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THE
HISTORY
OF OUR
BLESSED LORD AND SAVIOUR
JESUS CHRIST:

WITH

*The Lives of the Holy Apostles, and their Successors
for three hundred years after the crucifixion.*

BY THOMPSON AND PRICE.



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BLESSED LORD AND SAVIOUR
JESUS CHRIST:

WITH THE
LIVES OF THE HOLY APOSTLES,
AND THEIR SUCCESSORS FOR THREE HUNDRED YEARS
AFTER THE CRUCIFIXION.

BY EBENEZER THOMPSON, D. D. AND WILLIAM C. PRICE, L. L. D.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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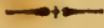


TO HIS GRACE

THE

LORD ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY,

Primate and Metropolitan of all England.



MY LORD,

THAT we have the Honor to dedicate this Work to your Grace, can be attributed only to the Respect we have for your truly dignified Character, and our unfeigned Zeal for the Propagation of that Religion, over which your Grace presides with such distinguished Propriety.

The superior Force of Example over Precept, will not be denied by any rational Man; and

every Person professing the Christian Religion will be free to acknowledge, that the Life of our BLESSED SAVIOUR exhibits the purest Pattern of Devotion, and the brightest Picture of every moral Excellence.

For a Series of near eighteen hundred Years the Christian World has had Reason to triumph in the glorious Dispensation of the Gospel, which is calculated, beyond every other System of Religion, to purify the Morals, refine the Mind, and gently lead us on to Immortality.

Your Grace cannot be unapprized, that many Books have been written on the Subject of which we propose to treat. It might seem invidious to say, that some of them are almost rendered useless by the Change that Time has made in our Language; and that others are totally disgusting, on Account of the injudicious Manner in which they have been executed.

If we have been more happy in the Compilation of a HISTORY of the LIFE of the GREAT REDEEMER of Mankind than our Predecessors, it must be attributed in part to the Advantage we have derived from the Works of former Writers, and partly to the improved State of the English Language, since any reputable Work of this Kind was written.

Your Grace will please to reflect, that the Age in which we live, has the Unhappiness to be marked with the Commission of Crimes of the utmost Magnitude :—To stop the Torrent of these Crimes, is it possible that we can apply a more effectual Remedy than the History of that SAVIOUR, who was all we can conceive of human Excellence, and who exhibited the divinest Pattern of supreme Perfection ?

If our Labors may, in any Degree, tend to advance the Study of those sacred Truths, on

which Christians rest their Hope, and in which, with good Reason, they have their fullest confidence, it will afford the highest Satisfaction to

Your GRACE'S most humble

and obedient Servants,

E. THOMPSON,

W. C. PRICE.



INTRODUCTION.



SINCE it is the duty of writers to impress on the minds of their readers the importance of the subject of which they treat ; and since no subject can be more important than that which will be comprized in the following pages, we think it our especial duty to lay before the reader an exhortation to the imitation of the life of that blessed Saviour, on whom, if he endeavors to copy his great example, he may rely with the most assured hope, and the fullest confidence.

The brightest of all patterns is that of the Redeemer of mankind : his conduct may be held forth for the imitation of all men ; and, however we may fail in our attempts to emulate his illustrious example, there can be no failure of duty in making those attempts ; for the brighter the example, and the more assiduously it be followed, the greater probability is there that we

shall approach that perfection, which it is equally our duty and our interest to imitate.

The character of our blessed Saviour has been very forcibly drawn by different writers, though none of them have been able to give a just picture of the divine original. From what they have written, and from our own study of the holy scriptures, we shall endeavor to place this picture in a light so strikingly amiable, that not to admire it must argue a total want of common sense, as well as an absolute indifference to our best and greatest interest.

Our Saviour was descended of a poor woman, and so humble was his state, that neither Jews, Gentiles, nor even the apostles themselves, could at first discern the essence of that divinity which afterwards became so conspicuous : but his life became greatly worthy of imitation, even from the confession of his professed enemies.—The wife of Pilate called him “ that *just* person ;” Pilate pronounced him “ *guiltless* ;” and Judas said he was “ *innocent*.” Thus we see, that though the preaching of Christ might be obnoxious to some, the force of his doctrine was generally confessed.

The example of our Saviour was great beyond all precedent. His piety was even and constant, without appearing to have any thing in it so extraordinary as might not have been imitated by the most humble of his followers. In the following history of his life, it will be seen that, though

he was free from sin, “ yet the instances of his
“ piety were the actions of a very holy, but of
“ an ordinary life ;” and the whole tenor of his
conduct tended to prove that he so conversed
with men, that they, by copying his great exam-
ple, might for ever converse with him.

It is observed by a wise and learned writer,
that “ We find some saints have had excrescen-
“ ces and eruptions of holiness in the instances
“ of uncommanded duties, which in the same
“ particulars we find not in the story of the life
“ of Jesus. John Baptist was a greater mortifi-
“ er than his Lord was ; and some princes have
“ given more money than all Christ’s family did
“ while he was alive. But the difference which
“ is observable is, that though some men did
“ some acts of counsel in order to attain that
“ perfection which in Jesus was essential and un-
“ alterable, and was not acquired by degrees,
“ and means of danger and difficulty ; yet no
“ man ever did his whole duty, save only the
“ holy Jesus.”

The best men, in all ages, have deviated some-
thing from the strict rule of propriety, from the
doctrine laid down by the great author of our
faith and salvation ; and have either, in the in-
temperance of their zeal, exceeded, or in the
indifference of their conduct, fallen short of the
duty enjoined. The very contrary is evident in
the life of JESUS, who, himself the pattern of all
perfection, recommended by his own conduct
the doctrines which he proposed should be obey-

ed. His doctrines were plain, easy to be followed, adapted to every understanding, and competent to every rational wish that can be formed by the human mind.

So truly exemplary is the life of Jesus, that it is in the highest degree attractive of our imitation, from its justice, temperance, chastity, piety, charity, and devotion. All his actions have such a super-excellence of merit, that not to endeavor an imitation of them, must argue the height of stupidity, and the blindest inattention to our immortal interest; and we ought to remember, for our consolation, that while we are endeavoring this imitation, every gracious allowance will be made for the frailties and infirmities of human nature, and that nothing farther will be expected from us, than, by God's goodness, we may be enabled to perform.

But we must remember, that all which was performed by Christ is not within the compass of our imitation. His abilities, his powers of mind and of body, were so greatly superior to those of a man merely mortal, that it would be presumption in us to attempt all that he carried into actual execution. Jesus, for instance, fasted forty days and forty nights. This would be an absolute impossibility for any man to do, and therefore it is not required that any man should attempt it. Christian fasts have in all ages been limited to the term of an artificial day; and we learn from the Jewish ritual, that, after fasting, they began to eat in the evening, as soon

as the stars made their appearance. We have no record that Jesus was ever seen to laugh, and but one instance that he is said to have "rejoiced in spirit:" but such is the frailty of our nature, that we could not sustain a perpetual gravity, but must have intervals of relaxation, and hours of recreation.

Still, however, it is worthy of remark, that it was but in a very few instances that our blessed Saviour deviated from the regular line of his common conduct and conversation; for as his life was to be held up as a pattern of imitation, he chose that the general tenor of his behaviour might be imitable even by the frail children of men. And here it may be noticed with propriety, that whatever he absolutely commanded, as well as whatever he actually performed in the mere line of moral duty, or in pursuance of the laws of nature, is held up as a pattern for our observance in the conduct of life. Thus far we are to tread in his footsteps, and imitate his practice.

It is farther worthy of remark, that, as our great Redeemer did some things which are altogether above our imitation, so we are bound to do others which cannot be copied from him: for some of our duties pre-supposing a state of sin, and others a temptation and a disposition towards it, we can, in these instances, learn only by precept, and not by the example of our Saviour, what is our duty to perform. It is our duty to repent, and perform acts of mortification and

self-denial. Our Saviour had nothing of which to repent, and his acts of austerity had reference only to the benign work of our redemption.

Let us reflect also, that the holy Jesus acted not in many stations to which important duties are annexed among the children of men. He was not a temporal prince ; his kingdom was *not of this world* ; nor did he act as a legislator, a merchant, or a professor of the law ; neither was he united in the bonds of marriage ; yet persons in all these situations are bound to imitate the example of the holy Jesus, in the purity of his manners, and the divine perfection of his life : in a word, let each one emulate, to his utmost power, the bright pattern, and endeavor to act, as far as is consistent with the frailty annexed to our mortal state, as they conceive their immaculate Director would have acted, had he been placed in a similar situation.

The substance of the Christian duty appears to consist in a determined resolution to follow the great example before us, and in no instance to depart from his precepts. We are to *walk as he walked* ; to make his unerring practice the rule of our conduct, and thereby to glorify him, as he glorified his almighty Father. In all our actions we should have a view to the honor of the Saviour, and disdain, above all things, the idea of bringing reproach on his sacred institution.

It is judiciously observed by a celebrated writer, that “ He that gives alms to the poor, takes

“ Jesus by the hand : he that patiently endures
“ injuries and affronts, helps him to bear his
“ cross ; he that bathes his own and his neigh-
“ bor’s sins in tears of penitence and compassion,
“ washes his Master’s feet.” Hence we are
taught the virtues of benevolence, patience, and
brotherly love, which it is equally our duty and
our interest to transplant into the practice of our
lives. The great duty of prayer is likewise in-
culcated in the most forcible manner by the ex-
ample of our Redeemer. His compassion to the
human race was unbounded, and his petitions
arose to the throne of God with an ardor and
effect altogether unexampled.

What then do we not owe to the Saviour who
has done so much for us, and has so plainly mark-
ed out the steps in which we may safely tread to
reach those blissful regions where all sin and sor-
row shall be done away, and tears be wiped for
ever from our eyes : where we may be admitted
to a communication with the just made perfect,
to the glorious assembly of saints and angels ;
and be permitted to sing eternal praises “ to him
“ that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb
“ for ever and ever !”

THE COMPLETE
H I S T O R Y
OF THE
L I F E A N D D E A T H
OF OUR
BLESSED SAVIOUR ;
WITH THE
LIVES, TRANSACTIONS, AND SUFFERINGS OF
HIS HOLY APOSTLES.

CHAPTER I.

The time of incarnation of our blessed Saviour. The birth of John the Baptist predicted. The characters of Zacharias and Elizabeth. David divides the Jewish priesthood into twenty-four courses. The angel appears to Zacharias, who is struck dumb. The conception of John the Baptist. The salutation of the angel to the Virgin Mary. The visitation of the blessed virgin to Elizabeth, which is returned. Elizabeth is delivered of a son. Zacharias recovers the use of the organs of speech and bearing. The education of John the Baptist.

FOUR thousand years after the creation, a wonderful combination of most extraordinary circumstances occurred, to verify the several predictions and prophecies respecting the birth of the great Messiah, the Saviour of mankind, and the restorer of human nature.

“ The sceptre was now departed from Judah, and the lawgiver from between his feet ;” the seventy weeks of Daniel were nearly completed ; the last age of the Cumean prophecy was arrived ; and “ swords were turned into plough-shares, and spears into pruning hooks ;” when the great Author of our existence afforded a signal instance of his unbounded benevolence towards his creatures, by sending into this world his only Son, under the semblance of frail mortality, to instruct mankind in the certain means of eternal salvation.

The Almighty had declared by his prophets, that the birth of his son, whose throne is established in righteousness, and whose dominion shall remain to eternity, should be preceded by a messenger to “ prepare the way.” “ Prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make straight in the desert, a highway for our God.” Isa. xl. 3.

Two holy persons, Zacharias, a priest, and Elizabeth, of the race of Aaron, had long cohabited in the matrimonial state, though without descendants ; and from their advanced years, they were, according to the ordinary course of nature, considered as incapable of procreation. However the unblemished righteousness and rigid sanctity of the lives of these aged persons, procured them the exalted honour of being selected by the Almighty, as the parents of the holy child, whose birth was to precede that of the blessed Saviour of mankind. Thus was Elizabeth who had been greatly derided on account of her supposed barrenness, now not only to be a mother, but even the mother of a prophet, whose holy ministry was to render him more famous than any that had appeared in Israel since the days of Moses.

In the above instance was plainly manifested the

power of the eternal God to effect his own great purposes, by means surpassing the extent of human comprehension; and that he is graciously pleased sometimes to reward with extraordinary blessings, such of his creatures as have merited a glorious distinction above their fellow mortals, by a rigid adherence to his divine institutions.

After having regulated and established the several ceremonies of divine worship in the temple which was to be constructed, David separated the priests into twenty-four courses; and these priests were to officiate alternately, each course commencing the exercise of the holy function on a sabbath-day, and continuing their sacred ministry to the end of the week. After the Babalonish captivity, only four of these courses returned; the rest either remaining in Babylon, or being extinct. But that the original number of courses might be restored, each of the remaining four was divided into six, and the new courses assumed the appellations of their predecessors. One of the new courses in this subdivision, and the eighth in the order of the twenty-four, was that of Abiah, of which Zacharias was a member.

At the period of which we are writing, the several courses of the priesthood had become rather numerous; and therefore it was usual to determine by lot, who should perform the several parts of divine service throughout each week. It proving to be the lot of Zacharias to exercise the functions of his sacred ministry in the temple, he was therein employed in the discharge of the duties of his office, when the conception of his wife Elizabeth was revealed to him by the angel.

While the people were offering up their prayers in the court without the temple, Zacharias entered the

sanctuary, to make the daily oblations. Here, on the right hand side of the altar of incense, he perceived a being, whom, from the extraordinary lustre of his beauty, he immediately conceived to be of heavenly extraction. Perceiving his terror and astonishment, the angel addressed the priest to the following purpose : Fear not, Zacharias ; for the Lord is propitious to thy fervent prayers for the redemption of Israel, and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear to thee a son, whom thou shalt call by the name of John. This son shall obtain a distinguished place in the favor of the Almighty, and he shall be appointed to an office of peculiar honor and sanctity : that he may be a proper receptacle for the Holy Ghost, with which he shall be filled even from the period of his nativity : he shall refrain from the use of wine and all other strong drink, and live according to the abstemious manner of the Nazarites. “ He will be the fore-runner of the great Messiah ; and therefore shall he be supplied, by the especial appointment of God, with extraordinary abilities and divine instructions, for the purpose of reforming the irregularities which at present prevail among the Jews. That he may effect a conversion among the people of Israel, he shall possess powers similar to those intrusted to Elias, who convinced them of the abominable sin of the idolatrous worship of Baal, and of the righteousness of a fervent adoration of the true and only God. He shall reconcile those dissensions which prevail on the subject of religion between father and son ; he shall expose to the unbelieving and the obstinate, the deformity of their erroneous practices, inspire them with sentiments of true piety, and instruct them in the necessity of yielding obedience to one master, the glorious Messiah, who, by means of your promised son, shall, when he appears upon earth, find a people already prepared to give a due confidence to all the energy of his holy doctrines.”

Reflecting on the advanced age both of himself and his wife, Zacharias suggested a doubt as to the probability of the prediction of the angel being verified. Hence then, he demanded of the angel, a sign or token, whereby he might be satisfied that his wife would conceive and bring forth the promised son. God had commissioned the heavenly messenger to remove such difficulties as Zacharias might suggest, and also to do it in such a manner as would convince him of the divine displeasure, at his want of faith. The angel, therefore, addressed him to this effect: Know, Zacharias, that I am Gabriel, an angel of the Lord, under the most high authority of whose command I have reported the happy tidings respecting the fruitfulness of thy ancient wife Elizabeth: but since thou hast been so rash as to demand a sign to ascertain the veracity of my divine mission, as a necessary reproof for thy incredulity, thou shalt be deprived of the faculties of speech and hearing, until the events I have predicted are fully verified.

Upon the return of Zacharias from the sanctuary, the people who were still waiting in the court of Israel, enquired as to the cause of his having remained so much longer in the sanctuary than was usual for the priest who offered up incense; and to these questions he replied by signs, from which the people understood that he had beheld a vision.

Upon the expiration of the week of the ministration of Zacharias, he returned to his own habitation: a short time after which, his wife discovered herself to be pregnant; but this circumstance she preserved profoundly secret for the space of five months, fervently pouring forth thanks to God, for having, at her advanced time of life, rendered her no longer liable to the reproach of sterility. In the thirty-third year of Herod the Great, king of Judea, and the

twenty-sixth after the establishment of Augustus Cæsar in the imperial dignity, and six months after the conception of Elizabeth, God sent his angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a small city of Galilee, about sixty miles nearly to the north of Jerusalem, to foretel the birth of the holy Jesus Christ.

The woman whom the Lord appointed to be the mother of our blessed Saviour, was named Mary: her sphere of life was humble, but the purity of her sentiments, and her strict adherence to the sacred institutions, advanced her to the most eminent state of exaltation with which the daughter of man was ever honored. This holy virgin was espoused to a man named Joseph, of equal condition in life, and of the same family; and this pious couple employed a considerable portion of their time in fervent prayers to the Almighty, for the accomplishment of his promises concerning the nativity of the blessed Messiah.

The heavenly ambassador appearing before Mary, addressed to her this salutation: "Hail! blessed virgin, the Divine Father of the universe will bestow upon thee such extraordinary blessings, that thou shalt be distinguished as the happiest of women by all the nations of the earth." Although the virgin had been accustomed to a spiritual intercourse with the Almighty, she could not but be struck with surprize and admiration upon beholding a figure, whose grace and dignity were so transcendently superior to every idea that could be formed of human nature. Perceiving that her mind was agitated by a mixture of holy impressions, the angel, after graciously advising her to dissipate her apprehensions, proceeded to explain the nature of his divine commission. "Happy virgin! (said he) thou art peculiarly favored of God; be assured that thou shalt conceive, and bring forth a son, whom thou shalt

“ call by the name of Jesus : he shall be acknowledged the Son of the most high God, by whose power he shall obtain possession of the throne of David, from whose race he will derive his birth. He shall succeed to the throne of his ancestors, and reign over Israel. The kingdom of David and his successors continued but for an inconsiderable number of ages ; but the dominion of Jesus shall have no end.”

Though espoused to Joseph, the marriage had not been consummated : and so entirely was the mind of the virgin occupied by the spirit of piety, that it is probable she had made a vow of perpetual celibacy. However, she asked the angel, by what means the events he had foretold, could be verified, since “ she knew not man ?” Gabriel now informed her, that without an intercourse with the opposite sex, she should become pregnant, that the child she should bear should be the immediate result of the divine intervention, and that he should be called the Son of God. That she might entertain no further doubts as to the accomplishment of his predictions, and to manifest the omnipotency of God, he informed her, that her cousin Elizabeth had conceived in her old age, and was then in the sixth month of her pregnancy. Hereupon Mary said, all her doubts were vanquished, and that, whatever might be the divine pleasure, she should yield to it with devout zeal and pious cheerfulness :—and the angel immediately disappeared.

Desirous of communicating her vision to her cousin Elizabeth, and of receiving her personal confirmation of what she had already sufficient authority to believe authentic, Mary, soon after her interview with the angel, undertook a journey from Nazareth to a city about eighty miles distant, in the hill country

of Judea, of which Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth were inhabitants.

Repairing to the habitation of Zacharias, the holy virgin, upon entering the dwelling, cordially saluted Elizabeth, who being at that moment sensible of an extraordinary springing of the infant within her, and at the same time feeling the sacred inspirations of the Holy Ghost, by means of which she was fully informed of all the particulars of the interview between the angel and Mary, she expressed the transports of her soul in the following manner: “ O most highly honored and most happy of women! and O most blessed infant whom thou bearest in the sacred womb!—By what means can I have merited so high an honor as that the mother of my God should condescend first to visit me her humble handmaid? No sooner did thy welcome salutation meet my ears, than the child within me leaped, seemingly as if sensible of the presence of the holy virgin, pregnant with the great Messiah. Highly art thou blessed, O holy virgin! Thou hast believed in the predictions delivered to thee by the command of the Lord, and shalt be rewarded according to thy faith. Since the appearance of the angel to my husband, he has been deprived of the use of speech and hearing as a punishment for his incredulity in the divine mission: but thou shalt experience blessings superior to all other of the daughters of man, and the predictions to which thou hast given a holy confidence, shall be fully accomplished.”

In return to these gratulations, the blessed virgin expressed the most joyful and zealous thanksgivings to the Lord, in the words of that excellent hymn called the *MAGNIFICAT**. This hymn was in such

* My soul doth magnify the Lord, &c. ST. LUKE i. 46.

high estimation, that it was made use of as a part of the devotional practices of the primitive christians, and it is still retained in the service of the church of England. Mary sojourned with her cousin Elizabeth for about the space of three months, and then, being indisputably convinced of her pregnancy, she returned to her habitation in Nazareth.

