, trying, and examining Jesus, and the witnesses against him; and had come to an unanimous vote, that he was guilty of death; upon which they either put Jesus out of the room for a while, or went into another themselves, to consult what further steps should be taken: or if they went home to their own houses, they very quickly got together again, and met in the temple, where they seem to be, Mt 27:5, unless the story of Judas is, by anticipation, inserted here; and in their council chamber, where they led Jesus, and examined him again concerning his being the Son of God; see Luke 22:66, all which shows how intent they were upon this business, and with what eagerness and diligence they pursued it; their feet ran to evil, and they made haste to shed blood. This was the time of their morning prayers, of their saying their phylacteries, and reciting the "shema", "hear, O Israel! the Lord our God is one Lord", according to their canon, which is this ¹⁵⁸¹:

¹⁵⁸¹ Misn. Beracot, c. 1. sect. 2.

“from what time do they read the “shema” in the morning? from such time that a man can distinguish between blue and white: says R. Eliezer, between blue and green; and he finishes it before the sun shines out. R. Joshua says, before three hours had elapsed:”

but religion, rites, ceremonies, and canons, must all give way to the accomplishment of what their hearts were so much set upon:

all the chief priests and elders of the people.

The Syriac and Persic versions leave out the word “all”, but it is retained in the Vulgate Latin, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions, and in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel, and that very rightly. The Scribes and elders met at Caiaphas’s house before, Mt 26:57, but it being in the night, they might not be all together; Annas particularly seems to have been absent, Joh 18:24, but now they all assemble together, as in a case of necessity they were obliged to do: their rule was this ¹⁵⁸²;

“the sanhedrim, consisting of seventy and one (as this was), are obliged to sit all of them as one, (or all, and everyone of them,) in their place in the temple; but at what time there is a necessity of their being gathered together, מתקבץ כולם, “they are all of them assembled”; but, at other times, he who has any business may go, and do his pleasure, and return: yet so it is, that there may not be less than twenty three sitting continually all the time of their sitting; (their usual time of sitting was from the morning daily sacrifice, to the evening daily sacrifice ¹⁵⁸³;) one that is under a necessity of going out; this looks upon his companions that remain, and if twenty three remain, he may go out; but if not, he may not, until the other returns.”

This being now a case of necessity, and great importance, they are all summoned and gathered together, unless we except Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus; who yet might be there, though they did not consent to their counsel and deed, as is certain of the former,

Luke 23:51, these

took counsel against Jesus;

God’s holy child Jesus, his anointed, the Messiah; and which was taking counsel against the Lord himself; and so the prophecy in Ps 2:2, had its accomplishment: what they consulted about was

¹⁵⁸² Maimon. Hilch. Sanhedrin, c. 3. sect. 2.

¹⁵⁸³ lb. c. 3. sect. 1. Bernidbar Rabba, sect. 1. fol. 177. 3.

to put him to death;

it was not what punishment to inflict upon him, whether scourging or death; that was before determined; they had already condemned him to death: but now they enter into close consultation what death to put him to, and in what manner; whether privately, he being now in their hands; or whether by the means of zealots, or by the Roman magistrate; or whether it should be by stoning, which must have been the case, if they put him to death according to their law; and by their authority; or whether by crucifixion, which they chose as the most ignominious and painful; and therefore determined to deliver him up to the Roman governor, and use their interest with him to put him to death, according to the Roman law.

Matthew 27:2

Ver. 2. **And when they had bound him,**

The captain, and officers, bound him when they first took him, and brought him to Annas, and Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas, Joh 18:12. Perhaps he might be unloosed whilst he was examining before the high priest, under a show of freedom to speak for himself; or they might bind him faster now, partly greater security, as he passed through the streets, and partly for his greater reproach; as also, that he might be at once taken to be a malefactor by the Roman judge;

they led him away:

the chief priests and elders of the people led him, at least by their servants, and they themselves attending in person, that they might awe the people from attempting a rescue of him, as they passed along; and that they might influence the Roman governor speedily to put him to death; and lest he should be prevailed upon to release him, through his own commiseration, the innocence of Jesus, and the entreaty of his friends.

And delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor; and so fulfilled what Christ had predicted, Mt 20:19. This they did, either because the power of judging in cases of life and death was taken away from them; or if it was not, they chose that the infamy of his death should be removed from them, and be laid upon a Gentile magistrate; and chiefly because they were desirous he should die the death of the cross. The Syriac, Arabic, and Persic versions leave out the first name Pontius, and only call him Pilate: the Ethiopic version calls him Pilate Pontinaeus; and Theophylact suggests, that he was so called because he was of Pontus. Philo the Jew ¹⁵⁸⁴ makes mention of him:

¹⁵⁸⁴ De Legat. ad Caium, p. 1033, 1034.

“Pilate, says he, was epitropov thv Ioudaiaiv, “procurator of Judea”; who not so much in honour of Tiberius, as to grieve the people, put the golden shields within the holy city in the palace of Herod.”

And so Tacitus ¹⁵⁸⁵ calls him the procurator of Tiberius, and Josephus also ¹⁵⁸⁶. It is said ¹⁵⁸⁷ of him, that falling into many calamities, he slew himself with his own hand, in the times of Caligula, and whilst Publicola and Nerva were consuls; which was a righteous judgment of God upon him for condemning Christ, contrary to his own conscience.

Matthew 27:3

Ver. 3. **Then Judas, which had betrayed him,**

Before, he is described as he that shall, or should, or doth betray him; but now having perpetrated the horrid sin, as he that had done it.

When he saw that he was condemned;

that is, that Jesus was condemned, as the Syriac and Persic versions read, either by the Jewish sanhedrim, or by Pilate, or both; for this narrative concerning Judas may be prophetically inserted here, though the thing itself did not come to pass till afterwards; and the sense be, that when he, either being present during the whole procedure against Christ; or returning in the morning after he had received his money, and had been with his friends; finding that his master was condemned to death by the sanhedrim, who were pushing hard to take away his life; that they had delivered him bound to the Roman governor; and that he, after an examination of him, had committed him to the soldiers to mock, and scourge, and crucify him; and seeing him leading to the place of execution,

repented himself:

not for the sin, as committed against God and Christ; but as it brought a load of present guilt and horror upon his mind, and exposed him to everlasting punishment: it was not such a repentance by which he became wiser and better; but an excruciating, tormenting pain in his mind, by which he became worse; therefore a different word is here used than what commonly is for true repentance: it was not a godly sorrow for sin, or a sorrow for sin, as committed against God, which works repentance to salvation not to be repented of; but a worldly sorrow,

¹⁵⁴² Hist. l. 15.

¹⁵⁸⁶ De Bello Jud. l. 2. e. 9. sect. 2.

¹⁵⁸⁷ M. Aurel-Cassiodor. Chronicon in Caligula, Joseph. Antiq. l. 18. c. 11. Euseb. Eccl. Hist. l. 2. c. 7.

which issues in death, as it did in him. It did not spring from the love of God, as evangelical repentance does, nor proceed in the fear of God, and his goodness; but was no other than a foretaste of that worm that dieth not, and of that fire which cannot be quenched: it was destitute of faith in Christ; he never did believe in him as the rest of the disciples did; see Joh 6:64, and that mourning which does not arise from looking to Jesus, or is not attended with faith in him, is never genuine. Judas’s repentance was without hope of forgiveness, and was nothing else but horror and black despair, like that of Cain’s, like the trembling of devils, and the anguish of damned souls. It looks as if Judas was not aware that it would issue in the death of Christ: he was pushed on by Satan, and his avarice, to hope, that he should get this money, and yet his master escape; which he imagined he might do, either through such a defence of himself, as was not to be gainsaid; or that he would find out ways and means of getting out of the hands of the Jews, as he had formerly done, and with which Judas was acquainted: but now, there being no hope of either, guilt and horror seize his mind, and gnaw his conscience; and he wishes he had never done the accursed action, which had entailed so much distress and misery upon him:

and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders:

which was the sum he; had covenanted for, and they had agreed to give him, on condition of delivering Jesus into their hands, which he had done: and it appears from hence, that the money had been accordingly paid him, and he had received it. But he being filled with remorse of conscience for what he had done, feels no quietness in his mind; nor could he save of what he had desired, but is obliged to return it; not from an honest principle, as in the case of true repentance, but on account of a racking and torturing conscience.

Matthew 27:4

Ver. 4. **Saying, I have sinned,**

Here was a confession, and yet no true repentance; for he confessed, but not to the right persons; not to God, nor Christ, but to the chief priests and elders; nor over the head of the antitypical scape goat, not seeking to Christ for pardon and cleansing, nor did he confess and forsake sin, but went on adding sin to sin, and so found no mercy. The same confession was made by a like hardened wretch, Pharaoh, Ex 9:27. He proceeds and points out the evil he had committed:

in that I have betrayed innocent blood,

or “righteous blood”; so the Vulgate Latin, and Syriac versions, and Munster’s Hebrew Gospel read, and some copies; that is, have betrayed an innocent and righteous person, and been the occasion of his blood being about to be shed, and of his dying wrongfully. So God, in his all-wise providence, ordered it, that a testimony should be bore to the innocence of Christ, from the mouth of this vile wretch that betrayed him; to cut off the argument from the Jews, that one of his own disciples knew him to be a wicked man, and as such delivered him into their hands: for though Judas might not believe in him as the Messiah, and the Son of God, at least had no true faith in him, as such; yet he knew, and believed in his own conscience, that he was a good man, and a righteous and innocent one: and what he here says is a testimony of Christ’s innocence, and what his conscience obliged him to; and shows the terrors that now encompassed him about; and might have been a warning to the Jews to have stopped all further proceedings against him; but instead of that,

they said, what is that to us? see thou to that:

signifying, that if he had sinned, he must answer for it himself; it was no concern of theirs; nor should they form their sentiments of Christ according to his: they knew that he was a blasphemer, and deserving of death; and whatever opinion he had of him, it had no weight with them, who should proceed against him as an evil-doer, let him think or say what he would to the contrary; and suggest, that he knew otherwise than what he said: so the Syriac and Persic versions render it, “thou knowest”, and the Arabic, “thou knowest better”.

Matthew 27:5

Ver. 5. **And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple,**

Upon the ground, in that part of the temple where they were sitting; in their council chamber, tyzgh tkvl, “the paved chamber”, where the sanhedrim used to meet¹⁵⁸⁸: for it seems they would not take the money of him; and he was determined not to carry it back with him, and therefore threw it down before them, left it,

and departed;

from the sanhedrim: and went; out of the temple; not to God, nor to the throne of his grace, nor to his master, to ask pardon of him, but to some secret solitary place, to cherish his grief and black despair,

and hanged himself.

The kind and manner of his death, as recorded by

¹⁵⁸⁸ T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 88. 2.

Luke in Ac 1:18 is, that “falling headlong, he burst asunder the midst, and all his bowels gushed out”; which account may be reconciled with this, by supposing the rope, with which he hanged himself, to break, when falling; it may be, from a very high place, upon a stone, or stump of a tree; when his belly burst, and his guts came out: or it may be rendered, as it is in the Arabic and Ethiopic versions, “he was strangled”; and that either by the devil, as Dr. Lightfoot thinks; who, having been in him for the space of two or three days, caught him up into the air, and threw him down headlong; and dashing him on the ground, he burst in the midst, and his bowels gushed out, and the devil made his exit that way: or by a disease called the squinancy, or quinsy, a suffocation brought upon him by excessive grief, deep melancholy, and utter despair; when being choked by it, he fell flat upon his face, and the rim of his belly burst, and his entrails came out. This disease the Jews call arkoa, “Iscara”; and if it was what he was subject to from his infancy, his parents might call him Iscariot from hence; and might be designed in providence to be what should bring him to his wretched end: and what is said of this suffocating disorder, seems to agree very well with the death of Judas. They say¹⁵⁸⁹, that

“it is a disease that begins in the bowels, and ends in the throat:”

they call death by it, her ביהיה, “an evil death”¹⁵⁹⁰; and say¹⁵⁹¹, that

“there are nine hundred and three kinds of deaths in the world, but that arkoa שבכלל קשה, “the hardest of them all is Iscara”; which the Gloss calls “strangulament”, and says, is in the midst of the body:”

they also reckon it, hnwvm htym, “a violent death”¹⁵⁹²; and say¹⁵⁹³, that the spies which brought a bad report of the good land, died of it. Moreover, they affirm¹⁵⁹⁴, that

“whoever tastes anything before he separates (i.e. lights up the lamp on the eve of the sabbath, to distinguish the night from the day), shall die by “Iscara”, or suffocation.”

¹⁵⁸⁹ Gloss. in T. Bab. Sabbat, fol 33. 1.

¹⁵⁹⁰ T. Bab. Yebamot, fol. 62. 9.

¹⁵⁹¹ Beracot, fol. 3. 1.

¹⁵⁹² Gloss. in T. Bab. Taanith, fol. 19. 2.

¹⁵⁹³ T. Bab. Sota, fol. 35. 1.

¹⁵⁹⁴ T. Bab. Pesachim, fol. 105. 1.

Upon which the Gloss says, this is

“measure for measure: he that satisfies his throat, or appetite, shall be choked: as it is said¹⁵⁹⁵ he that is condemned to be strangled, either he shall be drowned in a river, or he shall die of a quinsy, this is “Iscara”.

Matthew 27:6

Ver. 6. **And the chief priests took the silver pieces,**

Off of the ground, after Judas was gone, no other daring to meddle with them; for in any other it would have been deemed sacrilege; and they being the proper persons to take care and dispose of money brought into the temple: and if not, their covetous disposition would have moved them to take up the money:

and said, one to another, it is not lawful to put them into the treasury,

or “Corban”; as the Vulgate Latin and Ethiopic versions leave the word untranslated: and which is the place where the offerings for the repair and service of the temple were put, and is the same into which Christ beheld the people casting their money, Mark 12:41. Josephus¹⁵⁹⁶ observes, that

“there was, with the Jews, an holy treasure, which is called “Corbonas”;

and this is the לשכת הקרבן, “the chamber of the Korban”, of which the Jews make mention¹⁵⁹⁷: the reason the high priests give why it was not lawful to put this money into the treasury, or into any of the chests in the “Corban” chamber, was,

because it is the price of blood.

Thus they strained at a gnat, and swallowed a camel. It is highly probable, that they took this selfsame money out of the treasury to buy this blood with, and yet scruple to put it in, having bought it: and besides, they made no hesitation about seeking for, and shedding this innocent blood, and yet boggle at putting this money into the “Corban”, because it was the price of it; proceeding upon the same reason as the law in

De 23:18 does, pretending much religion, and great veneration for holy pieces and things, when they made no conscience of committing the most flagitious crimes.

Matthew 27:7

Ver. 7. **And they took counsel,**

¹⁵⁹⁵ T. Bab. Cetubot, fol. 30. 2.

¹⁵⁹⁶ De Bello Jud. l. 2. c. 9. sect. 3.

¹⁵⁹⁷ Misn. Middot, c. 1. sect. 1.

With one another, considered of the matter, and de-liberated about it a while; and at last came to a resolution, **and bought with them the potter’s field, to bury strangers in:**

a field of no great value, or it could not have been bought so near Jerusalem for so small a sum as thirty pieces of silver. Grotius’s conjecture seems to be a good one, that it was a field the potter had dug up for his use, and had made the most of it; so that it was good for nothing, but for the purpose for which these men bought it, “to bury strangers in”: either such as were not of their own nation, as the Roman soldiers, many of which were among them, and who they did not suffer to be buried among them; or proselytes, or such as came from distant parts, at their three festivals, many of whom may be supposed to die at such times: now by this act of humanity in providing for the interment of strangers, they designed, and hoped to have covered their wickedness in bargaining with Judas to betray innocent blood, for this sure of money; but it was so ordered by divine providence, that this became a public and lasting memorial of their sin and infamy: for it follows,

Matthew 27:8

Ver. 8. **Wherefore that field was called,....** Not by the priests and elders, but by the common people, who knew by what money it was purchased,

the field of blood;

or “Aceldama”, which so signifies, as in Ac 1:19, not called the field of the priests, the purchasers; nor the field of the strangers, for whom it was bought; but the field of blood, being purchased with that money, for which innocent blood was betrayed; and this name it bore

unto this day;

in which Matthew wrote his Gospel, about eight years after, as is thought. Jerom¹⁵⁹⁸ says, that in his time this field was shown on the south side of Mount Sion.

Matthew 27:9

Ver. 9. **Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet,**

Through the purchasing of the potter’s field with the thirty pieces of silver, the price that Christ was valued at, a prophecy in the writings of the Old Testament had its accomplishment: but about this there is some difficulty. The evangelist here says it was spoken by Jeremy the prophet; whereas in his prophecy there is no mention of any such thing. There is indeed an account of his buying his uncle Hanameel’s son’s field, in

¹⁵⁹⁸ De locis Hebraicis.

Jer 32:7, but not a word of a potter, or a potter's field, or of the price of it, thirty pieces of silver; and that as a price at which he, or any other person was valued; but the passage which is manifestly referred to, stands in Zec 11:12, where are these words, "and I said unto them, if ye think good, give [me] my price, and if not, forbear; so they weighed for my price thirty [pieces] of silver: and the Lord said unto me, cast it unto the potter, a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty [pieces] of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord": the removing of this difficulty, it might be observed, that the Syriac and Persic versions make no mention of any prophet's name, only read, "which was spoken by the prophet"; and so may as well be ascribed to Zechariah, as to Jeremy, and better: but it must be owned, that Jeremy is in all the Greek copies, in the Vulgate Latin, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions, and in Munster's Hebrew Gospel. Various things are said for the reconciling of this matter: some have thought that Zechariah had two names, and that besides Zechariah, he was called Jeremy; but of this there is no proof. Jerom¹⁵⁹⁹ affirms, that in an Hebrew volume, being an apocryphal work of Jeremy, which was shown him by one of the Nazarene sect, he read these words verbatim: so that though they do not stand in the writings of Jeremy, which are canonical Scripture, yet in an apocryphal book of his, and which may as well be referred to, as the book of Maccabees, the traditions of the Jews, the prophecies of Enoch, and the writings of the Heathen poets. Moreover, Mark. Mede¹⁶⁰⁰ has laboured, by various arguments, to prove, that the four last chapters of Zechariah were written by Jeremy, in which this passage stands; and if so, the reason is clear, for the citation in his name. But what seems best to solve this difficulty, is, that the order of the books of the Old Testament is not the same now, as it was formerly: the sacred writings were divided, by the Jews, into three parts: the first was called the law, which contains the five books of Moses; the second, the prophets, which contains the former and the latter prophets; the former prophets began at Joshua, and the latter at Jeremy; the third was called Cetubim, or the Hagiographa, the holy writings, which began with the book of Psalms: now, as this whole third and last part is called the Psalms, Luke 24:44, because it began with that book; so all that part which contained the latter prophets, for the same reason, beginning at Jeremy, might be called by his name; hence a passage, standing in the prophecy of

Zechariah, who was one of the latter prophets, might be justly cited, under the name of Jeremy. That such was the order of the books of the Old Testament, is evident from the following passage¹⁶⁰¹

"it is a tradition of our Rabbins, that the order of the prophets is, Joshua and Judges, Samuel and the Kings, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Isaiah, and the twelve."

Moreover, it is usual with them to say¹⁶⁰², that the spirit of Jeremiah was in Zechariah; and it is very plain, that the latter prophets have many things from the former; and so might Zechariah have this originally from Jeremy, which now stands in his prophecy: all this would be satisfactory to a Jew: and it is to be observed, that the Jew¹⁶⁰³, who objects to everything he could in the evangelist, with any appearance on his side, and even objects to the application of this prophecy; yet finds no fault with him for putting Jeremy for Zechariah. That the prophecy in Zechariah belongs to the Messiah, and was fulfilled in Jesus, manifestly appears from the context, for as well as the text itself. The person spoken of is in Zec 11:4, called to "feed the flock of slaughter", which being in a very poor condition, Zec 11:5, the state of the Jews, at the time of Christ's coming, is hereby very aptly represented: he agrees to do it, Zec 11:7, and accordingly furnishes himself for it; but he is despised, abhorred, and rejected by the shepherds, the principal men in church and state; because he severely inveighed against their doctrines and practices, Zec 11:8, upon which he rejects them, and dissolves both their civil and church state; which can suit with no other times than the times of Jesus, Zec 11:9, and lest it should be thought that he used them with too much severity, he gives one single instance of their ingratitude to him, which shows how little they esteemed him; and that is, their valuing him at no greater a price than "thirty pieces of silver", Zec 11:12, which were afterwards "cast unto the potter". The Jews¹⁶⁰⁴ themselves own, that this prophecy belongs to the Messiah, though they interpret it of him in another manner.

"Says R. Chanun, the Israelites will have no need of the doctrine of the king Messiah in the time to come; as it is said, Isa 11:10, "to him shall the

¹⁶⁰¹ T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 14. 2. Vid. Praefat. R. David Kimchici in Jer.

¹⁶⁰² Sepher Hagilgulim apud Surenhus. Biblos Katallages, p. 41.

¹⁶⁰³ R. Isaac Chizzuk Emuna, par. 2. c. 25. p. 412.

¹⁶⁰⁴ Bereshit Rabba, sect. 98. fol. 85. 3, 4.

¹⁵⁹⁹ In loc.

¹⁶⁰⁰ Mede's Works, p. 963, 1022, 1023.

Gentiles seek", and not the Israelites: if so, for what does the king Messiah come? and what does he come to do? to gather the captives of Israel, and to give them the thirty precepts, as it is said, Zec 11:12, "and I said unto them, if ye think good", &c. Rab says, these are the thirty mighty men; and Jochanan says, these are the thirty commands."

Should it be objected, that supposing the Messiah is intended, the money is said to be given into his hands, and not into the hands of him that was to betray him; "if ye think good, give [me] my price",

Zec 11:12: it may be replied, that the words yrkv wbh, should not be rendered, "give me my price", but "give my price"; i.e. give what you think fit to value me at, into the hands of the betrayer; and accordingly they did: "so they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver", Zec 11:12; which is the very sum the chief priests agreed with Judas for, and which he received; see Mt 26:15, and if it should be objected to the citation of the evangelist, that it is considerably different from the word of the prophet, it being in the latter, "I took the thirty pieces of silver"; whereas in the former, the words are quoted thus,

saying, and they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value:

it may be observed, that the word which Matthew uses may be rendered, "I took", as it is in the Syriac version; and that the thirty pieces of silver were the goodly price, at which the Messiah was valued by the children of Israel, is manifest enough; and is an instance of egregious ingratitude, that this should be the price of the "innocent one", as the Arabic Version renders the phrase, "of him that was valued"; of the "honoured one", as the Ethiopic; of the "most precious one", as the Syriac; he who in his person, and the perfections of his nature, is equal to his father, and his fellow; who has all the riches of grace and glory in him, as mediator; who is superior to angels, and fairer than the sons of men in human nature: is the chiefest among ten thousands, and more precious than rubies; and all the things that can be desired are not to be compared with him, and yet sold for a sum of money, the price of a slave, Ex 21:32, and that by the children of Israel, to whom the Messiah was promised; who expected him, and desired his coming; and who sprung from among them, and was sent unto them, and yet they received him not, but undervalued him in this exceeding mean way. Wicked men have no value for Christ; they

sell him and themselves for nought; but gracious souls cannot value him enough, nor sufficiently express their esteem of him.