Soon after the departure of the blessed virgin, Elizabeth was delivered of a son, according to the prediction the angel Gabriel: and her relations and neighbors came to congratulate her, on occasion of her happiness in being so greatly distinguished by the grace and favor of heaven. The eighth day after the birth of the child was appointed for the time of circumcision; and it was the unanimous desire of the several branches of the family, that, according to the Jewish custom, the infant should receive the name of Zacharias, after his father. Hereupon Elizabeth, who had been informed by her husband what name the child should receive, resisted the proposition of her visitors, and steadily insisted that he should be called John. In order to induce Elizabeth to consent to her son receiving the name of Zacharias, her relations and friends urged that none of the family had been called by the name of John; and they made signs to the father, signifying that they wished to know his determination with respect to the point in dispute. Zacharias made a sign, purporting that he wished to have a writing-table; which being brought, he wrote expressly that the name of the child should be John. The determination of Zacharias excited the surprise of the whole company, for John was a name not commonly given to Jewish children, whom it was usual to call after some one of their ancestors. The signification of John, or Jonathan, is "The grace of our Lord;" and therefore the name bore a happy allusion

to the person whose sacred office was to be the forerunner of the blessed Saviour of mankind.

No sooner had Zacharias given the name of John to his son, than he was restored to the powers of speech and hearing; and in an audible voice he immediately poured forth thanksgivings to the Almighty, to the surprise of all who were witnesses to his miraculous recovery; which was no sooner rumoured abroad than it created an universal astonishment among the inhabitants of the circumjacent country.

The several events attending the nativity of this child, were precisely observed by the people in general; and they were of so remarkable a nature, that it was universally conjectured he would prove a man of a most singular character.

At the time Zacharias recovered the use of his speech and hearing, he received the influence of the Holy Ghost, and broke forth into rapturous and prophetic expressions, blessing the God of Israel, who had given a token, that, in conformity to what he had revealed to Adam, Abraham, and all the holy prophets who had appeared since the beginning of the world, he would redeem his people, by means of a mighty Saviour, deriving his birth from the family of David; rescue them from the power of their spiritual enemies, and enable mankind to serve God in the ways of righteousness and sanctity. Speaking of his newly-born son, Zacharias described him in a manner similar to that in which he is spoken of in the writings of the prophets. He said John should be esteemed a prophet of the Lord; and that he should go before the face of God, to incite the Jews to repentance, and thereby put them in a state of preparation to receive his sacred doctrine at his manifestation.

In the due process of time, all the predictions relating to John were fully accomplished. The Lord caused the education of the child to be so conducted, that he was carefully defended from whatever might tend to the interruption of the exercise of those graces of self-denial, which were essential to qualify him for his holy ministration.

As his years increased, John attained to a degree of wisdom and vigor of mind altogether extraordinary; and he led a pious, contemplative, and solitary life, till he received his divine commission to visit the most considerable cities of the Jewish nation, and preach the doctrine of repentance to his countrymen.

All that we have hitherto said concerning John, is founded upon unquestionable authority; and we are informed by tradition, that when he was eighteen months old, his mother Elizabeth fled with him into the wilderness, in order to escape the fury of the tyrant king Herod, where she died in about forty days; and also that about the same period Zacharias was slain in the court of the temple, in the course of the week of his ministration. John being thus left an orphan, the Lord appointed an angel to be his guardian and nourisher, as he had before acted with respect to Ishmael, when he dwelt in the wilderness, and Elias, when he fled from the rage of Ahab. What degree of credit is due to these opinions of the fathers, we shall not pretend to decide; but content ourselves with observing, that they are recorded by grave and pious men.

CHAP. II.

Of the authority of the scriptures. Arguments against scepticism. Prophecies. State of the Roman empire at the nativity of our Saviour. The Sibylline oracles. Description of the holy land.

TO those who believe in the doctrine of redemption, it is unnecessary to produce arguments to prove that man is fallen from his original state; for the former as necessarily pre-supposes the latter, as a confidence in the authenticity of the holy scriptures includes a belief of both. The history, therefore, of the degeneracy of mankind, as delivered to us by divine revelation, is all that is necessary to impress upon our minds a full conviction, that the appearance of Jesus Christ was indispensably requisite, for the great purpose of establishing a glorious example for the imitation of man; by means of which he might be restored to that place in the divine favor, which he had forfeited through his abominable iniquities. The holy in spirit must for ever bless the Lord for the glorious provision he has made for their eternal salvation, by sending into this world his own Son; “In whom whosoever believeth, shall not perish, but obtain everlasting life.”

Those whose minds are unhappily involved in the mists of scepticism, are seriously recommended to consider, that the fall of man from his original state of purity, rendered the interference of a divine agent necessary, for making his peace with his offended Creator; and that, for this benevolent purpose, God determined to send his Son into the world; in the mean time fully explaining his gracious intention,

and, both before and after his manifestation, accepting the atonement of this divine Mediator, in behalf of all righteous believers. The believers of divine revelation who lived before the incarnation of Jesus Christ, obtained the grace of God by prayer, typical sacrifices, and other religious exercises, which had an evident allusion to the birth of the Messiah.

According to those writers who are esteemed the most accurate chronologists, Jesus Christ was born (as we have before observed) in the year of the world four thousand. This computation corresponds with an ancient Jewish tradition, which mentions the birth of the Messiah. This tradition says that the world was to continue for the space of six thousand years ; of which two thousand were to precede the law ; two thousand to be under the law ; and the remaining time to be under the Messiah. This opinion is of great antiquity, and is still considered as one of the most ancient of the Jewish traditions. However, the futility of this is sufficiently apparent ; for it is declared in the holy scriptures, that the period when the world shall be at an end, is known only to the Almighty.

Christ was born precisely at the time which the tradition fixes for his appearance : but though near eighteen hundred years have since elapsed, so perverse is their infidelity, that the Jews have not yet acknowledged his existence. To excuse themselves from censure on this account, though they admit that the year of the world four thousand was the exact time foretold by the prophets for the appearance of the Messiah, yet they alledge that, on account of the enormity of their transgressions, his coming has been hitherto postponed. But in contradiction to this, may be opposed another doctrine universally received among the Jews, whereby they are taught to believe, that when God denounces future evil, he doth not always bring it

to pass, which was the case with respect to the repentant Ninevites; but that when he predicts happy events, they are unfailingly accomplished. This doctrine is consistent with both reason and the principles of religion; for persons to whom promises are made, thence derive a right of expectation for their fulfilment: but with regard to denunciations of evil, the threatener reserves to himself the power of wholly relinquishing, or of abating what he has denounced, according as circumstances may occur to cause an alteration in his original intention.

The state of the Roman empire at the time of the nativity of Christ being considered, the application of the prophecy in the preceding chapter of turning “Swords into plough-shares, and spears into pruning-hooks,” will not be deemed improper. In times of war it was usual to throw open the gates of the temple of Janus at Rome, and to close them when the republic was in a state of tranquility. From the building of the city of Rome, these gates had been shut only five times: first, in the reign of Numa; secondly, after the conclusion of the first Punic war; the third time was after Augustus had vanquished Antony and Cleopatra, and by means of that signal victory, subjected the whole Roman empire to his dominion; the fourth time was on occasion of the same emperor’s return from the war with the Cantabrians in Spain; and the fifth in the very year which gave birth to Christ. At this last time of shutting the gates of the temple of Janus, there was a general peace throughout the universe; and this state of tranquility continued without interruption, for the space of twelve years. Without insisting, therefore upon the express meaning of the inspired writer, it may be fairly concluded that the prophecy as we have introduced it in our history, bears a very natural allusion.

From the time of his victory at Actium, the years of Augustus are reckoned thirteen after the death of Julius Cæsar, and twelve after the establishment of the triumvirate composed of Augustus, Antony, and Lepidus. The reign of king Herod commenced at the time of his conquest over Jerusalem, about three years after being proclaimed king of the Jews at Rome, when, upon the decease of Antigonus, he was established in absolute possession of Judea. According to this computation, the twenty-sixth year of Augustus corresponds with the thirty-third year of Herod, and the four thousand seven hundred and ninth of the Julian period, the precise time of the incarnation of our blessed Saviour.

As the Sibylline oracles are said to have been the foundation of a great number of prophetic assertions relating to the birth of Christ, it may not be improper to give some account of those books, and of the persons by whom they are supposed to have been delivered.

By ancient writers, the Sibyls are described as ten women possessed of a prophetic spirit, the eldest and chief of whom was named Sibylla; who was also called Sibylla Cumæa by the Romans, and Erythræa by others, in consequence of an opinion that she was born at Erythræa in Ionia, and that she removed from thence to Cumæa in Italy, where she delivered her oracles in a subterraneous cave; of which Justin Martyr has given a description, and which Onuphrius says, remained till the year of the world 1539, when it was destroyed by an earthquake, the effects of which were felt throughout the whole country of Campania: and this writer adds, that he visited the spot in 1548, when the description he received from the inhabitants of the country, exactly corresponded with Justin's account of the cave; of which, however, after the most

diligent search, he could not trace the smallest vestiges. A vault is still shewn to travellers, under the pretext of its being the grotto of the Sibyl: but this may be fairly deemed an imposition, by means of which the natives levy contributions upon credulous strangers.

It cannot be disputed, that the Sibyls were in ancient days in high reputation. They are respectfully mentioned by Plato, Aristotle, Varro, Livy, and Dionysius Halicarnassus. It is also certain, that their oracles contained many predictions relating to Christ, which were held in general repute before his birth. Though the existence of the women called the Sibyls be not absolutely denied, it would be absurd to admit, that their predictions were the effect of divine inspiration; for most of their oracles were directions to such idolatrous practices, as cannot, without the most gross absurdity, and the most abominable impiety, be ascribed to God. By what means then are we to account for such of their oracles as related to Christ? We read that in ancient times diabolical spirits had their oracles, which were chiefly delivered by women; and before they quitted their habitations, these spirits might be compelled by the power of God, as was the case with those who, previous to the birth of Jesus, were under the necessity of proclaiming that they should be deprived of their power by the birth of the expected Messiah. Thus in the New Testament the devils acknowledged the Son of God, who cast them out of the people of whom they had taken possession.

Supposing all that is related of the Sibyls, and indeed of the Heathen oracles in general, to be but political forgeries, yet it will be a matter of difficulty to account satisfactorily for these extraordinary predictions. It is, however, reasonable to imagine, that the prophecies concerning Christ, obtained a place among the inventions of the Heathens, in consequence of the

dispersion of the Jews. Their expectation of the Messiah, which is attested by Josephus, as well as by St. Luke in the instances of Simeon and Anna, was a subject of much popularity. The prophecies of Daniel precisely ascertained the time of the birth of Christ, and for eighty years before that event, the expectation that it would happen was firmly believed by all the children of Israel. These predictions the Heathens obtained from the Jews, and in process of time they attained to a degree of reputation equal to that of their own oracles; among which they were admitted previous to the collection of the Sibylline prophecies, after the conflagration of the capital.

It will be proper here to mention some of those positive and direct promises given to the Jews, during the Mosaical dispensation; for these afford an incontrovertible authority, that Jesus of Nazareth is the anointed God and Redeemer of mankind.

Moses predicted the appearance of the Messiah, saying he was to be the "Great Prophet of the church," to whom all people should attend, as to one sent from heaven to instruct mankind in the divine laws. David, who was informed that Christ should spring out of his family, speaks with precision as to his sufferings and manner of death, "by piercing his hands and feet;" of his resurrection, saying, that "God would not leave his soul in hell, nor suffer his holy One to see corruption;" and he also mentions his ascension into heaven and sitting on the right hand of the Almighty. The prophet Isaiah wrote a particular account of the miraculous birth of Christ, whom he said, "should be born of a virgin, and his name be Immanuel."—This inspired writer also mentioned the peculiar qualifications he should be endowed with for the exercise of his sacred ministration, and also of the reception he should experience from mankind, and the nature

and design of his sufferings. Micah foretold that "Bethlehem Ephratah, the least of the cities of Judah, should be honored above all the rest, by being the place of the nativity of a prince," who was to be a "Ruler in Israel, whose going forth had been from everlasting." The time of the birth of Jesus was precisely ascertained by the prophet Daniel, who in the most express and positive language, declared, that "at the end of seventy prophetic weeks, the Messiah should appear, and be cut off as a victim for the sins of the people:"—and this prediction was literally fulfilled.

From the texts above recited, which are interpreted by the Jews in the same sense as they are by the Christians, it is evident, that from the fall of man till the arrival of the period of his redemption, the Almighty, by frequent, explicit, and circumstantial revelations, promised the birth of the Messiah to the fathers and prophets: and the full accomplishment of these revelations and prophecies in the person of Jesus Christ, affords a certain foundation for our faith and confidence in him, as the Mediator of the new covenant.

As we shall soon have occasion to mention several parts of the land of Israel, or the holy land, we shall conclude this chapter with a general but concise survey of that country.

The land of Israel included the whole of that tract of country, on each side the river Jordan, which, upon their coming out of Egypt, God appointed for the inheritance of the children of Israel. All the provinces and countries which Christ honored with his presence, were within this extent of country, excepting only Egypt; whither, to avoid the rage of Herod, he was conveyed while in a state of tender in-

fancy. This would have proved a glorious advantage to the land of Egypt, had the inhabitants improved the blessing of our Lord's visitation: but as a punishment for their persecution of, and cruelty towards the blessed Jesus, by the judgment of the Almighty, "the Romans came upon them, and took away both their place and nation." On account of its having been the place of refuge to our Saviour, this country received the name of the Holy Land.

The name of the province of Judea is derived from Judah, the fourth son of Jacob, whose descendants formed the most celebrated of the twelve tribes; not only the race of temporal kings, but even the blessed Saviour himself, being in a direct lineal descent from this tribe. Therefore, according to the original interpretation, the persons composing that particular tribe alone were called the children of Judah, and the land of Judah signified that portion of land possessed by this tribe.

However, upon the revolt of the ten tribes, who erected themselves into a separate kingdom, under the denomination of the kingdom of Israel, the two remaining tribes of Judah and Benjamin, who still preserved their attachment to the house of David, were included under the common title of the kingdom of Judah. In proportion as the people extended their possessions, this title became more comprehensive; and particularly on occasion of the ten tribes being carried into captivity by the king of Assyria, at which time those of Judah seized the lands of Simeon and Dan, the two neighbouring tribes, and imposed upon the whole southern tract of the land of Israel the name of Judea. This name was, after the Babylonish captivity, sometimes made use of to signify the whole of that country now called the Holy Land; or so much, at least, thereof, as was inhabited by the Jews.—

When Judea is mentioned in conjunction with Galilee, Samaria, and the country beyond the Jordan, it is to be understood, in the limited sense, for the whole southern part of the Holy Land: but to this there is an exception in the seventh and eighth verses of the third chapter of St. Mark, where Idumea is also mentioned, and where seems to be denoted the more southern part of the province of Judea; which being destitute of inhabitants during the Babylonish captivity, was taken possession of by the neighbouring Idumeans, whose original place of habitation, Mount Seir, was situated on the borders of the inheritance of Judah, to the south of the Red Sea.

Notwithstanding these Idumeans were afterwards reduced by the victorious Maccabees to the necessity of complying with such conditions as were proposed by the Jews, yet they still maintained their possessions, consenting to profess the principles of Judaism, rather than be compelled to abandon their new habitations. Thus they became incorporated into the nation of the Jews: but that part of Judea which they inhabited did not immediately lose the name by which they had distinguished it; so that not only in the times of the New Testament, but also for about a century after, this tract of country was called Idumea, which is only a Greek word for Edom.

To the North, and above Judea, was the province of Samaria, so called from the city of that name, which was anciently the capital of the kingdom of Israel. The founder of this city was Omri, king of Israel, who “bought the hill Samaria of Shemer, for two talents of silver, and built thereon, and called the city which he built Samaria,” 1 Kings xvi. 24. The province of Samaria, like that of Judea, stretched from the Mediterranean westward, and to the river Jordan eastward, comprehending the most considerable part of the ground that had formerly belonged to the tribe

of Ephraim, and the half tribe of Manasseh on the West of the Jordan, lying exactly between Judea to the South, and Galilee to the North.

Galilee is remarkable for having been more particularly honored than any other place, with the presence of our Saviour. It was in this province that he was conceived; hither was he brought by Joseph and Mary, on their return from Egypt; here he resided with his reputed father, and the blessed Virgin his mother, till he attained to about the age of thirty, and was baptized of John; hither he returned after his baptism and temptation by Satan; and though after he publicly commenced his holy ministration, he frequently visited other countries, yet his established place of residence was in Galilee. It was in this province that, after his resurrection, he first made his appearance to the eleven apostles; and most, if not the whole of these apostles, were natives of the same country, on which account the angels stiled them the "men of Galilee." This country included the ground that had been formerly possessed by the tribes of Issachar, Zabulon, and Naphtali, and the inland part of the tribe of Asher.

Tyre and Sidon, two very considerable cities on the Mediterranean, were situated on the West and North of Galilee. They were both within the land of Canaan, of which Sidon was the northern boundary; and in consequence of the division of this land among the twelve tribes, both Tyre and Sidon devolved to the tribe of Asher. The city of Sidon received its name from Sidon, the eldest son of Canaan, from whom the name of the whole country was derived.

The Eastern boundary of Galilee consisted of the countries of Abilene, Iturea and Trachonitis. The

most northerly of these provinces was Abilene, which is supposed belonged to the lot of Nephtalim, though it was never subdued by that tribe.

Iturea was situated South of Abilene, and on the East of the Jordan. This place is supposed to have received its name from Jetur, one of the sons of Ishmael, who settled in those parts, and whose posterity were subdued by those Amorites who lived under the government of Og, king of Bashan, in the time of Moses. Iturea was a considerable portion of that tract of ground which Moses bestowed upon the half tribe of Manasseh, which settled on the East side of Jordan. To this half tribe also belonged the region of Argoh, the country surrounding Mount Gilead, which the Greeks called Trachonitis, signifying the mountainous country. Trachonitis was situated to the East of Iturea, and these places together formed a tetrarchy in the time of Jesus Christ.

Within the boundaries of the land of Israel was also a province called Perea, or the country beyond Jordan, lying on the South of Iturea, and to the East of Judea and Samaria; and the tribes of Reuben and Gad were anciently in possession of this tract of country.

Decapolis was a tract of land which derived its name from the circumstance of its containing ten considerable cities, some of which lay without, but the majority of them was within the boundaries of the Holy Land, some being in Iturea, and others in Perea.

Now that we have mentioned the provinces which were included, either wholly or in part, in the land of Israel, we shall proceed to relate some curious particulars concerning the ancient and modern state of several remarkable places.

The city of Nazareth, to which place the angel was sent to inform the Virgin Mary, that she was so highly favored of heaven as to be selected for the mother of the Redeemer of mankind. This town was in the South-West part of Galilee, at a small distance from the confines of Samaria, and still nearer Tyre and Sidon to the West. From the scriptures it appears, that this place was in so little estimation among the Jews, that they reproached Christ on account of his being a native of Galilee. With regard to its modern situation, Nazareth is but an inconsiderable village, standing in a kind of concave circular valley, on the top of a high hill. Over the part described to have been the place of annunciation, a convent is erected, where a small number of Latin fathers are immured; these people live in a state of rigid mortification, and are in perpetual dread of the Arabs, to whose barbarous authority the whole country is subject.

The church of Nazareth, or the sanctuary of that place, is in a cave, where the angel is said to have delivered his message to the blessed Virgin. The figure of this church resembles that of a cross. The part forming the tree of the cross is fourteen paces long, and three over, and runs directly into the grotto, having no arch over it but that formed by the natural rock. The transverse part of the cross is nine paces long, and four broad, and stands across the entrance of the grotto. At the section of the cross are two granite pillars, each two feet and one inch diameter; and they stand at the distance of about three feet from each other. These pillars are said to stand precisely where the angels and the Virgin Mary stood at the time of the annunciation. The innermost of these pillars, which is that of the Virgin Mary, has been greatly damaged by the Turks, who expected to find immense treasure concealed under it. Between the pil-

lar and the pedestal there is a space of eighteen inches, but notwithstanding this interstice, it remains erect. By what means this pillar is sustained, cannot be discerned: it unites to the roof, whereby it is in all probability suspended. The friars entertain an opinion, that the pillar is sustained by supernatural agency. At this place also is to be seen the house of Joseph, which, as the friars assert, is the very habitation wherein the blessed Jesus resided, in subjection to his nominal father, during the space of near thirty years.