Matthew 27:10

Ver. 10. **And gave them for the potter's field,**

In the prophet it is, "and I cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord",

Zec 11:13; whereas here it is, "they gave them"; but the word Matthew uses may be rendered, "I gave", as it is by the Syriac; and as the last words require it should, "as the Lord commanded me"; otherwise there will be no coherence between them: and whereas the thirty pieces of silver are, in the prophet, said to be cast, or given "to the potter", and here, "for the potter's field", there is no contradiction: the plain sense is, that they were given to the potter, as a valuable consideration for his field: and whereas it is added, "in the house of the Lord", which the evangelist does not cite the reason is, because this money was first cast down in the temple by Judas, and after being taken up by the priests, they covenanted with the potter for his field, and paid him for it with this money in the sanctuary. The evangelist, instead of this last clause, puts,

as the Lord commanded me;

which have made some think, that there should: be a different reading; and that instead of בית, "the house", it should be read כרתה, "according to the commandment": but there is no need to suppose this: the evangelist is justified in the use of this phrase, by what is said in the prophet in the beginning of Zec 11:13, "and the Lord said unto me": and this is only a transposition and explanation, according to a rule the Jews have, whvrdw arqmh oro, "invert, or transpose the Scripture, and explain it"¹⁶⁰⁵. Should it be said that the Messiah, and not the betrayer, nor the priests, is said to cast this money to the potter, or give it for the potter's field; it may be replied, that Jesus may be said to do that which Judas, and the chief priests did; because, by his almighty power and providence, he overruled those things for good, which in themselves were evil. Judas thought to have converted the money to his own use, and the priests would have been glad to have taken it again to themselves; but Christ obliged Judas to carry back the money to the priests, and cast it into the temple, and worked upon the minds of the priests, not to put it into the treasury, but to buy the potter's field with it, whereby the prophecy, in its literal

¹⁶⁰⁵ T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 119. 2. & Vajikra Rabba, sect. 27. fol. 167. 4.

sense, was fully accomplished.

Matthew 27:11

Ver. 11. **And Jesus stood before the governor,**

Pilate who sat; for so was the custom for the judge to sit, and those that were judged, to stand, especially whilst witness was bore against them ¹⁶⁰⁶.

”Says R. Bo, in the name of Rab Hona, the witnesses ought to stand whilst they bear witness. Says R. Jeremiah, in the name of R. Abhu, also יני ומד להיות ריבנ להיות ומד, “those that are judged ought to stand”, whilst they receive their witness.”

And again ¹⁶⁰⁷,

”how do they judge? the judges sit, והנידוניני ומדיני, and “they that are judged stand”.

’Think what a sight was here, the eternal Son of God in human nature, the Lord of life and glory, the Prince of the kings of the earth, standing before an Heathen governor! he before whom Pilate must stand, and even all men, small and great, another day; all must appear, and stand before the judgment seat of Christ; he himself stands at the bar of men! the reason of this was, because he stood in the legal place, and stead of his people: he became their substitute from everlasting, was made under the law in time, and was subject to its precept, and its penalty: and though he had no crimes of his own to answer for, he had the sins of his people on him; on account of which he stood before the governor, to receive the sentence of condemnation on himself; that so sin being condemned in his flesh, the whole righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in them: he stood here, that they might stand before God, and at the throne of his grace with boldness and intrepidity; a new, and living way to it being opened for them, through his blood and sacrifice; and that they might stand before him, the judge of all the earth, with confidence, and not be ashamed at his coming.

And the governor asked him, saying, art thou the king of the Jews?

for the Jews had suggested to Pilate, that Jesus had given out that he was Christ a king; and he being Caesar’s procurator, it became him strictly to inquire into this matter, lest there should be any encroachment made on his master’s dignity, authority, and dominions, and he himself should suffer blame; wherefore, he does not ask Jesus, whether he said he was the king of the Jews, or others said so of him, but whether he was their king: he

knew he was not in fact; but his question was, whether he was so in right; or if he thought he was, what claim he made, and what he did to support it:

and Jesus said unto him; thou sayest;

which is all one as if he had said, “I am”; see Mt 26:25, compared with Mark 14:62, and that this was the sense of his answer is clear from Joh 18:36, though, at the same time, he let him know that his kingdom was not of this world; that he was not a temporal king, nor did he lay any claim to any earthly dominions; and therefore neither he, nor his master Caesar, had anything to fear from him: he was only a king in a spiritual sense, over the Israel of God; such as received him, as the Messiah, and believed in his name.

Matthew 27:12

Ver. 12. **And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders,**

As that he was a perverter of the people, a stirrer of sedition, discord, and rebellion among them; that he taught them not to give tribute to Caesar, and set up himself for a king; all which he had done not in one place only, but throughout all the land of Judea, from Galilee to Jerusalem; see Luke 23:2, he answered nothing; the things laid to his charge being notoriously false, and known to be so by all the people; and the evidence with which they were supported being so slender, the judge could never receive it; he therefore judged it unnecessary, and not worth a while to return an answer to them: besides, he knew they were bent upon his death, and that, should he set aside these charges, as he easily could, they would invent new ones, and so increase their sin, and their condemnation: but the chief reason of all, of his silence, was, he had the sins of his people to answer for, and the time of his dying for them was now come, and for which he was ready; and therefore would say nothing to remove these false charges, and retard his death. Matthew 27:13 Ver. 13. Then saith Pilate unto him,.... Observing he made no reply to the accusations of the chief priests and elders, and in order to draw something out of him, hearst thou not how many things they witness against thee? art thou deaf? or dost thou not take in what is alleged against thee? dost thou not consider the nature of these charges? how many, and of what kind the depositions are now made by persons of such rank and figure? art thou under no concern to make answer to them?

Matthew 27:14

Ver. 14. **And he answered him to never a word,**

He made no reply to anyone thing which Pilate sug-

gested to him, though it seems to have been in a kind and friendly way, and with a view to his good:

insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly;

that a man, who at other times had such fluency of speech, and readiness of expression, who both for matter and words, and also weight and authority, spake as never man did: and who had so often silenced the Scribes and Pharisees, men of the greatest learning among the Jews, of which Pilate, doubtless, had knowledge, should say nothing in his own defence; and especially when the charges brought against him were of a capital nature, and touched his life, and yet were so easy to be refuted, and proved to be false ones: and what might increase his wonder, was, that he should take no notice of them, nor return an answer to them, considering by whom they were brought; not by the common people, but by the sanhedrim of the nation, and that before him the Roman governor, who had power to crucify or release him: and above all, he marvelled at the patience of Jesus, that he could hear such notorious falsities, and which so affected his character, and his life, and say nothing to them; and at the fortitude of his mind, at his being so regardless of his life, and fearless of death.

Matthew 27:15

Ver. 15. **Now at [that] feast,**

The Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions read, “at every feast”: which looks as if the authors of these versions thought the sense was, that the following custom was used at each feast in the year, at the feasts of pentecost, and tabernacles, and passover; whereas it was only at the feast of the passover; and which is meant by the feast here, as is clear from Joh 18:39. It was but once a year that this was done; at every returning passover; and so the Persic version renders it, “every year on the day of the feast”; that is, of the passover, and which was frequently called by way of emphasis, gx, “the feast”:

the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would.

It was not a law, but a custom; it was not enjoined by the law of Moses; for they that sinned against that; died without mercy: nor is it agreeable to strict justice, that there should be such a release of criminals; nor was it a Jewish custom, as an emblem of their deliverance out of Egyptian bondage. I have not met with the least trace of any such custom of theirs at the time of the pass over in any of their writings; but it seems to be a Roman one: and from all the accounts of the evangelist, it appears to be peculiar to the Roman governor, who, either by the

order of Caesar, or of himself, introduced such a custom to get the favour of the people; for it was to them the release was made, and the person, whom they pleased; and this being repeated annually for some time, was expected by them, and at last became necessary.

Matthew 27:16

Ver. 16. **And they had then a notable prisoner,**

The Vulgate Latin reads, “he had”; that is, Pilate, who had committed him to prison, and under whose power he was: for the Jews had lost all authority of this kind, at least in capital cases. This prisoner is called a “notable” one; that is, a famous, or rather an infamous one: he was a thief, and a robber, and had been guilty of sedition; had made, or joined with others in an insurrection, and had committed murder in it; and so, on more accounts than one, was deserving of death: nor could it be otherwise expected by himself, or others, but that he should die: his name was called Barabbas; that is, as the Syriac version reads it, aba rb, which signifies “the son of a father”: a father’s child that was spoiled and ruined, and a child of his father the devil. This was a name common among the Jews. Frequent mention is made of R. Abba ¹⁶⁰⁸, and Bar Abba is the son of Abba: hence we read of Abba Bar Abba ¹⁶⁰⁹, and of R. Samuel Bar Abba ¹⁶¹⁰ and of R. Simeon Bar Abba ¹⁶¹¹, and of R. Chijah Bar Abba ¹⁶¹². In Munster’s Hebrew Gospel it is read hbrb, “Bar Rabbah, the son of a master”; and so Jerom says, that in the Gospel according to the Hebrews it is interpreted, “the son of their master”; but the former is the right name, and the true sense of the word. The Ethiopic version adds, “the prince”, or “chief of robbers, and all knew him”; and the Arabic, instead of a “prisoner”, reads, a “thief”, as he was.

Matthew 27:17

Ver. 17. **Therefore when they were gathered together,**

Meaning not the chief priests and elders; for these were together before, but the common people; and so the Persic version renders the words, when the people increased into a multitude: for it was to them the release of a prisoner was to be made, and so the proposal of one; and it was at their option, who should be the person; for it was “whom they would”, as in Mt 27:15, and where the

¹⁶⁰⁸ Juchasin, fol. 70. 1, &c.

¹⁶⁰⁹ T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 18. 2. & Hieros Pesachim, fol.

32. 1. & Juchasin, fol. 104. 1.

¹⁶¹⁰ T. Hieros. Pesachim, fol. 32. 1.

¹⁵⁶⁸ T. Hieros. Succa, fol. 53. 3. Juchasin, fol. 105. 1.

¹⁶¹² T. Hieros. Succa, fol. 55. 3. Juchasin, fol. 91. 2.

¹⁶⁰⁶ T. Hieros. Yoma, fol. 43. 2, 3.

¹⁶⁰⁷ Ib. Sanhedrin, fol. 21. 2.

Ethiopic version adds, “and should choose”. Pilate said unto them, whom will ye that I should release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus, which is called Christ? He puts it to them, whom they would choose to have released, Barabbas, the thief and robber, the seditious person and murderer, or Jesus, whom some called the Christ, the Messiah, the king of the Jews. Pilate on purpose proposed such an infamous person along with him, not doubting but they would have preferred him, whatever were their prejudices against him, before such a scandalous person as Barabbas; and whatever good will they might secretly have to put Jesus to death, and release Barabbas, yet he thought they could not, for shame, speak out their sense, and desire him, and not Jesus. His view was not to reproach Christ, by joining him with so wicked a man, but in order to save him.

Matthew 27:18

Ver. 18. **For he knew that for envy they had delivered him.**

He saw in their countenances, and by their charges against him, and by the whole of their conduct, that it was not out of any regard to Caesar, or to the peace and tranquillity of the civil government, or to strict justice; but from envy, at his popularity, at his fame and credit, the honour, glory, and applause he had among the people, on account of his doctrine, and miracles, that they had delivered him up into his hands; and therefore Pilate might the rather hope to succeed in this scheme of his to release him, by proposing him with so notorious a person to the populace, when the one, as he might reasonably judge, was abhorred by them, and the other had got great credit and esteem among a large number of them. The Persic version here adds the people’s answer; “they answered, release Barabbas, but deliver Jesus to us”.

Matthew 27:19

Ver. 19. **When he was set down on the judgment seat,**

That is, when Pilate the governor, as the Syriac and Persic versions read, was set down upon the bench, and while he was sitting there, and trying of Jesus:

his wife sent unto him:

her name, according to the Ethiopians, was Abrokla¹⁶¹³; who might be a Jewess, as the wife of Felix was, Ac 24:24, and a favourer of Jesus, or, at least, a religious person; and if, only a mere Heathen, yet had some notion of justice being to be done; and however, pressed by her

¹⁶¹³ Ludolph. Lex. Ethiop. p. 541.

dream, sent a messenger to her husband, as he was trying this cause:

saying, have thou nothing to do with that just man;

meaning Jesus, whom she either knew to be so, or concluded from her dream that he was one: and her sense is, that her husband would have no hand in his condemnation and death, but rather do all he could to release and save him. She might know that he had gone some lengths already against him; that he had the night before granted a band of soldiers to the chief priests to apprehend him; and knew he rose early that morning, at the request of the same, to try him; and he was now before him, and she might be apprehensive that he was forward to condemn him to death, and therefore sends this cautionary message; alleging this for a reason,

for I have suffered many things this day, in a dream, because of him.

The Arabic and Persic versions read, “this night”. Pilate might rise that morning before she was awake, and had an opportunity of telling her dream; or she might dream it after he was gone; in which she was sadly distressed about Jesus, and might have some hints given her of the miserable consequences of his death, not only to the Jewish nation, but to her husband and family; which gave her great uneasiness and disquietude. Some have thought, that this dream was from the devil, willing to hinder the death of Christ, and so man’s redemption and salvation by it; but had he had any such intention, the most effectual method would have been to have persuaded the chief priests and elders off of it, and in attempting it; whereas, on the contrary, they were instigated by him to it: and whatever natural causes there might be of this dream, as the chief priests coming over night to desire a band of soldiers to take Jesus, and the discourse they might have with Pilate about him; which things might run in her mind in her sleep; yet, doubtless, this was of God, and with a design that a testimony should be bore to the innocency of Christ every way; as by Judas that betrayed him, by Pilate his judge, and by his wife.

Matthew 27:20

Ver. 20. **But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude,**

Among whom the choice lay who should be released. This they did not by haranguing them, or making a public oration to them; but by sending their servants, or proper persons among them, telling them that Jesus had been examined before the sanhedrim that morning, and was found to be a blasphemer; and that the whole court

had unanimously condemned him to death, and therefore it became them to act according to their decree: and besides, should this man be set free, they might suggest to them, since he has given out that he is the king Messiah, the Romans hearing of it, will be jealous of such a person, and come and take away both our place and nation, or deprive us of the privileges we have remaining; with such sort of arguments as these, it may be supposed they worked upon the common people. The Persic version reads, “commanded”, instead of “persuaded”,

that they should ask Barabbas

to be released to them,

and destroy Jesus;

for nothing short of that would satisfy them: they thirsted after his blood, and were bent upon his death: to release Barabbas, if Jesus was not destroyed, would not answer their end: they desired Barabbas’s liberty for no other reason, but for the sake of the destruction of Jesus.

Matthew 27:21

Ver. 21. **The governor answered and said unto them,**

A second time, after some time had been allowed and taken up to consider of the matter, and which the chief priests and elders improved among the people against Jesus. Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? for as these two were proposed, one of them must be released; and it lay in the breast of the people to choose which they would: they said, Barabbas; so that Christ was not only numbered among, and reckoned with transgressors, but he was accounted worse than the worst of them; a seditious person, a robber, and a murderer was preferred before him: see Ac 3:14.

Matthew 27:22

Ver. 22. **Pilate saith unto them,**

As one astonished at their choice: he could not have thought they would have asked the life of so vile a wretch, that had been guilty of such capital crimes, crimes to be abhorred by all men: what shall I do then with Jesus, which is called Christ? Surely you would not have me put him to death, and that for no other reason but this, because he is called either by himself or others, Christ, or the Messiah, or the king of the Jews! they all say unto him, let him be crucified; which was a Roman punishment, inflicted on the meanest and worst of men; as wicked servants, thieves, robbers, and cut-throats¹⁶¹⁴; and so was not only a torturing and painful death, but a very shameful and ignominious one; yea, an accursed

¹⁶¹⁴ Lipsius de Cruce, l. 1. c. 12, 13.

one: in this they all agreed, being instigated to it by the chief priests and elders.

Matthew 27:23

Ver. 23. **And the governor said, why, what evil hath he done?**

What reason can be given, why he should be crucified? what sin has he committed, that deserves such a death? From whence it is clear, that of all the things they had accused him, they had not, in Pilate’s account, given proof of one single action, that was criminal, nor had he done any: he came into the world without sin, he did none in it; he knew no sin, nor could any be found in him, by Satan, nor his accusers, nor his judge:

but they cried out the more, saying, let him be crucified:

the more they saw Pilate inclined to favour him, and pleaded for him, and attested his innocence; the more clamorous, outrageous, and urgent they were to have him crucified.

Matthew 27:24

Ver. 24. **When Pilate saw he could prevail nothing,**

That it was to no purpose to talk to them, and in favour of Jesus; he saw they were determined upon his crucifixion, and that nothing else would satisfy them:

but that rather a tumult was made;

there was an uproar among the people, and he might fear the consequences of it, should he not grant their request; otherwise, as Philo the¹⁶¹⁵ Jew says of him, he was, שחכלמא שדאינא ת אחמ אכ שהפמאכא נסש נהח, “naturally inflexible, rigid, and self-willed”: but he knew the temper of these people, and had had experience of their resoluteness, when they were determined on any thing; as in the case of his introducing the golden shields into the holy city, of which the same author speaks: and was then obliged, though sore against his will, as now, to yield unto them:

He took water, and washed his hands before the multitude;

either in conformity to a custom among the Jews, whereby they testified their innocence as to the commission of murder; see De 21:6, or to a Gentile one, used when murder was committed, for the lustration or expiation of it¹⁶¹⁶:

saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person;

¹⁶¹⁵ De Legat. ad Caium, p. 1034.

¹⁶¹⁶ Vid. Ovid. Fast. l. 2. Anticlidis Redit. l. 74. Triclinius in Ajac. Sophocl. 3. 1. {

though this did not clear him from all guilt in this matter: he ought to have acted the part of an upright judge, and not have yielded to the unrighteous requests of the people; he ought not to have scourged an innocent man, and much less have condemned and delivered him to be crucified, as he did; though in this he bore a testimony to the innocence of Christ, and which is somewhat remarkable in him; who was, as Philo says ¹⁶¹⁷, notoriously guilty of receiving bribes, of injuries, rapine, and frequent murders of persons uncondemned:

see ye [to it];

you must be answerable for this action, and all the consequences of it. The Syriac version renders it, “you have known”; and the Persic version, “you know”: and the Arabic version, “you know better”; See Gill on “Mt 27:4”.

Matthew 27:25

Ver. 25. **Then answered all the people,**

They were as unanimous in their imprecations upon themselves, as in desiring the crucifixion of Christ:

and said, his blood be on us, and on our children; not for the cleansing of them from sin, which virtue that blood has, but if there were any stain, blot, or pollution, through the shedding of it, they wished it might be on them and theirs: not for the forgiveness of sins, which that blood was shed for; but on the contrary, if there was any sin and guilt in it, they desired it might be imputed to them: nor for their justification before God, and security from wrath to come, both which are by his blood; but all the reverse of this, that if there were any punishment, and condemnation, and death, due for the shedding of it, they imprecated it all upon themselves, and their posterity: so this phrase is used in Jos 2:19, and in other places, and in the Talmud ¹⁶¹⁸; and it is a notion of the Jews, that the guilt of innocent blood, and the blood of that innocent man's children, lie not only upon the persons immediately concerned, but upon their children to the end of the world: and so the judges used to address the witnesses upon a trial, after this manner ¹⁶¹⁹;

”know ye, that capital causes, are not as pecuniary ones: in pecuniary causes, a man gives his money, and it atones for him; but in capital causes, זרנו ודמו זרנו תלויוי שב “his blood, and the blood

of his seed, hang upon him”, to the end of the whole world: for lo! of Cain it is said, “the voice of the blood of thy brother cryeth”, &c. his blood, and the blood of his seed.”

And this imprecation of theirs, has been notoriously verified in them; for though this blood was shed for many of them, and Christ prayed for the forgiveness of them, and they had the Gospel, and the doctrine of remission of sins first preached among them, which was made the power of God unto salvation to some of them, even of those who were concerned in the crucifixion of Christ; yet, on the generality of them, his blood was in the sense they wished it; and for the shedding of it, wrath came upon them to the uttermost, in the entire destruction of their nation, city, and temple, and very remarkable it is, that great numbers of them were put to death by crucifixion; and very likely some of those very persons, that were so clamorous for the crucifying of Christ; and if not, at least their children; five hundred of the Jews and more, were sometimes crucified in a day, whilst Titus was besieging the city; till at length there wanted “room for crosses”, kai stauroi toiv swmasi “and crosses for bodies”, as Josephus {u} says, who was an eyewitness of it: and to this day, this dreadful wish of the blood of Christ upon them, is to be seen in their miserable, abject, and captive state; and will be, until such time that they look to him whom they have pierced, and mourn.

Matthew 27:26

Ver. 26. **Then released he Barabbas unto them,**

The seditious person, robber, and murderer, for which crimes he was in prison. This man was an emblem of the persons for whom Christ suffered, both in his character and in his release: in his character; for they are such as have rebelled against God, robbed him of his glory, and destroyed themselves; many of them are notorious sinners, the chief of sinners, and all of them by nature, children of wrath, as others; and as the descendants of Adam, under the sentence of condemnation and death; and yet in Christ, they are children of Abba, Father; being of God predestinated by him, to the adoption of children: and in his release; for when Christ was apprehended, they were let go; when he was bound they were loosed; when he was condemned, they were released, and acquitted; and when the sword of justice was awaked against him, the hand of grace and mercy was turned upon them.

And when he had scourged Jesus;

which was done some time before his examination,

trial, and condemnation were over, though mentioned here, as appears from Joh 19:1, and was done by Pilate, in order to move the pity and compassion of the Jews; hoping they would have been satisfied with it, and not have resisted upon his death: and he indeed moved it to them, that he might chastise him and let him go, Luke 23:22, but nothing would do but crucifixion. Whether the previous scourging sufficed, or whether he was not scourged again upon his condemnation, is not certain: if he was scourged twice, John may be thought to relate the one, and Matthew the other; for certain it is, that it was usual with the Romans to scourge either with rods or whips, just before crucifixion ¹⁶²⁰: our Lord was scourged with whips, as the word here used shows. Persons of birth and blood, and freemen of Rome, were beaten with rods; but such as were servants, which form Christ had taken, were scourged with whips; to which, sometimes were fastened, the hip bones of beasts ¹⁶²¹; so that this kind of whipping, was very severe and cruel. The Jews themselves own this scourging of Jesus, only they ascribe it to the elders of Jerusalem, and relate it thus ¹⁶²²:

”the elders of Jerusalem took Jesus, and brought him to the city, and bound him to a marble pillar in the city, ויכרוהו בשוטים, “and smote him with whips”, or “whipped him”; and said unto him, where are all thy miracles which thou hast done?”

Hereby the prophecy in Isa 1:6, and our Lord's prediction in Mt 20:19, had their accomplishment. This scourging of Christ, was an emblem of the scourges and strokes of divine justice, which he endured in his soul, as the surety of his people; being smitten of God by the sword of justice, as he stood in their place and stead, and stricken for their transgressions; and may furnish out several instructions: as that it is no wonder, if any of the followers of Christ have, do, or shall, meet with such like treatment from men; and that it becomes them to bear patiently the scourges of their heavenly Father, since these are in love; and that they need not fear being trodden down, or carried away by the overflowing scourge of God's wrath, since Christ has endured this in their room. This being done,

he delivered him to be crucified;

either into the hands of the Jews, to their will and at their request; or into the hands of his soldiers, to execute the sentence he passed upon him; which was done in a

¹⁶²⁰ Lipsius de Cruce l. 2. c. 2.

¹⁶²¹ Ib. c. 3.

¹⁶²² Toldos Jesu, p. 17.

judicial way, and according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.

Matthew 27:27

Ver. 27. **Then the soldiers of the governor,**

Those that were about him, his attendants and guards, took Jesus into the common hall; the “praetorium”, or judgment hall, as it is sometimes called; the governor's palace, into which the Jews would not enter, lest they should defile themselves: Pilate therefore came out to them, and went into the pavement called Gabbatha, and sat upon a judgment seat there; see Joh 18:28, where he passed sentence on Christ; which being done, the soldiers took him into the hall of judgment; which being both magnificent and large, was fit for the scene they intended to act there. Munster's Hebrew Gospel reads it, they took him “in the house of judgment”; and the Ethiopic version renders it, “out of the court of judicature”; both wrong. And gathered unto him whole band [of soldiers]; the same that Judas had with him to take him, consisting of five hundred, and some say more: these their fellow soldiers, to whom Jesus was committed, got together to him, or “against him”, as the Syriac and Persic versions render it, make themselves sport and diversion with him. Think in what hands and company our dear Lord now was: now was he encompassed with dogs, and enclosed with the assembly of the wicked indeed; see Ps 22:16. The Persic version renders it, “multitudes of knaves being gathered together to him”.

Matthew 27:28

Ver. 28. **And they stripped him,**

Of his clothes; at least of his upper garment: for one man to spit upon another, as these soldiers afterwards did on Christ, or to strip him of his garment, according to the Jewish canons, were punishable with a fine of four hundred pence ¹⁶²³, which amounted to twelve pounds and ten shillings of our money; but the soldiers were in no danger of being prosecuted, for stripping Christ. This is one part of the low estate Christ submitted to: his clothes on his back seem to be all he had in this world, and of these he is stripped: and put on him a scarlet robe, or “a red coat”, as the Persic version renders it; very likely an old coat of one of their officers. The Evangelists Mark and John say it was “purple”, Mark 15:17, and so the Arabic version renders it here: whether there were two garments put upon him, the one a purple vest, and the other a scarlet robe over it; or whether scarlet was used instead of purple, is not certain; which was a colour wore

¹⁶²³ Misn. Bava Kama, c. 8. sect. 6.

¹⁶¹⁷ Ubi supra. (De Legat. ad Caium, p. 1034.)

¹⁶¹⁸ T. Bab. Pesachim, fol. 110. 1. Yoma, fol. 2l. 1. & Avoda Zara, fol. 12. 2.

¹⁶¹⁹ Maimon. Hilch. Sanhedrin, c. 12. sect. 3. {u} De Bello Jud. l. 6. c. 12.

by kings, and a sign of imperial dignity ¹⁶²⁴; and therefore put upon Christ by way of mockery, upbraiding him with the character he bore, as king of the Jews. This was an emblem of his being clothed, as it were with our sins, which are as scarlet, and of his bloody sufferings in the human nature.

Matthew 27:29

Ver. 29. **And when they had platted a crown of thorns,**

What sort of thorn this crown was made of, whether of the bramble, or of the white thorn, is not very material ¹⁶²⁵: the word used in the Syriac version, is rendered by interpreters, “white thorns”, and which were common in Judea: these, be they what they will, they made into the form of a crown,

and they put it upon his head;

both to reproach him as a king, and to torture him as a man: however, it had its significance, and was an emblem of men, comparable to thorns; either of wicked men, and of his being encompassed with them at this time; or of good men, chosen out from among them, redeemed by him, and accounted as a royal diadem with him ¹⁶²⁶: or it might represent the sins of his people, which, like thorns, pierced him, and like a crown of them surrounded him every side; or else the many troubles he was exercised with, and through which he did, as his members do, enter the kingdom: and especially, his being made a curse for us, thorns and briars being the curse which was inflicted on the earth, for the sin of man: in this Christ was the antitype of the ram, caught by his horns among the thickets, which “Abraham” sacrificed in the room of his son. This may teach us many useful lessons: we may see what a curse sin brought upon man, and upon the earth for man’s sake; and even upon the Messiah, in the stead of men: we may observe the difference between us and Christ: we are a crown of glory, and a royal diadem in his hand; we are crowned with loving kindness and tender mercies, and have a crown of righteousness, life, and glory, laid up for us, and he was crowned with thorns; as also the difference between Christ in his state of humiliation wearing such a crown, and his state of exaltation, in which he is crowned with glory and honour. The Jews acknowledge this circumstance of the sufferings of Jesus, though they ascribe it to the elders of Jerusalem; who, they say ¹⁶²⁷,

¹⁶²⁴ Alexander ab Alex. Genial. Dier. l. 1. c. 28.

¹⁵⁸² Vid. Bartholin. de Spinea Corona, sect. 1. 2.

¹⁶²⁶ Vid. Paschal. de Coronis, l. 10. c. 12. p. 701, 702.

¹⁶²⁷ Toldos Jesu, p. 17.

”took thorns and made a crown of them, and put it upon his head.”

Which are the very words of the evangelist:

and a reed in his right hand,

or “cane”; and Munster’s Hebrew Gospel uses the word, קנה, “a cane”, such as men walk with; and this may be confirmed from the barbarous use they afterwards made of it, by smiting him on the head with it: a “reed” indeed may fitly express the weakness of his kingdom in the eye of the world: but any cane or common staff, or stick, put into his hands in the room of a sceptre, would also signify the meanness of his kingdom, which was not of this world, and came not with observation: they meant to reproach him with it, but they will find one time or another, that he, has another sceptre, even a sceptre of righteousness, a staff of strength, a rod of iron, with which he will rule and break in pieces, all the wicked of the earth. However, we may learn from hence, Christ does not disdain to hold a reed in his hand: nor will he break the bruised reed, or discourage, or crush the weakest believer.

And they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, king of the Jews:

being thus clad in a scarlet, or purple robe, or both; and having a crown of thorns on his head, and a reed instead of a sceptre in his hand, they carry on the mockery still further, and bend the knee to him, as to a prince just come to his throne, and salute as such; and in a mock way, wish him long life and prosperity: thus deriding him in his kingly office, as all such do, who call him Lord, Lord, but disregard his commands.

Matthew 27:30

Ver. 30. **And they spit upon him,**

The Syriac and Persic versions add, “upon his face”, which he did not hide from spitting; see Isa 1:6, and so what with sweat, by being hurried from place to place, and with blood trickling down from his temples, scratched with thorns, and with the spittle of these filthy soldiers, his visage was more marred than any man’s, and his form than the sons of men, Isa 52:14.

And took the reed,

or “cane”, which was put into his right hand, and smote him on the head; whereby they drove the sharp points of the thorns into it, which must give him inexpressible pain and torture.

Matthew 27:31

Ver. 31. **And after that they had mocked him,**

Gone through the whole farce, and glutted them-

selves with derision of him, and with sport and diversion with him,

they took the robe off from him;

it belonging to one of their company, and put his own raiment on him; partly that he might be known to be the selfsame person that was condemned and committed to them, which they now brought forth to crucify; and partly, that the four soldiers that were appointed to be the executioners, might have the perquisite of his clothes, which belonged unto them:

and led him away to crucify him;

for a condemned person was always executed the same day: their canon is ¹⁶²⁸,

”after that his judgment, or sentence is finished, they do not tarry with him, but slay him, ביימו, “that very day”.

And their custom was this;

”he whose sentence for death is finished, they bring him out from the house of judgment; and one stands at the door of it, and linen clothes in his hand, and a horse at some distance from him; and a crier goes out before him, “saying”, such an one is going to be executed with such a death, because he has committed such a sin, in such a place, at such a time, such and such being witnesses; whoever knows him to be innocent, let him come, and speak in his favour: if one says, I have something to say in his favour: this waves with the linen clothes, and the other rides upon the horse, and runs and brings back him that is judged, to the sanhedrim; and if he is found innocent, they dismiss him: but if not, he returns, and goes to execution ¹⁶²⁹.”

The Jews pretend ¹⁶³⁰, that a crier went out before Jesus of Nazareth, forty days before his execution, and made such a proclamation, but found none that had any thing to say in his favour, and therefore hanged him on the evening of the passover. But this is false; Christ had no such length of time, or his friends any liberty granted them to speak for him. They led him out of the common hall, through Jerusalem, and through one of the gates of it, without the city, in order to crucify him, to which he was condemned, when that prophecy was fulfilled in Isa

¹⁶²⁸ Maimon. Hilch. Sanhedrin, c. 12. sect. 4. Misn. Sanhed. c. 6. sect. 1.

¹⁶²⁹ Maimon. Hilch. Sanhedrin, c. 13. sect. 1.

¹⁶³⁰ T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 43. 1.

53:7. “He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth”: as he made no opposition or struggle, but quietly went along with them, where they led him; so he took every thing patiently from them, uttered not one complaint, or any murmuring and repining word, or any thing by way of reviling; but became meekly subject to them, and submitted himself to him that judgeth righteously.

Matthew 27:32

Ver. 32. **And as they came out,**

Of the city; for no execution was made, neither in the court of judicature, nor in the city, but at some distance; as it was at stoning, so at crucifixion ¹⁶³¹:

”when judgment was finished, they brought him out to be stoned; the place of stoning was without the sanhedrim, as it is said, Le 24:14, “bring forth him that hath cursed without the camp”.

Upon which the gloss and Gemara say ¹⁶³², without the three camps; which were these, the court which was the camp of the Shekinah; or the divine presence; and the mountain of the house, the camp of the Levites; and the city, the camp of Israel; so that he that was executed, was had without the city. Maimonides ¹⁶³³ says,

“the place in which the sanhedrim executed, was without it, and at a distance from it, as it is said, Le 24:14, and it appears to me, that it was about six miles distant; for so far it was between the sanhedrim of Moses our master, which was before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the camp of Israel.

”So Jesus went without the camp, and suffered without the gate, as the antitype of the red heifer; see Nu 19:3, compared with Heb 13:11, and the notes there.

They found a man of Cyrene:

a place in Libya, and one of the five cities called Pentapolis: which were these, Berenice, Arsinoe, Ptolemais, Apollonia, and Cyrene ¹⁶³⁴; Kir in Am 1:5 is rendered by the Targum, ynryq, “Cyrene”, as it is also by the Vulgate Latin. There were many Jews dwelt here, as appears from Ac 2:10, as this man was a Jew, as his name shows; and besides, there was a synagogue of the Cyrenian Jews at Jerusalem, Ac 6:9, so that though he was a native of

¹⁶³¹ Misn. Sanhedrin, c. 6. sect. 1.

¹⁶³² T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 42. 2.

¹⁶³³ Hilch. Sanhedrin, c. 12. sect. 3.

¹⁶³⁴ Plin. Nat. Hist. l. 5. c. 5.

Cyrene, he might now dwell there, and some of these were converted to the faith of Christ; for of those that were scattered abroad at the death of Stephen, some were men of Cyrene, Ac 11:19. And it is very likely, that this man was a favourer of Christ, which might be one reason why they laid hold on him, and obliged him to bear the cross of Christ; since he was the father of Alexander and Rufus, who were men of note among the first Christians:

Simon by name;

of which name was one of the apostles, and a common name among the Jews, and signifies hearkening and obedient: and none are fit to bear, or will bear the cross of Christ, but such who hearken to his voice, and are obedient to him, being made willing in the day of his power:

him they compelled to bear his cross;

which they did, not out of good will to Christ, but fearing lest through his faintness and weakness, he should, die before he got to the place of execution, and they be disappointed of their end, the crucifixion of him; or because they were in haste to have him executed, and he was not able to go so fast as they desired; for when they, first came out, the cross was laid upon Christ, and he bore it, as John relates; but he being weak and ready to faint under it, and not able to go the pace they would have him, and meeting with this man, they press him to bear it after him: which he might be unwilling to do, partly because it was scandalous and ignominious; and partly, because if a favourer of Jesus, he did not choose to be any ways accessory to his death: but he was obliged to it; and it may be observed from hence, that taking up the cross and following Christ, is disagreeable to flesh and blood: though the spirit may be willing, the flesh recoils; none care for it, or choose to bear it, unless constrained to it.

Matthew 27:33

Ver. 33. **And when they were come to a place called Golgotha,**

The true pronunciation is “Golgotha”, and so it is read in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel. It is a Syriac word, in which language letters are often left out: in the Syriac version of this place, the first “I” is left out, and the latter retained, and it is read “Gogoltha”: and so, in the Persic, “Gagulta”; and in the Arabic, “Gagalut”. The Ethiopic version reads it, “Golgotha”; and so, Dr. Lightfoot observes, it is read by the Samaritan interpreter of the first chapter of Numbers:

that is to say, a place of a skull:

some say Adam’s skull was found here, and from

thence the place had its name; this is an ancient tradition, but without foundation ¹⁶³⁵: it seems to be so called, because it was the place where malefactors were executed, and afterwards buried; whose bones and skulls in process of time might be dug up, and some of them might lie scattered about in this place: for, one that was executed as a malefactor ¹⁶³⁶,

”they did not bury him in the sepulchres of his ancestors; but there were two places of burial appointed by the sanhedrim; one for those that were stoned, and for those that were burnt; and another for those that were killed with the sword, and for those that were strangled; and when their flesh was consumed, they gathered the bones, and buried them in their place;”

i.e. in the sepulchres of their ancestors. This place was as infamous as our Tyburn, and to be crucified at “Golgotha”, was as ignominious as to be hanged at Tyburn; which shows what shame and disgrace our Lord was brought, and what he condescended to bear on our account.

Matthew 27:34

Ver. 34. **They gave him vinegar to drink,**

It was a custom with the Jews ¹⁶³⁷ when

“a man went out to be executed, to give him to drink a grain of frankincense in a cup of wine, that his understanding might be disturbed, as it is said, Pr 31:6. “Give strong drink to him that is ready to perish, and wine to those that be of heavy hearts”; and the tradition is, that the honourable women in Jerusalem gave this freely; but if they did not, it was provided at the charge of the congregation.”

”The design of it was to cheer their spirits, and intoxicate their heads, that they might not be sensible of their pain and misery. But such a cup was not allowed Christ at the public expense, nor were the honourable women so compassionate to him; or if it was sent him, the soldiers did not give it him, but another potion in the room of it; indeed Mark says, they gave him “wine mingled with myrrh”, Mark 15:23; which was either a cordial provided by his friends, and given him, and is different from what the soldiers gave him here; or the sense is,

¹⁶³⁵ Misn. Sanhedrin, c. 6. sect. 4. 5.

¹⁶³⁶ T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 43. 1. Maimon. Hilch. Sauhedrin, c. 13. sect. 2, 3.

¹⁶³⁷ T. Bab. Avoda Zara, fol. 12. 2.

that they gave him the cup, that was so called, but not the thing; but instead of it,

vinegar mingled with gall.

The Vulgate Latin and Ethiopic versions, instead of “vinegar”, read “wine”; and so does Munster’s Hebrew Gospel, and so it is read in Beza’s most ancient copy, and in another exemplar, and in one of Stephens’s; and which may be easily reconciled with the common reading, and that with Mark; for the wine they gave him was flat and sour, and no other or better than vinegar; and real vinegar may be so called, as this seems to be; and the rather, because vinegar was a part of the Roman soldiers’ allowance, and so they had it ready at hand; See Gill on “Joh 19:29”. As also, because it was thought that vinegar was useful to prolong the life of a man ready to die; and therefore they might choose to give it to Christ, that he might live the longer in misery: so the Jews ¹⁶³⁸ write, that

”if a man swallows a wasp or hornet alive, he cannot live; but they must give him to drink a quarter, רהלא שמגז, “of vinegar of Shamgaz”, (which the gloss says is strong vinegar,) and it is possible he may live a little while, until he hath given orders to his house.”

The Arabic version, instead of “gall”, reads “myrrh”; nor are we to suppose that this drink was mixed with the gall of a beast itself, but with something that was as bitter as “gall”; as wormwood, or myrrh, or any other bitter, to make it distasteful. This potion of vinegar with gall, was an aggravating circumstance in our Lord’s sufferings, being given to him when he had a violent thirst upon him; and was an emblem of the bitter cup of God’s wrath, he had already tasted of in the garden, and was about to drink up: the Jews had a notion of vinegar’s being expressive of the chastisements of the Messiah; the words in Ru 2:14, they say ¹⁶³⁹,

”speak of the king Messiah; “come thou hither”, draw nigh to the kingdom; “and eat of the bread”, this is the bread of the kingdom, “and dip thy morsel in the vinegar”, אלו הייורי, “these are the chastisements”, as it is said in Isa 53:5, “he was wounded for our transgressions”.

”By this offer was fulfilled the prophecy in Ps 69:21, and which he did not altogether refuse; for it follows,

and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink:

not because it was the vinegar of Gentiles, which was

¹⁶³⁸ Midrash Ruth, fol. 33. 2.

¹⁶³⁹ T. Bab. Avoda Zara, fol. 29. 2.

forbidden by the Jewish canons ¹⁶⁴⁰, lest it should have been offered to idols; but because he would make use of no means either to prolong his life, or discompose his mind; and that it might appear he knew what he did, and that he was not afraid nor unwilling to die; though he thought fit to taste of it in a superficial way, to show he did not despise nor resent their offer; and that he was really athirst, and ready to drink a more disagreeable potion than that.

Matthew 27:35

Ver. 35. **And they crucified him,**

That is, the soldiers: they laid the cross upon the ground, and stretched Christ upon it; they extended his two arms as far as they could, to the transverse part of it, and nailed his hands unto it: his two feet they fixed by each other on a basis, in the body of the cross, through which they also drove nails; and then raising it up, fixed it in the earth, and left him hanging on it till he expired. This death was not only painful and cruel, but exceedingly shameful and ignominious: it was what was inflicted on the meanest of persons, as servants, whose form Christ had taken; and upon the worst of men, as murderers, cut-throats, thieves, and the vilest of men ¹⁶⁴¹ among whom Christ was now numbered:

and parted his garments, casting lots:

for they stripped him of his clothes before they fixed him to the cross, and crucified him naked, as was the custom of the Romans ¹⁶⁴²; as it was of the Jews to stone and hang persons naked: their canons run thus ¹⁶⁴³,

”when he is four cubits off of the place of stoning, they strip off his garments; a man they cover before, a woman both behind and before; the words of Judah: but the wise men say, a man is stoned naked, and a woman is not stoned naked: a man, they hang him with his face to the people; a woman, with her face to the tree. R. Eliezer, and the wise men say, a man is hanged, but a woman is not hanged.

“On which the Gemara ¹⁶⁴⁴ says,

“what is the sense of the Rabbins? the Scripture says, “thou shalt hang him”; him, and not her: and, says R. Eliezer, him, בלא כיווי, “without his clothes”.

¹⁶⁴⁰ T. Bab. Avoda Zara, fol. 29. 2.

¹⁶⁴¹ Lipsius de Cruce, l. 1. c. 12. & 13

¹⁶⁴² Lipsius de Cruce, l. 2. c. 7.

¹⁶⁴³ Misn. Sanhedrin, c. 6. sect. 3, 4.

¹⁶⁴⁴ T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 46. 1.

So our Lord was crucified; his clothes were a perquisite of the soldiers; there were four of them, as we learn from Joh 19:23, and they parted them into four parts, and then cast lots whose each part should be; or rather, they divided his garments into four parts, and each took his part; but his vesture, or coat, being seamless, and woven from top to bottom, they did not choose to tear it into pieces, but cast lots for it, who should have it:

that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, by David, in Ps 22:18,
they parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.

All this, Beza says, is not in any of the ancient copies; nor is it in the Syriac, Arabic, Persic, and Ethiopic versions, but stands in the Vulgate Latin, and in Munster's Hebrew Gospel; See Gill on "Joh 19:24".

Matthew 27:36

Ver. 36. **And sitting down, they watched him there.**

That is, the soldiers, after they had crucified Jesus, and parted his garments, sat down on the ground at the foot of the cross, and there watched him, lest his disciples should take him down; though there was no need to fear that, since they were few, and weak, and wanted courage, and were in the utmost dread and consternation themselves; or lest the people, who were very changeable with respect to Christ, one day saying Hosanna to the son of David, and another day crucify him, crucify him, should once more change their sentiments of him, and through pity to him rise and take him down; or rather, lest Jesus himself should, by his miraculous power, unloose himself, come down, and make his escape. It was usual with the Romans to set a soldier, or soldiers, to watch those that were crucified, not only before they expired, but after they were dead, lest they should be taken down and buried; as appears from Petronius, Plutarch, and others¹⁶⁴⁵. This seems to be the watch Pilate refers to, Mt 27:65, and over which there was a centurion, Mt 27:54.

Matthew 27:37

Ver. 37. **And set up over his head his accusation written,**

The Evangelist John calls it a "title", Joh 19:19, and Luke, a "superscription", Luke 23:38, and Mark, the "superscription of his accusation", Mark 15:26: it was what contained the sum and substance of what he was accused, and for which he was condemned, and suffered.

¹⁶⁴⁵ Vid. Lipsium de Cruce, l. 2. c. 16. & Lydium. de re militari, l. 5. c. 4. p. 191. Kirchman. de funeribus Rom. append. c. 9. p. 726.

The Syriac and Persic versions here render it, "the cause of his death". It was written by Pilate in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, that all might read it; and by his orders it was put upon the cross, and over the head of Jesus by the soldiers. This title, or inscription, setting forth the person's crime, used to be carried before him, or put upon him, as he was led to execution¹⁶⁴⁶; but here it was set upon the cross, and perhaps nailed unto it; to which the apostle seems to allude in Col 2:14, the substance of it was,

this is Jesus the king of the Jews.

This was what the chief priests accused him of to Pilate, and about which he questioned him, and for which they desired he might be crucified; urging, that should he let him go, he could not be Caesar's friend. Hence Pilate wrote his accusation in this form, not so much in derision of Jesus; for by conversation with him he understood what sort of a king he was, as to the reproach of the Jews for crucifying him who was their king; being the person that was prophesied of in their books, as king of Zion, and whom they expected as such, though now they denied and rejected him.

Matthew 27:38

Ver. 38. **Then were there two thieves crucified with him,**

Which seems contrary to one of their canons, which runs thus; אין דיני שנימביומ אחד, "they do not judge two in one day"¹⁶⁴⁷, unless they were both in the same crime, and died the same death: but here were three persons, Jesus, and these two malefactors, condemned and executed in one, and the same day: these two thieves were led out with Jesus, to be put to death with him, according to Luke 23:32, and were crucified with him upon the same spot of ground; their death was the same, but not their crime:

one the right hand, and another on the left;

and Jesus in the midst, as John relates, Joh 19:18, and hereby was fulfilled, as Mark observes, Mark 15:28, a prophecy in Isa 53:12. If this was so ordered by Pilate, it might be done in order to cover the sin, and take off the reproach of putting an innocent person to death, suggesting hereby he was one of them; though this seems rather to be done by the Jews, the soldiers agreeing to it, for the greater reproach of Jesus; intimating, that he was the worst of these malefactors, and a ringleader of such sort of persons; and whereas they had observed, he took

¹⁶⁴⁶ Lipsius de Cruce, l. 2. c. 11.

¹⁶⁴⁷ T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 35. 1. & 46. 1. Bemidbar Rabba, sect. 8. fol. 190. 1.

it ill at their hands that they should come to apprehend him with swords and staves, as if he was a thief and a robber; to vex and distress him the more, they crucify him between two such persons: but the grand reason why it was so ordered, was, that though Christ was no transgressor, he was accounted one, and stood in the room and stead of sinners, and was numbered with them, and as such was treated by divine justice, and accordingly died for them.

Matthew 27:39

Ver. 39. **And they that passed by,**

In the road to or from Jerusalem; for, it seems, the crosses were placed by the wayside; or they who passed by the cross, the populace that came from Jerusalem, on purpose to see the sight, reviled him, or "blasphemed him": they spoke all manner of evil of him, they could think of, to which he answered not a word; and which may teach us patience under the revilings of men: this was foretold of him, Ps 89:51, "they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed", or "Messiah"; and which Jarchi explains by ypw, "the ends of the king Messiah"; his last times, towards the close of his days; and cites that passage in the Misna¹⁶⁴⁸,

"in the heels, or, as Buxtorf renders it, in the end of the days of the Messiah impudence shall be multiplied,"

as it now was exceedingly: wagging their heads; in derision of him, and as exulting in his misery; see Isa 37:22. This also was prophesied of him in Ps 22:7.

Matthew 27:40

Ver. 40. **And saying, thou that destroyest the temple,**

The Vulgate Latin, and Munster's Hebrew Gospel, read, "the temple of God"; and add "ah!" here, as in Mark 15:29, and so Beza says it is read in a certain copy. They refer to the charge of the false witnesses against him, who misrepresenting his words in Joh 2:19, declared that he gave out that he was able to destroy the temple of Jerusalem, and rebuild it in three days time; wherefore it is added,

and buildest it in three days, save thyself.

They reproach him with it, and suggest, that these were vain and empty boasts of his; for if he was able to do any thing of that kind, he need not hang upon the tree, but could easily save himself:

if thou be the Son of God, come down from the

¹⁶⁴⁸ Sota, c. 9. sect. 15.

cross.

The Jews themselves say¹⁶⁴⁹ that the following words were said to Jesus on the cross,

"if thou be the Son of God, why dost thou not deliver thyself out of our hands?"