At a small distance from the places above-mentioned, is shewn the synagogue wherein Christ delivered that sermon whereby his countrymen were so exasperated, "that they rose up and thrust him out of the city, and led him to the brow of the hill whereon the city was built, that they might cast him down headlong." This hill, which is about half a league Southward from Nazareth, is now called "The mountain of precipitation." On the brink of the precipice there is a large stone, in which are several indentures, representing the impression of fingers, which are asserted to have been made by our Saviour, when he opposed the outrages offered to his sacred person. Among the remains of a religious building founded here by the empress Helena, mother of Constantine the Great, are two or three cisterns for saving water, and some few other articles in a still more decayed state. The churches constructed by this empress adjacent to the habitation of Joseph and the synagogue above-mentioned, have experienced a fate similar to that of the other monuments of her piety, being now little more than a confused heap of ruins.

It is imagined, and indeed with much probability, that the city of Zacharias and Elizabeth, in the hill

country of Judea, to which the Virgin Mary went from Nazareth to visit her cousin, is Hebron; for that was one of the cities given to the priests in the tribe of Judah, and expressly mentioned to be situated in the mountains or hills, which crossing Judea from South to North, gave the name of the hill country to that tract of land through which they passed. Before David took Jerusalem from the Jebusites, Hebron was the seat of that monarch. About a century and a half ago, Hebron was visited by Mr. Sandys, who relates that it was then in a state of utter ruin. Near the spot where the ancient city of Hebron stood, there was a small village containing a handsome temple, constructed by the empress Helena, in the field of Machpelah, over the burial vault of the patriarchs; a place which was much resorted to by pilgrims, until the edifice was converted into a mosque for the use of the followers of Mahomet.

CHAP. III.

The pregnancy of Mary discovered to Joseph, who proposes to repudiate her, but declines that resolution in consequence of a dream. The decree of Augustus. Joseph and Mary repair to Bethlehem. The birth of our Blessed Saviour. The angels appear to the Shepherds, who go to Bethlehem, and worship the heavenly infant. The circumcision of Jesus, and the appearance of the star in the East. The wise men repairing to Jerusalem, are examined by Herod, after which they pursue their journey to Bethlehem, where they pay adoration to the Messiah, and present to him myrrh, gold, and frankincense.

THE Son of God being to assume the nature and substance of humanity from a pure virgin, in order to defend his reputation from the censure and calumny of those whose minds could not comprehend the mysterious manner of his nativity, it was expedient that, at the time of his conception, the holy Virgin should be espoused to a man, the sanctity of whose character rendered him worthy to be intrusted with the particulars of so great a miracle:—and such a man was Joseph.

No approaches having been made towards a consummation of his marriage, Joseph was equally astonished and grieved, upon discovering the pregnancy of his wife, of whose chastity he had not entertained the slightest suspicion. In cases of adultery, it was prescribed by the law of the Jews, that the woman should be conveyed from her husband's house to the door of her father, and there be stoned to death.

But, after having painfully reflected on the supposed infirmity of Mary, her husband, yielding to his naturally mild and merciful temper, formed the resolution to effect a private dissolution of the marriage contract, that he might preserve her from public infamy, and the severity of legal vengeance. However, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, and told him to decline all thoughts of repudiating his wife; assuring him that she was not pregnant in consequence of any unlawful commerce, or in the ordinary mode of procreation, but by the immediate operation of the Divine Power. The angel also informed Joseph, that the child of which his wife should be delivered, he should call by the name of Jesus, which signifies a Saviour; because he should save the people of Judea, not from their bondage to the Romans, which they believed would be the office of the Messiah, but from their iniquities, and spiritual infirmities and miseries.

This heavenly notice proved entirely satisfactory to Joseph, to whom Mary, upon his enquiry, communicated the particulars of her conception, as had been related to her by the angel. Joseph immediately accompanied her to his habitation, where he lived with her in a state of the purest chastity, till she was delivered of the blessed Messiah.

About this period of time, and as it is very reasonable to conjecture, by the especial ordination of God, Augustus Cæsar issued a proclamation, which was circulated throughout the Roman empire; and this proclamation was transmitted into Judea, ordaining, that all persons, with their estates and conditions in life, should be registered at certain places, according to their respective provinces, cities, and families.—The motive of Augustus in publishing this decree, was said to be in order to ascertain the strength and

opulence of his dominions; and to obtain a knowledge as to what would be an equitable proportion of a general tax, which he had conceived the idea of imposing; and this project he carried into execution in Judea, after that country was reduced to a province, in consequence of the banishment of Archelaus. According to general opinion, Publius Sulpicious Quirinus, who is called Cyrenius by St. Luke, was sent with an extraordinary commission into Syria, in which the dominions of Herod were included, to enrol that part of the empire.

Agreeable to the imperial decree, Joseph and his wife Mary repaired from their habitation in Nazareth to Bethlehem, a small city in the territories of their own tribe, and the place of the nativity of David, which the prophet Micah had declared should be the birth-place of the Messiah, for the purpose of delivering their names at the office of enrolment.

The concourse of people who on this occasion resorted to Bethlehem, was so great that when our holy travellers arrived in that city, they could obtain no better place of accomodation than a stable: and Mary being at this juncture sensible of the indications of her approaching delivery, she was under the necessity of retiring, in company with her husband, to this receptacle for beasts. In this place was the Son of God brought into the world; and we may suppose that, as the blessed Virgin conceived from the immediate interposition of the divine power, she was delivered of her heavenly burthen without pain. Destitute of every accommodation and convenience, she discharged the offices both of midwife and nurse; and after binding the infant in swaddling clothes, laid him to rest in a manger. In this humble manner did the Son of God come into the world; whereby a very forcible lesson is conveyed to mankind, shewing us the guilt

of pride, and the virtue of humility; and that as the former was the occasion of our fall, by means of the latter we may be again exalted to our original state of happiness.

On the night of the birth of our blessed Saviour, while the generality of mankind were at rest, certain shepherds were tending their flocks in the very plains where David himself had frequently exercised the same occupation; and to these people was made the first publication of the nativity of Jesus. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, while an emanation of light shone around them, whereby they were equally terrified and astonished: but to appease their apprehensions, the heavenly ambassador addressed them to the following effect: "Fear not; for I bring tidings
" of great joy to you and to all mankind. This day
" is born unto you, in the city of Bethlehem, the great
" Saviour of the world, the blessed and long expected
" Messiah. You shall find the babe wrapped up in
" swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger." No sooner had the angel proclaimed this glorious instance of the transcendent goodness of Almighty God, than an immense multitude of the blessed spirits composing the celestial choir, joined in resounding the praises of the Lord, chaunting forth, "Glory to God in
" the highest, and on the earth peace; good-will to-
" wards men."

Upon the departure of the celestial choir, the astonished shepherds hastened to Bethlehem, where they found the holy Infant in a situation precisely corresponding with the prediction of the angel; and having paid fervent adoration to the great Messiah, and poured forth praises and thanksgivings to the Almighty Father of the universe, for the manifestation of his goodness towards sinful man, they departed, publishing abroad all the circumstances of the

angel's revelation in the field, and the particulars of their having beheld and worshipped the great Redeemer of mankind.

Our blessed Saviour was, upon the expiration of eight days after his nativity, subjected to the ceremony of circumcision ; and, agreeable to the command of God by his angel, he was called by the name of Jesus. Though with respect to his exalted nature, it was not necessary that he should submit to this custom ; yet considered in his humble state, “ that he “ was born of a woman,” and that “ he came to fulfil all righteousness,” it was requisite that he should conform to the ceremony of circumcision, which was one of the principal injunctions of the Mosaic institution.

During these important transactions in Bethlehem, a new star was discovered by the Eastern nations ; and this extraordinary appearance in the firmament was understood as a token of the birth of the Messiah. According to Josephus, Suetonius, Tacitus, and other writers of high reputation, the birth of the blessed Redeemer of mankind was expected throughout all the nations of the East ; for great numbers of Jews having dispersed themselves through that quarter of the globe, the precepts of their religion were disseminated among the natives, who held many of them in sacred estimation.

In consequence of the extraordinary luminary they had seen in the heavens, certain Eastern philosophers, who were called the Magi, or wise men, hastened towards Jerusalem ; and upon their arrival in that city, after a journey of six or seven days, they made a public enquiry, where they might find the new-born king of the Jews, to whose dominion the whole world should become subject ; averring that they had ob-

served a surprising phænomenon in the firmament, which they were persuaded was the star of the Messiah, to whom they were impatient to pay those honors and adorations that were due to his divinity.

Intelligence of the arrival of the Magi, and the design of their journey, being communicated to Herod, he became exceedingly alarmed. He was an ambitious, cruel, and vindictive prince; and suspicion and fear, the constant concomitants of guilt, were added to make up the horrid deformity of the mind. Having previously determined to exert his utmost efforts for sacrificing the life of the Holy Infant, who he was apprehensive would become the rival of his power and grandeur, and on whose account he suspected the seeds of sedition would be dispersed among his subjects, he summoned a grand council, composed of such persons as were descended from the chief priests, or had either already discharged the duties of that function, or were at that time principals of the sacerdotal classes, and such of the Sanhedrim as were most celebrated for learning, and demanded of them, what part of Judea the predictions of the prophets had mentioned as the place of the nativity of the Messiah? Being informed by the grand council of the nation, that the prophet Micah had declared the Messiah should be born in the town of Bethlehem, he commanded the Magi into his presence, and enquired of them as to the time of their having discovered the new star; in order that, by ascertaining the time of the Saviour's birth, he might be the better enabled to carry his impious project into execution. The Magi having given Herod every information in their power, he dismissed them with an affectation of the utmost complacency and friendship; enjoining them to report to him the event of their pious errand, and adding, that he was anxious for an opportunity of paying his devo-

tions to the Son of God, and of acknowledging the future king of Judea.

Upon the arrival of the travellers in Judea, the star by which they had been conducted from their own country, disappeared; and therefore they went into Jerusalem to enquire for the abode of Jesus. Thus was the Almighty pleased to promulgate the nativity of Christ throughout the whole nation.

Having obtained the information they sought in Jerusalem, the Magi again proceeded on their journey, when, to their inexpressible satisfaction, the star again became visible to them. Directed by this celestial conductor, they travelled to Bethlehem, and upon their arrival in that city, the luminary stopped immediately over the habitation where Mary and her Heavenly Son resided. Hereupon, they entered the dwelling, and prostrating themselves before Jesus, presented him with gold, frankincense, and myrrh, according to the custom of the Oriental people, who never approach their sovereign without a gift.*

When the Magi were preparing to return to their country by the way of Jerusalem, that they might acquaint Herod of the abode of Jesus, it pleased the Lord to reveal to them in a vision the barbarous design of Herod, and to direct them to return by a different course:—and thus was the horrid intention of the tyrant defeated.

* Some writers contend for a particular significancy in these gifts of the Magi, descriptive of the object of their adoration. Myrrh, say they, was offered as to a man, who was, for our salvation, to be consigned to death and the grave; gold, as to a king, whose dominion was to remain for ever; and incense, as to a God.

“Dant tibi Chaldæi prænuntia munera reges:

“Myrrham homo, rex aurum, suscipe thura Deus.”

CLAUDIAN.

CHAP. IV.

The uncertainty of the particular day of Christ's nativity. Remarks on the decree of Augustus, and a description of the Roman empire. Time occupied in making the survey mentioned by St. Luke. Account of the Jewish shepherds. The city of Bethlehem, the cave of nativity, convents, chapel of the manger, and grotto of the blessed Virgin; chapels of St. Jerome, St. Paula, and Eustochium. The field of the shepherds. Solomon's pools, gardens and fountains.

ACCORDING to several traditions of great antiquity, the nativity of Christ was on the twenty-fifth day of December, which is therefore observed as one of the great annual festivals of the Western Christians; and many arguments have been adduced by chronological writers, to prove that it happened in the month of September. After having pretty clearly ascertained the year in which King Herod died, the ingenious M. Le Clerc writes to the following effect: From the gospel of St. Luke it appears, that Christ was born six months after John the Baptist: but since the month in which John was born, is a point that cannot be decided, no certain conclusion can be deduced with respect to the time of the birth of Christ." Indeed some men of learning have taken great pains to ascertain the week in which the class of Abias, to which Zacharias belonged, executed the functions of the priesthood in the temple: but all that has been said on this subject is so inconclusive, as to leave the question still involved in all its original intricacy.

While the Western churches contended, that Christ was born on the twenty-fifth of December, the Churches of the East as strenuously argued in favor of the sixth of January ; urging, that they had opportunities to qualify them to determine with accuracy in this affair, which were denied to their opponents by the circumstance of their being situated at so much greater distance than themselves from the place which gave birth to the Messiah. However the contentions on this head are sufficient testimony to prove, that the universal opinion of the church is in favor of observing some day in pious veneration of so glorious an event as the birth of our blessed Saviour.

With respect to the decree of Augustus, which is mentioned by St. Luke, we must observe, that it was not meant the whole world, or even all the Roman empire, should be immediately laid under contribution, as seems to be implied in our translation ; but that persons of every description should be enrolled, according to their respective families and estates.— This procedure of Augustus is variously accounted for by different writers. By some it is supposed to have happened, in consequence of the emperor's determination that all taxes should be paid in equitable proportions ; his predecessors having exacted contributions from the public, according to their own arbitrary will. It is also conjectured, that the reason of this general enrolment was, that the estates and other property of individuals, which the civil wars had rendered of precarious tenure, might be secured to them ; and that for this purpose it was necessary, the people should ascertain and register their families and descent. Some ascribe this measure merely to the curiosity of Augustus, alledging that he had no view either to the augmentation of his revenue or the reformation of the excesses of his predecessors.

We are rather inclined to favour the latter opinion, which corresponds with what we have before said concerning the emperor having been influenced by the especial providence of God, who, to verify the prediction of the prophet Micah, rendered it necessary for the holy Virgin to go to Bethlehem, there to be delivered of her heavenly burthen. Whatever was the cause of this decree, we have the united authority of all the writers of that time, that the survey was actually made.

In consequence of the imperial mandate for taking a survey or description of the whole Roman empire, including an account of the persons, estates and other effects, and of the taxes issuable from them, the measure was carried into execution in Judea, in the year wherein Christ was born, as it is written in the gospel of St. Luke. It was customary for a similar account to be taken of the citizens of Rome, at the end of every fifth year; and officers were appointed for this purpose, under the denomination of censors. Augustus extended the order for a general register to the provinces also; and three times in the course of his reign, he caused a description of this kind to be made throughout his dominions. The first of these general decrees was executed in the year when Augustus the sixth time, and M. Agrippa, the second time, were consuls, twenty eight years previous to the Christian æra; the second was eight years before the Christian æra, during the consulship of C. Martius Censorinus, and C. Asinius Gallus; and the last was in the year of the Christian æra, fourteen, in the time of the consulship of Sextus Pompeius Nepos and Sextus Apuleius Nepos.

The publication of the nativity of Jesus was first made to the shepherds, who were tending their flocks by night. To elucidate this, it is necessary to ob-

serve, that the night was divided into four watches, being the evening watch, the midnight, the cock-crowing, and the morning watch. The first watch terminated at nine at night, the second at twelve, the third at three in the morning, and the fourth at six. Agreeable to this plan, a sufficient number of men were in the field during the night to protect the sheep from robbers and wild beasts. The word shepherd is very honorably mentioned in different parts of the Bible. Moses describes Abel as a shepherd; and the majority of the ancient patriarchs were also of that profession. The great Messiah himself is frequently mentioned in the character of a shepherd, and even speaks of himself under that appellation. "I am the good shepherd. The shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." John x. 11.

Exclusive of the above authorities, from the concurrent testimony of different ages, the shepherds among the Jews appear at the time of the birth of Christ, to have been a people of exemplary virtue and remarkable simplicity of heart; and being totally uninfluenced by any of those prejudices which most probably would have operated upon persons of a different character, upon being informed that the Saviour of the world was born in a stable, and to be found lying in a manger, they were the most proper persons to receive and promulgate the happy news of the nativity of the Messiah.

In a preceding chapter we have given a general view of the whole land of Israel: and we shall here introduce an account of Bethlehem, which was so honorably distinguished beyond all the other cities of Judah. Bethlehem, Bethleem, or Bethlechem signifies, "The house of Bread." It was in the tribe of Judah, and to distinguish it from another city of the same name in the tribe of Zebulun, it was generally called

Bethlehem of Judah. This place was also called Ephrath, and its inhabitants were termed Ephrathians. The situation of Bethlehem, which was not remarkable either for riches or extent, was about six miles from Jerusalem, upon the declivity of a hill. Elimelech, the father-in-law of Ruth, that illustrious Moabitish woman, who retired hither with her mother-in-law Naomi, when they were both in a state of widowhood, was a native of this town, where it was that Boaz espoused that celebrated proselyte; and from this union descended David, king of Israel, who also received his birth in this city.

The cave in which the Messiah was born, is supposed to have been without the town of Bethlehem. St. Jerome says it was on the South side; and Justin Martyr and Eusebius agree that it was without the city, and in the fields.

The inn to which the blessed Virgin and Joseph retired, was probably a place where guests were permitted to take shelter without expence; and on account of the immense numbers of people who had assembled, the holy couple were under the necessity of taking up their abode in a cave, which the evangelists call a stable, as it was a place converted to the purpose of sheltering the cattle belonging to travellers, who stopped to procure refreshment at the adjacent public inn. The ancient writers agree, that the birth of Christ happened in a cave, which, according to the information of travellers, is above forty feet deep, and twelve in width, growing narrower towards the roof. St. Jerome asserts that, in order to obliterate all knowledge of the place where our Saviour was born, the emperor Adrian planted a grove of trees over the cave in honour of Adonis.

From the information of modern travellers we learn,

that Bethlehem is still resorted to by pilgrims, and that there are three convents still remaining, one of Latins, one of Greeks, and a third of Armenians, each having a door of communication with the chapel of the holy manger, which stands, as the friars insist, upon the very spot where Jesus was born; and a manger, said to be that in which the blessed infant was laid, is shewn at this place.

A place called the grotto of the blessed Virgin, is shewn at about the distance of thirty or forty yards from the above convents. Tradition says, that previous to their departure into Egypt, Mary concealed herself and her holy babe for some time in this grotto, in order to elude the vengeance of the tyrant Herod.

In Bethlehem also are to be seen the chapel of St. Joseph, the reputed father of our blessed Saviour; the chapel of the Holy Innocents, and those of St. Jerome, St. Paula, and Eustochium. St. Jerome was a celebrated writer towards the conclusion of the fourth century, and his works still remain in high reputation. Paula, the mother, and Eustochium, the daughter, were two Roman ladies of remarkable sanctity, and pupils to St. Jerome, by the advantage of whose instructions they attained to a great proficiency of learning; and with their preceptor they afterwards retired to Bethlehem, where is to be seen the school of that venerable, pious, and learned father.

About half a mile to the East of the town is the field, where the angel proclaimed the nativity of Christ to the shepherds; and in this place the pilgrims who go to Bethlehem, never omit to manifest their piety. Adjacent to this field is the village where the shepherds are supposed to have dwelt. Near this village, on the right hand, are the remains of a nunnery, con-

structed by St. Paula, who rendered the building more memorable by its being the place wherein she yielded up her breath.

In the way between Jerusalem and Bethlehem are several objects worthy the attention of the curious. The tract of ground through which the road runs, is the valley of Rephaim, celebrated for being the theatre of the victories of David over the Philistines. On the right hand, to the South of a square seraglio, is a fountain, said to be that wherein Bathsheba was accustomed to refresh herself by bathing. At the distance of about two miles from Jerusalem stands the celebrated turpentine tree, in the shade of which the virgin Mary is said to have reposed herself while she was carrying Christ in her arms, in order to present him to the Almighty. At about an equal distance, upon a small hill, stands an ancient tower, supposed to have been the habitation of that venerable prophet Simeon, who taking Jesus in his arms, chaunted in the temple that admirable hymn called "Nunc Dimittis." About a mile beyond the turpentine tree, is to be seen a cistern or well: and we are told that, after leaving Jerusalem, when the wise men of the East arrived at this spot, the new star a second time became visible to them, and conducted them to the place of our Saviour's nativity. Advancing about half a mile further, a convent is seen dedicated to St. Elias; and here the Greek monks pretend to shew the impression of that holy man's body on a large stone, of a very hard quality, which, they assert, he was accustomed to use as a bed. Pursuing the road further, the monks shew what they call Rachel's tomb; this may be erected upon the very spot where she was interred: but to people only of very limited discernment can it appear to be the monument erected to her memory by Jacob, being evidently of modern Turkish structure. Near this edifice is a piece of ground containing vast numbers

of small stones, exactly resembling the form of peas. There is still a tradition extant concerning these stones, to the following effect : to appease her hunger, the Virgin Mary requested a husbandman to give her a handful of the peas which were growing in his field ; but being uncharitably refused by the surly rustic, all the peas in his ground were immediately petrified by a miracle.