"As Satan before them, they put an "if" upon the sonship of Christ: and seeing his followers believed in him as the Son of God, and he had owned himself to be so before the sanhedrim, they require a sign of it by his power, and to do that which they believed no mere man in his situation could do; which shows, that they had no other notion of the Son of God, but that he was a divine person: but his sonship was not to be declared by his coming down from the cross, which he could have easily effected, but by a much greater instance of power, even by his resurrection from the dead; and no other but that sign was to be given to that wicked and perverse generation.

Matthew 27:41

Ver. 41. **Likewise also the chief priests,**

Who as they attended at his apprehension, and in their own council condemned him to death unanimously, and were very busy at his arraignment, examination, and trial before Pilate, and persuaded the people to be urgent for his crucifixion; they follow him to the cross to exult over him, and insult him, and to see that the execution was strictly performed: and forgetting their character, office, and education; and laying aside all humanity, decent, and good manners; instead of rebuking and restraining the populace from using him in an ill and unkind manner, they themselves stood

mocking him, with the Scribes and elders;

who composed the whole sanhedrim of the nation. The Syriac, Arabic, and Persic versions, and several copies, read, "and the Pharisees": of which, no doubt, there were great numbers present, who had been indefatigable and implacable enemies of Christ every where, and to whom it must be a pleasing sight to see him hanging on the cross: these scoffed at him, gibed, and reproached him; and

said,
as follows;

Matthew 27:42

Ver. 42. **He saved others, himself he cannot save,**

This was not so much a concession of theirs, that he had done many saving works, as healing the sick, cleansing lepers, causing the blind to see, and the lame to walk,

¹⁶⁴⁹ Toldos Jesu, p. 17.

and raising the dead; but rather a suggestion, that these were only pretensions and illusions; that either they were not really done, or done by the help of the devil; since now he himself was in the utmost extremity, he could not save himself: but of this they might have been convinced by his striking many of them to the ground, that came to apprehend him in the garden, and of which these men were eyewitnesses; and he, as man, could easily have obtained of his Father more than twelve legions of angels that would have rescued him out of their hands: but so it must not be; he came not to save himself, but others, and to save them spiritually and eternally by dying himself.

If he be the king of Israel;

that is, the Messiah, who was promised and expected as a king, as Zion's king, or king of Israel; see Joh 1:49, hence in Mark 15:32 it is Christ the king of Israel.

Let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.

The Persic version reads, "that the people may see, and believe in him"; and the Syriac and Arabic versions, "that we may see, and believe in him", as in Mark 15:32. But, alas! they had seen greater things already than this, and yet had not believed. He could easily have caused the nails to have given way, and unloosed himself, and come down, who had done such mighty works among them; and if he had, there is no reason to conclude they would have believed him to be the Son of God, and the true Messiah; for though after this, he did a much greater work, raised himself from the dead, of which they had the fullest evidence, yet they remained unbelieving.

Matthew 27:43

Ver. 43. **He trusted in God,**

That is, he pretended to claim an interest in him, to be high in his favour and esteem, and to have great faith and confidence in him:

let him deliver him now;

directly, from the cross, and the death of it: if he will have him; or if he is well pleased with him as his own Son, or delights in him as such, and will show him any favour and good will; see Ps 22:8, where are these very words, and which are predicted should be said by these men to Christ; and are a wonderful confirmation of the truth of that Psalm and prophecy belonging to him:

for he said, I am the Son of God;

not only in his ministry, but he had said so in their grand council, before them all.

Matthew 27:44

Ver. 44. **The thieves also,**

One or other of them, not both; an Hebrew way of speaking, as Drusius¹⁶⁵⁰ observed: so it is said of Jonah, Jon 1:5, that he was "gone down into the sides of the ship"; not into both sides, but into one or other of them: so here the thieves, one or other of them, not naming which, railed at Jesus, for it was but one of them; see Luke 23:39, unless it can be thought, as it is by some, that they both at first reviled him; but one being quickly convinced of his evil, ceased, and rebuked his fellow sufferer, confessed his, sin, bore a testimony to the innocence of Christ, and desired to be remembered by him in his kingdom. This was an aggravation of the sufferings of Christ, that he should be vilified by those,

which were crucified with him;

who ought to have been, considering the condemnation they were in, and the future state they were just entering into, lamenting and confessing the sins they had been guilty of, instead of adding sin to sin, and so aggravating their condemnation. These, at least one of them,

cast the same into his teeth;

as the populace, the chief priests, Scribes, elders, and Pharisees had done; twitted him with his pretensions of being the Son of God, the Messiah, and king of Israel; and urged, that if he was, why did not he save himself, and them also?

Matthew 27:45

Ver. 45. **Now from the sixth hour,**

Which was twelve o'clock at noon,

there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour;

till three o'clock in the afternoon, the time the Jews call "between the two evenings"; and which they say¹⁶⁵¹ is "from the sixth hour, and onwards". Luke says, the sun was darkened, Luke 23:45. This darkness was a preternatural eclipse of the sun; for it was at the time when the moon was in the full, as appears from its being at the time of the passover; which was on the fourteenth day of the month Nisan, the Jews beginning their months from the new moon: and moreover, it was over all the land, or earth, as the word may be rendered; and the Ethiopic version renders it, "the whole world was dark"; at least it reached to the whole Roman empire, or the greatest part of it; though some think only the land of Judea, or Palestine, is intended: but it is evident, that it is taken notice of, and recorded by Heathen historians and chronologers, as by Phlegon, and others, referred to by Eusebius

¹⁶⁵⁰ Quaest. Heb. l. 1. qu. 5.

¹⁶⁵¹ T. Hieros Pesachim, fol. 31. 3.

¹⁶⁵². The Roman archives are appealed unto for the truth of it by Tertullian {e}; and it is asserted by Suidas, that Dionysius the Areopagite, then an Heathen, saw it in Egypt; and said,

"either the, divine being suffers, or suffers with him that suffers, or the frame of the world is dissolving."

Add to this the continuance of it, that it lasted three hours; whereas a natural eclipse of the sun is but of a short duration; see Am 8:9. The Jews¹⁶⁵³ have a notion, that in the times of the Messiah

"the sun shall be darkened, amwy twglpb, "in the middle of the day", (as this was,) as that day was darkened when the sanctuary was destroyed."

Yea, they speak¹⁶⁵⁴ of a darkness that shall continue a long time: their words are these:

"the king Messiah shall be made known in all the world, and all the kings shall be stirred up to join together to make war with him; and many of the profligate Jews shall be turned to them, and shall go with them, to make war against the king Messiah; so לְמַעַן כָּל הָעוֹלָם יְחַשְׁכוּ "all the world shall be darkened" fifteen days, and many of the people of Israel shall die in that darkness."

This darkness that was over the earth at the time of Christ's sufferings, was, no doubt, an addition to them; the sun, as it were, hiding its face, and refusing to afford its comforting light and heat to him; and yet might be in detestation of the heinousness of the sin the Jews were committing, and as expressive of the divine anger and resentment; for God's purposes and decrees, and the end he had in view, did not excuse, nor extenuate their wickedness; as it shows also their wretched stupidity, not to be awakened and convinced by the amazing darkness, with other things attending it, which made no impression on them; though it did on the Roman centurion, who concluded Christ must be the Son of God. It was an emblem of the judicial blindness and darkness of the Jewish nation; and signified, that now was the hour and power of darkness, or the time for the prince of darkness, with his principalities and powers, to exert himself; and was a representation of that darkness that was now on the soul of Christ, expressed in the following verse; as well as of the eclipse of him, the sun of righteousness, of

¹⁶⁵² In Chronicis. {e} Apolog. c. 21.

¹⁶⁵³ Zohar in Exod. fol. 4. 1.

¹⁶⁵⁴ Ib. fol. 3, 4.

the glory of his person, both by his incarnation, and by his sufferings.

Matthew 27:46

Ver. 46. **And about the ninth hour,**

Or three o'clock in the afternoon, which was about the time of the slaying and offering of the daily sacrifice, which was an eminent type of Christ. The Jews say¹⁶⁵⁵, that

"every day the daily sacrifice was slain at eight and a half, and was offered up at nine and a half:

"about which time also the passover was killed, which was another type of Christ; and as they say¹⁶⁵⁶, "was offered first, and then the daily sacrifice." Though the account they elsewhere¹⁶⁵⁷ give of these things, is this;

"the daily sacrifice was slain at eight and a half, and was offered up at nine and a half; (that is, on all the common days of the year;) on the evenings of the passover, it was slain at seven and a half, and offered at eight and a half, whether on a common day, or on a sabbath day: the passover eve, that happened to be on the sabbath eve, it was slain at six and a half, and offered at seven and a half, and the passover after it."

At this time,

Jesus cried with a loud voice:

as in great distress, having been silent during the three hours darkness, and patiently bearing all his soul sufferings, under a sense of divine wrath, and the hidings of his Father's countenance, and his conflicts with the powers of darkness; but now, in the anguish of his soul, he breaks out,

saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani:

which words are partly Hebrew, and partly Chaldee; the three first are Hebrew, and the last Chaldee, substituted in the room of "Azabthani"; as it was, and still is, in the Chaldee paraphrase of the text in Ps 22:1, from whence they are taken;

that is to say, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

He calls him his God, not as he was God, but as he was man; who, as such, was chosen by him to the grace of union to the Son of God; was made and formed by him; was anointed by him with the oil of gladness; was supported and upheld by him in the day of salvation;

¹⁶⁵⁵ T. Hieros. Pesachim, fol. 31. 3, 4.

¹⁶⁵⁶ Ib.

¹⁶⁵⁷ Misn. Pesachim, c. 5. sect. 1.

was raised by him from the dead, and highly exalted by him at his own right hand; and Christ, as man, prayed to him as his God, believed in him, loved him, and obeyed him as such: and though now he hid his face from him, yet he expressed strong faith and confidence of his interest in him. When he is said to be “forsaken” of God; the meaning is not, that the hypostatical union was dissolved, which was not even by death itself; the fulness of the Godhead still dwelt bodily in him: nor was he separated from the love of God; he had the same interest in his Father’s heart and favour, both as his Son, and as mediator, as ever: nor was the principle and habit of joy and comfort lost in his soul, as man, but he was now without a sense of the gracious presence of God, and was filled, as the surety of his people, with a sense of divine wrath, which their iniquities he now bore, deserved, and which was necessary for him to endure, in order to make full satisfaction for them; for one part of the punishment of sin is loss of the divine presence. Wherefore he made not this expostulation out of ignorance: he knew the reason of it, and that it was not out of personal disrespect to him, or for any sin of his own; or because he was not a righteous, but a wicked man, as the Jew ¹⁶⁵⁸ blasphemously objects to him from hence; but because he stood in the legal place, and stead of sinners: nor was it out of impatience, that he so expressed himself; for he was entirely resigned to the will of God, and content to drink the whole of the bitter cup: nor out of despair; for he at the same time strongly claims and asserts his interest in God, and repeats it; but to show, that he bore all the griefs of his people, and this among the rest, divine desertion; and to set forth the bitterness of his sorrows, that not only the sun in the firmament hid its face from him, and he was forsaken by his friends and disciples, but even left by his God; and also to express the strength of his faith at such a time. The whole of it evinces the truth of Christ’s human nature, that he was in all things made like unto his brethren; that he had an human soul, and endured sorrows and sufferings in it, of which this of desertion was not the least: the heinousness of sin may be learnt from hence, which not only drove the angels out of heaven, and Adam out of the garden, and separates, with respect to communion, between God and his children; but even caused him to hide his face from his own Son, whilst he was bearing, and suffering for, the sins of his people. The condescending grace of Christ is here to be seen, that he, who was the word, that was with God from everlasting, and his only begotten Son that lay in his bosom, that he

¹⁶⁵⁸ Vet. Nizzachon, p. 162.

should descend from heaven by the assumption of human nature, and be for a while forsaken by God, to bring us near unto him: nor should it be wondered at, that this is sometimes the case of the saints, who should, in imitation of Christ, trust in the Lord at such seasons, and stay themselves on their God, and which may be some support unto them, they may be assured of the sympathy of Christ, who having been in this same condition, cannot but have a fellow feeling with them. The Jews themselves own ¹⁶⁵⁹, that these words were said by Jesus when he was in their hands. They indeed apply the passage to Esther; and say ¹⁶⁶⁰, that

“she stood in the innermost court of the king’s house; and when she came to the house of the images, the Shekinah departed from her, and she said, “Eli, Eli, lama Azabthani?” my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

Though others apply the “Psalm” to David, and others to the people of Israel in captivity ¹⁶⁶¹: but certain it is, that it belongs to the Messiah; and many things in it were fulfilled with respect to Jesus, most clearly show him to be the Messiah, and the person pointed at: the first words of it were spoken by him, as the Jews themselves allow, and the very expressions which his enemies used concerning him while suffering, together with their gestures, are there recorded; and the parting his garments, and casting lots on his vesture, done by the Roman soldiers, are there prophesied of; and indeed there are so many things in it which agree with him, and cannot with any other, that leave it without all doubt that he is the subject of it ¹⁶⁶².

Matthew 27:47

Ver.47. **Some of them that stood there**

Near the cross, looking on, and mocking at him, when they heard that; the words, “Eli, Eli”, spoken by Christ, **said, this man calleth for Elias.**

These could not be the Roman soldiers that said so, who had no notion of Elias; rather the Hellenistic Jews, who not so well understanding the Hebrew language, hearing the above words, and having some notion of the prophet Elias, fancied he was calling for him; though it

¹⁶¹⁶ Toldos Jesu, p. 17.

¹⁶⁶⁰ Bab. Megilia, fol. 15. 2. & Gloss. in T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 29. 1.

¹⁶⁶¹ Vid. Jarchi & Kimchi in Psal. xxii. 1.

¹⁶⁶² See my Book of the Prophecies of the Old Test. &c. p. 158.

seems most likely to be the Jews, who either through the nearness of the sound of the words, and mistake of them, and not near enough to hear and distinguish them, really thought he called for that prophet; or rather wilfully mistook him, with an intent to banter and ridicule him.

Matthew 27:48

Ver. 48. **And straightway one of them ran and took a sponge**

Which was not far from the cross, where a vessel full of vinegar was set, (John 19:29) ,

and filled it with vinegar;

dipping it into it, it sucked it up. Some of these sponges had leathern handles to them. ¹⁶⁶³

And put it on a reed; a stalk of hyssop; (See Gill on John 19:29),

and gave him to drink;

not to revive his spirits, or hasten his death, as some have thought, but in contempt of him, and to mock him, he having signified that he was athirst.

Matthew 27:49

Ver. 49. **The rest said, let be**

The others, to whom he belonged, that fetched the sponge, said to him, let him alone, keep at a distance from him, give him nothing to drink:

let us see whether Elias will come to save him;

whom the Jews looked upon to be the forerunner of the Messiah, and therefore suggest, that should he come to save him, they would believe he was the Messiah; and they had a mighty notion of Elias appearing to persons frequently ¹⁶⁶⁴, and talking, and conversing with them; (See Gill on Matthew 17:3), though they did not believe he would come, and appear to Christ; for they were persons of great note for piety and learning, to whom he appeared, as they pretend, whereas they had no such opinion of him. The Ethiopic version here adds, and one took a spear and pierced his side with it, and blood and water flowed out: but this circumstance is only recorded by the Evangelist John, (John 19:34) , though Beza says the same is read here in two ancient copies.

Matthew 27:50

Ver. 50. **Jesus, when he had cried again**

“A second time”, as the Persic version; for he had cried once before, and expressed the words he did, as in (Matthew 27:46) , what he now delivered were, “Father,

¹⁶⁶³ Misn. Sabbat, c. 21. sect. 3.

¹⁶⁶⁴ Vid. Juchasin, fol. 79. 1. & 86. 1. & 101. 1. & 118. 2. & 132. 1.

into thy hands I commend my Spirit”, (Luke 23:46) , and “it is finished”, (John 19:30) , which he said

with a loud voice;

which showed the vehemency of his affection, his strong confidence in God, and his being fearless of death; as also he thus spoke, that he might be heard, and his words attended to, since they contained things of the greatest importance and consequence: moreover, being able to express himself in such a manner, this declared him to be more than a mere man; for after such agonies in the garden, and so much fatigue in being hurried from place to place, and such loss of blood by being buffeted, scourged, crowned with thorns, and nailed to the accursed tree, where, being stretched, he had hung for some hours; to speak with so loud a voice was more than human, and was a conviction to the centurion, that he was a divine person: for when he saw that he so cried out, and “gave up the ghost”, he said, “truly this man was the Son of God”, (Mark 15:39) , and likewise it shows, that he died freely and voluntarily, and not through force and necessity: it was not all that men had done, or could do to him, that could have forced his life from him: he died willingly, and when nature was in its full strength; and which is signified in the next phrase,

yielded up the ghost,

or “dismissed the Spirit”, as the Syriac version truly renders it; he sent it away. It was not taken from him, he laid down his life of himself, as the Lord of it, and gave himself freely to be an offering and sacrifice in the room of his people; which is a proof of his great love, and amazing grace unto them.

Matthew 27:51

Ver. 51. **And behold, the vail of the temple was rent in twain**

Just at the time that Christ spake with so loud a voice, and expired, and which was at the time of the offering up of the evening incense; and so must be seen by the priest that was then offering, and those that assisted him, for the incense altar was near the vail; and which must be a very astonishing sight unto them: the vail was of a very great thickness; it was made of fine twined linen, (Exodus 26:31) , and it is a rule with the Jews ¹⁶⁶⁵, that

“where ever mention is made in the law of fine linen, or fine twined linen, it means a thread six times doubled:”

and whereas this was made of blue, and purple, and

¹⁶⁶⁵ Maimon. Cele Hamikdash, c. 8. sect. 14. Kimchi in Sepher Shorash rad. (שורש) .

scarlet, Jarchi's note on the place is, that

“every kind was doubled with each thread of six threads.”

His sense is more clearly expressed in his note on (Exodus 26:1),

lo! here are four sorts to every thread; one of linen, and three of wool, and every thread is six times doubled; behold four sorts when they are twisted together, make twenty four doubles to a thread.”

Yea, some of them make it to be forty eight doubles¹⁶⁶⁶. What a thick piece of tapestry must this be! and this makes the rending of it the more amazing; for no doubt but that the vail of the second temple was made after the manner of the first; and this was rent

from top to bottom;

and which was no less than forty cubits in length, which was the height of the holy of holies in the second temple; and which made the rent the more astonishing. The account the Jews give of the vail, is this¹⁶⁶⁷:

“R. Simeon ben Gamaliel said, on account of R. Simeon, the son of the Sagan, the thickness of the vail is an hand's breadth, and it is woven of seventy two threads, and every thread has twenty four threads in it: it is forty cubits long, and twenty broad, and is made of eighty two myriads; (which is either the number of the threads in it, or the sum of the golden pence it cost. Some copies read, is made by eighty two virgins¹⁶⁶⁸;) two are made every year; and three hundred priests wash it.”

The Syriac version renders it, “the face of the gate of the temple”; by which may be meant, perhaps, the vail of the gate of Ulam, or of the porch¹⁶⁶⁹. The Jews have a tradition¹⁶⁷⁰ that

“forty years before the destruction of the temple, the gates of it opened of themselves. R. Jochanan ben Zaccai reproved them, saying, O temple! temple! wherefore dost thou fright thyself? I know thy end is to be destroyed; for so proph-

¹⁶⁶⁶ T. Hieros. Shekalim, fol. 51.

¹⁶⁶⁷ Misn. Shekalim, c. 8. sect. 5. Shernot Rabba, sect. 50. fol. 144. 2. Bernidbar Rabba, sect. 4. fol. 183. 2.

¹⁶⁶⁸ Vid. Bartenora & Yom. Tob. in ib.

¹⁶⁶⁹ Vid. Bartenora in ib.

¹⁶⁷⁰ T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 39. 2. Jarchi & Kimchi in Zech. xi. i. Ganz Tzemach David, par. 1. fol. 25. 2.

esied of thee Zechariah, the son of, Iddo, “open thy gates, O Lebanon” (Zechariah 11:1) .”

But whether this may be referred to in the above version, or has any reference to the evangelic history, I will not say. Other writers, as Josephus¹⁶⁷¹, and Egesippus¹⁶⁷², speak of the eastern gate of the city, which was of brass, and as much as twenty men could shut, opening of its own accord, before the destruction of the temple; which perhaps the Jewish tradition rather regards. This rending of the vail was done, as some think, in token of mourning for, and testifying abhorrence at the crucifixion of Christ; the temple rending its garments, the vail, at the death of its Lord, proprietor, and type, as the high priest did his at supposed blasphemy; or to show that the Lord, who had taken up his residence in the most holy place between the cherubim, over the mercy seat, in thick darkness, was now about to remove, and leave the house desolate; or it signified the rending of Christ's flesh, the breaking of his body for us, which was typified by the vail; see (Hebrews 10:20), and may also denote both the fulfilment and abrogation of the ceremonial law, which had its end in the death of Christ; and likewise the more clear discoveries of the mysteries of grace under the Gospel, in which they are laid to open view, and are beheld with open face: to which may be added, that this pointed out, that the way to the holiest of all, to heaven, of which this was a figure, was now made manifest; and was plain and accessible, as it was, first to Christ, who entered by his own blood, as the forerunner; and also to his people, who likewise have boldness to enter by the same.

And the earth did quake:

whether this earthquake reached only to the spot of ground where Christ was crucified, and on which the city and temple of Jerusalem stood; or whether it extended to other parts of the earth; since, in the reign of Tiberius Caesar, as Pliny¹⁶⁷³ relates, there was an earthquake, in which twelve cities in Asia fell, is not certain. However, it was an indication of the divine anger and resentment, and in detestation of the sin of crucifying Christ; see (Psalms 18:7) , and was an emblem of the shaking and removing of the Jewish church state and ordinances, (Hebrews 12:26 Hebrews 12:27) .

And the rocks rent;

which were near Mount Calvary, and about Jerusalem; and, as we are told, the clefts are to be seen to this day, and which appear to be supernatural. This was also a

¹⁶²⁸ L. 8. c. 12.

¹⁶⁷² L. 5. c. 44.

¹⁶⁷³ L. 2. c. 84.

token of divine wrath and fury, (Nahum 1:5 Nahum 1:6), and a rebuke of the stupidity and hardness of the Jews, who were unmoved when rocks were rent asunder, being harder than they; and an emblem of the future conversion of many through the powerful ministry of the word, and in consequence of Christ's death; when hearts, as hard as rocks, were broke in pieces, stony hearts taken away, and hearts of flesh given; of which the three thousand being pricked to the heart under Peter's sermon, were an instance.

Matthew 27:52

Ver. 52. **And the graves were opened**

Which were near the city of Jerusalem: this was a proof of Christ's power over death and the grave, by dying; when he through death, destroyed him that had the power of it, and abolished death itself; and became the plague of death and the destruction of the grave, taking into his hands the keys of hell and death:

and many bodies of saints which slept, arose:

not that they arose at the time of Christ's death: the graves were opened then, when the earth quaked, and the rocks were rent; but the bodies of the saints did not arise, till after Christ was risen, as appears from the following verse; but because the other event now happened, they are both recorded here: these were saints, and such as slept in Jesus; and of whom he is the first fruits that now rose; and not all, but many of them, as pledges of the future resurrection, and for the confirmation of Christ's, and the accomplishment of a prophecy in (Isaiah 26:19) . And they rose in the same bodies in which they before lived, otherwise they could not be called their bodies, or known by those to whom they appeared: but who they were is not to be known; some have thought them to be the ancient patriarchs, as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob In the Septuagint on (Job 42:17) , Job is said to be one of them, and a tradition is there recorded, which runs thus:

“it is written, that he rose with whom the Lord rose.”

But it should seem rather, that they were some later saints, such as Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, John the Baptist himself, good old Simeon, Joseph the husband of Mary, and others, well known to persons now alive. Some think they were such, as had been martyrs in the cause of religion; and so the Persic version renders the words, “and the bodies of many saints who suffered martyrdom, rose out of the graves”.

Matthew 27:53

Ver. 53. **And came out of the graves after his resurrection**

The resurrection of Christ; for he rose as the first fruits, as the first begotten of the dead, and the firstborn from the dead; for he was the first that was raised to an immortal life; for though others were raised before him, by himself, and in the times of the prophets, yet to a mortal life; but these saints came forth to the resurrection of life, and therefore it was necessary that Christ the first fruits, should rise first. The Arabic version indeed reads, “after their own resurrection”; and the Ethiopic version, “after they were raised”; both wrong, and scarcely sense:

and went into the holy city;

the city of Jerusalem, which though now a very wicked city, was so called, because of the temple, and the worship of God, and his residence in it: the burying places of the Jews were without the city¹⁶⁷⁴, and therefore these risen saints, are said to go into it:

and appeared unto many;

of their friends and acquaintance, who had personally known them, and conversed with them in their lifetime. These saints, I apprehend, continued on earth until our Lord's ascension, and then joining the retinue of angels, went triumphantly with him to heaven, as trophies of his victory over sin, Satan, death, and the grave.

Matthew 27:54

Ver. 54. **Now, when the centurion**

That was over the band of soldiers, that mocked Christ in Pilate's hall, and who was particularly over the guard of soldiers, set about the cross of Christ:

and they that were with him, watching Jesus:

the soldiers that were with him, who were set to watch the cross of Christ, lest he should come down, or any should take him down from thence; (See Gill on Matthew 27:36).

Saw the earthquake, and those things that were done;

as besides that, the darkening of the sun, the rending of the rocks, and particularly heard with what a loud voice Christ spoke, and then at once expired:

they feared greatly;

not with a true godly fear, but with a fear of punishment; lest divine vengeance should light on them, for their concern in this matter:

saying, truly this was the Son of God;

¹⁶⁷⁴ F1 Vid. Gloss. in T. Bab. Kiddushin, fol. 80. 2. & Maimon. Hilch. Shemitta veyobel, c. 13. sect. 3.

which they concluded, not from any mediatorial performances, which they were utter strangers to, but from effects of divine power; and which to them showed him to be a divine person, what he said he was, and the Jews charged him with blasphemy, on account of, and condemned him for, as these soldiers might have seen and heard.

Matthew 27:55

Ver. 55. **And many women were there**

At the cross of Christ, at some little distance from it; but where was Peter, who had declared he would never be offended, though all men were; and would die with Christ, rather than deny him? and where were the rest of the disciples, who said the same things? None were present excepting John, as can be learnt from the evangelists; but many women, those of the weaker sex, were there, which was a rebuke of the former vanity and confidence of the disciples, and of their present pusillanimity and cowardice:

beholding afar off;

Christ upon the cross, in all his agonies, the chief priests and people mocking him, the darkness upon the earth, the quaking of it, and the rending of the rocks: they were witnesses of all this, being at some little distance, by reason of the crowd of people and soldiers about the cross; and they beheld with an eye of faith, their bleeding, dying Lord, as crucified for them, and as bearing and taking away their sins: a sight which at once stirred up their affection and love to Christ, their concern for him, and sorrow for sin; and yet joy and peace, in believing in him:

which followed Jesus from Galilee:

where they had seen his miracles, heard his doctrines, and had been savingly converted by him; and therefore followed him wherever he went, though an hundred miles or more, and through many difficulties and discouragements: they attended him in his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, and now at his cross; nor did they leave him when dead, and in his grave:

ministering unto him:

not now, for he stood in no need of their assistance, nor could they give him any; but this respects what they had done heretofore, in their journey with him from Galilee to Jerusalem; when they ministered to him of their worldly substance, as a token of their affection for him; and which expresses the low estate and mean condition he was in, and is an instruction to his followers, how to behave towards the faithful preachers of his Gospel; see

(Luke 8:3) .

Matthew 27:56

Ver. 56. **Among which was Mary Magdalene**

Out of whom Christ had cast out seven devils; and who having received much from him, loved much, which she showed by her zealous and constant attachment to him. She was called Magdalene, either because she was an inhabitant of Magdala, (Matthew 15:39) , so we read ¹⁶⁷⁵ of R. Isaac, (מגדלאה) , of “Magdala”, or “Magdalene”; and the rather, because that Magdala was famous, or rather infamous, for whoredom; for which reason the Jews ¹⁶⁷⁶ say, it was destroyed: or else she was so called, because she was (מגדלה) , a “tonstrix”, or plaiter of women’s hair, as the word signifies ¹⁶⁷⁷; and so we often read of Mary, (מגדלא שיה נשייא) , “the plaiter of women’s hair” ¹⁶⁷⁸; by whom the Jews seem to design Mary, the mother of Jesus, whom they confound with this Mary Magdalene. Jerom says ¹⁶⁷⁹, her name signifies “towered”, or “fortified”, because of her care and diligence, and the ardour of her faith; and “Migdal”, in Hebrew, does signify a tower:

and Mary the mother of James and Joses:

the same with the wife of Cleophas, and sister to Mary, the mother of Jesus: instead of Joses, the Vulgate Latin and Ethiopic versions read Joseph: (יי) “Jose”, in Hebrew, is the same with “Joseph”, the last letter being cut off; the Arabic version reads Mary, the mother of James, and the mother of Joses, (John 19:25) .

And the mother of Zebedee’s children:

that is, of James and John; her name was Salome, (Mark 15:40) .

Matthew 27:57

Ver. 57. **When the even was come**

The second evening, when it was just at sunset; at which time the Jewish sabbath began, and when the bodies of those that were crucified, must be taken down; and if not dead, their bones must be broken, and they dispatched, in order to be interred in the common burying place of malefactors:

there came a rich man Arimathea:

not from thence now, for he lived at Jerusalem; but this was the place of his nativity, or former abode, and

¹⁶⁷⁵ Juchasin, fol. 96. 2.

¹⁶⁷⁶ T. Hieros. Taaniot, fol. 69. 1. Echa Rabbati, fol. 52. 4.

¹⁶⁷⁷ Maimon. & Bartenora in Misn. Kiddushin, c. 2. sect. 3.

¹⁶⁷⁸ T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 104. 2. Chagiga, fol. 4. 2. & Sanhedrin, fol. 67. 1.

¹⁶⁷⁹ Ad Principiam, Tom. 1. fol. 41.

from whence he originally came; and is the same with Ramathaim Zophim, and Ramah, and was the birthplace of Samuel the prophet, (1 Samuel 1:1 1 Samuel 1:19) , and is by the Septuagint called Armathaim, in (1 Samuel 1:1 1 Samuel 1:3 1 Samuel 1:19) (8:4) (15:34) (16:13) (28:3) . His character, as a rich man, is particularly mentioned, not merely to show that such men may be, and sometimes are, instances of the grace of God; much less in a way of boasting, that such a man was attached to Jesus; but rather to point out the reason, how he came to have such easy access to Pilate, and to succeed in his business with him; as well as to observe the accomplishment of a prophecy, in (Isaiah 53:9) ,

named Joseph;

the same name with one of the patriarchs, the sons of Jacob; between whom there was a resemblance, not only as good men, but in their observance of funeral rites and obsequies; the one in those of his father, the other in those of his dear Lord and Master. Some think ¹⁶⁸⁰ he is the same with Joseph ben Gorion, the brother of Nicodemus ben Gorion, often spoken of as a priest, and one of the richest of them in Jerusalem:

who also himself was Jesus’ disciple;

though he was only a secret one, as Nicodemus was: he had not as yet, or till now publicly professed him, for fear of the Jews, who had made a law, that whoever did, should be cast out of the synagogue; see (John 19:38) .

Matthew 27:58

Ver. 58. **He went to Pilate**

To his house where he lived, and went in, as Mark says, (Mark 15:43) , boldly; not being ashamed of Christ crucified, or afraid to own him, and show his respect to him as dead, though he knew he should incur the displeasure, reproach, and persecution of the Jews:

and begged the body of Jesus;

which could not be taken down and interred, without the leave of the Roman governor; and which was generally granted to the friends of the deceased, when asked; otherwise they were buried in places ¹⁶⁸¹ appointed for such persons; (See Gill on Matthew 27:33). And this would have been the case of Christ, had not Joseph craved his body; and which he did, to prevent its being abused by the Jews, and interred in such an ignominious manner:

then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered; to Joseph, after he had understood by the centuri-

¹⁶⁸⁰ Alting. Shilo, p. 309.

¹⁶⁸¹ See Misn. Sanhedrin, c. 6. sect. 5, 6. Maimon. Hilch. Sanhedrin, c. 14. sect. 9.

on that Jesus was dead, which he at first could not tell how to believe, and marvelled at it, (Mark 15:44 Mark 15:45) . Joseph might the more easily obtain his request, as he was a person of character and riches; and because Pilate himself had a good opinion of Jesus, and of his innocence, as well as his wife was much in his favour: so that Joseph had no difficulty to obtain the body of Christ; but as soon as he asked, he had the favour granted, and orders were given to the centurion and his soldiers, to deliver it to him.

Matthew 27:59

Ver. 59. **And when Joseph had taken the body**

Down from the cross, with the assistance of others, or from the hands of those who had orders to deliver it to him:

he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth:

that is, he wound up the body in it round and round, as was the custom of the Jews; see (Acts 5:6) (John 11:44) . Nor was it usual to bury in any thing but linen: so it is said ¹⁶⁸²,

“let the wrappings, or grave clothes, be (פשתו לבנים) , “of white linen”; and let not the price of them be dear, for it is forbidden to bury in wrappings of silk, or brodered garments, even to a prince of Israel: for this is pride and destruction, and the work of the Gentiles.”

This clean linen cloth, in which the dead body of Christ was wrapped, may be an emblem of his purity and innocence, who did no sin; nor did he die for any of his own, but for the sins of others; and also of his pure and spotless righteousness, which is compared to fine linen, clean and white, and which he now had wrought out, and brought in; see (Revelation 19:8) .

Matthew 27:60

Ver. 60. **And laid it in his own new tomb**

Christ was laid not in his own, but in another’s tomb; for as in his lifetime he had not where to lay his head; so when he was dead, he had no sepulchre of his own to put his body in: and moreover, this shows that as he was born for others, and suffered and died not for himself, but them; so he was buried for them, as well as rose again for their justification: and it was a “new” tomb in which he was laid, in which none had been laid before; and was so ordered by providence, for the confirmation of the truth of his resurrection; for had another body been laid there, it might have been said that it was that, and not

¹⁶⁸² Juchasin, fol. 54. 2. Vid. Maimon. Hilchot Ebel, c. 4. sect. 2.

his that was raised. The Jews distinguish between a new grave, and an old grave ¹⁶⁸³:

“a new grave may be measured, and sold, and divided; an old one may not be measured, nor sold, nor divided: there is a new grave, which is as an old one; and an old one, which is as a new one; an old grave, in which are ten dead bodies, which is not in the power of the owners, lo! this is as a new grave.”

Which he had hewn out in the rock; it was usual with the Jews to make their sepulchres in rocks:

“in the midst (of the court of the sepulchre, they say ¹⁶⁸⁴) two caves are opened, one on one side, and the other on the other; R. Simeon says, four on the four sides; Rabban Simeon ben Gamaliel says, all are (eloh ypl) , “according to the rock”.

i.e. according to the nature of the rock, out of which the sepulchre is hewn; see (Isaiah 22:16) .

And he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre;

for the sepulchres were made with doors to go in and out at: hence we often read ¹⁶⁸⁵ of הפתח הקבר , “the door of the sepulchre”; and this was not only the custom of the Jews, but of other nations also ¹⁶⁸⁶: the stone rolled to the door, was what the Jews call, (llwg) , from its being rolled to, and from the door of the sepulchre; and which, they say ¹⁶⁸⁷, was a large and broad stone, with which the mouth of the sepulchre was stopped above: and it was at the shutting up of the sepulchre with this stone, that mourning began ¹⁶⁸⁸; and after it was shut with this sepulchral stone, it was not lawful to open it ¹⁶⁸⁹: now this was done by Joseph, to preserve the body from any injury, either from beasts, or from the Jews:

and

when he had so done,

he departed

to his own house; for the sabbath drew on, and there was no more time to do any thing more in this affair. The Syriac version reads these last clauses in the plural num-

ber; “they rolled a great stone, and they put it” and they went away; intimating, that Joseph did not do this himself; the stone was too great; but by others, or with their assistance. It may be observed, that all this was done on a feast day; on one of the days of the feast of the passover, when no servile work was to be done; and yet this was agreeably to the Jewish canons, which say ¹⁶⁹⁰,

“they do all things needful for the dead on a feast day; they shave his head, and wash his clothes, and make him a coffin; and if they have no boards, they bring timber and saw boards of it, silently within doors; and if the person is a man of note, they do it even in the street; but they do not cut wood out of the forest, to saw planks of it for the coffin; nor do they hew stones, to build a tomb with them.”

In this case, there was no need for the latter, because the sepulchre in which the body of Christ was laid, had been hewn out of a rock before; but the body was wrapped in a clean linen cloth, and wound up in it with myrrh and aloes to preserve it, and was interred; and so the women on this day, prepared spices and ointments, to anoint it with; though they rested on the sabbath day according to the commandment; but then as soon as that was over, though it was a feast day, they came to the sepulchre with their spices and ointments, (Luke 23:56) (24:1) .

Matthew 27:61

Ver. 61. **And there was Mary Magdalene and the other Mary**

The wife of Cleophas, and the mother of James and of Joses:

sitting over against the sepulchre;

observing where the body of Christ was put, and how it was laid; for they intended to prepare spices and ointments to anoint it with; and were mourning for the death of Christ: for sitting was a mourning posture, which now they were allowed, the body being taken down from the cross, and interred by leave of the governor; for, for one that died as a malefactor, they might not use the outward signs of mourning: the canon is this ¹⁶⁹¹; for such

“they do not mourn, but they grieve; and there is no grieving but in the heart:”

hence these women before stood, (John 19:25) , but now they sat.

Matthew 27:62

1690 Maimon. Hilchot Yom. Tob. c. 7. sect. 15.

1691 Misn. Sarhedrin, c. 6. sect. 4.

Ver.62. **Now the next day that followed the day of preparation**

Which was the sabbath day; for the day of preparation was the day before the sabbath, (Mark 15:42) , in which they prepared every thing necessary for the sabbath, and therefore was so called: and as this introduces the account of the chief priests and Pharisees, making application to Pilate, to secure the sepulchre; and which by his leave they did, by sealing the stone, and setting a guard about the sepulchre; it shows what consciences these men had, who accused the disciples of Christ of a violation of the sabbath, for plucking a few ears of corn on that day; and sought to kill Jesus, because he healed a man on it, and bid him take up his bed and walk; and yet they themselves could leave their devotions, and first meet together and agree upon an address to Pilate, and then go in a body to his palace; and having obtained their request, march to Joseph’s garden, and make the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch, which were servile works, and, according to their laws and traditions, not to be done on the sabbath day; and yet they scrupled them not, notwithstanding their characters and profession, which follow:

the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate;

these were the inveterate and implacable enemies of Christ; they took counsel how to put him to death; they employed Judas to betray him, and sent a band of soldiers with him to take him; they suborned false witnesses against him; they moved the people to prefer Barabbas to him; they got him condemned to death, and followed him to the cross, where they mocked him; and still, like the troubled sea, they were restless and uneasy; for though he was dead, they feared his resurrection; and though they could not prevent the thing, they consult to hinder the credit of it.

Matthew 27:63

Ver.63. **Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said**

Meaning Jesus; for no better name could they give him alive or dead, and they chose to continue it; and the rather to use it before Pilate, who had a good opinion of his innocence; and to let him see, that they still retained the same sentiments of him: (tyom) , “a deceiver”, is with the Jews ¹⁶⁹²,

“a private person, that deceives a private person; saying to him there is a God in such a place, so

1692 Misn. Sanhedrin, c. 7. sect. 10.

it eats, and so it drinks; so it does well, and so it does ill.”

But which can never agree with Jesus, who was not a private person, but a public preacher; and who taught men, not privately, but openly, in the temple and in the synagogues; nor did he teach idolatry, or any thing contrary to the God of Israel, or to the unity of the divine being; or which savoured of, and encouraged the polytheism of the Gentiles. The Ethiopic version renders these words thus; “Sir, remember” as if Christ had said this to Pilate in their hearing, and therefore put him in mind of it.

While he was yet alive;

so that they owned that he was dead; and therefore could not object this to the truth of his resurrection, that he was taken down from the cross alive, and did not die:

after three days I will rise again:

now, though he said to his to his disciples privately, (Matthew 16:21) (17:23) , yet not clearly and expressly to the Scribes and Pharisees; wherefore they must either have it from Judas, and lied in saying they remembered it: or they gathered it either from what he said concerning the sign of the prophet Jonas, (Matthew 12:40) , or rather from his words in (John 2:19) , and if so, they acted a most wicked part, in admitting a charge against him, as having a design upon their temple, to destroy it, and then rebuild it in three days; when they knew those words were spoken by him concerning his death, and resurrection from the dead: they remembered this, when the disciples did not: bad men have sometimes good memories, and good men bad ones; so that memory is no sign of grace.

Matthew 27:64

Ver. 64. **Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure**

By this also they own, that he was buried; and they knew in what, and whose sepulchre he was laid, and where it was; and request of Pilate, that as he had given leave to Joseph to take the body and inter it, that he would also give orders that the sepulchre might be watched, that no body might come near it, and remove the body, and that

until the third day:

not from the time they made this request, but from the time of Christ’s death; for no longer did they desire the sepulchre to be guarded; for if he did not rise, and no pretensions could be made to it in that time, they then very likely intended to expose his dead body, and

1683 Massech. Semachto, c. 14. fol. 16. 2.

1684 Misn. Bava Bathra, c. 6. sect. 8.

1685 Misn. ib. & Bartenora in Misn. Ohalot, c. 15. sect. 8.

1686 Vid. Kirchman de Funer. Roman. l. 3. c. 15. p. 438.

1687 Bartenora & Yom. Tob. in Misn. Ohalot, c. 2. sect.

4.

1688 T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 47. 2. Maimon. Hilchot Ebel, c. 1. sect. 2. & c. 2. sect. 8.

1689 Vid. Buxtorf. Lex. Rab. p. 437.

triumph over him as an impostor; and after that time, they cared not what became of it, and were in no concern about watching the sepulchre; but till then they judged it necessary and desired it,

lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away:

but of this there was no danger; they were too fearful and timorous to do such an action, had they been ever so much inclined to it; they all forsook him and fled immediately upon his apprehension; nor durst any of them appear at the time of his crucifixion, but John; and were now shut up for fear of the Jews; and besides, they had forgot what Christ said to them about his resurrection, though these men remembered it, and even disbelieved it when it was told them: the phrase “by night”, is not in two copies of Beza’s, nor in the Vulgate Latin and Arabic versions, nor in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel; but is in other copies, and in the Syriac, Persic, and Ethiopic versions:

and say unto the people, he is risen from the dead;

to the common people, that were illiterate, credulous, and easily imposed on: as for themselves, who were the learned, the wise and knowing, they were in no danger of being carried away with such a deception; but the populace, for whom they pretend a great concern, were:

so the last error shall be worse than the first;

either their own error and mistake, should the sepulchre be neglected, and an opportunity given for such a report; this would be of more fatal consequence than their first mistake, in suffering him and his followers to go on so long: or rather, the error of the people, in believing that Jesus was the Messiah; which would be greatly strengthened and received by greater numbers, should it be given out, and there was any proof of it, that he was risen from the dead: nor were they mistaken in this, for the number of the disciples and followers of Christ greatly increased after his resurrection; to an hundred and twenty, which was their number upon Christ’s resurrection, three thousand were added at one time; being converted under one sermon, and that the first preached after Christ was risen.

Matthew 27:65

Ver. 65. **Pilate said unto them, ye have a watch**

Meaning either the watch of the temple, said to be placed in the tower of Antonia, for the service of it: hence mention is made of the captain of the temple, (Acts 4:1) , but it is not likely they would remove the temple guards, to watch a sepulchre night and day: or rather, therefore, the soldiers that had had the care of the crucifixion of Christ, and watched him on the cross, are designed:

the words may be read imperatively, “have ye a watch”, or “take a watch”, as the Ethiopic version renders it, and which seems best; for if they had a watch already, what occasion had they to have applied to Pilate for one? but having none, he gives them leave to take one, or such a number of soldiers as were sufficient:

as fast as you can, take the watch as soon as you please, make no stay, but satisfy yourselves in this point:

make [it] as sure as you can;

or, as you know how to do it, and what will be proper and necessary.

Matthew 27:66

Ver. 66. **So they went**

From Pilate’s palace, to the garden of Joseph, and to the sepulchre there; which whether more than a sabbath day’s journey, or two thousand cubits, may be inquired; and if so, then they broke one of their own traditions, which allowed a person to go no further on a sabbath day; (See Gill on Acts 1:12).

And made the sepulchre sure;

in the following manner,

sealing the stone;

that was rolled to the door of it, it may be with some public seal, with Pilate’s, or with the sanhedrim’s; as the stone at the mouth of the lions’ den, in which Daniel was put, was sealed with the king’s signet, and with the signet of his lords, (Daniel 6:17) , that there might be no change of the sentence upon him, and by which it appeared, that his deliverance was by no human assistance: so the stone at Christ’s sepulchre was sealed, that it could not be removed without breaking it; which would show, whether any fraudulent methods were taken to remove the body:

and setting a watch;

a guard of soldiers, to observe and prevent any person coming near it; or “with the watch”: they made sure the sepulchre with the watch; or sealed the stone, the watch being present; all which was overruled by the providence of God, for the greater confirmation of the truth of Christ’s resurrection: by the methods taken, it clearly appears, there could be no fraud in the case; the body was laid in a tomb, where no corpse had ever been before; in a tomb hewed out of a rock, to which there was no access, but at the door; where a great stone was rolled; and this had a seal upon it, and a guard of soldiers about it; and hereby there were more witnesses of Christ’s resurrection, than otherwise would have been; as the soldiers, though they were afterwards bribed to tell

another story; and even the chief priests and Pharisees were convicted that he was risen, or they would never have taken such a method with the soldiers, as they did.

Matthew Chapter 28

Matthew 28:1

Ver. 1. **In the end of the sabbath,**

This clause is by some joined to the last verse of the preceding chapter, but stands better here, as appears from Mark 16:1, and intends not what the Jews call the sabbath eve, for that began the sabbath; but what they call מוצאי שבת, “the goings out of the sabbath”; and as Mark says, Mark 16:1, “when the sabbath was past”: that is, when the sun was set, and any stars appeared. The Vulgate Latin, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions, and Munster’s Hebrew Gospel render it, “the evening of the sabbath”; and the Persic version, “the night of the sabbath”; but must mean, not the evening and night, which preceded the sabbath, and was a part of it, but what followed it, and belonged to the first day.

As it began to dawn;

not the day, but the night; a way of speaking used by the Jews, who call the night, אור “light”: thus they say ¹⁶⁹³, אור לארבה שר, “on the light, or night of the fourteenth” (of the month Nisan) “they search for leavened bread”, &c. And so the word is used, in Luke 23:54, of the eve of the sabbath, or the beginning of it, as here of the going out of it;

towards the first day of the week,

or “sabbaths”; so the Jews used to call the days of the week, the first day of the sabbath, the second day of the sabbath, &c. take an instance or two ¹⁶⁹⁴

“The stationary men fast four days in the week, from the second day to the fifth day; and they do not fast on the sabbath eve (so they sometimes call the sixth day), because of the glory of the sabbath; nor באחד בשבת, “on the first day of the sabbath”, or week, that they may not go from rest and delight, to labour and fasting, and die.”

On which the Gemara has these words ¹⁶⁹⁵;

“the stationary men go into the synagogue, and sit four fastings; בשני בשבת, “on the second of the sabbath”, or “week”: on the third, and on the fourth, and on the fifth.”

Came Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary,

the wife of Cleophas, and mother of James and Jo-

¹⁶⁹³ Misn. Pesachim, c. 1. sect. 1. Vid. Maimon. & Bartenora in ib.

¹⁶⁹⁴ Misn. Taanilth, c. 4. sect. 3.