Before we conclude our account of this country, we shall speak concisely of the fountains, pools, and gardens of Solomon, which are said to have afforded particular satisfaction to that illustrious monarch. The gardens being situated on a rocky foundation, they could not have been brought to the state of perfection for which they were so highly celebrated, without an immense expence of wealth and labour. The pools contain a much greater collection of the most excellent spring-water, than is to be found in any other part of Palestine ; they are three in number, of a quadrangular form, the breadth of each being about ninety paces ; but they are not of an equal length, the first being about one hundred and sixty paces long, the second two hundred, and the third two hundred and twenty. They are lined with a kind of plaister which effectually prevents the water from sinking into the earth. These pools are so situated, that the waters of the first descend into the second, and those of the second into the third. Close by the pools stands a castle of modern structure, and at the distance of about one hundred and forty paces, is the fountain from which these admirable reservoirs chiefly derive their waters.

CHAP. V.

The genealogy of Jesus Christ. The line of the Virgin Mary included in that of Joseph. Reasons for the rejection of Cainan and other names in the catalogue of St. Luke.

WE shall now endeavour to prove the descent of our blessed Lord and Saviour, as a man, being the son of Abraham and David, to each of whom the promise of the birth of the Messiah had been respectively made. In the gospels of Matthew and Luke it will be found, that each of those evangelists has given a catalogue of the ancestors of our blessed Redeemer; the former tracing the line as far back as Abraham, and the latter pursuing the genealogy immediately to Adam. St. Matthew calls his genealogy, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, and the son of Abraham." Therefore, had he not intended to prove Jesus Christ the Messiah, by deducing his lineage from Abraham and David, what motive could induce the evangelist to call him the son of both the patriarch and the monarch, in so emphatical a manner, when he was several generations from both. In the scriptures, indeed, the word son is frequently introduced to denote a grandson, or a more remote descendant, or sometimes even an heir apparent: but in instances of this kind, the word is always used with some design similar to what we here ascribe to St. Matthew.

The Jews were in ancient times unremittingly careful to preserve in their genealogies the most critical accuracy. St. Paul seems to censure his countrymen for their excessive solicitude on this point. "Avoid

“ foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, “ and strivings about the law ; for they are unprofitable and vain.” Titus iii. 9. But notwithstanding this, some considerable portion of this species of knowledge was necessary to the Jews, and particularly to those who were of the priest-hood ; for we are told in the book of Ezra, that only such priests as were able to produce the genealogies of their families, were permitted to exercise the sacerdotal function. Josephus avers, that, in his time, there had been an uninterrupted succession of priests in the Jewish nation, for the space of two thousand years ; adding, that not in Judea alone, but also in Babylon and Egypt ; and, in short, wherever they were dispersed, the priests never espoused women of rank inferior to their own, but kept exact genealogical registers of their families, which were extracted from authentic records kept at Jerusalem, to which they had recourse whenever occasion required. The same author says, that amidst all the wars in which the Jews engaged, and all the persecutions and public calamities which they sustained, they were particularly solicitous to preserve these records, and to renew them when necessary. If then the priests were so minutely observant on this point, with respect to themselves, there is every reason imaginable to suppose, the Jewish nation at large would be at least equally careful to preserve an exact knowledge of the royal line of David, from whom they expected the great Messiah to descend.

From what is said above it seems unquestionably evident, that the evangelists must have been in possession of all the materials necessary for executing the matter in which they engaged, with the nicest accuracy ; and it may be added, that all the facts requisite for establishing their respective genealogical tables, were matters of public notoriety throughout the whole country of Judea.

It will not appear extraordinary, that the two inspired writers abovementioned, have given us the genealogy of Christ, according to the flesh, if we reflect that, exclusive of the necessity they were under of proving him a lineal descendant of David, the Jews always considered the genealogy of any person whose transactions were committed to writing, as an indispensable part of the history. In confirmation of this may be brought the genealogies to be found in the Old Testament, some of which are carried back for the space of more than three thousand five hundred years; including not only the lineal descent of persons who had rendered themselves conspicuous in the histories of their respective times, but also particularising the nearer of the collateral branches, many of the names in which are on no other occasion mentioned.

Tables of the Genealogy of our blessed Saviour.

* St. Matthew.

St. Luke.

1	God		
2	Adam	-	1
3	Seth	-	2
4	Enos	-	3
5	Cainan	-	4
6	Maleleel	-	5
7	Jared	-	6
8	Enoch	-	7
9	Mathusala	-	8
10	Lamech	-	9
11	Noe	-	10

* The evangelist St. Matthew being a Jew, and writing to people of his own persuasion, represents Jesus as the son of David and Abraham, from whom it had been promised the Messiah should descend: but St. Luke being a Gentile, he traces our Saviour's genealogy up to Adam, with a view, we may reasonably conjecture, to represent him as the Mediator of mankind.

St. Matthew.

St. Luke.

12	Sem	-	-	11
13	Arphaxad	-	-	12
14	<i>Cainan</i>			
15	Sala	-	-	13
16	Heber	-	-	14
17	Phaleg	-	-	15
18	Ragau	-	-	16
19	Saruch	-	-	17
20	Nachor	-	-	18
21	Thara	-	-	19

The first series of St. Matthew, the same as in St. Luke.

1	Abraham	-	-	-	20
2	Isaac	-	-	-	21
3	Jacob	-	-	-	22
4	Judah	-	-	-	23
5	Phares, the son of Thamar, and brother of Zara	-	-	-	24
6	Esrom	-	-	-	25
7	Aram	-	-	-	26
8	Aminadab	-	-	-	27
9	Naasson	-	-	-	28
10	Salmon	-	-	-	29
11	Booz, the son of Rachab, a woman of Jericho, and the husband of Ruth, after the death of the son of Elimelech				30
12	Obed	-	-	-	31
13	Jesse	-	-	-	32
14	David, who had two of his sons (Solomon and Nathan) by Bathsheba, formerly the wife of Uriah	-	-	-	33

St. Matthew.

St. Luke.

The legal line.		The natural line.	
1	Solomon -	1	Nathan - - 34
2	Roboam -	2	Mattatha - 35
3	Abia -	3	Menan - 36
4	Asa - -	4	Melea - 37
5	Josaphat -	5	Eliakim - 38
6	Joram -	6	Jonan - - 39
*	<i>Achasia</i> -	7	Joseph - 40
*	<i>Joas</i> -	8	Judah - - 41
*	<i>Amasia</i> -	9	Simeon - 42
7	Ozias - -	10	Levi - - 43
8	Joatham -	11	Matthat - 44
9	Achaz -	12	Jorim - - 45
10	Ezechias -	13	Eliezer - 46
11	Manasses -	14	Jose - - 47
12	Amon -	15	Er - - 48
13	Josias -	16	Elmodam - 49
14	Jechonias -	17	Cosam - - 50
*	<i>Jechonias</i> , another of that name who died without children.	18	Addi - - 51
*	<i>Zedechias</i> , uncle by the father's side, and heir to the younger Jechonias.	19	Melchi - 52
*	<i>Assir</i> , heir to Jechonias after Zedechias.	20	Neri - 53

The lines united.

1	Salathiel, the son of Neri, heir to Assir and Jechonias	- -	54
	<i>Pedaiah</i>		
2	Zorobabel, heir to Salathiel	-	55

St. Matthew.

St. Luke.

The legal line.		The natural line.	
3	Abiud -	23	Rhesa - - 56
4	Eliakim -	24	Joanna - 57
5	Abner -	25	Juda - 58
6	Azor -	26	Joseph - 59
7	Sadoc -	27	Semei - 60
8	Achim -	28	Mattathias - 61
9	Eliud -	29	Maath - - 62
10	Eleazar -	30	Nagge - 63
*	- -	31	Esli - 64
*	- -	32	Naum - 65
*	- -	33	Amos - 66
*	- -	34	Mattathias - 67
*	- -	35	Joseph - 68
*	- -	36	Janna - 69
11	Matthan, who died without children.	57	Melchi, natural father of Jacob, and father of Heli-Levi. - 70
12	Jacob, the natural son of Melchi, by the relict of Matthan, whose legal son Jacob was therefore accounted, according to the law of the Jews in such cases.	38	<i>Levi</i>
		39	<i>Matthat</i>
		40	Heli, or Heli-Levi, the son of Melchi, half-brother of Jacob, and natural brother of Joseph. - 71

-
- 13 Joseph the son of Heli or Heli-Levi, and heir of Jacob. - - 72
- 14 Jesus Christ, the supposed son and legal heir of Joseph, who by the intermarriages of his predecessors, was heir to the two branches of David's family, descended from Solomon and

Nathan. Christ, therefore, according to these accounts, was strictly and legally king of the Jews, and successor of David, which was one of the characters of the Messiah, given long before by the prophets.

In the genealogy given by St. Matthew, there are seven names printed in the Italic character, as are three in that by St. Luke, exclusive of Pedaiah, who comes between Salathiel and Zorobabel, where the lines are united. The stars prefixed to six of the names in Matthew's list, are to denote that they are extracted from the genealogies of the Old Testament. Cainan, Levi, and Matthat, in the genealogy of St. Luke, are rejected by many persons of great learning for reasons which we shall hereafter particularize.— We shall also account for having distinguished Pedaiah and Abner, and give the reason for inserting the columns under the heads of the legal line and the natural line.

An interpretation founded upon the plain sense of an author's words, should most certainly be preferred to a forced construction. Thus upon deciding the question, Whether St. Luke gives us the genealogy of Joseph from Nathan, the son of David, as Matthew has given from his brother Solomon, or rather the genealogy of Mary from her father Heli, a strict adherence to the above rule will be found absolutely necessary. If we ascribe the genealogy of St. Luke not to Joseph, but to the Virgin Mary alone, it will most certainly be putting a forced construction upon the meaning of the writer; for instead of "being as was supposed, the son of Heli," we must in the above case read, "being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph, but in reality the son of Mary only, who was the daughter of Heli."

Had St. Luke, who was an accurate Grecian, intended to signify this to his readers, he would scarcely have made use of such obscure language, as appears to convey an idea directly opposite to that entertained by the general consent of antiquity. The Greek words which are translated, "being, as was supposed," might have been rendered, "being, as the law allows," or "in the spirit of the law, the son of Joseph."

According to the laws of all nations, the son of a married woman should be called the son of her husband; and in this sense Christ was unquestionably the son of Joseph, he being the husband of Mary; and therefore St. Luke was guilty of no impropriety in giving him that appellation.

After having brought down his genealogy to Joseph, St. Matthew, unquestionably with the same design, informs us, "That Joseph was the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ." Neither of these evangelists says that Jesus was the son of Joseph, but they both prove, that according to the true meaning and interpretation of the law, he ought to be so reputed.

Upon the first view, the following question may appear as an obstacle not to be easily surmounted: By what means can a knowledge of the descent of Mary be obtained from the two genealogies wherein she is not even mentioned, both of which, however, are admitted to belong to her husband Joseph? To decide this question, we must conclude, which we may do very reasonably, that the genealogy of Joseph included that of his wife Mary.

The New Testament affords an incontestible proof that Mary was of the race of David. When the angel

told her that "she should bear a son, and call his name Jesus," he added, that "The Lord should give him the throne of his father David." If David could in any sense be called the father of the son of Mary, it is evident, that she must have been a daughter of David's family. It is also said in the hymn of Zacharias, that God by giving his kingdom to the son of Mary, "had raised up for them a horn of salvation in the house of his servant David." We have also the concurrent testimony of all the ancient fathers, that Joseph and Mary were of the same tribe and family. This was never disputed by the Jews who were cotemporaries with Joseph and Mary; and it may be fairly inferred, that had not this been founded in fact, they would have exposed the fallacy, which they might have done by a reference to their genealogical tables. They would have been happy in the opportunity of convicting the christians of a falshood: but their silence on this subject, in which they were so nearly interested, is a sufficient testimony, that they were persuaded that the whole of what the fathers had advanced respecting the genealogy of Mary being included in that of Joseph, were facts of too stubborn a nature to admit either of doubt or controversy.

The above facts being admitted, it is to be observed, that there will appear nothing extraordinary in the circumstance of the inspired writers having delivered to us the genealogy of Joseph rather than of Mary, when it is considered, that it was the invariable practice of the Jews to form their genealogical tables from the men, without regard to the other sex.

By Moses, the daughters of Israel, who possessed any inheritance, were strictly enjoined not to contract matrimony out of the families of their progenitors:— and there is more than a mere probability, that Mary

was in this predicament; for Epiphanius, one of the most learned of the fathers, positively declares, that “Mary was given to Joseph in marriage, because the rights of inheritance which she possessed, rendered the union necessary.” This law was not peculiar to the Jews, for the Athenians, and the inhabitants of other Grecian cities, were, according to Demosthenes and Diodorus Siculus, prohibited from contracting marriage with foreigners.

Admitting that Luke has given us the genealogy of Joseph, as well as Matthew, and also that neither of them has mentioned the descent of Mary distinctly from that of her husband, another intricacy will occur, which, on the first view, will appear as difficult to be reconciled as the former.

We are informed by one of the evangelists, that Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary; and by the other evangelist, the same Joseph is called “the son of Heli.” Their respective genealogical tables quite up to David, do not correspond in any point, except with regard to the names of Salathiel and Zorobabel: and several learned men are of opinion, that these two names are in both genealogies meant to signify the same person. Is it possible that Joseph could be descended from David both by Nathan and Solomon; or could he be the immediate issue both of Heli and Jacob.

We shall now endeavour to convince our readers, that there is no inconsistency in what we have advanced on this subject, by proving that Joseph might derive his birth from the two branches of the family of David, which we have already mentioned; that he was the natural son either of Jacob or Heli; and that he might with propriety be called the son of the other also, being his immediate heir and successor.

We have already observed, that in the Bible, persons are frequently called the sons of those who are not their fathers according to literal interpretation ; a grandson, a great grandson, a more remote descendant, or one who is only an heir apparent, sprung from some collateral branch, being in the liberal sense denominated the son : agreeable to this rule, a man is said to beget his grandson or his heir, although the latter be in a very distant degree of consanguinity.— Of this kind we have two particular instances in the genealogy by St. Matthew, who says, that “ Joram begat Ozias.” But from the Old Testament it is evident, that Joram begat Achasia, that Achasia begat Joas, that Joas begat Amasia, and that Amasia begat Ozias. Thus we plainly perceive an omission of no less than three generations.

But to pursue our investigation of the point in question. Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time of being carried into Babylon. After being taken to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel, who begat Zorobabel. It appears, however, that between Jechonias, the son of Josias, and Salathiel, there was another Jechonias, the son of the former ; and this younger Jechonias being pronounced childless by the Lord, he was succeeded by Zedechias, his uncle, to whom the next in succession was Assir. It does not seem that Salathiel was the natural son of either of these, but of Neri, whose son he is called by St. Luke : but upon the decease of the relations of Jechonias, this Salathiel succeeding to the royal issue, in him the two branches of Solomon and Nathan became united.

In the Chronicles, Zerubbable, who in the New Testament is called Zorobabel, is said to be the son of Pedaiah, one of the brothers of Salathiel, although neither of the evangelists mention Pedaiah. As se-

veral of these persons are denominated the sons of their immediate predecessors in the catalogue, so was Joseph the son either of Jacob or Heli: but, notwithstanding all that has been written on this subject, which of these persons was his natural father, is a question that will perhaps never be determined.

However, in the proper sense, it is clear, that he was the son of both; being the natural issue of the one, and the legal issue of the other. Africanus, Eusebius, Epiphanius, and Jerome, suppose that Jacob was the real father of Joseph, and that Heli was his father only according to legal construction. A great number of the learned moderns have adopted this opinion; and these strenuously contend, that our Saviour was lineally descended not only from David, but from Solomon also. They resist the idea of any failure in the line of Solomon; and are, therefore, under the necessity of representing the Salathiel and Zorobabel in St. Luke's catalogue, not to have been the persons mentioned by St. Matthew. The foundation of this opinion is the following promise made to David "When thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee.—He shall build a house for my name; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever."

Nathan was the brother of Solomon, both on the side of father and mother; and there appears to have been a long succession of intermarriages between these two branches of David's family. It follows, then, that those who suppose Joseph was the natural son of Heli, put no greater stress upon the promise made to David, than the advocates for the contrary opinion put upon the names of Salathiel and Zorobabel, and upon the prophecy of Jeremiah, respecting Jechonias, which says, "Write this man childless." The house of Solomon we learn was never deficient

of heirs, on account of its intimate alliance with that of Nathan ; and these two houses were, according to Africanus, so closely united, partly by intermarriages, and partly by raising up the name of the deceased, in compliance with the ordination of the law, that the same persons, without the least impropriety, might be deemed the brethren of both houses. That this union was continued down to the time of our Saviour, is beyond dispute ; for otherwise Joseph could not have been introduced as the son or heir, of both Jacob and Heli.

It appears from the preceding considerations, that the most proper method is to accept the genealogy of St. Luke as the natural line of Joseph, after the example of Grotius and other writers : and this plan we have adopted in our genealogical table.

From our most elaborate researches, we have not been able to acquire information sufficient to enable us to speak with precision respecting the degree of relationship between Joseph and the blessed Virgin ; but nothing further is in our power, than to say, that the general opinion of the learned is, that they were cousins-german. Epiphanius was an inhabitant of Judea, and lived nearly at the time of Joseph and Mary ; consequently he had opportunities of learning the truth ; and this consideration, should be some inducement to our reliance on his authority. This writer, as we have before observed, says, that the Virgin was obliged by the rights of inheritance to espouse Joseph : and thence it follows, that he must have been the nearest of her male relations.

The evangelist St. Matthew has formed his genealogical table in four classes, in each of which are said to be fourteen generations. To preserve this number of fourteen, several names are omitted, and of

this omission we have particularised two instances. However, his list still seems to be defective ; for from the time of coming out of Babylon to Christ, we find but thirteen names, beginning with Salathiel, and concluding with Christ. This is rectified by an ancient Hebrew copy, wherein the name of Abner is inserted between Eliakim and Azor, as in our table.

The second Cainan, between Arphaxad and Sala, in the genealogy of St. Luke, is rejected by the best critics as an interpolation in the text of that evangelist. The reasons they produce in support of their objection are as follow : this name is not found in the Bible, nor in the works of those learned ancients, who follow the Septuagint translation into Greek ; as Josephus, Philo, and Eusebius, although an account of the patriarchs is given by each of these writers. Arphaxad they represent as the father of Sala, and mention Abraham as the tenth from Noah : but both these assertions must be false, unless Cainan be rejected. It is true, that this name is now found in the Septuagint, but it must have been introduced after the time of the above-mentioned writers. This name is not mentioned in any Greek version except the Septuagint, nor in the Samaritan, the Syriac, or Arabic ; and it is also omitted in the Vulgate and the Targums.

Some of the fathers who have written on this subject, though they excluded Cainan, were silent as to that name being mentioned by St. Luke ; whence it may be concluded, that they had not seen the name in the gospel of that evangelist. It must be further observed, that the fathers mention only seventy-two generations in St. Luke's genealogy, which affords a reason for rejecting the names of Matthat and Levi, as we have done in our table upon the authority of the most learned writers.

In conclusion we must observe, that these mistakes, the effects of the ignorance or the inattention of transcribers, can in no respect whatever impair the authority of the other parts of the New Testament, which inculcates such doctrines as will infallibly lead to ETERNAL SALVATION.

CHAP. VI.

Institutions relating to the presentation of the first-born, and the purification of women. Joseph and Mary repair to Jerusalem. Simeon takes Jesus in his arms, and praises God. Account of the prophetess Anna. In consequence of a vision, Joseph and Mary convey Jesus into Egypt. Massacre of the children of Bethlehem. Upon the decease of Herod, Joseph returns to Nazareth. Infant state of our Saviour. He accompanies Joseph and Mary to Jerusalem, whence they depart without him, and afterwards find him in the temple, engaged in dispute with the doctors. The humility of Christ towards Joseph and Mary. Proofs that Christ followed the occupation of Joseph.

AS our Saviour was without sin, an entire exemption from pain and dishonour might, with great propriety, have been pleaded in his behalf; but he was subjected to the ceremony of circumcision according to the injunctions of the law; and after this, the two other institutions of the same law were observed with equal exactness, the one relating to mothers, and the other to first-born children. Every woman, according to the ordination of the Jewish law, was, upon the birth of a male child, to separate herself from the public congregation for the space of forty days, and upon the expiration of that time, to be purified in the temple; and by another law it was decreed, that the first-born male, whether of man or beast, should be holy to the Lord, whereby it was signified, that the firstlings of clean beasts should be assigned to the service of the altar, and the first-born of men for the service of the temple. Until the Le-

vites were substituted in their room, by the particular direction of the Almighty, the first born males were exclusively entitled to the honours of the priesthood: and from respect to this ancient law, they were still presented to God: but it was allowed, that they might be restored to their parents, in consideration of a stipulated sum being paid for their redemption. Though no defilement had been contracted by the Holy Virgin, and no impurity had attended the birth of Christ, yet as he was born for our salvation, under the law, and as his holy mother was supposed to be in the condition of all other women in similar circumstances, it was expedient that they should submit to the established ceremonies. When the mother presented her son on these occasions, she was to pay the priest five shekels for the ransom of her infant; and at the same time to offer, for her own purification, a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and for a sin-offering either a young pigeon or a turtle dove: but persons in indigent circumstances were excused from any other oblation than two young pigeons or a pair of turtle doves.