¹⁶⁹⁵ T. Bab. Taanith, fol. 27. 2. Vid. T. Bab. Nidda, fol. 4. 2. & 11. 1. & 67. 2.

ses, with whom also was Salome, the mother of Zebedee’s children, Mr 16:1. There seems to be some difference between the evangelists about the time of the women’s coming to the sepulchre. Matthew says, it was “at the end of the sabbath, when it began to dawn; towards the first day of the week”. John says, that “Mary Magdalene” came “when it was yet dark”, Joh 20:1, and yet Mark says, that they came “at the rising of the sun”, Mark 16:2. Though they all agree it was early in the morning: all they say is no doubt true, and may be reconciled thus. As soon as the sabbath was ended, the women set out on their journey, and as they went, bought spices and ointment to anoint the body with: they passed through the gates of the city before they were shut, and might stay some time in the suburbs; when Mary Magdalene, eager to be at the sepulchre, set out first, whilst it was dark, and came back and reported to Peter what she had seen, and returned again by such time the other women came, which was at sunrising. From all the accounts it is clear, that he rose, as is expressly said, Mark 16:9, on the first day of the week, and which was the third from his death: on the sixth day, which was Friday, he was crucified, and buried that evening; he lay in the grave all sabbath day, or Saturday; and rose early on the first day of the week, before the women got to the sepulchre; who came thither, as it is here said,

to see the sepulchre:

not merely to see it, for they had seen it before, and where, and how the body of Christ was laid in it; but to see whether they could enter into it, and anoint the body with the spices and ointments, which they had prepared and brought with them for that purpose.

Matthew 28:2

Ver. 2. **And behold there was a great earthquake,**

Or “there had been one”; which, how far it reached, and whether further than the spot of ground in which the sepulchre was, is not certain: it was an emblem of the shaking of the earth by the preaching of the Gospel, the sound of which was now to go after Christ’s resurrection to the ends of the world; and a prelude of the general resurrection, when the earth shall be shaken, and the graves opened, and the dead come forth; and was a symbol and token of the presence and majesty of Christ, at whose rising, as at his death, the earth shook and trembled. Think whether the watch could now be asleep, as they afterwards gave out, Mt 28:13. The Persic version renders it very wrongly; “and there was great consternation and fear”; which was the consequence of the earthquake, and the descent of the angel, and was so great that it was not

possible for the keepers to sleep, if ever so much inclined:

for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven; perhaps Gabriel, who brought the news of the conception of Christ to the virgin, and of his incarnation to the shepherds, and might be the same angel that strengthened him in the garden: nor is this any contradiction to the other evangelists, which speak of two angels, Luke 24:4, for Matthew does not say there were no more than one, though he makes mention but of one.

And came and rolled back the stone from the door; of the sepulchre, which by Joseph, or his orders, was put there, and was sealed by the Jews. This might be done, that way might be made for the risen body of Christ to pass out of the sepulchre; for to suppose, as some do, that he penetrated through this stone with his risen body, is not to be credited: it is true, he could have caused the stone to have given way, or removed it himself, and put it in the place again; as he caused the doors of the house in which the disciples were, to open and shut so quick, that they could not discern it when he appeared in the midst of them, Joh 20:19; see Ac 12:10, but he might choose to do it by the ministry of an angel, which is no ways derogatory to his power and majesty, but rather agreeable. Moreover, this might be done, that the women might have access to the sepulchre, and enter into it, which was the thing they were concerned about by the way, who should roll away the stone for them. Besides, this the angel did, as a token that Christ was risen, and to let the guard know as much, who, if they thought fit, might come and see what was done; but chiefly the stone was rolled away by the angel, as an emblem of the acquittance and discharge of Christ, as the surety of his people. He had taken upon him their sins; he had bore them in his body on the tree; he had suffered and died for them, and was laid as a prisoner in the grave; and now full satisfaction being made, an angel is sent from heaven to roll away the stone; thereby signifying, that the debt was fully paid, and he was now legally discharged. It is added,

and sat upon it;

thereby showing who it was that rolled it away; that it was done by him, not by the earthquake, nor by any human power: he sat there defying the guard of soldiers to come nigh; and waiting for the coming of the women, to tell them the good news, that their Lord was risen; and as the keeper of the sepulchre, that no corpse might be brought and laid in the room of Christ, and it be said that he was not risen. This posture of the angel does not contradict what other evangelists say of this, and the other angel, that they stood by the women, and also were sit-

ting in the sepulchre, Mark 16:5, for each was true: when the women first came, the angel sat upon the stone; after that, with the other, stood by them; when having invited them to the grave, placed themselves, sitting the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Christ had lain.

Matthew 28:3

Ver. 3. **His countenance was like lightning,**

There was such a lustre and brightness in his face, that it glittered like lightning: such a description is in Da 10:6,

and his raiment white as snow:

the word “white” is left out in the Vulgate Latin, and in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel: the angel appeared clad in white, as a token of the purity and innocence of his nature; and because of the victory and triumph of Christ over death and the grave; and that he might be known and taken by the women for a good angel, it being a commonly received notion of the Jews, that ministering angels were clothed in white ¹⁶⁹⁶.

“Said R. Ame to R. Levi, show me the Persians; he said to him, they are like to the mighty men of the house of David: show me the Chaberin, (another nation near the Persians,) they are like to destroying angels: show me the Ishmaelites, they are like to devils of the house of Hacsas: show me the disciples of the wise men in Babylon, they are like to the ministering angels.”

Upon which the gloss says,

“to the devils”, because they are clothed in black, and are like to devils; to “the ministering angels”, לבנימי לבושי, “they are clothed in white”, and veiled like the ministering angels; as it is written in Eze 9:2, “and the man was clothed with linen”: and it is said ¹⁶⁹⁷ of R. Judah, that he was veiled, and sat in fine linen fringed, and was like to an angel of the Lord of hosts: and elsewhere ¹⁶⁹⁸ it is said, who are the ministering angels? the Rabbins: and why are they called ministering angels? because they are fringed, as the ministering angels, in beautiful garments.”

Matthew 28:4

Ver. 4. **And for fear of him the keepers did shake,**

Though they were soldiers, Roman soldiers and veterans, who had been used to terrible sights in the field of battle; were men of courage, and fearless of danger; **and yet were seized** with a panic, and every limb of them

¹⁶⁹⁶ T. Bab. Kiddushin, fol. 72. 1.

¹⁶⁹⁷ T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 25. 2.

¹⁶⁹⁸ T. Bab. Nedarim, fol. 20. 2.

shook and trembled at the sight of the angel, for fear he was come as an executioner of divine vengeance upon them; who had been concerned in the crucifixion of Christ, had watched him as he hung upon the cross, and now his body in the sepulchre: and even supposing no consciousness of guilt in them, or dread of punishment from him; yet such was the glory and majesty in which he appeared, of which they had never seen the like before, that it had this effect upon them:

and became as dead men:

they turned pale, as dead men, and had scarce any life, or spirit, left in them.

Matthew 28:5

Ver. 5. **And the angel answered and said unto the women,**

Who being come up, were also affrighted at the sight of the angel. The Arabic version leaves out the first part, “and the angel answered”: which is a Jewish way of speaking, when nothing goes before, to which it is a reply; and renders the other part thus, “and said to the two women”: but from the other evangelists it appears, that there were more women than two; see Mark 16:1,

fear not ye;

some put an emphasis upon the word “ye”, as if used in opposition to the keepers, who had reason to be afraid, but not these good women. It was very common with gracious persons to be filled with fear at the sight of an angel, as Zacharias, and the shepherds; but without reason; they are their friends, their fellow servants, and ministering spirits to them. The Persic version adds, “but come near before, for ye are his familiars”: the reason alleged, by the angel, why they had no reason to fear, is,

for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified:

the knowledge which angels have of saints is very considerable, and which arises from their frequent embassies to them, care and guardianship of them, the good offices they perform, and their several ministrations to them; and the knowledge which the angel had of these good women, might not be from immediate revelation, but from the observations he had made of them: they had followed Jesus from Galilee, they had attended him all the while he was on the cross, and were now come to his grave to anoint him; and from their words and gestures, the angel might know that they were the disciples of Christ, and now sought him; and therefore had no reason to fear, as those who were his adversaries: and indeed, such as seek a crucified Christ, and life and salvation by him, have no reason to be afraid of any thing; not of sin,

and its damning power, since Christ saves, his blood cleanses, and his righteousness justifies from all sin; nor of the law, its menaces, curses, and condemnation, for Christ has redeemed them from it; nor of Satan, and his principalities and powers, who are spoiled by Christ, and out of whose hands he has ransomed his people; nor of the world, since Christ has overcome it, and delivered his people from it; nor of death, whose sting is taken away, and that abolished as a penal evil; nor of hell, and wrath to come, from which he has saved them; and much less of good angels, who are kindly disposed to them: and such are they that seek a crucified Christ, whom Christ has first sought, and looked up, and found in redemption and the effectual calling; who are made sensible of their lost and dangerous state by nature, to whom Christ has been manifested; and who see both their need of him, and his worth and value: these seek to him in the first place, and with all their hearts, for cleansing, pardon, righteousness, rest, food, salvation, and eternal life: they seek for him where he is, and is revealed, in the Scriptures, in the Gospel, in the ordinances, and at the Father’s right hand.

Matthew 28:6

Ver. 6. **He is not here,**

In the grave, where he was laid, and these women saw him laid: he was dead, but is now alive; he was laid in the grave, but God would not leave him there, nor suffer him to see corruption:

for he is risen, as he said;

not stolen away, as the chief priests hired the soldiers to say he was; nor removed to another place, as Mary Magdalene first thought, when she found him gone; but he was risen from the dead, by the power of his Father, and by his own power, as he had before said he should. In one of Beza’s exemplars it is added, “to you”; for the words that Christ said in Galilee, that he should be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and rise again, the third day, were said in the presence and hearing of these women, and to them, as well as to the disciples; see Luke 24:6. This clause is left out in the Persic version: it follows,

come see the place where the Lord lay;

the Lord both of angels and men: the Syriac and Persic versions read, “our Lord”. The Arabic and Ethiopic versions leave out the word “Lord”, and only read “he”. Christ, as the Son of God, lay in the bosom of his Father, and in the arms of his love, from all eternity; as mediator, he lay in the womb of God’s purposes and decrees,

being his elect, in whom his soul delighted; as man, he lay in the womb of the virgin; and, as an example to his people, he lay, when baptized, in the waters of Jordan; and as the language of the ordinance of the Lord's supper is, "come see my hands, and my feet"; that of baptism is, "come see the place where the Lord lay": but here it regards the grave, in which the body of Christ had been laid; and the women are invited by the angel to go along with him, into the sepulchre, to see the place where he had lain; to assure them the more of the truth of his resurrection, that they might, with their own eyes, see that he was gone, who before had beheld where, and how he was laid; as also to affect them with the condescending grace of Christ, in making his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; as well as to strengthen their faith in their discharge from sin and condemnation by Christ, who was risen for their justification; as also to let them see that the grave was perfumed and sanctified by him; and he was risen as the first fruits and pledge of them that slept.

Matthew 28:7

Ver. 7. **And go quickly and tell his disciples,**

Who were mourning and weeping for the death of Christ; despairing of his resurrection, of which, at least, they had but little hope, nor indeed much thought, though Christ had so often told them of it; and therefore a quick dispatch was necessary to remove their sorrow, revive their faith, and relieve their souls, to which the errand these women were sent upon, and the news they were to bring, had a tendency; namely,

that he is risen from the dead:

than which nothing could be more joyful news unto them, as it is to all believers; for on this depend the justification and salvation of God's elect; their security from condemnation, and their resurrection from the dead. This news was first brought to the apostles by women, who were greatly honoured hereby; that as the woman was first in the transgression, and the cause of death, so the first news of the resurrection of Christ to life, and of life and immortality being by him, who was first showed the path of life, were brought by women; and to a woman it was that Christ first appeared after his resurrection, Mark 16:9. The Vulgate Latin only reads, "that he is risen", as in the former verse.

And behold he goeth before you into Galilee.

These are still the words of the angel to the women, telling them what they should say to the apostles, that he should go before them into Galilee; and which might

serve to confirm the resurrection to them, and to give the greater credit to the report of the women, since this very thing Christ had promised them before; see Mt 26:32, though it was also true, that he should go before these women into Galilee, and who also should see him there: for the next words,

there shall ye see him;

though they may chiefly design the apostles, who should have a sight of Christ in Galilee, yet may include these women also:

lo! I have told you;

I "Gabriel", who am an angel of the Lord, sent by him to inform you of these things; and you may depend upon the truth of them, that Jesus is risen, and that he is about, in a very little time, to go before his disciples into Galilee, where they shall see him with their bodily eyes, and have a free and familiar conversation with him. The reasons why this place was pitched upon for Christ and his apostles to meet in, were, because here he first preached, and chiefly conversed, and had the largest number of disciples there, to whom he meant to show himself, as he did, 1Co 15:6, as well as to his apostles: moreover, the apostles were of Galilee, and so were these women; and to go into their own country, and there meet with Jesus, must be very agreeable; and besides, there they would be safer and freer from the molestations and persecutions of the Jews; and might follow their former calling, as they did, until the time they were to be further employed in preaching the Gospel.

Matthew 28:8

Ver. 8. **And they departed quickly from the sepulchre,**

Or "they went out from it", as it may be rendered, and as it is in Mr 16:8, which shows, that they went into the sepulchre upon the invitation of the angel, and saw the place where the Lord lay; and here it was the angel gave them their instructions, and errand to the disciples; which as soon as they received, they quitted the sepulchre in all haste, partly in obedience to the angel's orders, and partly through surprise and fear; for Mark says, "they fled from the sepulchre";

Mark 16:8, as persons terrified and affrighted: and it is added here,

with fear and great joy:

a mixture of both these; with fear and dread, because of the vision they had seen, and with joy at the news of Christ's resurrection; and yet in this their faith might not be so confirmed, as to have no doubt about it: they might

fear the body was taken away, and removed to some other place, and that this they had seen might be a deception and a delusion. However, between both joy and fear, they set out,

and did run to bring his disciples word;

as Mary Magdalene ran to Peter, Joh 20:2, nor is running unusual for women, or unbecoming them on certain occasions; see Ge 24:20. Their fright, as well as their joy, and their regard to the angel's order, might cause them to run, and make the quicker dispatch.

Matthew 28:9

Ver. 9. **And as they went to tell his disciples,**

This clause is wanting in the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, Arabic, and Persic versions, and in Beza's most ancient copy; but it stands in the Ethiopic version, and in Munster's Hebrew Gospel,

behold, Jesus met them:

that they might be confirmed in what the angel had told them, and their fear might be removed, and their joy increased; and also be capable of reporting to the disciples not only what they had heard from the angel, but what they had seen themselves; they being now eyewitnesses, as well as earwitnesses of his resurrection: so souls in the way of their duty, as these women were, oftentimes meet with Jesus, and he with them, as they may expect, and indeed not otherwise:

saying, all hail;

all health of soul and body, all happiness and prosperity, both temporal, spiritual, and eternal, attend you. The Syriac and Persic versions, and Munster's Hebrew Gospel render it, "peace be to you"; which, it is highly probable, was the phrase used by Christ, since it was the common form of salutation among the Jews, and what Christ made use of at other times; see Joh 20:19,

and they came;

near unto him, being encouraged by the above salutation, and knowing who he was by his voice, habit, and gesture:

and held him by the feet;

they threw themselves prostrate at his feet, in token of reverence and humility; and they laid hold on his feet, that they might know, and be assured that he was really risen, and that it was not a spirit, or a mere phantom and appearance; and they held him in affection to him, and as desirous of his continuance with them:

and worshipped him:

with divine adoration, expressing their love to him; their faith and hope in him, owning him to be their Lord

and God; he being, by his resurrection from the dead, declared to be the Son of God, with power; and so the proper object of religious worship.

Matthew 28:10

Ver. 10. **Then said Jesus unto them, be not afraid,**

Of me, or what you have seen; or lest there should be any deception in the case. In other respects the saints are subject to fears; as lest they should have no share in the love of God, nor interest in Christ, or the work of God is not begun in their hearts; and by reason of sin, lest that should get the ascendant over them, and they perish by it, and so fall short of eternal glory; when it is the will of Christ to have these fears removed, by shedding abroad his love in their hearts, by affording his gracious presence, views of interest in him, and promises of his grace, by sending his Spirit, word, and ministers to comfort them, by discovering and applying pardoning grace to them, and showing his power to keep them.

Go tell my brethren;

meaning not his kinsmen according to the flesh, but his disciples, who were in this relation to him, as all the elect of God are; not only through his incarnation, he being their "Goel", their near kinsman, and Redeemer, and of the same nature, flesh, and blood with them, and like unto them in all things, excepting sin; but on account of their divine adoption, to which they were predestinated, and which they received through his redemption, and under the witnessings of the Spirit: he that is his God being theirs; and he that is his Father being theirs also: and which was made manifest in their regeneration, by their faith in him; and obedience to him, and his Father; see Mt 12:49. A very considerable relation this is, that the disciples stood in to Christ, who is the eternal Son of God, and heir of all things; and wonderful grace and condescension it was in Christ to own the relation, when they had so lately forsaken him; and now he was raised from the dead, and had glory given him:

that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me:

he does not say they should not see him before: for they saw him, all but Thomas, that very evening, and all of them eight days after; and both times were before they went into Galilee: but this he said, to put them in mind of what he had promised them, Mt 26:32, and to confirm the words of the angel; and which might serve for a confirmation of the truth of these things, both to the women, and to the disciples, when they observed the exact agreement between the words of Christ, and

of the angel. Moreover, it may be remarked, that wherever Christ has appointed to meet his people, they may expect, and be sure to see him at one time or another; as in his house and ordinances, where they are sometimes indulged with a sight of him by faith, which is an appropriating, assimilating, soul rejoicing, and satisfying one; when with pleasure they behold the glory of his divine person, and of his offices, the transcendent excellencies and perfections of his nature, his love and his loveliness, the beauty and amiableness of him, the fulness of grace, life, and righteousness in him, and so the suitability of him as their Saviour and Redeemer; and when they are favoured with communion with him, and the joys of his salvation.

Matthew 28:11

Ver. 11. **Now when they were going,**

Or were gone from the sepulchre: that is, the women, Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, and their companions, when they were going, or gone, and before they could come to the disciples, to inform them of what they had seen and heard, and deliver the message both of the angel, and of Christ, unto them:

behold, some of the watch came unto the city:

that is, “of Jerusalem”. The word “behold” is left out in the Syriac, Persic, and Ethiopic versions; but ought to be retained as expressive of what is wonderful, and worthy of observation and attention; that the very persons who were placed to prevent every thing, that might be the foundation of a report, that Christ was risen, should be the first persons that should relate it to the chief priests and elders, that employed them: not all the watch, for some still stayed behind, till they had orders to come away; but some of them, the principal of them, or who were deputed by the rest, came. The Persic version, rather commenting than translating, has these words:

“moreover, the rulers and governors, who watched the sepulchre, coming to themselves, returned to the city with a pale and frightened countenance.”

And showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done;

how that there had been a very great earthquake, and a very surprising appearance; one like a young man descended from the clouds, whose countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow, which filled them with astonishment and dread; that he rolled away the stone from the sepulchre, and then sat upon it; and that some women coming to the sepulchre, were shown

by him where the body had been laid, but was now gone; and how, that after they had recovered themselves from the fright, they had themselves examined the sepulchre, and the body was certainly gone; and sure they were that the women did not carry it away, nor any other: all which they thought proper to relate to the chief priests; partly on their own account, to clear themselves from the charge of bribery and corruption, and sloth and negligence; and partly that the chief priests might consider what was proper to be done at such a juncture.

Matthew 28:12

Ver. 12. **And when they were assembled with the elders,**

Upon this the grand sanhedrim was convened together, which consisted of the chief priests, Scribes, and elders;

and had taken counsel

among themselves what steps to take to stifle this matter, that it might not spread and be believed by the people; they agreed upon this, as the best expedient, to bribe the soldiers to give a false account of it, as they did:

they gave large money unto the soldiers,

or “sufficient money”; they gave large sums of money, as were enough to satisfy the soldiers; they gave them whatever they would have; for though these men were very covetous, yet upon this occasion gave liberally; and that perhaps which were for the sacrifices, or for the repair of the temple, or for the supply of the poor.

Matthew 28:13

Ver. 13. **Saying, say ye his disciples came by night,**

They charged them to tell every one that should ask them about this affair; and even publish it every where, that the disciples of Christ came in the dead of the night,

and stole him away while we slept:

which was a very unlikely thing, and a foolish scheme this, for such a body of men to form. There is no show of probability in it, that the disciples, who were intimidated by the taking and putting Christ to death, and were now shut up in a house, for fear of the Jews, that these should venture out in the night, to take away the body of Christ, which was decently and honourably interred in a garden of one of his disciples: and when they knew it was guarded by a company of Roman soldiers; and who besides had no notion of his resurrection from the dead, nor never thought of it till he was risen, and therefore would never attempt any thing of this kind, in order to give out such a report. Moreover, had they took it away by stealth, it is not reasonable to think that they would

afterwards have reported such a lie every where, that he was risen from the dead, when they were sure to obtain nothing by it, but reproach, afflictions, persecutions, and death: add to this, that this was never objected to them by their worst enemies, when they most strongly asserted his resurrection: nor was it a feasible account, or well put together, with respect to the watch. It can hardly be thought that they should be all of them asleep at once; and if they were, it is much they were not awaked by the coming up of the disciples, and the rolling away of the stone, and the bustle there must be in taking up the body, and carrying it away; and besides, if they were asleep, and continued so, what is their evidence good for? for how could they know that his disciples came and took him away? if they awaked, though too late, and saw them at a distance, why did not they pursue them, who might easily have been overtaken with such a burden? at least, why did not they search their houses for the body? and take up both the women and the disciples, and prosecute them for it? and yet nothing of this was done. Besides, how came the linen clothes to be left behind? why did they take the napkin from his head, and give themselves all that trouble to unwrap the body, and carry it away naked? It is clear the chief priests themselves were convinced in their own minds, that he was truly risen, or they would have punished the soldiers severely for their sleep and negligence, and would never have given them money to spread such a story.

Matthew 28:14

Ver. 14. **And if this come to the governor’s ears,**

Not the governor of the watch, but Pontius Pilate the governor of Judea: if this should be told him, and should be heard by him; or this matter should come before him, and be under his examination, and there should be any danger of punishment; for to sleep on the watch was severely punished by the Romans:

we will, persuade him;

that this is the true state of the case, and intercede with him, and make use of all our interest, not to punish for it: or will persuade him, that though this is a false account, yet it will be much better that it should go in this way, for his own peace, and the peace of the nation, and the security of the Roman government; since, should it spread among the people, that this person was really raised from the dead, they would, one and all, believe he was the true Messiah, and would set him up as a king, and seize upon the government in favour of him:

and will secure you;

indemnify you, bear you harmless, keep you from punishment; so that you need not be under any care, or concern on this account.

Matthew 28:15

Ver. 15. **So they took the money, and did as they were taught,**

Though they had been just now in the greatest fright and consternation imaginable, at the sight of the angel, and knew what was done; yet being men of no religion or conscience, were tempted with the money, and took it, and reported every where what had been put into their mouths by the chief priests and elders.

And this saying is commonly reported among the Jews unto this day;

to the time that Matthew wrote this Gospel; which according to the subscriptions to a most ancient copy of Beza’s, and the Syriac and Arabic versions of De Dieu, was in the “eighth” year after our Lord’s ascension; though others make it to be the “ninth”; and others the “fifteenth”. The sense is, not that this narrative the evangelist gives, that the sanhedrim bribed the soldiers to give out such a lying story, was known to the Jews, and commonly reported by them; though some take this to be the sense; but that it was reported and believed among the Jews in common, to that time, that the disciples of Christ did really come in the night, and steal away the body of Christ, while the watch slept: to such judicial blindness, and hardness of heart, were they given up, as to believe a lie, and which had no appearance of truth in it. They have since contrived a more monstrous and ridiculous story than this. They say ¹⁶⁹⁹, that Judas, seeing where the body was laid, and the disciples sitting upon the tomb, and mourning over it, in the middle of the night, took his opportunity to take away the body, and buried it in his own garden, under a current of water; having first turned the water another way, and then put it in the same course as before; and which he afterwards discovered to the Jews; and the body was taken up and exposed, and insulted in the most ignominious manner: but alas! Judas had hanged himself some days before; and had he been living, would not have been capable of doing what they ascribe unto him.

Matthew 28:16

Ver. 16. **Then the eleven disciples,**

For Judas was not only gone from them, but was dead; so that there were now but eleven of them:

went away into Galilee:

¹⁶⁹⁹ Toldos Jesu, p. 18, 19, 21.

not directly, as soon as the women had delivered their message; for Christ appeared to them the same day at Jerusalem; and so he did at the same place that week; see Joh 20:19, but some time, after this they went together into Galilee, according to Christ's direction both before and after his resurrection, Mt 26:32,

into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them;

either before his death, or since he was risen; and very likely at one of the above interviews he had with them. This is generally thought to be Mount Tabor; but of this there is no proof, nor certainty: it might be the mountain near Capernaum, on which he taught, Mt 5:1, or that, if not the same with the other, near the sea of Galilee, where Christ fed four thousand with seven loaves, and a few fishes, Mt 15:29. A mountain was appointed for this meeting, both for solitariness and for sight; for here it was he was seen by above five hundred brethren at once, 1Co 15:6.

Matthew 28:17

Ver. 17. **And when, they saw him, they worshipped him,....** With divine adoration, as the eternal Son of God; for so he was now declared to be by his resurrection from the dead, Ro 1:4,

but some doubted;

or "some of them", as the Syriac and Arabic versions render it; that is, some of the eleven disciples: not that they doubted now that Christ was risen from the dead; since he had appeared several times to them before this, and had given them all the proofs of the truth of his resurrection they could desire; but they, who worshipped him now in Galilee, had doubted before in Jerusalem; not only Thomas, but all of them: they looked upon the words of the women as idle tales; nor did the rest believe the two disciples, with whom Christ travelled to Emmaus: wherefore he upbraids them for their unbelief, Luke 24:11, or else the sense is, that some of them, though they believed Christ was risen from the dead, of which they had had the strongest assurance; yet they doubted whether what they then saw on the mountain was he, or whether it was not a spirit, or a mere phantom; and therefore, as in the next verse, he "came" nearer to them, when they knew him: or else this may be understood of some of the seventy disciples, or of the five hundred brethren, who saw him at this time, and at first had some doubts of his resurrection, but were afterwards fully satisfied.

Matthew 28:18

Ver. 18. **And Jesus came and spake unto them,**

To the eleven disciples and apostles; for though there might be so large a number as before observed, yet the following words were only spoken to the apostles:

saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth;

which is to be understood of him, not as God, who has the same original and underived power and authority over all creatures, and things in heaven and earth, as the Father has; but as mediator, to whom all things are delivered by the Father; and not of a power of doing this, or the other thing, or of omnipotence, being the Almighty; nor of doing miracles, and forgiving sins, which he had, and exercised before his death and resurrection, but of governing: he was king before, but his kingdom was not with observation; but now he was declared, and made manifest, to be both Lord and Christ; he had "all" power and authority for the settling the affairs of his church and kingdom, to appoint offices and officers in it, and, to bestow gifts upon men, to qualify them for the same, and to institute ordinances to be observed till his second coming: and this power of his reached to things in heaven; he having the angels in heaven subject to him, as ministering spirits to be sent forth by him at his pleasure; and all the gifts of the Spirit to dispose of as he thought good; and to things on earth, not only to the saints, whose King he is, and who are made willing to serve him; but to all flesh, to kings and princes, who rule and reign by him; and even to all the wicked of the world, who in some shape or another are made to subserve the ends of his mediatorial kingdom and government: and this is not usurped power, but what is given him, and what he has a right to exercise; having finished sin, abolished death, overcome the world, and destroyed the devil; and must reign till all enemies are subject to him: and this he says, and it was necessary to say it at this time, partly on account of his late sufferings and death, which were attended with weakness and reproach; and partly on account of the following commission he gives to his disciples, that it might be seen and believed, he had power and authority sufficient to give them such an one; as also to animate and encourage them under all the weakness, contempt, and persecution that should attend them in their ministry. The Syriac and Persic versions add, "as the Father hath sent me, even so I send you", as in Joh 20:21, from whence these words seem to be taken.

Matthew 28:19

Ver. 19. **Go ye therefore,....**

Into all the world; some into one place, and some

into another; since his power and authority, and so now the commission he gave them, reached every where: before it was confined to Judea, but now it is extended to all the nations of the world; see Mt 10:6,

and teach all nations;

Jews and Gentiles, first the one, and then the other, the doctrines of the Gospel, and the ordinances of it; whatever they had learned from Christ, or were ordered by him, or "disciple all nations": make them disciples by teaching them; or, as the Persic version, by way of explanation, adds, "bring them to my religion and faith": not that they were able to do this of themselves, but they were to teach men externally, or outwardly minister the word, whilst the Spirit of God internally applied it, and taught, and made men true disciples of Christ: and they are such, who have learned to know themselves, their sin, and lost estate by nature; to deny themselves, both sinful and righteous self; who have learnt to know Christ, and the way of righteousness, peace, pardon, life, and salvation by him; and who are taught and enabled to part with all for Christ, and to bear all for his sake, and to believe in him, and give up themselves to him, and follow him whithersoever he goes:

baptizing them;

not all nations, for the antecedent to the relative "them", cannot be "all nations"; since הַיְיָ אֱלֹהֵי אֲמֵנוּ, the words for "all nations", are of the neuter gender, whereas שְׂמָיָא, "them", is of the masculine: nor can it be thought that it should be the mind of Christ, that all the individuals of all nations should be baptized, as Heathens, Turks, and Jews; but תַּלְמִידָא "disciples", supposed and contained in the word תַּלְמִידָא, "teach", or "make disciples"; such as are taught, and made disciples by teaching, or under the ministry of the word by the Spirit of God: Christ's orders are to "baptize": טַבְּלוּ, "dip" them, as Munster's Hebrew Gospel renders it; that is, in water, which, though not expressed, is implied; for with no other baptism could the apostles baptize: not with the Holy Ghost, and with fire; for this was Christ's peculiar prerogative; but with water, which they in obedience to this commission practised, Ac 8:36, and which was to be done

in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;

by the authority of these three divine persons, who all appeared, and testified their approbation of the administration of this ordinance, at the baptism of Christ: and as they are to be invoked in it, so the persons baptized not only profess faith in each divine person, but are devoted to their service, and worship, and are laid under obliga-

tion to obedience to them, Hence a confirmation of the doctrine of the Trinity, there are three persons, but one name, but one God, into which believers are baptized; and a proof of the true deity both of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and that Christ, as the Son of God, is God; since baptism is administered equally in the name of all three, as a religious ordinance, a part of divine instituted worship, which would never be in the name of a creature. This is the first, and indeed the only, place in which the Trinity of persons is expressed in this order, and in the selfsame words. Galatinus¹⁷⁰⁰ pretends, that the ancient Jews used the same way of speaking. It would be well if proof could be made of it: he asserts it to be in Zohar on De 6:4, and in the Targum of Jonathan ben Uzziel on Isa 6:3. In the former he says, it is expressed thus, "hear, O Israel; the Lord", he is called "the Father; our God", he is called the Son; "is one Lord", this is "the Holy Ghost", who proceeds from both; and again, by the same R. Simeon, it is said, "holy", this is אב, "the Father"; "holy", this is בן, "the Son"; "holy", this is רוּחַ הַקֹּדֶשׁ, "the Holy Ghost": and in the latter after this manner, "Holy Father, Holy Son, and Holy Holy Ghost"; but no such words are now to be found in either of these places. He affirms, that he himself saw a copy of Jonathan's Targum that had these words. The Jews often speak of the Tetragrammaton, or name of four letters, the name Jehovah, which they say is not lawful to be pronounced; and also of the name of twelve letters, which the above writer¹⁷⁰¹ makes to be "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost"; and of forty two letters, which from a book called Gale Razia, he says is,

"Father God, Son God, Holy Ghost God, three in one, and one in three;"

which in the Hebrew language make up so many letters; but this wants better authority.

Matthew 28:20

Ver 20. **Teaching them to observe all things,**

All ordinances, not only baptism, but the Lord's supper; all positive institutions, and moral duties; all obligations, both to God and men; all relative duties that respect the world, or one another, those that are without, and those that are within; and these are to be taught them, and therefore to be insisted on in the ministry of the word; and not merely in order that they may know them, and have the theory of them, but that they may put them into practice:

1657 L. 2. c. 1.

1701 Ib. c. 11, 12. Vid. Buxtorf. Lex. Heb. in voce הוה

whatsoever I have commanded you;

every thing that Christ has commanded, be it what it will, and nothing else; for Christ's ministers are not to teach for doctrines the commandments of men; or enjoin that on the churches, which is of their own, or other men's devising, and was never ordered by Christ; and for their encouragement he adds,

and lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world:

meaning, not merely to the end of their lives, which would be the end of the world to them; nor to the end of the Jewish world, or state, which was not a great way off, though this is sometimes the sense of this phrase; but to the end of the world to come, the Gospel church state, which now took place; or to the end of the present world, the universe: not that the apostles should live to the end of it; but that whereas Christ would have a church and people to the end of the world, and the Gospel and the ordinances of it should be administered so long, and there should be Gospel ministers till that time; Christ's sense is, that he would grant his presence to them, his immediate disciples, and to all that should succeed them in future generations, to the end of time: and which is to be understood not of his corporeal presence, which they should not have till then, but of his spiritual presence; and that he would be with them, in a spiritual sense, to assist them in their work, to comfort them under all discouragements, to supply them with his grace, and to protect them from all enemies, and preserve from all evils; which is a great encouragement both to administer the word and ordinances, and attend on them.

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Appendix 1**Firstborn** Matthew 1:25

Faulty versions omit the term "first born son" of Mary and by its omission endorses the Roman Catholic doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary.

Correct Versions

(KJV) And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

(1611 KJV) And knewe her not, till shee had brought forth her first borne sonne, and he called his name Iesus.

(1587 Geneva Bible) But he knew her not, til she had broght forth her first borne sonne, & he called his name Iesus.

(1526 Tyndale) and knewe her not tyll she had brought forth hir fyrst sonne and called hys name Iesus.

Counterfeit Versions

(1901 ASV) and knew her not till she had brought forth a son: and he called his name JESUS.

(CEB) But he didn't have sexual relations with her until she gave birth to a son. Joseph called him Jesus.

(CEV) But they did not sleep together before her baby was born. Then Joseph named him Jesus.

(ERV) But Joseph did not have sexual relations with her until her son was born. And he named him Jesus.

(ESV) but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

(GNB) But he had no sexual relations with her before she gave birth to her son. And Joseph named him Jesus.

(HCSB) but did not know her intimately until she gave birth to a son. And he named Him Jesus.

(NASB) But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

(NIV) But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

(RSV) but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus.

(NRSV) but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

(NAB-Roman Catholic) He had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him Jesus.

(NWT-Jehovah's Witness) But he had no intercourse with her until she gave birth to a son; and he called his name Jesus.

Textus Receptus - Traditional Text

kai ouk eginwsken authn ewV ou eteken ton uion authV ton prwtokon kai ekalesen to onoma autou ihsoun

Hort-Westcott - Critical Text

kai ouk eginwsken authn ewV [ou] eteken uion kai ekalesen to onoma autou ihsoun

Corrupted Manuscripts

This verse is corrupted in the following manuscripts:

Aleph 01 - Sinaiticus - Nineteenth Century Counterfeit

B 03 - Vaticanus - Fourth century

1 (Minuscule) - Seventh century

13 (Minuscule) - Eighth century

33 (Minuscule) - Ninth Century

071 - Fifth/Sixth century

Manuscripts which agree with the Textus Receptus for this verse

Byzantine Text (450-1450 A.D.)

C 04 - Ephraemi Rescriptus - Fifth century

D 05 - Bezae Cantabrigiensis - Fifth century

K 017 - Ninth century

W 032 - Fourth/fifth century

Delta 037 - Ninth century

PI-041 - Ninth century

28 (Minuscule) - Eleventh century

565 - (Minuscule) - Ninth century

700 - (Minuscule) Eleventh century

892 - (Minuscule) - Ninth century

1010 - (Minuscule) - Twelfth Century

1079 - (minuscule) - Tenth Century

1241 - (Minuscule) - Twelfth century

Published Critical Greek Texts with Corruptions

Omit "her firstborn"

Lachmann, Karl - 1842

Tischendorf, Constantine - 1869

Tregelles, Samuel - 1857

Alford, Henry - 1849 revised in 1871

Westcott and Hort - 1881

Weiss, Bernhard - 1894

Nestle - 1927 as revised in seventeenth edition in 1941

Nestle-Aland - 1979 - Twenty Sixth Edition

Nestle-Aland - 1993 - Twenty Seventh Edition

United Bible Societies - 1983 - Fourth Edition

Von Soden, Freiherr - 1902

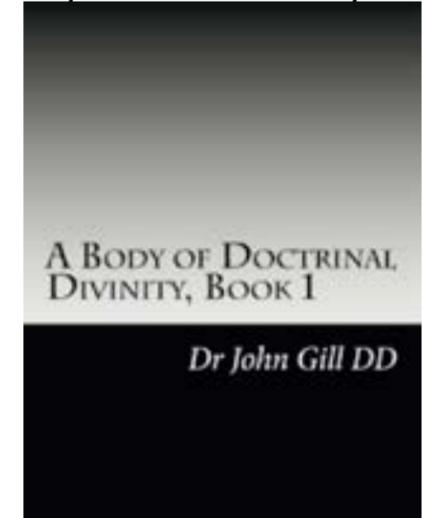
Affected Teaching

The Greek word for "firstborn" is omitted in both (B) and (Aleph). By removing this word in the modern versions, it endorses the Roman Catholic doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary. The word "firstborn" automatically indicates that Mary did have other children and the Bible tells us that she did in the following:

(Mark 6:2-3 KJV) And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? {3} Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.

By removing the word "firstborn" it can also set up erroneous beliefs that Mary had children before she had Jesus. That word "firstborn" is pivotal to the doctrine of the Virgin Birth. The removal of this word is a serious breach of truth and can lead to the denial of the Virgin Birth of Christ. If Christ was not born of a Virgin, then we will still be in our sins and bound for Hell. The modern versions, along with the Jehovah's Witness version, all agree with the Roman Catholic Institution's teaching that Mary was a perpetual Virgin. For someone to say that the modern versions do not stem from Roman Catholic Manuscripts is willful denial of the truth, keep in mind the two manuscripts which omit "Firstborn." The two are Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, both manuscripts were in the hands of the Roman Church, yet have become the primary manuscripts underlying the modern versions.

So tonight or tomorrow when your Pastor reads the narrative about the birth of Jesus from the book of Matthew in a modern version, then realize he is perpetuating the Roman Catholic error of the perpetual virginity of Mary which has caused many true Christians to be put to death under their inquisition because they refused to believe what was false in light of Mark 6:1-3.

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9 Of The Omniscience Of God.

10 Of The Wisdom Of God.

11 Of The Will Of God And The Sovereignty Of It

12 Of The Love Of God

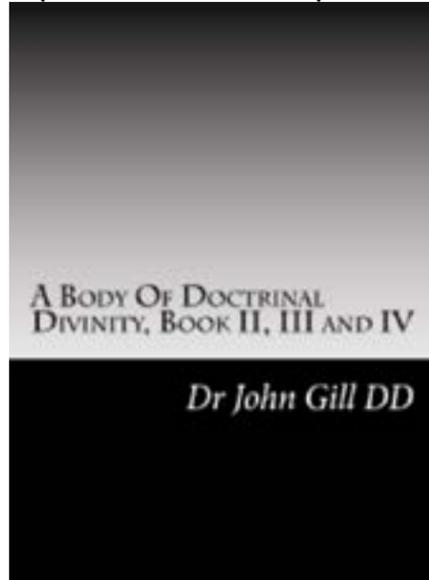
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 30 Of The Distinct Personality, And Deity Of The Son.
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 4 Of The Eternal Union Of The Elect Of God Unto Him.
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 9 Of The Part The Son Of God, The Second Person, Has Taken In The Covenant.
 10 Of Christ, As The Covenant Head Of The Elect
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Contents Book IV.

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Chapter

- 1 Of The Manifestation And Administration Of The Covenant Of Grace
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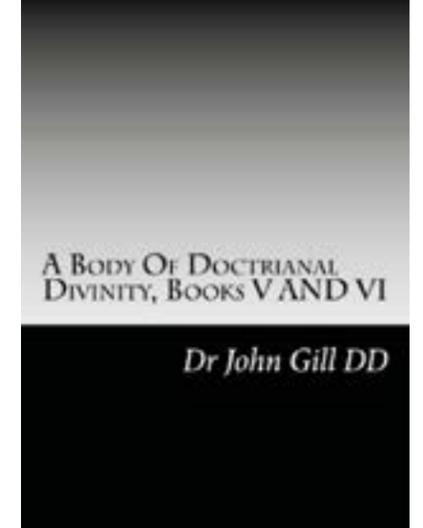
Table of Contents Book V

- 1 Of The Incarnation Of Christ
 2 Of Christ's State Of Humiliation
 3 Of The Active Obedience Of Christ In His State Of Humiliation
 4 Of The Passive Obedience Of Christ, Or Of His Sufferings And Death
 5 Of The Burial Of Christ
 6 Of The Resurrection Of Christ From The Dead.
 7 Of The Ascension Of Christ To Heaven
 8 Of The Session Of Christ At The Right Hand Of God

God

- 9 Of The Prophetic Office Of Christ
 10 Of The Priestly Office Of Christ
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 14 Of The Spiritual Reign Of Christ

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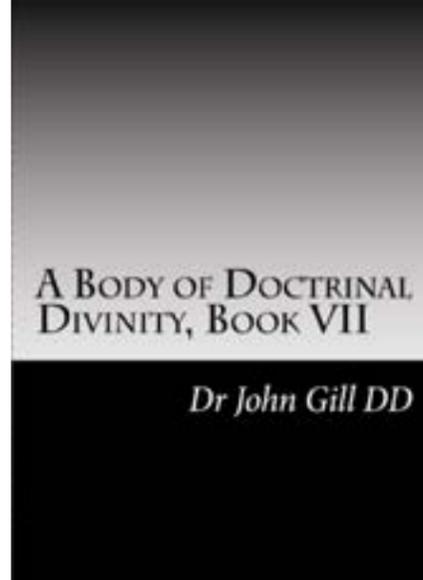
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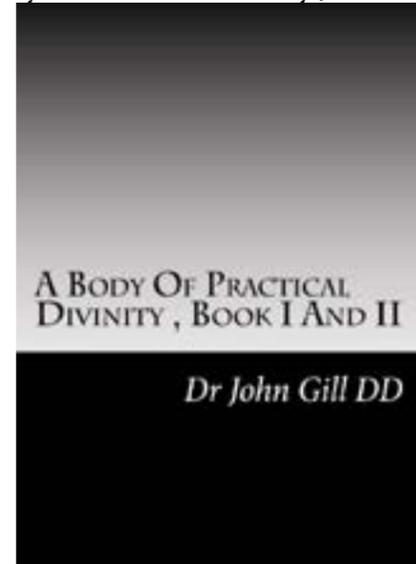
Book VII Contents

Chapter

1 Of The Death Of The Body
 2 Of The Immortality Of The Soul
 3 Of The Separate State Of The Soul Until The Resurrection, And Its Employment In That State
 4 Of The Resurrection Of The Body
 5 Of The Second Coming Of Christ, And His Personal Appearance
 6 of Of The Conflagration Of The Universe
 7 Of The New Heavens And Earth, And The Inhabitants Of Them.

8 Of The Millennium Or Personal Reign Of Christ
 With The Saints On The New Earth A
 Thousand Years
 9 Of The Last And General Judgment
 10 Of The Final State Of The Wicked In Hell
 11 Of The Final State Of The Saints In Heaven

A Body Of Practical Divinity , Book I, II



A System of Practical Truths

Authored by Dr John Gill DD,

Created by David Clarke Cert.Ed

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This reproduction of Dr John Gill's Body of Divinity is book I and II of Practical Divinity of total of IV books.

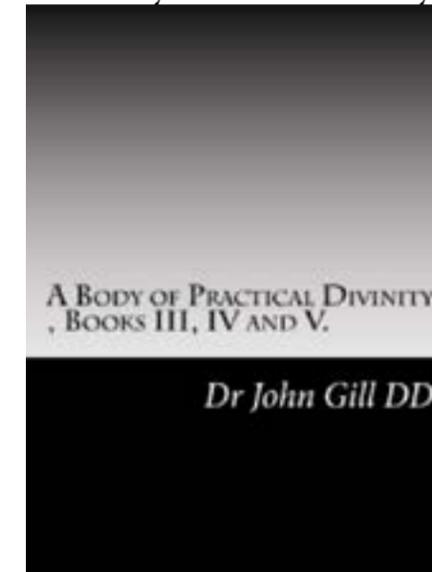
Contents Book I

Chapter

1 Of The Object Of Worship
 2 Of Internal Worship; And Of Godliness The Groundwork Of It.
 3 Of The Knowledge Of God
 4 Of Repentance Towards God
 5 Of The Fear Of God
 6 Of Faith In God And In Christ
 7 Of Trust And Confidence In God
 8 Of The Grace Of Hope
 9 Of The Grace Of Love
 10 Of Spiritual Joy
 11 Of Peace And Tranquility Of Mind
 12 Of Contentment Of Mind
 13 Of Thankfulness To God
 14 Of Humility

15 Of Self-Denial
 16 Of Resignation To The Will Of God
 17 Of Patience
 18 Of Christian Fortitude
 19 Of Zeal
 20 Of Wisdom Or Prudence
 21 Of Godly Sincerity
 22 Of Spiritual Mindedness
 23 Of A Good Conscience
 24 Of Communion With God
Book II Of External Worship, As Public
 Chapter
 1 Of The Nature Of A Gospel Church, The Seat Of Public Worship
 2 Of The Duties Of The Member Of A Church To Each Other
 3 Of The Officers Of A Church, Particularly Pastors
 4 Of The Duties Of Members Of Churches To Their Pastors
 5 Of The Office Of Deacons
 6 Of The Discipline Of A Church Of Christ

A Body of Practical Divinity , III, IV, V



A System of Practical Truths

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BISAC: Religion / Christian Theology / Systematic

Book III

Of The Public Ordinances Of Divine Worship

Chapter

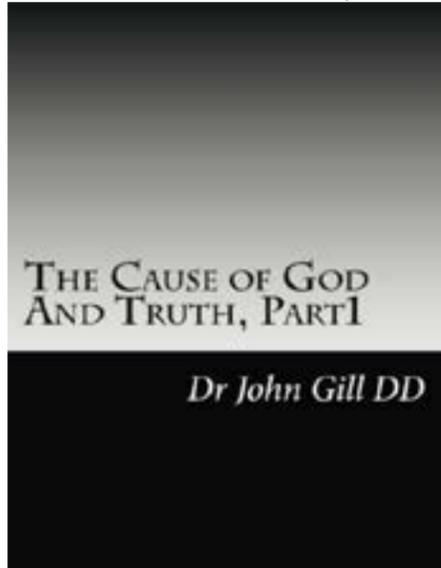
1 Of Baptism
 2 Of The Lord's Supper

3 Of The Public Ministry Of The Word
 4 Of Public Hearing The Work
 5 Of Public Prayer
 6 Of The Lord's Prayer
 7 Of Singing Psalms, As A Part Of Public Worship
 8 Of The Circumstances Of Public Worship, As To Place And Time Of Private Worship, Or Various Duties, Domestic, Civil, And Moral
Book IV
 Chapter
 1 Of The Respective Duties Of Husband And Wife
 2 Of The Respective Duties Of Parents And Children
 3 Of The Respective Duties Of Masters And Servants.
 4 Of The Respective Duties Of Magistrates And Subjects
 5 Of Good Works In General
 6 A Compendium Or Summary Of The Decalogue Or Ten Commands

Book V

Chapter

1 A Dissertation Concerning The Baptism Of Jewish Proselytes Of The Various Sorts Of Proselytes Among The Jews
 2 The Occasion Of This Dissertation
 3 The Proof Of The Baptism Of Jewish Proselytes Inquired Into; Whether There Is Any Proof Of It Before, At, Or Quickly After The Times Of John And Christ.
 4 The Proof Of This Custom Only From The Talmuds And Talmudical Writers
 5 The Reasons Why Christian Baptism Is Not Founded On And Taken From, The Pretended Jewish Baptism Of Israelites And Proselytes

The Cause of God And Truth, Part 1

Authored by Dr John Gill DD, Created by David Clarke CertEd

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Contents

Sections 1-60 Scriptural Passages

Genesis 4:7

Genesis 6:3.