In conformity to the above institutions, Joseph and Mary departed from Bethlehem, where they had resided from the birth of Jesus, and went to Jerusalem, whence they intended to travel to Nazareth, the place of their habitation, after having complied with the ceremonies of their religion. Upon their arrival in Jerusalem, the Holy Virgin repaired to the temple with her new-born son, at the time of the morning sacrifice, and with the utmost humility waited in the outward court, while the priest made an oblation of the pigeons or turtle-doves, her circumstances not permitting her to make a more expensive offering. The first part of the ceremony being performed, Mary was admitted into the second court of the holy congregation, where the priest received the Blessed Infant from his mother

at the altar of burnt-offerings. Thus the prophecies of Haggai and Malachi began to be accomplished ; for they had predicted, That the desire of all nations, the Messiah of the new covenant, should come to the temple of God, and render that more glorious than the former house.

A pious and venerable old man, named Simeon, supposed by many to be the son of Hillel, a celebrated doctor of the Sanhedrim, at this time resided in Jerusalem. This man, after having for a long series of years expected and fervently prayed for the redemption of Israel, had received a revelation from the Holy Ghost, that notwithstanding the very great age he had already attained, he should live to behold the great Messiah. While Joseph and Mary were in the temple, engaged in the discharge of the duties which were enjoined by the law, the Holy Spirit again descended upon Simeon, and instructed him to repair immediately to the house of God, where he should witness the accomplishment of the divine promise, by beholding the Son of God in the arms of a poor virgin. In obedience to the divine instruction, Simeon hastened to the temple ; and upon beholding Jesus, he took the Holy Infant in his arms, and glorified the Lord, saying, “ Now, O God, according to thy sacred
“ word, thou lettest thy servant depart in peace ; for
“ mine eyes have beheld thy salvation, which thou
“ hast prepared before the face of all people, a light
“ to enlighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy peo-
“ ple Israel.”

While Joseph and Mary stood in silent wonder at what the prophet had said concerning Jesus, the holy man, addressing himself to Mary, informed her, that her son was born for the happiness or destruction of many, according as they should obey or disregard the prophecy he should deliver ; and that he should be

placed among mankind as a mark against which the disobedient and obdurate would direct the utmost force of their malice. Simeon spoke thus to Mary, because he foresaw that she would live to be a witness of the persecuted life and cruel death of her son, and even be present at his crucifixion; for this is alluded to in the following part of the prophecy: "Yea a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also;" whereby it was implied that the anguish she should feel on account of the sufferings of Jesus, would be equal to the utmost tortures of which human nature was capable. Having concluded his benediction and prophecy, Simeon joyfully retired, to wait his approaching dissolution, which, according to the course of nature, he was sensible could not be far distant.

A woman named Anna, the daughter of one Phanael, of the tribe of Asser, also dwelt at this time in Jerusalem. She had been once married, and had lived in that state about seven years. She had now attained the age of eighty-four, having lived many years in widowhood. She had been long remarkable for a strict observance of the duties of the temple; and the evangelist informs us, that she "served God with fastings and prayers day and night." This woman possessed a prophetic spirit, of which she had given many signal instances. Thus then she appears to have been a woman in whom a number of circumstances combined to render her worthy of being selected as a second witness to the first public appearance of our blessed Saviour. That the testimony of both sexes might be secured, the spirit of inspiration which had descended upon Simeon, now communicated to Anna, that the Saviour of mankind was in the temple; whither she immediately hastened, and arriving at the very instant when Simeon had concluded his discourse, she immediately acknowledged Jesus to be the blessed Messiah, and glorified God. Anna also assured all

the pious inhabitants of Jerusalem, who expected the salvation of Israel, that she had actually beheld and paid adoration to the blessed Saviour of mankind.

After an exact observance of those ceremonies prescribed by the law of God, Joseph and Mary meant to repair to Nazareth, their former place of abode ; and this design indeed they carried into execution after their return from Egypt : but yet they seem to have taken a temporary abode at Bethlehem, perhaps for the purpose of taking some repose after their late fatigue, or for discharging some engagements they had contracted during their former residence in that city.

Soon after their return, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream, commanding him immediately to flee into Egypt with his wife and the Holy Infant, there to remain till it should please God to give further directions for the regulation of his conduct ; adding that Herod, apprehending that Christ might deprive his posterity of the throne of Judea, had impiously projected machinations for sacrificing the life of Jesus.

In obedience to the heavenly mission, Joseph resolved to seek shelter in Egypt with all possible expedition. And, that his sudden departure might not be rendered ineffectual by a speedy pursuit, he, accompanied by Mary and the Holy Babe, quitted his habitation during the night :—and after travelling about two hundred miles, they arrived in Egypt, where they sojourned till they were recalled by the angel, after the decease of Herod. To this circumstance the evangelist St. Matthew, with great propriety, applies the following words of God relating to the Hebrew nation, which are recorded by Hosea : “ Out of Egypt have I called my Son.”

Hermopolis was the name of the city of Egypt

where the holy family are supposed to have resided. We are told that when Christ was carried into one of the temples at Hermopolis, all the idols fell down, to the utter astonishment and confusion of their impious worshippers. Thus was fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: "Behold the Lord shall go into Egypt, and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence." It is recorded by several writers of antiquity, that Jeremiah threatened the Egyptian priests, that their idols should be destroyed when a Holy Virgin and her Infant should come into their country; and many persons entertain a belief, that for this reason the Egyptians worshipped an infant in a manger, and a virgin in her bed.

Herod, who had for a considerable time impatiently expected the return of the Magi, was inflamed to the most extravagant degree of rage by the public declarations of Simeon and Anna. Reflecting on the indirect means by which he had obtained the sovereignty of Judea, and, from the many conspiracies that had been formed against him on very slight occasions, apprehending that the Jews might endeavour to conceal the child, and excite an insurrection in his behalf, he commanded a powerful body of armed men to invest the city of Bethlehem, and massacre all the male children who had been born in that town and its adjacent cities within the two preceding years. Thus the inhuman tyrant hoped to involve our blessed Saviour in the common slaughter of the innocent victims. After this shocking instance of the more than savage barbarity of Herod, that detestable tyrant, having been informed that the son of Zacharias was to discharge an eminent office under Jesus, dispatched one of the minions of his power with orders to put John to death. However he was preserved by the vigilance of his mother, who being apprized of the cruel design of Herod, conveyed her son John to an obscure place

in the desert, where he remained in concealment till the time of his manifestation to Israel. As the children of Bethlehem died in the room of Christ, so did the father of the Baptist for his son ; for Herod slew Zacharias between the temple and the altar, in consequence of his refusal to surrender the infant into the power of that monster of cruelty.

The gospel does not inform us what space of time our Saviour remained in Egypt, but only mentions that he was not conveyed out of that country till after the demise of Herod, who did not survive the horrid massacre of the children of Bethlehem more than a year. Upon the decease of Herod the angel of the Lord again appeared to Joseph in a dream, and commanded him to return with Mary and her son to the land of Israel. The holy family immediately set out, in compliance with the divine injunction : but being informed on the way, that Archelaus, the son of Herod, had succeeded to the throne of Judea, and that he had already afforded sufficient proofs of a malignant and sanguinary disposition in suppressing an insurrection among the Jews, he deemed it not prudent to enter the dominions of that prince. But being again visited, and reminded of his duty by the celestial monitor, he pursued his journey to Nazareth, the city in Galilee where he had formerly resided, which was at this time under the government of Herod Antipas, one of the brothers of Archelaus, according to the last will of their father, and the decree of Augustus. The inhabitants of this city were entirely unacquainted with the extraordinary combination of circumstances attending the birth of our Saviour, who at this place, according to an ancient prediction, which was then current among the Jews, obtained the name of a Nazarene.

From the scriptures, we are not able to collect many particulars relating to the manner in which our

Saviour employed his time during his state of infancy and youth: and, indeed, the writings whose authenticity may be relied on, speak but very imperfectly of his actions for the first thirty years, which, indeed, included by far the greatest part of his life. Though St. Luke was more particular in his account of the minority of Jesus, than either of the other evangelists, yet he says no more than that, “the child grew up, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him:” and speaking of his manner of life at Nazareth, he says only that, “he was subject to his parents, that he increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor both with God and man.”

From what remains on record, however, it may be concluded, that Christ was not subject to those infirmities of mind that are common to other children, but that he was remarkable for a sedate deportment, a modest demeanour, and an even complacency of temper; and also that a considerable portion of his time was occupied in prayer, meditation, and spiritual intercourse with his heavenly Father.

We have, however, one very remarkable event upon record which occurred in the early part of the life of our Saviour; and this is his going with Joseph and Mary to Jerusalem, when he was twelve years of age and conversing with the doctors in the temple, with such a superiority of wisdom as astonished the whole auditory. Before this, as appears from the words of St. Luke, which we have quoted above, the favor of God towards Jesus was very remarkable, so that the divine Spirit with which he was filled, was manifested in his infant state. His progress in knowledge and wisdom, the composure of his countenance, the evenness of his temper, the acuteness of his penetration, and many other admirable qualities, were such as had

not been before discovered in one of his years, and were esteemed as infallible testimonies of his divinity. While the perfections of Jesus wonderfully continued to display themselves, his parents persevered in the pious custom, which, indeed, was common among the Jews, of visiting Jerusalem at the time of celebrating the feast of the passover. Whether Christ ever went to Jerusalem in celebration of the passover before he was twelve years of age, we are not informed : but, from circumstances, his first visit on that occasion seems to have been at the period of life we have mentioned.

Jesus continued with his parents for the space of seven days, during the course of their attendance upon the temple ; and while they were upon their return home, he privately withdrew himself, and remained in Jerusalem. Joseph and Mary supposing him to be in the numerous company of their relations and friends, who, after having visited Jerusalem on the same business with themselves, and were now on their return to their respective homes, travelled forwards a whole day's journey, in momentary expectation that their son would join them. His absence, at length, gave them much uneasiness, and after the most diligent enquiry, being satisfied that Christ was not in the company, they returned to Jerusalem, anxiously searching for him upon the way.

After a vigilant enquiry for the space of three days, they found him seated amidst the doctors in the outer court of the temple, attending to their discourse, and proposing questions to them. About the outer court, commonly called the court of the people, were certain porches, or chambers, called Gazophylacia, from the goods and treasures of the temple being deposited therein. These apartments belonged to the priests ; and in them the doctors of the law assem-

bled at appointed times, for the purpose of expounding the Mosaical institutions, and debating among themselves upon intricate points. Such youths as applied themselves to literary pursuits were admitted to these assemblies, where they received such instructions as were usually given in other public seminaries of learning.

In this assembly Christ gravely attended to the discourse of the doctors, to whom he proposed several difficult questions; and such as they were unable to solve, he himself explained to the entire satisfaction of the auditors; who were amazed to hear a youth of his tender age afford such evident proofs of a degree of understanding so greatly surpassing that of men, who were the most celebrated for learning and wisdom.

Thus was our blessed Saviour employed when Joseph and Mary entered the temple; and upon their appearance, he rose from his place with great humility, and going towards them, saluted them with the utmost cordiality. The Virgin informed him, that his absence had, for three days, been the cause of the greatest anxiety both to Joseph and herself, and asked the cause of his having quitted them; adding that the question was merely for the purpose of learning the reason, and not meant to convey the slightest reproof; for she was persuaded, he had acted under the immediate direction of the Almighty. Jesus replied, that their solicitude for his safety had been wholly unnecessary; and that the period would shortly arrive, when he should be entirely employed in the public business of his Father. They did not clearly comprehend the meaning of this reply, either being ignorant that he alluded to his heavenly Father, or not understanding what he meant by "the business of his Father." Mary, however, as she had

done on every other particular occasion, treasured the words of Christ in her memory, esteeming them as a sacred deposite, which in the course of the future ministry of her Son, would be fully explained.

In the same year that Jesus Christ went to the pass-over at Jerusalem with Joseph and Mary, in the twelfth year of his age, Augustus sent Publius Sulpitius, whom he had appointed president of Syria, to seize the country over which Archelaus had reigned, and reduce it to a Roman province : and with him was sent Coponius, a Roman of the Equestrian order, to assume the government, under the title of Procurator of Judea. Arriving at Jerusalem, they confiscated the effects of Archelaus, and having in a great measure abolished the Jewish policy, they established that of Rome in its stead. Coponius assumed the powers of administration in the name of Augustus ; but he still acted in subordination to the president of Syria, Judea being made a part of that province.

The appearance of Christ in the temple was predicted by the prophet Malachi ; and, according to the prophet Haggai, the blessed Jesus made “ the glory of the latter house much greater than that of the former.” By the latter house the prophet meant the temple, from the time of its being rebuilt by Zerubbabel, when the Jews returned from their captivity in Babylon, till its final destruction by Titus ; for although within that period of time, it was re-constructed by Herod, and rendered more magnificent than before, yet as he employed a considerable part of the old materials, and even preserved some parts of the ancient edifice, his structure was confounded with that of Zerubbabel, and the temple was still distinguished by the name of the second or latter house.

Jesus now returned with Joseph and Mary to their humble habitation in Nazareth, where he resided with them several years in the constant observance of filial duty and affection. Thus he exhibited a most admirable lesson for the imitation of children, who by the strongest ties of nature, and obligations of gratitude, are bound to live in dutiful subjection to their parents: the great Messiah himself, the glorious Redeemer of mankind, has afforded them a most noble example, by an uninterrupted discharge of all filial obligation towards his earthly parents.

We are told in the scriptures, that as our Saviour grew up in stature, the powers of his mind increased, by just gradations of wisdom, till he attained to an heavenly perfection. Some writers doubt whether Jesus in reality, or only in appearance, increased in wisdom; urging, that a plenitude of wisdom was as necessarily a part of his composition, as the divine nature. Others, grounding their sentiments on the literal interpretation of history, which affirms, that Christ increased in the favor of God as well as man, and in wisdom as well as stature, contend that it was agreeable to the human nature of Jesus, to have different degrees of understanding as well as other perfections: and that it is equally reasonable to believe, that the Godhead might for a time suspend the effusion of wisdom upon the humanity of Christ, as that he did suspend the beatific vision, which was not imparted in the height of our Saviour's passion. But whether it was in reality, or only in appearance, that Christ increased in understanding, whether in habit of mind, or only in experience and exercise, it is indisputable, that the advancements of the Holy Child were truly wonderful, and more than barely sufficient to inspire mankind with a disposition to receive more full manifestations of his divinity in his future public administration.

From the period of our Saviour being twelve years old, till he attained the age of thirty, we have nothing material on record relating to his life and conversation: but yet some information on those subjects, may be collected from divers passages in scripture. We may reasonably infer, from the circumstance of his parents seeking him among their kindred and friends, when he remained in Jerusalem after their departure, that he was not difficult of access, but that his conversation with persons of every description was entirely free from every restraint, except such as was imposed from the purity of his mind. Being in no respect liable to contract sin, it was not necessary that he should seclude himself from society, or otherwise live in a state of severity and self-mortification. It is also apparent, that though the doctors, and the rest of his auditors in the temple of Jerusalem, expressed the greatest astonishment at the profundity of his wisdom, and though he afterwards, in the presence of his mother and other particular friends, on divers occasions, displayed instances of unbounded sanctity and consummate prudence, yet he modestly concealed his divine perfections, and was so reserved in his intercourse with the generality of mankind, with whom he always conversed in a manner suitable to the extent of their knowledge and capacities, that he obtained no great share of popular reputation even in the city of which he was a native, where he was afterwards reproached on account of his mean birth and education.

It evidently appears that when Jesus was advancing towards manhood, he contributed by his own labour to relieve the necessities of his parents, following the occupation of his reputed father, who the evangelists say was a carpenter. Some of the ancient writers have pretended to ascertain the particular branch in the art of carpentry, at which Joseph wrought; and particularly Justin Martyr asserts, that it was

making ploughs, yokes and other implements of husbandry, for the use of his neighbours. Joseph is supposed to have died before John began to baptize; for after that period he is not mentioned in the evangelical writings: and there is reason to suppose, that for some time after the decease of Joseph, Christ employed himself in the occupation of his reputed father; for St. Mark has not, like St. Matthew, made the Jews call him "The carpenter's son," but simply "The carpenter, the son of Mary."

Great and various were the hardships and mortifications which our blessed Lord suffered during his minority; and amidst his other sufferings, it was particularly severe, that he who was the word and wisdom of God, should, for so long a space of time, be compelled to submit to the law of silence, when the follies and iniquities of mankind afforded him innumerable opportunities of manifesting his superior wisdom and sanctity. When the people frequented the synagogue on the sabbath days, Jesus and his parents constantly attended. Thus the great Lawgiver of Israel appeared in the temple under the character of a common artificer; and even after he had arrived at man's estate, he patiently heard the priests and elders give erroneous interpretations of the law, that at the proper period the full-collected blaze of his divinity might impress mankind with a conviction, that his knowledge and works were the immediate effects of a supernatural power.

CHAP. VII.

Of the name of the blessed Virgin. Her parents and nativity. Her education and nuptials. Her virginity after marriage, and her annunciation. That Mary was with Jesus at Cana, and other places. The death of the Virgin Mary, and revelation concerning her. Of the perpetual virginity of the mother of Jesus. Her assumption.

JOSEPH and the Virgin Mary have hitherto been conspicuous characters in our history: but from the period to which we have now brought our narration, to the death of our blessed Saviour, Joseph is not mentioned in the sacred writings, nor is the Holy Virgin spoken of frequently. Therefore it may be concluded, as we have before observed, that Joseph died before our Lord commenced his public ministration. With respect to the Virgin, in order that a more perfect account of her life may appear, we shall collect the small number of passages which occur in relation to her, under one point of view.

Some have conjectured, that the name of Mary was meant to be expressive of the dignity, illumination, grace, and dominion of the Holy Virgin. But among both the ancient and modern Jews, this name was common to the female sex. As the name of Jesus is synonymous with Joshua, so is Mary with Miriam, who, we learn, was the daughter of Amram, the sister of Moses and Aaron, a prophetess, to whom, as well as to her brethren, is attributed the bringing of Israel out of Egypt. “I have brought thee up
“ out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out
“ of the house of servants; and I sent before thee

“Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.” As Miriam was so greatly honored as to be one of the persons who brought the people of God out of the Egyptian bondage, so was Mary more gloriously distinguished, by bringing into the world the blessed Messiah, who has redeemed mankind from sin and Satan, of which the redemption from the Egyptian bondage was but a type.

The evangelists have told us, that Mary was of the family of David, and of the town of Bethlehem : but they say little more particular respecting her parents. From the gospel of St. John we learn that Mary, the wife of Cleophas, who probably was the mother of those whom the gospel stiles the brethren of our Saviour, was her sister ; and this is understood in the obvious sense by St. Jerome, and other writers of antiquity. She was also related to the family of Aaron, by her cousin Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist. For some centuries past, the Latin church has, in conformity with the Greeks, honored St. Joachim as the father, and St. Anne as the mother of the blessed Virgin : but there is no evidence to prove them entitled to such distinction.

We have the testimony of an angel, that “in the divine favor Mary was happy above all other women ; that she was full of grace, and that the Lord was with her in a peculiar manner.” That he might assume the nature of humanity, it was necessary that our blessed Saviour should inhabit some woman ; and it was agreeable to the infinite wisdom of the Almighty, to appoint for the mother of his Son a virgin of the most exemplary character, the endowments of whose mind and body surpassed those of the rest of her sex, and who, in short, was a repository of all the divine graces.

The tradition of the ancients, mentioning that Mary was espoused to Joseph at the age of fifteen years, may reasonably be admitted, that being, according to the custom of the Jews, the usual period when the women contracted matrimony. It is the unanimous opinion of the Greek fathers of the first ages, and of many of the Latins, that at the time of his espousal with Mary, Joseph was a widower, and had several children living by a former wife, who are by these learned fathers supposed to be meant by those who are called in the gospel "the brethren of our Saviour." But St. Jerome asserts, that there is no authority in support of this opinion; adding that the brethren of Christ were his cousins-german by Mary, wife of Cleophas, and sister to the Holy Virgin.

Notwithstanding her marriage, that the mother of Jesus was to remain in a state of virginity, and to conceive in a miraculous manner, is so explicitly the doctrine of scripture, as to admit of no controversy. Prophecy of this mysterious incarnation, Isaiah says, "A virgin shall conceive and bear a son." The most proper signification of the Hebrew word *Almah* is a *virgin*; and thus it is rendered by all the ancient interpreters: nor is it once introduced in any other sense throughout the whole body of scriptural writings, as divers learned men have clearly proved, in refutation of the groundless pretensions of the modern Jews. The original signification of the word is *hid* or *concealed*; whence it is used to denote a virgin, because it is the custom of the Eastern countries for the virgins to reside in the apartments of the women, where they are secluded from every species of intercourse with the other sex.

The evangelist St. Matthew says, "the virgin was espoused to Joseph;" and that "before they came together, she was found to be with child of the Holy

“Ghost.” Hence we may infer, that it was not an invariable custom for the bride to reside at the bridegroom’s dwelling, immediately after being affianced to him : but this is denied by St. Chrysostom, who grounds his opinion on the circumstance of his having been witness to the contrary practice at Antioch. However, in this respect the practice of the Jews was not uniform : and it is very reasonable to imagine, that the parties were at liberty to act in conformity to their own inclination. Previous to the solemnization of marriage, Rebecca was brought home to Isaac, “because it was convenient for him to take a journey “into Mesopotamia : ” and Sampson’s wife, on the other, hand “remained in her father’s house.” Modestinus considers it as one of the Roman customs, that the bride was not to go to her husband till the conclusion of the marriage ceremony. It is beyond dispute, that the woman was not to cohabit with the man, till their marriage had been sanctified by prayer in the congregation ; and to this custom the Jews still adhere. Therefore, though the bridegroom assumed the care of his bride’s chastity, yet, till the day of marriage, she remained in the women’s apartments, in a state of entire sequestration from the bridegroom. “Their coming together,” is a phrase which may signify, their residing in the same house, or lying in one bed ; but in the present instance, learned men have decided, that the former sense is to be preferred ; for we are told that, before Joseph and Mary cohabited together, “she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.”

The Roman church believes that Mary had restricted herself under a vow of perpetual celibacy ; and Grotius is inclined to the same opinion. “If it be true,” says this writer, as Epiphanius has delivered from ancient tradition, that “Joseph was superannuated “when he espoused Mary, there will appear a great

“ or probability in favor of the opinion of the ancients, that her question to the angel, who informed her that she should conceive and bear a son, was in consequence of her resolution to continue a virgin. How shall this be, seeing that I know not a man ?” It seems, continues our author, that she married an aged man, not with a prospect of bearing children, but to secure a protection from those injuries to which her sex was exposed. The design of the Almighty in the marriage of Mary to Joseph, was to defend her reputation under the mysterious circumstances of her supernatural conception : and her husband being apprized of the divine purpose, observed a chaste and holy conversation towards his wife, in due obedience to the will of heaven.

We shall now proceed to some particulars that occurred at the marriage in Cana of Galilee. The bride and bridegroom, as well as their friends, being in indigent circumstances, the wine provided on occasion of the marriage was not sufficient for the entertainment of the guests ; in consequence of which the Virgin informed her Son, that “ they wanted wine,” being assured of his power to supply the deficiency.— Hereupon, Christ said, “ Woman, what have I to do with thee ? Mine hour is not yet come.” From these words, which bear the appearance of a rebuke, the Manichees contend, that Mary was not the mother of Christ : and we readily admit, that she was not the mother of his divinity. But it is evident, that the meaning of Christ was not confined to a literal interpretation of the words, but had a more extensive import ; for they instruct us, to wait God’s time of performing his works. It is unquestionable, that our Lord intended no affront to his mother, towards whom he, on every occasion, observed a pious veneration. He only intimated, that the proper period of his working miracles, was not then arrived ; and that when

that time should come, it must not be employed for private considerations, but in pursuance of the great business he had in charge, the conversion and eternal salvation of mankind : and thus were the words of Jesus understood by the Virgin, who heard them with meekness and complacency, and afterwards enjoined the attendants strictly to obey whatever he should command.

From Cana our Saviour went to Capernaum, in order as St. Chrysostom imagines, to establish his mother in an habitation, where she was to reside while he travelled to various parts in the exercise of his holy ministration.

On the contrary, Epiphanius is of opinion, that she accompanied him in his ambulatory course of life. Certain it is, that several women of Galilee attended Jesus in his travels, and ministered to him ; and it is probable, that Mary was among these ; for who could be more desirous of, or who could better discharge the duties of this honorable service, than his holy mother ? But in support of this, we find no authority on record. We are, indeed, informed, that while Christ was preaching on a certain day to a vast concourse of people, a report was circulated that he had fallen into a swoon. Hereupon his relations, as we are told by St. Luke, hastened to the house, and the concourse of people being so great that they could not gain admittance, they procured a message to be conveyed from one person to another, till it reached Jesus ; importing, that his mother and brethren were without, and desired to speak with him. Our Saviour, who was at this moment preaching the word of God, availed himself of the opportunity of giving the message a spiritual application ; declaring, that “ whosoever did the will of his heavenly Father, the same was his mother, his sister, and brother.”—

Immediately upon the approach of Mary, a woman of the company, directing herself to Jesus, proclaimed, "Blessed is the womb that bear thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked." Whereupon Christ said, "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." But it must be observed, that he did not here mean to intimate, that she who had the honor of being his mother, did not deserve to be called the most happy woman throughout all generations: but he meant it to be understood, that the happiness of the Holy Virgin consisted more essentially in doing the will of God, than in having been the mother of the Redeemer of mankind.

From the time above-mentioned, we have no account of the Virgin Mary, till we find her at the passion of her blessed Son, standing close by his cross. On this occasion we cannot hesitate to believe that her soul, according to the prophecy of Simeon, was "pierced" with the most poignant affliction. But amidst her excessive grief, she still preserved a pious constancy; for when the grief and consternation of the apostles were such, that they were no longer able to continue in the presence of their master, she had the fortitude to remain amidst the cruel executioners, being prepared to die with her Son.

Our blessed Saviour, who came into the world to afford us an example of the perfection of every virtue, was pleased, in his dying moments, to instruct us that, whatever our circumstances and situations are, we must never abandon that tenderness and love, which are due to those to whom we are indebted for our existence. When Jesus was on the point of being separated from his mother, he tenderly recommended her to the care of his beloved disciple, St. John, who took her home. The Holy Virgin going to reside with St. John, is a strong proof that she had neither

husband nor child living at the time of the death of Christ.

We are informed by St. Luke, that the Virgin Mother was in company with the apostles and others who had assembled after the ascension of our Saviour, and were waiting for the descent of the Holy Ghost. Probably it was the Virgin who communicated to them the history of the private life of Jesus, previous to the time of his baptism.

The opinion of Andreas Cretensis, a writer of the seventh and eighth century, is that the Holy Virgin died at an extreme old age. This corresponds with Baronius, who observes, that it is probable she accompanied St. John and Mary Magdalen to Ephesus. But it must be acknowledged, that what these writers say of her death and burial, is wholly conjecture, and founded on no authentic record.

It was the pleasure of the Almighty to continue the Virgin Mary in an humble station, even after the birth of Christ, and also to conceal from us her sepulchre, as he did that of Moses from the Jews, lest an idolatrous use should be made of her relics. Epiphanius, the most learned father of the fourth century, declares, that he is ignorant whether she died a natural death, or by martyrdom, or whether she remained immortal. “The circumstances relating to the death of the Holy Virgin, says this author, are entirely unknown: but that she, being perfectly free from every species of impurity, enjoys a share of happiness worthy the person through whom the Sun of righteousness arose to shine upon the world, will not admit of a doubt.”

The revelations and visions which some Romish monks pretend to have had of the blessed Virgin, are exceedingly numerous: but these accounts are so in-

consistent with her honor and sanctity, as to render all argument to prove them impositions, wholly unnecessary.

Towards the conclusion of the fourth century, the perpetual virginity of the mother of Jesus was opposed by a sect, to whom Epiphanius gives the name of Antidicomarianists, or enemies of Mary. They supposed, that after the birth of our Lord, she had other issue by Joseph, whom the scripture stiles the brethren of Christ. This opinion was first entertained by the Eunomians and Apollinarists, and it obtained great numbers of advocates in different countries, particularly in Arabia. It was afterwards carried to Rome by Helvidius, and supported by a certain bishop, who is thought to have been the Heresiarch Bonosus. But this opinion was, at length, suppressed by Epiphanius, Jerome, and Ambrose, three of the greatest men of that age, though they did not write professedly on the subject. It was also resisted by St. Austin, and others.

The mother of our Lord was by the Greek and Latin churches called "The perpetual Virgin." St. Matthew says, "Joseph knew not Mary until she had brought forth her first-born son;" and hence some would infer, that he afterwards knew her: but from the manner of the scripture language, this inference does not follow. God said to Jacob, "I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of:" but it is not to be concluded, that when what the Almighty referred to was done, he abandoned Jacob. It is written of Moses, "No man knoweth his sepulchre unto this day:" but it would be absurd to infer from this, that the sepulchre has been known ever since.

In conclusion we shall observe, that the veneration

of the Roman Catholics towards the Holy Virgin degenerates into superstition and idolatry : but that good christians will content themselves with attributing to her so much honour as the scripture ;—let us hold the name of the blessed Virgin in that high reverence which is due to a person of such peculiar eminency ; and though we venerate her as the woman so greatly favored of heaven, as to be made instrumental in bringing into the world our blessed Redeemer, let us not impiously attribute to her the character of divinity.

CHAP. VIII.

The commencement of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The character and commission of John ; and the substance of his doctrine. Great multitudes of people resort to John from Galilee and the different parts of Judea, and are baptized by him. The discourses of John to the Pharisees, the publicans, and the soldiers. John declares that he is not the Messiah.

WE have no further account of Jesus Christ from the twelfth to the thirtieth year of his age, than that he resided at Nazareth, and was perfectly obedient to his parents. After this chasm of eighteen years in the history of our blessed Redeemer, we have the testimony of the evangelists—that his sacred ministry commenced, after the preparatory preaching and baptism of his fore-runner, John, the son of Zacharias, whose miraculous conception, birth, and education, we have already recorded.

The fifteenth year of Tiberius Cæsar, commonly reckoned the third emperor of Rome, was the time when the publication of the gospel of Christ commenced. At this period Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea, bearing the title of procurator ; Herod Antipas was tetrarch of Galilee, which dignity he enjoyed twenty-eight years ; and his brother Philip was tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias of Abilene ; and the dignity of the high priesthood was invested jointly in Annas and Caiaphas. This was the glorious period appointed by our wise and beneficent Creator, predicted by the prophets, and expected by the pious and faithful, when life and immor-

tality were to be brought to light through the gospel ; and for this reason, the evangelist St. Mark emphatically calls the time of John's baptism the beginning of the gospel.

The sacred commission some writers imagine to have been given to John in the month of September, about the time of the feast of trumpets, which was the beginning of the civil year of the Jews ; and also that the year which then commenced was a year of jubilee, on occasions of which kind it was usual for vast multitudes of people from foreign parts to assemble in Judea. But the whole of what we have said on this subject, is not ascertained by the general assent of chronological writings, though it must be observed, that the prophecy of Isaiah, among other characters of John's ministry, calls it, " a proclaiming the acceptable year of the Lord."

According to the vulgar computation, the time when John received his commission was about Midsummer. In this particular, bishop Usher is supposed to have been the most accurate. He agrees with those who fix the commencement of John's ministry to the proclamation of a jubilee, but he changes the month from September to October. The preaching of John, says the bishop, commenced on the tenth day of the seventh month, five days previous to the feast of tabernacles, upon the great day of expiation, when the high-priest entered into the holy of holies. This was a penitential day, and directed to be observed as a fast with such remarkable solemnity, that whosoever omitted to afflict his soul thereon, was to be cut off from the body of the people. This day answered to the nineteenth of our October, and it was also the day whercon by a solemn sounding of trumpets, the thirtieth jubilee of the Jews, and the last that they observed, was proclaimed.

Till the period above-mentioned, the Baptist had resided in the wilderness, under the discipline of the Holy Ghost, and the tuition of angels, and in spiritual conversation with God. His clothing, according to the custom of the ancient prophets, was a rough garment, composed of camel's hair, and this habit was confined with a leathern girdle, and his food was principally locusts, wild honey, and vegetables, spontaneously produced in the wilderness. In this state of retirement, he had necessarily almost continual opportunities for employing himself in prayer and pious meditation, and the practice of every holy obligation. By this severe course of life, his passions and bodily affections were so entirely subdued, that he was no longer liable to yield to the temptations or corruptions of the world. When he had attained the thirtieth year of his age, he was perfectly qualified to commence the actual administration of his holy office; and this was the time of life when the priests and Levites, of which body the Baptist was a member, were allowed by the law to commence the exercise of their holy functions. And "now the word of the Lord came upon John in the wilderness, commanding him to go to the Jews, and proclaim to them the necessity of a reformation and an holy life, inasmuch as the kingdom of the Messiah was at hand."

It was not immediately after receiving the divine command that John repaired to Jerusalem, or any of the other cities of Judea: for he first visited the country about the Jordan, sojourning at such places as he deemed most convenient for his purpose. Here it was that the passage through the river, which was typical of baptism, was discovered by the Israelites, when they came out of Egypt; and by the same way they afterwards passed, when going into the Babylo-nish captivity, it being the high road from Judea into

the East. Near this spot it was that Elias, that eminent type of St. John, after having passed the Jordan, was taken up in a fiery chariot. It was a very singular circumstance that the Baptist, who was the Elias mentioned by Malachi, should first discover the spirit of that ancient prophet, adjacent to the spot where he had dropped his mantle for Elisha, his servant and successor. Here John commenced his holy ministration, by proclaiming, that the time was nearly arrived, when the wonderful excellencies of the great Messiah would be manifested in his works. He powerfully enforced the necessity of a confession and repentance of sin, and an immediate reformation in the lives and manners of the people.

In order that this pure and regenerate state of life might be the more fully explained, and that his disciples might be induced to adhere to his precepts, he admitted them to the ceremony of washing their bodies in the waters of the river Jordan; in consequence of which he obtained the epithet of the Baptist, in addition to his proper name. The Jews had been before accustomed to the observation of this religious rite, and therefore John was secured from the charge of introducing an innovation. The baptism of St. John had a more mystical signification than any of the former ceremonies of a similar nature; for it represented to the people, that their minds must be cleansed from every species of impurity, if they meant to enjoy the blessings of that heavenly kingdom which was shortly to be established by the Messiah.

The doctrine inculcated by the Baptist was so consistent with reason, and the evidence of its truth was so clear, that vast multitudes of people resorted to him not only from Jerusalem, but from all the other parts of Judea, and even from Galilee. He was so successful in his holy ministration, as powerfully to

affect the minds of his followers with a dread of the divine displeasure, which he informed them would inevitably be inflicted upon those who obstinately persisted to act in contradiction to the principles of his doctrine : and great numbers avowed their offences, professed a determination of sincere repentance, and a steady resolution to conduct themselves in future in rigid obedience to the law of God ; and, in confirmation of their sincerity in these points, they were baptized by John in the river Jordan.

John now became the oracle of the people, and he was acknowledged as a prophet by those of all descriptions. So forcible were the persuasions of John, that the publicans, the soldiers, and other persons who were most remarkable for the enormity of their crimes, came to him in great numbers, to attend to his discourses in recommendation of repentance, and to receive instructions for reforming their lives. The reputation of the Baptist was not confined to the limits of Palestine ; for we read that some brethren of Ephesus, and Apollos of Alexandria, received his baptism.

Many of the Sadducees and Pharisees, were among the people who resorted from different parts to hear the sermons of John : but whether they were influenced by motives of curiosity, or some other reason, we are unable to determine. The former of these sects denied the doctrine of immortality ; and the latter, though they affected to believe in a state of futurity, were accustomed to deceive mankind by assuming an appearance of sanctity, which they did not in reality possess. No sooner did John perceive these people among his auditors, than, having an intuitive knowledge of their hypocrisy, and the concealed guilt of their hearts, he addressed to them an admonitory and keenly reprimanding discourse, which had a more immediate and happy effect than he expected.

He was indeed surprised to find his discourse so powerfully to influence these people, who reposed their hopes of salvation on the circumstance of their being the children of Abraham : and it is probable, that these hopes were cherished by a misrepresentation of the following passage of scripture : “ Thus saith the Lord, who giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon, and the stars for a light by night ; who divideth the sea, when the waves thereof roar ; the Lord of Hosts is his name. If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me, for ever. Thus saith the Lord : if the heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the Lord.” The Sadducees and Pharisees, in all probability, had recourse to John for baptism, with a view of averting the danger they might be liable to from being the professed enemies of the Messiah, whom they expected would appear in all the pomp and splendor of royalty, and assert his superiority by the force of arms. To chastise the arrogance of these people, who boasted that they were lineally descended from Abraham, he addressed them to the following effect : “ O ye people, whose principles are so abominably vitiated, as to deserve being compared with the deadly poison of vipers, you are deceived if you hope to escape the vengeance of the Almighty, by a mere cleansing of your bodies. If you mean to avail yourselves of those glorious advantages which are to be derived from my baptism, you must purge your minds from every kind of impurity, and manifest your reformation by an exact conformity to the will of God. Thus only can you render yourselves acceptable to the Lord ; for you are grossly deceived in the opinion, that your lineal descent from Abraham will secure your

“ eternal salvation, and that God has limited his favors to any particular race of men. The Omnipotent Power who created our first parents out of dust, and caused Sarah at a very advanced period of life, to bring forth a son, can raise up children unto Abraham, even from the very stones, who, by the purity of their lives, may approve their spiritual alliance to that holy patriarch, and partake with him the blessings of the kingdom of heaven.”

His auditors now requested, that he would inform them, by what means they could secure themselves against those dreadful punishments which the Almighty had denounced against their nation. To this he replied, “ He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that has none ; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.” Thus he strongly inculcated the doctrine of extensive charity, and the retrenchment of superfluous expences, by means of which, more liberal contributions might be afforded to the poor.—The Jewish tax-gatherers, who were remarkable for an avaricious and oppressive disposition, were among the number of his auditors ; and these people requesting to be informed as to the manner in which they should regulate their conduct, he enjoined them not to exact more than they had a right to collect in virtue of the decrees of the magistracy. The soldiers who were of the Jewish persuasion also came to John, and demanded of him, what were the principal vices to be avoided by men of their profession. In reply, he said, they ought to be guilty of no kind of injustice, either by open violence or secret fraud, but to rest satisfied with the pay allotted them by the government, and out of that allowance provide the means of subsistence.

Thus did John happily adapt his admonitory discourses to all ranks and degrees of the people ; and whereas the Scribes and Pharisees were accustomed

to decline all intercourse with the publicans and other people of the lower classes, and would but seldom condescend to instruct them in the principles of their duty, the Baptist, on the contrary, attended to their applications in the most gracious manner, and strongly exhorted them to faith and repentance.

The unwearied industry of John in his holy ministration, his inflexible virtue, his fervent zeal in the service of God, and the irresistible powers of his oratory, gained him a high degree of veneration in every part of Judea. Reflecting on the vision of Zacharias, the father of John, the arrival of the Magi at Jerusalem, the prophecies of Simeon, the discourses of Herod, and many other circumstances still recent in their memories, his disciples suggested an idea that there was a very strong probability of John being the promised Messiah. This conjecture soon acquired the general acquiescense of the people, who became desirous of proclaiming John the Redeemer of Israel. But the Baptist undeceived them in this point, assuring them that he was only the fore-runner of that glorious personage, who was soon to appear in the utmost splendor of dignity and power, and to whom he was not worthy to minister in the most servile offices. "But one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose."

The Baptist reproved the vices and follies of all ranks of the people with keenness and impartiality; and he exhorted them to repentance, and a rigid adherence to the dictates of Christian piety, by the most animated descriptions of that state of supreme happiness, wherein all those who conducted themselves in obedience to his doctrines, would infallibly be admitted. "Repent, says he, for the kingdom of God is at hand."

The appearance of the Messiah had been considered as a promised blessing so great and general to mankind, that he was termed not only the Hope of Israel, but also the Desire of all Nations ; and for many generations his presence had been impatiently expected : and John prepared the way of the Lord, by continually representing the glorious effects that the people would experience by qualifying themselves to become the disciples of Jesus, by purifying their hearts from the corruptions of nature, and observing an exact obedience to the law of God. He accused the Pharisees of hypocrisy, the Sadducees of prophaneness, the publicans of extortion, the soldiers of rapine, and Herod himself of lewdness and incest : but notwithstanding the freedom of his censures, and the severity of his reproaches, these dissolute and abandoned people attended to his discourses with awful veneration ; and notwithstanding all their ancient prejudices, they were at length convinced, that “ the Son of God was now “ manifested in the flesh.”