Deuteronomy 5:29.

Deuteronomy 8:2.

Deuteronomy 30:19.

Deuteronomy 32:29.

Psalm 81:13, 14.

Psalm 125:3.

Psalm 145:9.

Proverbs 1:22-30.

Isaiah 1:16, 17.

Isaiah 1:18, 19.

Isaiah 5:4.

Isaiah 30:15.

Isaiah 55:1.

Isaiah 55:6.

Isaiah 55:7.

Jeremiah 4:4.

Ezekiel 18:24.

Ezekiel 18:30.

Ezekiel 18:31&32.

Ezekiel 24:13.

Matthew 5:13.

Matthew 11:21, 23.

Matthew 23:37.

Matthew 25:14-30.

Luke 19:41, 42.

John 1:7.

John 5:34.

John 5:40.

John 12:32.

Acts 3:19.

Acts 7:51.

Romans 5:18.

Romans 11:32.

Romans 14:15.

1 Corinthians 8:11.

1 Corinthians 10:12.

2 Corinthians 5:14,15.

2 Corinthians 5:19.

2 Corinthians 6:1.

2 Corinthians 11:2, 3.

Philippians 2:12.

1 Timothy 1:19, 20.

1 Timothy 2:4.

1 Timothy 4:19.

Titus 2:11, 12.

The Epistle to the Hebrews.

Hebrews 2:9.

Hebrews 6:4-6.

Hebrews 10:26-29.

Hebrews 10:38.

2 Peter 1:10.

2 Peter 2:1.

2 Peter 2:20-22.

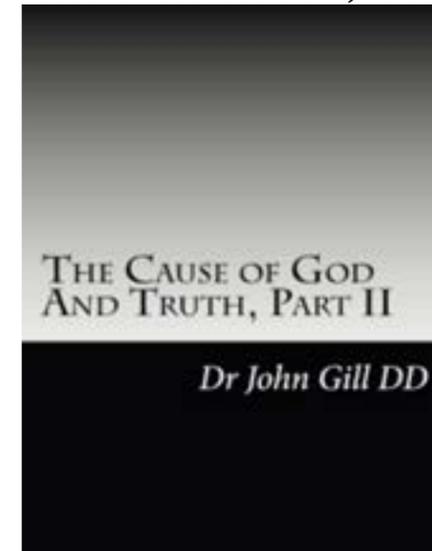
2 Peter 3:9.

1 John 2:2.

Jude 1:21.

Revelation 2 and Revelation 3.

Revelation 3:20.

The Cause of God And Truth, Part II

Authored by Dr John Gill DD, Created by David Clarke CertEd

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BISAC: Religion / Christian Theology / Systematic

This is volume 2 of this 4 part series and it should be known that the following work was undertaken and begun about the year 1733 or 1734, at which time Dr. Whitby's Discourse on the Five Points was reprinting, judged to be a masterpiece on the subject, in the English tongue, and accounted an unanswerable one ; and it was almost in the mouth of every one, as an objection to the Calvinists, Why do not ye answer Dr. Whitby ? Induced hereby, I determined to give it another reading, and found myself inclined to answer it, and thought this was a very proper and seasonable time to engage in such a work. In the year 1735, the First Part of this work was published, in which are considered the several passages of Scripture made use of by Dr. Whitby and others in favour of the

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Contents

Chapter 1

OF REPROBATION

Proverbs 16:4.

John 12:39, 40.

1 Peter 2:8.

Jude 1:4.

Revelation 13:8.

Chapter 2

OF ELECTION

1 Peter 2:9.

Romans 9:10-13.

Colossians 3:12.

Ephesians 1:4.

Romans 8:28, 29.

John 6:37.

Acts 8:48.

Romans 8:29, 30.

2 Timothy 2:19.

Romans 5:19.

Chapter 3

OF REDEMPTION

Matthew 20:28.

John 10:15.

John 17:9.

Romans 8:34.

Romans 8:32.

Romans 5:10.

John 15:13.

Chapter 4

OF EFFICACIOUS GRACE

Ephesians 1:19, 20.

1 Corinthians 5:17.

John 3:5.

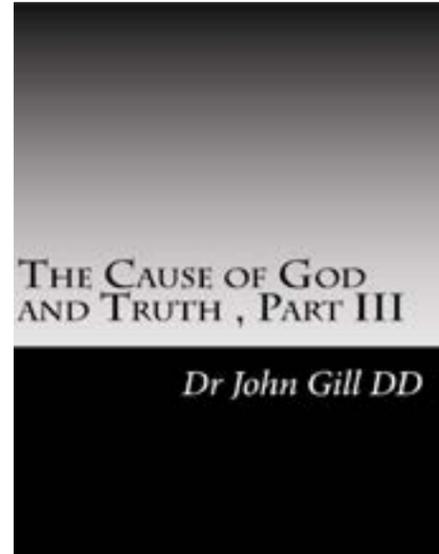
Ephesians 2:1.

1 Corinthians 2:14.

2 Corinthians 3:5.

John 15:5.
 John 6:44.
 Acts 11:18.
 Acts 16:14.
 Jeremiah 31:18.
 Jeremiah 31:33.
 Ezekiel 11:36:26.
 Philippians 2:13.
 1 Corinthians 4:7.
 Ephesians 2:8, 9.
 Chapter 5
 OF THE CORRUPTION OF HUMAN NATURE
 John 14:4
 Psalm 51:5.
 Genesis 6:5.
 John 3:6.
 Romans 7:18, 19.
 Romans 8:7, 8.
 Chapter 6
 OF PERSEVERANCE
 John 13:1.
 John 17:12.
 Romans 11:29.
 Matthew 24:24.
 John 6:39, 40.
 Romans 11:2.
 Romans 8:38, 39.
 Ephesians 1:13, 14.
 1 Peter 1:5.
 1 John 2:19.
 1 John 3:9.
 Isaiah 54:10.
 Isaiah 59:21.
 Hosea 2:19, 20.
 Jeremiah 32:40.
 John 14:16.
 John 10:28.
 1 Corinthians 1:8, 9.

The Cause of God and Truth Part III:



The Doctrines of Grace
 Authored by Dr John Gill DD, Authored by David
 Clarke CetEd
 List Price: \$9.99
 8.5" x 11" (21.59 x 27.94 cm)
 Black & White on White paper
 108 pages
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 ISBN-10: 1544810598
 BISAC: Religion / Christian Theology / Systematic
 This book contains John Gill's answers to Dr Whitby
 objections to The Doctrines of Grace under the follow-
 ing heads.

Chapter	
1	Of Reprobation.
2	Of Election and Reprobation.
3	Of Redemption.
4	Of Efficacious grace.
5	Of The Freedom of the Will of Man.
6	Of The Perseverance of the Saints
7	Of The Prescience and Providence of God.
8	Of The State and Case of the Heathens.

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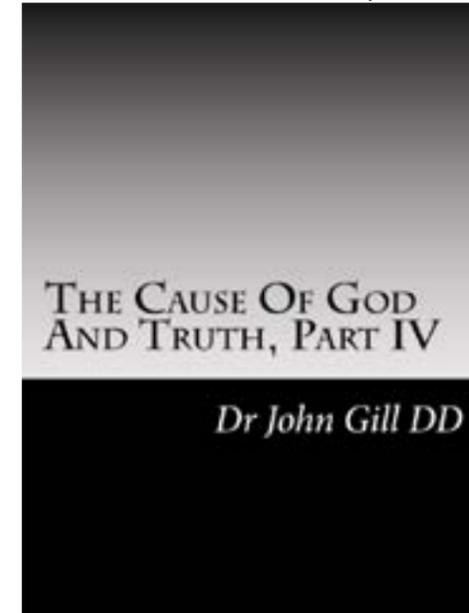
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In the year 1735, the First Part of this work was published, in which are considered the several passages of Scripture made use of by Dr. Whitby and others in favour of the Universal Scheme, and against the Calvinistical Scheme, in which their arguments and objections are answered, and the several passages set in a just and proper light. These, and what are contained in the following Part in favour of the Particular Scheme, are extracted from Sermons delivered in a Wednesday evening's lecture.

The Second Part was published in the year 1736, in which the several passages of Scripture in favour of special and distinguishing grace, and the arguments from them, are vindicated from the exceptions of the Arminians, and particularly from Dr. Whitby, and a reply made to answers and objections to them.

The Third Part was published in 1737.

The Cause Of God And Truth, Part IV



Authored by Dr John Gill DD, Created by David
 Clarke CertEd

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 BISAC: Religion / Christian Theology / Systematic

It should be known by the reader, that the following work was undertaken and begun about the year 1733 or 1734, at which time Dr. Whitby's Discourse on the Five Points was reprinting, judged to be a masterpiece on the

subject, in the English tongue, and accounted an unanswerable one ; and it was almost in the mouth of every one, as an objection to the Calvinists, Why do not ye answer Dr. Whitby ? Induced hereby, I determined to give it another reading, and found myself inclined to answer it, and thought this was a very proper and seasonable time to engage in such a work.

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The Second Part was published in the year 1736, in which the several passages of Scripture in favour of special and distinguishing grace, and the arguments from them, are vindicated from the exceptions of the Arminian, and particularly from Dr. Whitby, and a reply made to answers and objections to them.

The Third Part was published in 1737, and is a confutation of the arguments from reason used by the Arminians, and particularly by Dr. Whitby, against the above doctrines ; and a vindication of such as proceed on rational accounts in favour of them, in which it appears that they are no more disagreeable to right reason than to divine revelation ; to the latter of which the greatest deference should be paid, though the Rationalists of our age too much neglect it, and have almost quitted it ; but to the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them.

In this part of the work is considered the agreement of the sentiments of Mr. Hobbes and the Stoic philosophers with those of the Calvinists, in which the difference between them is observed, and the calumny removed ; to which is added, a Defence of the Objections to the Universal Scheme, taken from the prescience and the providence of God, and the case of the Heathens.

The Fourth Part was published in 1738, in which the sense of the ancient writers of the Christian Church, before the times of Austin, is given ; the importance and consequence of which is shown, and that the Arminians have very little reason to triumph on that account.

This work was published at a time when the nation was greatly alarmed with the growth of Popery, and several learned gentlemen were employed in preaching against some particular points of it ; but the author of

this work was of opinion, that the increase of Popery was greatly owing to the Pelagianism, Arminianism, and other supposed rational schemes men run into, contrary to divine revelation, This was the sense of our fathers in the last century, and therefore joined these and Popery together in their religious grievances they were desirous of having redressed ; and indeed, instead of lopping off the branches of Popery, the axe should be laid to the root of the tree, Arminianism and Pelagianism, the very life and soul of Popery.

This is Part 4 of 4 parts, and a new edition, with some alterations and improvements, is now published by request.

This work contains:

Chapter

1 Of Predestination

2 Of Redemption

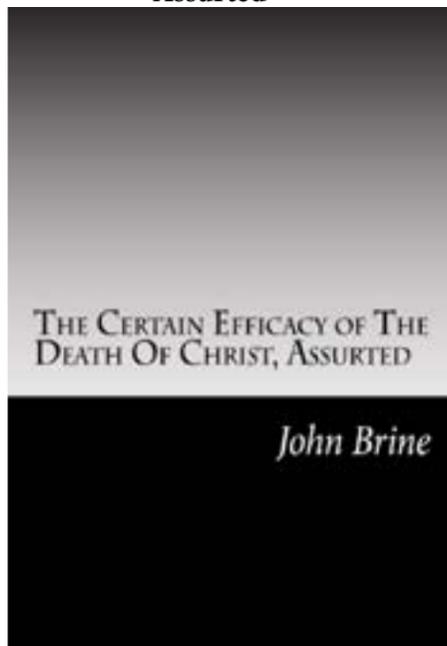
3 Or Original Sin

4 Of Efficacious Grace

5 Of Perseverance

6 Of The Heathens A Vindication of The Cause of God and Truth

The Certain Efficacy of The Death Of Christ, Assured



Authored by John Brine

Created by David Clarke

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Black & White on White paper

114 pages

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BISAC: Religion / Christian Theology / Soteriology

This work declares the Glory of God in all his Perfections, the Honour of Christ, and the eternal Happiness of his People, all of which are intimately concerned in them. This is treated in four parts: In the First John Brine endeavours to prove the limited Extent of the Death of CHRIST, and the certain Salvation of all those for whom he died.

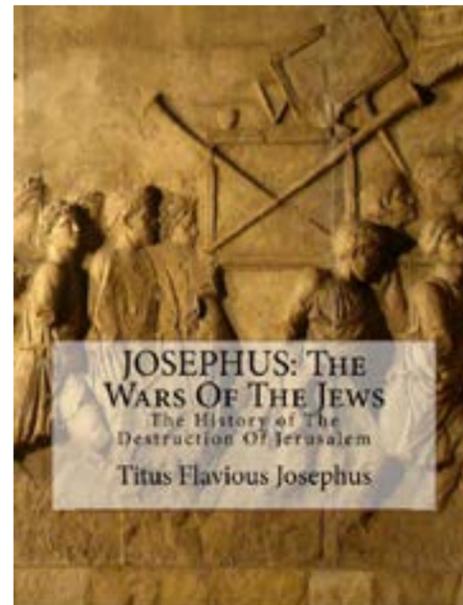
In the Second, the Objections which are usually urged by the Arminians, and others, will be answered.

In the Third shall attempt to prove the Impossibility of the Salvation of the Non-Elect, upon the Supposition of no other than a conditional Provision of Salvation being made for them.

In the Fourth Part shall attend to what he delivers on the Subjects of the Imputation of original Sin to Men, the Charge of Sin on CHRIST, and the Imputation of his Righteousness to his People.

This has been republished by Bierton Particular Baptists to further the cause of God and truth, it opposes Arminianism, Islam, and duty faith.

Josephus: The Wars Of The Jews



The History of The Destruction Of Jerusalem

Authored by Titus Flavius Josephus, Designed by William Winston

ISBN-13: 978-1985029132 (CreateSpace-Assigned)

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BISAC: Religion / Christianity / History / General

Josephus was an eye witness to those events that he records in this book, 'The Wars of The Jews', or 'The History of The Destruction Of Jerusalem'.

He records historic events that took place during and after the times of the New Testament scriptures.

The book of Revelation was a prophecy, given to Jesus Christ, and published by the Apostle John, about those things that were shortly to come to pass in his day.

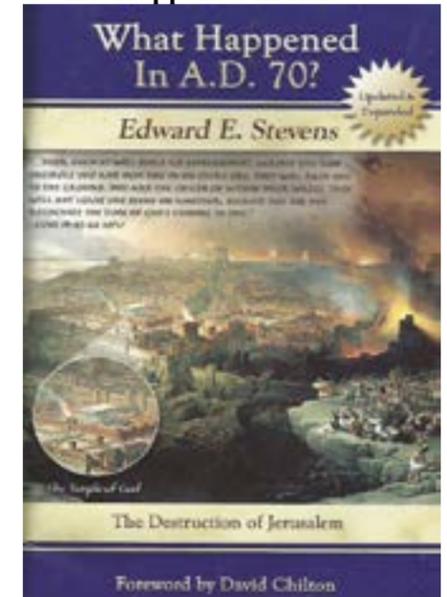
From the internal evidence of the book Revelation was written before the Neuronc persecution, of 66 A.D. and before the fall off Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple, in 70. A.D. This is because the book records that the temple in Jerusalem was still standing at the time the book was written and not around 95 A.D. as Eusebius mistakenly says.

The historic events that Josephus records are remarkable as they give evidence to the fulfillment of Prophecy given by the Lord Jesus in his Olivet prophecy. In fact the book of Revelation was a prophecy of those events that were shortly to come to pass when Jesus spoke to John who wrote the Revelation. Jesus had informed his Apostles about future events and they lived in expectation of there fulfillment in their day.

Josephus gives the historic evidence of the fulfillment of those prophecies and that confirms scripture fulfillment.

We recommend the James Stuart Russell's book, 'The Parousia' as a very good introduction to this subject and advertised at the back of this book in our Further Publications.

What Happened In A.D. 70?



This book introduces a view of Bible prophecy which many have found extremely helpful in their Bible study. It explains the end time riddles which have always bothered students of Bible prophecy. It is a *consistent view* which makes the book of Revelation much easier to understand. It establishes when the New Testament canon of scripture was completed, demolishes the liberal attack on the inspiration of the New Testament, and is more *conservative* on most other issues than traditional views. And there is *no compromise* of any essential Biblical doctrine of the Christian faith.

The key to understand any passage of scripture has always been a good grasp of the historical setting in which it was originally written (*audience relevance*). Two thousand yeas from now our history, culture, politics and language will have changed dramatically. Imagine someone then having to learn the ancient language of "American English" to read our USA newspapers! If they saw one of our political cartoons with a donkey and elephant, what would they think? How would they go about understanding it? Not only would they have to study the language, but also our culture, history, politics and economics. The same applies to Bible study. If we are really going to understand what all the "donkeys and elephants" (beasts, harlots, dragons, etc.) Symbolize in the book of Revelation, we will have to seriously and carefully study the language, history, culture and politics of the First Century. Of course, the truths essential for salvation are couched in simple language that everyone can grasp. But there are numerous scriptures in the Bible which are "hard to understand" (cf. 2 Pet 3:16), and Bible prophecy

is one of those things which must be approached with much more focus on the original historical art cultural context (audience relevance)

One of the main purposes of this book is to provide a closer look at the historical framework behind the New Testament. Many have found it helpful to lay aside (at least temporarily) the legion of speculative opinions about the book of Revelation, and look at a more historical alternative, which is that *the book of Revelation was written to the first century church and had primary relevance to them*. It warned of events that were about to happen in their lifetime, and prepared them for the tribulation and other events associated with the End of the Jewish Age.

Atheists, skeptics, Jew, Muslims, and liberal critics of the bible use the supposed failure of those end times events to occur in the First Century to undermine the integrity of Christ and the inspired NT writings.

Non-Christian Jews laugh at this supposed non-occurrence, and use it as evidence that Jesus is not the Messiah. Their forefathers in the flesh rejected Jesus in His first coming because He did not fulfill the Old Testament prophecies in the materialistic and nationalistic way that they were expecting, even though Jesus told them that His Kingdom was not of this world, and that it would be within them instead. Yet it seems that many futurists today are expecting that same kind of materialistic and nationalistic kingdom to arrive at a future return of Christ. Are they making the same mistake about the Second Coming that the Jews made about His first coming? Jesus repeatedly said His Kingdom is “not of this world” and that it would “not come with observation.” It is a spiritual entity, and it has arrived. We live in it. Both futurist Christians and non-Christian Jews need to realize this.

Christians are finally beginning to seek alternatives to the fatally flawed *futurist* interpretation. This book introduces the Preterist view.

“Preterist” simply means past in fulfillment. It means that Christ has already fulfilled His promise to return and consummate redemption in Himself and His ongoing spiritual kingdom (the church). We should be like the noble-minded Bereans and “search the scriptures daily to see whether these things are true” You might want to have your Bible open alongside as you read.

Edward E. Stevens

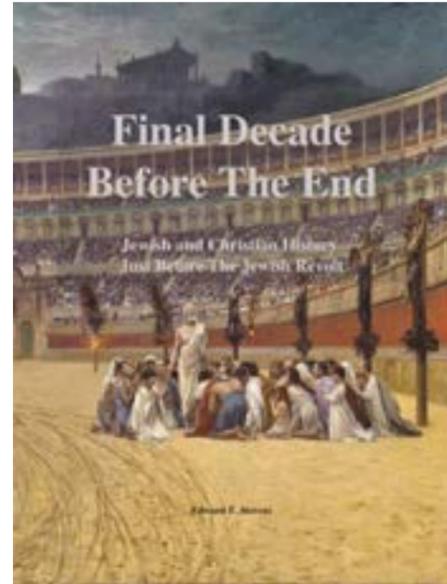
INTERNATIONAL PRETERIST ASSOCIATION

<https://www.preterist.org/>

Bradford, Pennsylvania

April 17,2010

Final Decade Before The End



INTRODUCTION

Ever since the booklet, **What Happened In AD 70?** was published in 1980, there have been constant requests for more detailed information about the Destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish, Roman, and Christian history associated with it. Over the years since then I have studied Josephus, Yosephus, Hegesippus, Tacitus, Suetonius, Eusebius, the Talmud, Midrash, Zohar, Pseudepigrapha, Church Fathers, Apocrypha, Dead Sea Scrolls and other Jewish/Christian writings, trying to determine exactly what happened, when it happened, and the effect it had upon the Church.

Then in 2002, after I began to promote J. S. Russell's view of a literal rapture, the demand for historical documentation of the fulfillment of all eschatological events dramatically increased. That forced me to dig much deeper. So in 2007 I put together a 21-page chronology of first century events. Two years later in 2009, we published a more substantial 73-page manuscript entitled, *First Century Events in Chronological Order*. That helped fill the void, but it did not go far enough. It only increased the appetite for a more detailed and documented historical reconstruction of first century events.

The book of Acts does not give a lot of details about the other Roman and Jewish events that were happening while Paul was on his various missionary journeys. For those events, we have to go to the other contemporary Jewish and Roman historians such as Josephus and Tacitus. The closer we get to AD 70, the more important all of those Jewish and Roman events become. They form an important backdrop behind the Christian events, and show how all the predictions made by Jesus were literal-

ly fulfilled. Every High Priest and Zealot leader that we encounter from AD 52 onwards are directly connected with the events of the Last Days. Things are heating up, not only for the Christians, but also for the Jews and the Romans.

Paul on his missionary journeys was clearly following a plan which was providentially arranged for him by Christ: (1) to plant new churches among all nations and not just Jews, (2) appoint elders and deacons in every church (Acts 14:23; 1 Cor. 4:17), (3) write inspired epistles to guide them, (4) instruct his fellow workers to “teach these things to faithful men who would be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2), and (5) establish the Gentiles in the Church and make them one united body with the Jews (Eph 4). Everywhere Paul went, he followed this pattern. We see this clearly as we study the historical narrative in Acts and Paul's other epistles that were written during this time. These are essential patterns that the apostles evidently bound upon both Gentile and Jewish Christians, and which were intended to be the pattern for all future generations of the eternal Church (Eph 3:21; 2Tim 2:2).

We begin our study by looking at the most likely dates for Matthew (AD 31-38) and Mark (AD 38- 44), and then proceed to the first three epistles of Paul (Galatians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians), which were written on his second missionary journey (AD 51-53). Including these five books in our study allows us to date all twenty-seven books of our New Testament, and show how the NT canon was formed and completed before the outbreak of the Jewish War in AD 66. The study of New Testament canonization in itself is a good reason for reading this work, without even looking at the historical fulfillment of all of the endtime prophecies that we document here.

After looking at the dates for those first five books, we then move on into the third missionary journey of Apostle Paul which began in AD 54. It was during this final dozen years (from AD 54 until AD 66) when the birth pangs and signs of the end started increasing in both intensity and frequency, along with a quickening pace of NT books being written. We show how 19 of our 27 NT books (70 percent) were written during those last five years just before the Neronian persecution (AD 60-64). The Great Commission was finished, and the rest of the endtime events predicted in the Olivet Discourse were fulfilled during that time of “tribulation” upon the church and the “days of vengeance” upon the unbelieving Jews (Luke 21:22).

Edward E. Stevens

INTERNATIONAL PRETERIST ASSOCIATION

<https://www.preterist.org/>

Bradford, Pennsylvania

April 17,2010