The extraordinary qualifications by which the Baptist was distinguished, so powerfully recommended him to the people, that they deemed him worthy of the most exalted honors they could bestow ; but so far from yielding to the incentives of vanity and ambition, the ascendancy that John had gained over the minds of the people, served to render his humility the more conspicuous. Here is afforded an admirable lesson for the use of those ministers, who treat their followers with superciliousness and arrogance. Let them remember the unaffected simplicity with which the gospel of Christ was first established, and judge whether an austerity of deportment towards those who are placed in the inferior classes of life, is not utterly inconsistent with the principles of that religion, which it is their peculiar province to cultivate.

It is pretended by the Roman Catholics, that the confession which John required of those who were admitted to his baptism, was not only a general declaration, acknowledging themselves to be sinners, but a definite and particular enumeration of the offences they had committed; and hence they deduce an argument in favor of auricular confession to their priests. However, it appears that the confession enjoined by John, was not to be made to the Baptist, but to the Almighty himself. The evangelist, speaking of John says, "all Judea went unto him." To have received the particular confessions of such multitudes of people, would have proved an undertaking beyond the power of any one man to accomplish. What was meant by the Baptist, could not possibly be more than a general acknowledgment of their sins, and a declaration of their sincere repentance to God. The confessions of which we read in the Old Testament, were of this kind.

The confession of the Jews to the Baptist was not of sins committed after baptism, but of those who were desirous of being admitted into the new dispensation, in order to which the ceremony of baptism was indispensably necessary. The words of the apostle James, commanding the christians to "confess their faults one to another," imply no more than that sick persons should acknowledge themselves sinners, in order to obtain the prayers of those who come to visit them; that by virtue of their particular intercession, the sincerity of repentance might be approved, and the afflicted persons restored to health; for the apostle says, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

CHAP. IX.

Preliminary Rules for elucidating the history of our Saviour's public ministry, from the time of his baptism to the time of his crucifixion.

IT evidently appears that St. Luke and St. John, and even St. Mark, have been more particular with regard to the order of time in which the several great events of the holy ministration of Christ occurred, than the other evangelist. St. Luke says, "For as much as many have taken in hand to set forth a declaration—It seemed good unto me also, having had perfect understanding in all things from the very first, to write unto thee *in order*, most excellent Theophilus." The profession of St. Luke to write in order, induced Beza to entertain an opinion, that when the evangelists are speaking on the same subject, the other three ought rather to be adapted to St. Luke, than he to them. Mark and John seem to have fixed the order of time without any very considerable variation; and St. Matthew appears to have the least attended to chronological accuracy; but this observation is applicable only to his thirteen first chapters, and the commencement of his fourteenth. Some writers contend, that Matthew, having the advantage of being an immediate witness to the events he records, was necessarily the most accurate in his narrative. But it is certain, that John also saw and heard what he relates. In the introduction to his gospel, St. Luke informs us, that he received his materials "from those who had been witnesses of them from the beginning, and ministers of the word." And it is very probable that Mark and Luke, when the

facts were communicated to them, were also informed of the particular periods at which they occurred.

In the writings of Luke and John there are sufficient reasons for an opinion, that they were more observant of the order of time, than Matthew. St. Luke settles the year of our Saviour's nativity, by saying, that he was born in Bethlehem at the time of the first decree of Augustus for taxing the Jews. This was settling the period of Christ's birth beyond the possibility of dispute among his contemporaries; for such of those as had even but an imperfect knowledge of the Jewish history, could not have been ignorant of the time when the decree was issued.

The same evangelist affords another instance of his chronological accuracy, where he says, that John began to preach and baptize in the fifteenth year of Tiberius; and this throws considerable light upon the whole system of the chronology of the life of Jesus. The evangelist says, "Jesus himself began then to be about thirty years of age." By knowing this, and also what space of time our Saviour and St. John continued in the exercise of their public ministry, we may accurately ascertain the year in which our blessed Redeemer suffered crucifixion. It is true, indeed, that a two fold commencement is attributed to the reign of Tiberius; one being when he was made colleague of the empire by Augustus, and the other when, in consequence of the decease of Augustus, the administration of government was exercised wholly by himself.

The best writers concur in opinion, that the fifteenth year of Tiberius, mentioned by St. Luke, ought to be referred to the time when he became the colleague of Augustus. This happened in the eleventh year of the vulgar æra, on the twenty-eighth day of August;

whence it follows, that on the twenty-fifth of the same æra, on the same day of the month, began the fifteenth year of Tiberius, wherein John the Baptist commenced his office as the harbinger of the Messiah.

It is not extraordinary that a two-fold beginning should be ascribed to the reign of Tiberius, since three several times are mentioned as the period when the reign of Augustus commenced. Some writers compute the sovereignty of Augustus from the year in which Julius Cæsar was slain, others from his consulate in the year following, and a third party will not allow his reign to have commenced till after the victory at Actium. There is no reason to suppose, that St. Luke might not adopt the opinion of those who date the reign of Tiberius from the time of his being made colleague by Augustus, especially when we consider, that in the Roman provinces Tiberius was accounted of equal dignity with Augustus. In the city of Rome, it is true, that Tiberius conducted himself in a subordinate manner, acting rather as the administrator, than the colleague of Augustus: but this was an artful affectation of humility, under the restraint of which he acted no longer than while he remained in the city.

No sooner had the provinces received intelligence, that Tiberius had obtained the proconsular dignity, than they attributed to him the full extent of sovereign authority; and from that time St. Luke might with great propriety date his reign.

To the evangelist St. John we are particularly indebted, for having recorded the three passovers which were observed in the course of the Holy ministration of our Saviour. The other evangelists have only mentioned the fourth and last passover, which was celebrated at the time when our Saviour suffered cru-

cifixion. John also speaks of the feast of tabernacles, and the feast of dedication, whereby the seasons of the last year of the life of Jesus are particularly distinguished.

The first passover mentioned by St. John, was that observed at the time when our Lord drove the traders out of the temple. After this, accompanied by a small number of his disciples, one of whom was Philip, our Saviour travelled into another part of Judea, where he resided till John the Baptist was cast into prison.— Passing through Samaria, he then went into Galilee, where he more openly proclaimed his gospel. Having ineffectually preached his holy doctrine at Nazareth, he proceeded to Capernaum, where he remained longer than he had done at any of the places he had before visited. He gained several disciples during his residence at Capernaum, particularly Peter, Andrew, John, and James. From this place he went to the cities of Galilee, where he preached his divine doctrine in the synagogue on the sabbath days. In this employment he was engaged a whole year; so much time being necessary, because he had few opportunities but on the sabbath days, of instructing those people who were at other times engaged in various parts of the circumjacent country, in their respective worldly avocations.

The second passover was that which St. John emphatically calls, “The feast of the Jews.” Our Lord remained at Jerusalem during this feast; and returning to Galilee immediately upon the conclusion of the passover, he selected from the number of his disciples twelve apostles, who he appointed constantly to attend him, and to be in readiness to be dispatched wherever he should judge proper. From this period Jesus more explicitly delivered the principles of his

gospel ; and this is manifested, in his sermons and discourses that remain on record.

Great multitudes of people resorted to Jesus from all quarters ; and he instructed them in the precepts of the gospel, occasionally working miracles among them, that they might be the more effectually convinced of his divinity. At this time he was employed in these great works principally at Capernaum, and other places adjacent to the lake of Gennesareth.— After this, Jesus went to Nazareth, and passing through Galilee, dispatched his apostles to preach the gospel, while he himself visited different places with the same holy purpose. Having fulfilled their commission, the apostles returned to Jesus, while he was at Capernaum, or some other town in the vicinity of the lake of Gennesareth. This business occupied about the space of a twelvemonth.

The third passover was that which was “near at hand,” when the five thousand men, exclusive of women and children, were entertained by Jesus, who fully gratified their appetites with only five loaves and two fishes. At this passover, if we may judge concerning this year, from his practice in others, he repaired to Jerusalem. He then went into that part of Galilee which is nearest the borders of Tyre and Sidon. After this, he again went to the lake of Gennesareth, and resided a considerable time in the region of Decapolis. Removing from Decapolis, he crossed the lake, and continued frequently to change the place of his abode, lest any seditious practices might be fomented among the vast multitudes of people who resorted to him : and this precaution was doubtless necessary ; for had any popular tumult occurred, it would have been imputed to his charge, as we may reasonably infer from the circumstance of his being afterwards accused of treason before Pilate. For the same

reason he forbade his disciples to distinguish him by the name of the Messiah, and also prohibited them from publishing several of his miracles abroad ; for he was conscious there were at this time great numbers of malecontents among the Jews, who would have gladly availed themselves of any opportunity for effecting a change in the government.

Jesus now travelled to Panas, and to the fountains of Jordan ; some days after which he was transfigured on a mountain in Galilee ; and he afterwards made several journies into different provinces. At the beginning of the month of October, about the middle of the feast of tabernacles, he appeared at Jerusalem, having dispatched seventy disciples into various parts : and these probably returned to him after the feast, while he was upon his return to Galilee.

Christ again set out for Jerusalem on occasion of the feast of dedication, and he arrived there in the beginning of December. He travelled by easy journies, and gave holy instructions to the people in every town and village through which he passed. Upon the conclusion of this feast he again returned into Galilee, from whence he repaired into Judea, to restore Lazarus to life ; and then retiring into the desart of Jericho, he there remained till the time of celebrating the fourth passover, when he suffered crucifixion.

Since there were four passovers from the time when our Saviour commenced his public ministry, to that of his death, it follows, that if we can ascertain the true time of his first public appearance, we have only to add thereto three whole years, and so much time as elapsed between the first public appearance of Christ, and the passover immediately following it, and the true time of the death of our blessed Redeemer will appear.

That the whole of the history of the life of our Saviour is not given by the evangelists, is beyond all dispute. It will be found, that the narrative of one gives many particulars that are wholly omitted by the others : and that from the whole of the evangelical writings, cannot be collected all the occurrences in the life of Christ, we are expressly told in the conclusion of the gospel of St. John, " There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the whole world could not contain the books that should be written." Though it would be extremely absurd to suppose that these words are to be understood according to the literal interpretation, yet they plainly imply, that all the actions of our Saviour are not comprehended in the gospels. But we are not hence to infer, that the apostles have omitted to publish any matter having an essential tendency to our salvation. It would be ridiculous to insist, that Matthew and John were ignorant of the history of our Saviour's ascension, because the particulars of that glorious event are mentioned by Mark and Luke only. This observation will apply to similar omissions, and supercede the necessity of enumerating parallel instances.

The evangelists, in relating the actions and sayings of Christ, in general content themselves with giving a brief summary account of events, without particularising all the circumstances, or expressly rehearsing the words delivered on every occasion, in the order in which they were spoken.

This will be more apparent from some of the following observations, and will also serve as an apology for many of the additions and transpositions of order, which will be found in the course of our work.

A circumstance omitted, may frequently be inferred from one that is upon record. Of the truth of this, an instance is afforded in the case of Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, of whom we have said, in the preceding part of the work, "that he was both "deaf and dumb;" though the words of the angel to him, according to our translation from St. Luke, are only, "Thou shalt be dumb, and not able to "speak, till the day that these things be performed." The original word here rendered *dumb*, signifies both deaf and dumb, and is understood in either sense. This matter, however, is fully explained by St. Luke, who afterwards says, that the friends of Zacharias "made signs to him, how he would have his son called." Had not Zacharias been deaf, there would have been no necessity for putting the question to him by signs, instead of words.

Another instance of this kind, is to be found in the history of the marriage at Cana in Galilee. When Mary informed Christ that there was not wine for the entertainment of the guests, it is evident, that she expected him to work a miracle. We may reasonably suppose, that he had already given proofs of his divine power in private; and therefore it would not be improper to say, that "Mary had seen her Son work miracles upon other occasions, though they are not upon record;" for most certainly she would not have proposed his attempting to perform what was beyond the extent of human ability, had she not been persuaded that he possessed the miraculous power of changing the water into wine.

St. Matthew and St. Luke mention, that a centurion's servant at Capernaum was cured; but their accounts will not be found to correspond in every minute particular. According to both evangelists, Christ performed the cure in the absence of the person who

was afflicted. In Matthew the centurion is introduced addressing Christ in person; but in Luke he is described as sending the Jews to excuse him, as not daring to appear in the presence of Jesus. That the cure was performed, is beyond dispute; and a trifling disagreement in circumstances, is not sufficient to justify a supposition, that the writers were recording separate and distinct facts.

Three of the evangelists relate, that our Lord wrought the miracle of curing the blind, when he was in the neighborhood of Jericho. St. Luke by saying that he did this when he "drew nigh to Jericho," seems to imply, that he was going to, and not returning from that place, as St. Matthew and St. Mark have expressly written. It has, however, been observed, that the original words in St. Luke may, with the greatest propriety, be rendered, "when he "was near to Jericho;" the words being of a general purport, signifying neither entry nor departure.

Matthew mentions two blind persons, but Mark and Luke speak of no more than one. Respecting this variation, St. Augustin says, "Of the two blind "persons here mentioned, one was better known in "that city than the other, as appears from the recital of his and his father's name by St. Mark; for "among the number of persons on whom Jesus "wrought cures, we scarcely find another expressly "mentioned by name, except Jairus, the ruler of the "synagogue, whose daughter Christ revived from "death, and whose name seems to have been mentioned only on account of his dignity. The name "of Bartimæus, the son of Timæus, was doubtless "particularised, because he had suddenly declined "from some eminent station in life, and become a "remarkable example of misery; for he was afflicted "with blindness, and in circumstances of such ex-

“treme indigence, as to have no resource but public charity for the necessary means of subsistence. The evangelist, therefore, deemed it proper to introduce the name of this man, whose recovery of sight, would render the miracle as conspicuous, as his calamity was notorious.

This is not the only instance, wherein St. Matthew applies to two persons what St. Mark and St. Luke relate in reference only to one. Though one evangelist gives a less number, it is no argument but he might have given a greater, and especially if the contrary be not insinuated; and though another writes more copiously, it is no proof that he who writes less, hath given an unfaithful account.

In the perusal of the sacred writings, we should be careful not to deem as contradictions, what appear to be the errors of transcribers. St. John says, Christ was condemned by Pilate, about the sixth hour: but St. Mark affirms, that he was crucified at the third hour. After informing us that Jesus had been some time upon the cross, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, agree in saying, that from about the sixth hour, an universal darkness prevailed till the ninth. Therefore, instead of the *sixth*, there is reason to suppose we should read the *third* hour in St. John. If there be a false lection, St. John ought to be restored by the other writers: because having the combined testimony of three of the evangelists, opposed to the assertion of the fourth, it must appear, that the meaning of the latter has been perverted by the casual alteration of, perhaps, a single numerical figure or letter.

It is a maxim universally admitted by the civillians, that “What a man employs another to execute, he is himself accountable for, and is therefore said

“to do it himself;” and the two proverbs following, which were generally known among the ancient Jews, are to the same effect:—“Every man’s messenger is as it were himself;—the king’s ambassador is as the king himself.”

These things being considered, the difficulty we have mentioned in the narrative of the centurion of Capernaum will be removed. St. Luke says, he sent some of the Jews to Christ, not daring to accost him personally. St. Matthew, writing more concisely in this place, describes the centurion as doing that which he deputed others to do. Though St. Luke introduces messengers on this occasion, he makes them speak as if the centurion himself was present.—“When Jesus was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying, Lord, trouble not thyself, for I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof. But say the word, and my servant shall be healed.” That this mode of expression is frequently used by the inspired writers, may be seen in a great variety of instances, by referring to the Old and New Testament.

In conclusion we shall observe, that it is impossible but some obscurities must appear in the gospels. Being originally written in a dead language, and the facts not being always arranged according to historical rules, our endeavours to explain obscurities, may not always prove successful; since in discourses addressed to a people, to many of whose tenets and customs we are entire strangers, there may occur some intricacies in those narratives, which were exceedingly plain when delivered to the Jews in the Hebrew idioms. Our Saviour instructed the Jews in a language that they were accustomed to use in their ordinary conversation; and we shall carefully avoid all abstruse terms, that those who are ignorant of the an-

cient Jewish dialect, may more clearly understand the true import of the gospel of Christ, which enjoins us to nothing, either in faith or in practice, which may not be as explicitly conveyed in the common language of this country, as in the Hebrew, which Christ addressed to the Jews. Thus then, the evangelists will neither appear to be unintelligible, or be liable to misconstruction, in those places which would have required no explanation, had former commentators adopted our plan of rendering abstruse expressions into familiar and obvious English.

CHAP. X.

The baptism of our blessed Redeemer. The visible descent of the Holy Spirit; and the voice of the Almighty heard from the heavens. Christ goes into the desert, where he remains forty days and forty nights, without receiving any kind of nutriment. The several efforts of Satan to tempt our Saviour. Satan is rebuked and repulsed by Christ, who afterwards returns from the desert. The several testimonies of John concerning our Saviour.

THE harbinger of our blessed Lord was so successful in the exercise of his holy ministration, that great numbers of the Jews daily presented themselves, in order to receive his baptism. Having patiently waited for this opportunity of making his public appearance, Jesus Christ now departed from his habitation at Nazareth, and repaired to the Jordan, in order to submit to the ceremony of baptism.

To obviate the possibility of a suspicion, that a fraudulent compact subsisted between Christ and his fore-runner, it had pleased the Divine Wisdom, that they should pass the early part of their lives in very distant parts of the country of Palestine. When Jesus approached, the Baptist, who had not before beheld his person, by an intuitive principle, was sensible that he was the Messiah; and therefore he opposed his intention of submitting to baptism, urging, that he himself ought rather to be baptized by Jesus, who was so infinitely his superior. "And, said the Baptist, comest thou to me?" Hereupon Christ said, that though his resolution was to receive baptism, it was a ceremony which he was under no ne-

cessity of submitting to, as it represented a purification of the mind from sin, which he was in no respect liable to contract; but, notwithstanding this, he would insist on being baptized by John, because he had formed a resolution of complying with all the religious ordinances of the Jews, and deemed it expedient to sanctify the institution of baptism for the use of his church. Upon hearing these words, John immediately prepared to execute the duties of his office: and our blessed Redeemer submitted to the institution of baptism*, by an immersion in the river Jordan.

Immediately upon coming out of the river, our Saviour fervently addressed himself in prayer to heaven; and we may suppose, that, at this time, he professed himself willing to submit to the utmost hardships, and the most excruciating tortures, for the redemption of mankind. While Jesus was devoutly employed in addressing himself to heaven, the clouds suddenly divided, the heavens seemed to open, and the whole firmament was illuminated in a manner infinitely more glorious than can be done justice to by the most animated description.

At this instant, the Holy Ghost visibly descended in the form and with the motion of a dove, and rested on the head of Jesus: and at the same time the voice of God the Father pronounced these words: "THOU ART MY BELOVED SON IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED." Thus was the mystery of the Trinity at once revealed; and an explicit reason was at the same time given for that ordination of our Saviour, which expresses that Christian baptism shall be for ever administered in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of

* It is generally believed, that the day on which our Saviour was baptized, was the sixth of January, the day on which we celebrate the Epiphany.

the Holy Ghost, since all the three persons were combined and manifested at this baptism “ of the Word “ incarnate.” This visible descent of the Holy Spirit afforded a full confirmation to the idea that the Baptist had conceived from the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit, of Jesus being the promised Messiah. “ For “ he that sent him to baptize with water, the same “ said unto him,” *Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.*

Our blessed Saviour having been baptized, and proclaimed as the Son of the Almighty, in the glorious manner above described, and also replenished with the Holy Ghost, he departed from John, and retired to the most dreary part of the wilderness, in order to prepare himself by fasting, prayer, and meditation, for the glorious work of effecting the salvation of mankind. In this solitude he remained forty days and forty nights, in a state of entire abstinence from both food and rest. The most grievous of the sufferings which our Saviour experienced, during his abode in the wilderness, consisted in the allurements and temptations of Satan, who was permitted to assail him with the most insinuating wiles and stratagems, by means of which the evil spirit arrogantly hoped to retain mankind under the dreadful dominion of sin.

The purpose for which our blessed Redeemer was “ led into the wilderness” by the influence of the Divine Spirit was, that by resisting the temptations of Satan, he might begin to triumph over the great enemy of mankind, and teach us the duty of withstanding his abominable suggestions. “ In all things it behoveth “ him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might “ be a merciful and faithful high-priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins “ of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered,

“ being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted.” The full particulars of what happened to our Lord during his abode in the wilderness, are not recorded in the scriptures : but the following facts are, however, founded on the authority of the sacred writers.

Towards the conclusion of the forty days and forty nights, our Saviour became sensible of the sensations of hunger and thirst. Conceiving this to be a favorable opportunity for seducing Christ to a violation of his obedience to his heavenly Father, the tempter approached our Lord, saying, that if he was the Son of God, he must be superior to the laws of nature, and be able to assuage his appetite by means even of the common stones of the wilderness, which at his command would be changed into the substance of bread : and the devil urged him to work this miracle, in order to prove his divinity. Hereupon, Christ repeated the following words written by Moses, “ Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” Thus our Lord intimated, that for relief in all our necessities, we are to rely on the divine providence of the Almighty, who had supplied manna as sustenance for the Israelites, while they were in the desert ; and that a supernatural transmutation of stones into bread was unnecessary, because his food, drink, and even his life, consisted in his exact observation of the word of his heavenly Father.

This effort being defeated, Satan conveyed our Saviour to Jerusalem, and placed him on the highest part of the temple, requiring him to afford a demonstration of his divinity, by throwing himself from the eminence ; and to induce his compliance, he at the same time artfully concluded, as we learn from St. Matthew, with words to this effect : “ If thou be the

“ Son of God, he shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.” If these words were not meant to refer to Christ alone, they might, as being spoken with relation to the servants of God in general, without any impropriety, be applied to his Son. Hereupon, our Saviour retorted upon Satan, by quoting the following text of scripture, “ Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.”

Being again disappointed in his iniquitous design, the devil resolved to make a third, and a more daring effort to sully the immaculate virtue of our most blessed Redeemer. From the pinnacle of the temple, the devil transported Christ to the top of an exceeding high mountain*, hoping to effect his purpose by flattering his ambition. He therefore exhibited to him an alluring prospect of all the glories of the several kingdoms of the earth, united in one point of view; and he promised to invest our Lord with immediate possession of, and unlimited dominion over the whole, on condition that he would bow down, and worship him as his God. Satan did not in this instance, as he had done in the two preceding temptations, treat our Lord as the Son of God, but merely as the son of Joseph and Mary, and as one liable to all the infirmities of human nature, who was to be seduced by the common allurements of the world.-- Incensed at the blasphemous presumption and arrogance of the tempter, our blessed Saviour, in a tone of abhorrence and indignation, called him Satan, which signifies an enemy to God, and imposed upon him an irresistible command to depart, saying, “ It is further written by Moses, that thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou

* Several writers suppose this to be mount Pisgah.

“serve.” This rebuke convinced Satan that Christ was the Son of God, from whose presence he now retired with a resolution to exert his utmost efforts for inciting the hatred of mankind against our great Redeemer.

Immediately after the departure of Satan, a host of celestial spirits descended to administer comfort and consolation to Jesus : and thus was verified what our Lord intimated to the tempter, when he made his first effort to subdue the virtue and fortitude of Christ. The Almighty sent his angels to minister food to Jesus, as he had supplied the Israelites with manna in the wilderness, and provisions for Elijah, when he must have perished through want of nutriment, had he not been supplied by supernatural means.

From the time of the baptism of Christ in the river Jordan, John repeatedly, and by the most unequivocal testimony, declared him to be the promised Messiah. The great and increasing reputation of John, and the vast numbers of people who resorted to him from all parts of Judea, induced the rulers of Jerusalem to dispatch a deputation of priests and Levites to enquire concerning the office he had assumed, and by what authority he acted ; whether he was the Messiah, or Elias, or that great prophet who was to rise from the dead, and precede the public appearance of the Saviour of mankind, who was so anxiously expected by the whole kingdom of Israel ? In reply to their enquiries, the Baptist assured them, that he was not the Messiah : and upon their demanding, whether he was Elias, who they imagined was to descend from heaven before the public appearance of Christ, he answered them in the negative, as he also did upon their enquiring, whether he was that ancient prophet risen from the dead, who was to precede the Messiah ? But John assured them, that

he was the person alluded to in these words of the prophet Isaiah: "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord; make strait in the desert an highway for our God."

Not satisfied by the replies of John, the deputies enquired, since he did not pretend to be either the Messiah, Elias, or one of the ancient prophets risen from the dead, by what authority he had assumed the power of baptizing the people? Whereupon he informed them, that his baptism was of water only, by means of which he did not pretend to confer upon his disciples any celestial gifts; and that this baptism alone would prove wholly ineffectual towards the remission of sins, being only intended to signify, that the minds of all those who wished to obtain the favor of God, must be effectually cleansed from every kind of impurity. But the Baptist added, that a person was then upon earth, whom they knew not, because he had not manifested himself to the world, but who was to succeed him in the office of a messenger from heaven, and who was of such superior dignity and power, that he was unworthy to minister to him in the most servile capacity: "The latchet of whose shoe (said St. John) I am not worthy to unloose." The Baptist informed them, that the person of whom he had spoken, would not baptize with water only, but with the Holy Ghost, which he would shed upon them in the form of fire; adding, that as the corn is thrashed, in order that it may be separated from the chaff, so his successor would shortly separate the good from the bad men among the Jews, that the former might enjoy the most exalted blessings, and the latter be consigned to perpetual torments. At a place called Bethabara, adjacent to the banks of the river Jordan, John bore this public testimony in behalf of the Messiah, the blessed author of the salvation of mankind.

Our Saviour, in the mean time, retired from the mountain, where Satan had made the third ineffectual effort for seducing him to betray a want of confidence in the divine providence of his heavenly Father, and repairing to Bethabara, again manifested himself to John, who was still employed in instructing and administering baptism to the people. The day following that on which the Baptist had given his public testimony concerning Jesus to the deputation of priests and Levites, from the rulers of Jerusalem, John perceived our Saviour again approaching towards him; whereupon he rapturously exclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world." John then solemnly assured the people, that Christ was the person, of whose dignity, power, and authority, he had spoken on the preceding day; averring that he knew him not to be the Messiah, till the time of his coming to be baptized in the Jordan, when he saw the Holy Spirit miraculously descend upon him, in the shape of a dove, and remain on him some time, while a voice from the heavens awfully proclaimed him "the Son of God." And John bare record, saying, "I saw the spirit descending from heaven, like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not; but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw and bare record, that this is the Son of God." John i. 32, 33, 34.

The wilderness of Judea was the place where John preached and baptized. This wilderness stretched for a considerable space on both sides of the river Jordan; and therefore St. John is said by St. Mark to have both preached and baptized in the same wilderness, and by St. Luke to have "come into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance, for the

“ remission of sins.” This place was called the wilderness of Judea, not because it was absolutely destitute of inhabitants, but because it was less populous than any other part of the Holy Land.

The Jordan is the largest river in the Holy Land; and it is described in the following manner by Josephus, the celebrated Jewish historian : “ Panion has been generally considered as the head of this river :” but “ the fact is, that it passes hither under ground, its source being Phiala, which is situated at about an hundred and twenty furlongs from Cæsarea Philippa, a little on the right hand, and near the road to Trachonis. This spring is called Phiala, which signifies the Phial, on account of its circular figure. The waters are exactly level with the brink of the bason, and have not been known either to fall or overflow. The source of the Jordan was first discovered by Philip, the tetrarch of Trachonis, who cast into Phiala some straws, which were carried by the stream to Panion, where being taken up, they were known to be those cast into the bason by Philip. The river thus apparently deriving its origin from the cave of Panion, crosses the fens of the lake Semechonitis, and, after a course of an hundred and twenty furlongs, passes under the city of Julius or Bethsaida, and thence over the lake of Gennesareth ; and then pursuing a long course through a desert, it falls into the lake of Asphaltites, or the dead sea.”

According to the above account it appears, that the vulgar opinion of this river deriving its waters from two fountains, or rivulets, one named Jor, and the other Dan, is entirely fictitious. The cave of Panion, lying at the foot of mount Libanus, and the lake of Asphaltites stretching to the Southern extremity of Judea, it necessarily follows, that the course

of the Jordan must be entirely from the Northern to the Southern boundary of the Holy Land. The above account gives confirmation to what we have said before, concerning a desert of considerable extent, stretching along both sides of the Jordan; and therefore it is beyond dispute, that this was the place where John preached and baptized, according to the relations of the evangelists.

A modern writer has observed, that “the river Jordan may be said to have double banks, the first, or outward of which, are those to which the waters swelled at some seasons of the year, particularly at the time of harvest, or about the month of March, called the first month by the Jews. Whether the rapidity of the current has worn the channel deeper, or whether the waters have taken a new course, is uncertain: but the Jordan seems to have declined from his ancient magnitude. For, continues this writer, on the thirtieth of March, the proper time for expecting a swell, we could perceive no sign or probability of an inundation: but, on the contrary, the surface of the stream was at least two yards below the brink of the channel.—Between the outward and the immediate banks of the river, there is a level strand measuring about a furlong. The second banks are so incumbered with tamarisk, willow, oleander, and other trees and shrubs, as to make it exceedingly difficult to obtain a view of the water.—Anciently, divers kinds of wild and furious animals were accustomed to harbor in this thicket: and these being driven from their refuge by the inundations of the river, afforded occasion for the following allusion of the prophet Jeremiah: ‘He shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan.’ This river is exceedingly turbid, and swift in its course: it is about twenty yards in breadth, and

“ from seven to ten feet deep in many parts : but “ like other rivers, it doubtless varies with regard to “ these particulars.” At about the distance of a furlong from the Jordan, are to be seen the ruins of a church and convent, dedicated to St. John, as a memorial of his having baptized our blessed Saviour : and it is supposed, that these structures were raised as near as could be ascertained, to the spot where Christ submitted to the ceremony of baptism.

Informing his disciples by what means he knew Jesus to be the Messiah, John only mentions the visible descent of the Holy Ghost upon him at the time of his baptism, which was the token he received from the Almighty when he was sent to baptize with water : but St. Matthew says, when Jesus came to be baptized, which was previous to the descent of the Holy Spirit, “ John forbade him, saying, I have need “ to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me ?” Hence it appears, that John knew Christ, before the descent of the Spirit upon him ; and therefore it is necessary that we should endeavor to explain, by what means he obtained this knowledge. It is almost universally admitted by the commentators on the gospel of St. Matthew, that John being a prophet replenished with the Holy Ghost, he was sensible by means of the inspiration of that Spirit, that he who then approached towards him, was the person on whom the Holy Ghost would afterwards descend. Thus Simeon, being informed that he should not die till he had seen the Redeemer of mankind, was instructed by divine revelation, that Jesus was the promised Messiah ; and the prophetess Anna was moved by a like inspiration to speak of Jesus, and acknowledge him as the Son of God in the temple at Jerusalem. In the Old Testament, instances of a similar nature occur. Samuel was told by the Almighty, that “ on the morrow a “ man should come to him, to be captain over his peo-

“ple Israel ;” and when Saul appeared, Samuel was instructed by another intimation, that he was the person alluded to ; “ Behold the man of whom I spake to thee.” 1 Sam. ix. 15, 16. Though Moses was fully convinced by the express words of the Almighty, and several antecedent evidences, that he was appointed to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt, yet he was told by God, “ This shall be a sign to thee, that I have sent thee, when thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.” Exod. iii. 12. In short, when he baptized with water, John being to instruct the people, that Christ should baptize them with the Holy Ghost, he was notwithstanding himself informed, that he should have this evidence of the person who was to impart the Spirit, and that he should be a witness to the visible descent of the same Spirit upon him at the time of his baptism.

By submitting to baptism, our blessed Redeemer constituted it the perpetual initiatory sacrament of the Christian church. Christ being baptized in the Jordan, we read that “ he went straitway out of the water, and the heavens opening, the Spirit of God descended, and rested upon him, a voice from heaven at the same instant proclaiming him to be the Son of God.” Thus was our blessed Redeemer consecrated to be the eternal priest of the Christian church ; by this glorious solemnization was he anointed to be our prophet, and declared to be “ holy, harmless, separate from sinners, and able to save to the uttermost all such as should come to God by him.” Thus was he inaugurated into his mediatorial office, and in a most awful and majestic manner invested with power to interpose for the eternal salvation of mankind.

The most learned commentators concur in opinion, that from the words, "like a dove," we are not to understand that the Spirit came upon Jesus in the real body or shape of a dove, but only that it came down in the manner that a dove naturally descends, hovering over, or overshadowing the place where it means to alight. This many writers have endeavoured to prove from the original words of the text, and from corresponding passages in the scriptures. It is written that "cloven tongues, as it were of fire," appeared to the apostles. But this does not imply, that they had the actual property of heat, or any of the other common effects of fire. The "bodily shape as "a dove" seems to denote a body of light, or bright cloud, in which the Almighty usually appeared, and from which he spoke, and on this account it is called, "The glory of the Lord." It is expressly written, that, at the time of our Saviour's transfiguration, when the voice was heard from heaven, "a bright cloud "overshadowed them, and a voice came from the "cloud," or, as St. Peter expresses it, "from the "magnificent glory."

Immediately upon the conclusion of the great solemnity of his baptism, Christ departed from the Jordan, and by a strong impulse of the divine Spirit, was "led into the wilderness," or the most mountainous and desert part of the country, where St. John the Baptist had spent the early part of his life. Our Lord retired into the wilderness, in order that he might maturely deliberate on the important business he was about to undertake; that he might suggest a plan for the regulation of his conduct, and collect resolution sufficient to surmount the difficulties he should encounter in the prosecution thereof; and also that he might have frequent opportunities of engaging in spiritual intercourse with his heavenly Father. Another motive was, that he might prove the effects of a per-

sonal contest with the great enemy of mankind, who he was apprised, would be prepared to assail him with temptations, and thereby enable himself to judge precisely as to the degree of power and cunning that the evil spirit possessed, in order that he might be the more disposed to compassionate and afford succor to mankind, when tempted by the seducer.

We shall here introduce a concise account of the place to which our Lord retired after his baptism. From mount Olivet and Bethany the road is very intricate, lying among hills and valleys, and affording a dreary and comfortless prospect, but yet betraying evident tokens of cultivation in ancient days. Pursuing this difficult road some hours, the traveller arrives at the mountainous desert, where Christ was "led by the Spirit," to be tempted by Satan. This place consists of a collection of barren mountains, which seem to have been broken, and thrown into a state of miserable disorder, while nature suffered the most violent convulsions. In the deep valley on the left hand, are to be seen the ruins of several small cells and cottages, formerly inhabited by hermits, who retired there for penance and mortification; and in all probability, the whole globe does not exhibit a more desolate and abandoned spot. But, however dreary and miserable in other respects, these hills command an enchanting prospect of the mountains of Arabia, the Dead Sea, and the plain of Jericho, into which the traveller descends, after a journey of about five hours from Jerusalem.

Pursuing the road which at the commencement of the plain turns to the left hand, in about an hour we arrive at the foot of the Quarantania, which is said to be the mountain, from the summit of which Satan displayed to our Saviour a visionary scene of all the kingdoms of the earth. This, as St. Matthew ob-

serves, is “an exceeding high mountain;” and its ascent is both difficult and dangerous. On this mountain are two small chapels, one being on the summit, and the other, which is founded upon a prominent part of the rock, being about the midway. Near the latter are several caves and holes in the side of the mountain, wherein a number of hermits, in imitation of our Redeemer, were anciently accustomed to keep their lent. Most of these grotts are now in the possession of small parties of barbarous Arabs, provided with fire arms, and other offensive weapons; and these people extort money from such travellers as mean to gratify their curiosity, by ascending this dangerous precipice.

CHAP. XI.

The calling of Andrew and another of the disciples of John the Baptist. The calling of Peter and of Philip. The conversation of our Saviour with Nathaniel. Christ is invited to a marriage feast at Cana, where he changes water into wine.

ANDREW and the other disciple of John the Baptist, who were present when he bore the last public testimony concerning Christ, observing the extraordinary respect and veneration which their master observed towards our Saviour, were exceedingly desirous of ingratiating themselves into his favor, and of cultivating an acquaintance with him; and therefore, when he departed, they followed him at a respectful distance. It is probable that they were directed by John to follow the sacred person by whom he was to be succeeded in his holy ministry. Having departed from John a short time, our Lord turned towards Andrew and his companion, and in the most gracious manner enquired the reason of their following him? With great respect and humility they replied, that they were desirous of learning the place of his abode, in order that they might pay their respects to him at a more convenient opportunity, it being then within two hours of the time of sun-set. It is supposed that these two disciples were not present at the time of the descent of the Holy Ghost, and that therefore the person of the Messiah was pointed out to them as we have described. However that may be, Christ, with peculiar affability and condescension, admitted them to a familiar conversation with him, and cordially invited them to accompany him to his place of residence; and joyfully accepting the

offer of Jesus, they remained with him during the rest of the afternoon, and, probably, till the following day.

Andrew, the brother of Simon, who was afterwards called Peter, was one of the disciples who followed Jesus; and the other is supposed to have been John the evangelist, who is remarkable for studiously concealing his name, when writing of occurrences in which he had himself a concern. The divine discourses of Jesus had such an effect upon the minds of the two disciples, that they were now fully persuaded of the truth of all the Baptist had related in regard to him, as being the promised Messiah, and the great Saviour and Redeemer of mankind.

Shortly after the above interview, Andrew sought his brother Simon, to whom he communicated the important and glorious discovery he had made. He informed his brother, that he had seen and conversed with the Messiah, or, as his name signifies in the Greek, the Christ, or the anointed of God, whose appearance had been so long expected for the redemption of Israel. Simon earnestly requested to be conducted to Jesus, who upon observing him approach, accosted him to the following effect: "Thou art the Son of Jona, and thy name is Simon: but thou shalt be hereafter called Cephas, or Peter, signifying a rock or a stone." By this change of name our Saviour intimated, that the brother of Andrew possessed great strength and fortitude of mind, and that he should be made instrumental in establishing the foundation of the christian church.

On the following day, while Christ was pursuing his way towards Galilee, he casually met with Philip, a native of Bethsaida, and knowing him to be of a virtuous and holy disposition, he said to him, "Fol-

“low me.” Philip, who had been informed of the character, and divine mission of Jesus, and who probably had been a witness to the miraculous descent of the Holy Spirit at the time of his baptism, immediately complied with the divine call of our blessed Saviour.

Presently afterwards, Philip met with Nathaniel, who was his intimate friend, and informed him, that he, and some of his fellow-citizens, had seen the promised Messiah, that great deliverer of Israel, spoken of by Moses and the other prophets; that Jesus of Nazareth, who was supposed to be the son of Joseph, by those who were ignorant of his divine origin.—Nathaniel opposed this assertion, observing that no prophet had ever yet arose in Nazareth, which was supposed to be esteemed a mean and despicable place by the Almighty; and that therefore, as well as because the predictions of the prophets concurred in asserting, that the Messiah should be born in Bethlehem, the city of David, it was incredible that Nazareth should be the place of the nativity of the Redeemer of Israel. To this objection Philip returned no answer, but requested Nathaniel to accompany him to the person of whom he had spoken, whereby he would be enabled to form a right judgment.

In compliance with the request of Philip, they immediately departed, and upon their approaching Christ, he thus accosted Nathaniel: “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.” Astonished at receiving this commendation from one he had not seen before, and to whom he supposed himself to be entirely unknown, he enquired of our Lord, the reason of his entertaining so favorable an opinion of a stranger. Hereupon Jesus informed him, that he had seen him under the fig tree, before he had been called by Philip. Nathaniel, who had been praying under

the fig-tree, was now conscious, that Jesus had penetrated into the inmost recesses of his heart; and therefore he immediately acknowledged the divinity of Christ, saying, “ *Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the king of Israel.” Hereupon, our Lord said, “ Believest thou in me, because I said, I saw thee under the fig tree? Thou shalt behold things by far more glorious and wonderful; for the heavenly angels, the ministers of the Almighty, shall descend from heaven, and return thither, acting as messengers between my Father and myself, notwithstanding I now seem to you as a mere human being, and differ not from man in my exterior appearance.”

Having obtained these disciples, our Saviour departed into Galilee, and arriving at the town of Cana, in the neighborhood of Nazareth, he, together with Mary his mother, and some of his disciples, accepted an invitation to a marriage feast. The blessed Virgin observing that the wine provided on occasion of this entertainment, was presently exhausted, and being unwilling that the minds of the bride and bridegroom should be disconcerted by this circumstance, addressed herself to her Son, requesting that he would supply the deficiency. Though the changing of water into wine, is called by the evangelists, the “beginning of the miracles of Christ,” it is doubtless that Mary had in private been witness to his power in that respect, and was induced to the request, that he might prove his divinity in the presence of her friends, who were assembled on occasion of the marriage. Thus then she appears to have been influenced by two motives; to exalt the honor of her Son, and to gratify the guests who were invited to the en-

* Rabbi, or master, is a term of respect, used by the Jews, when addressing persons who were conversant in their law.

tainment. Jesus said to her, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? My hour is not yet come." These words were not meant to convey a severity of reproof; but only to intimate, that it was unnecessary she should remind him of what it was proper he should perform, and that the time was not arrived for his working miracles in public. This reproof the Virgin received with the utmost mildness; and understanding from Jesus, that notwithstanding what he had said, he was yet willing to comply with her desire, she privately addressed herself to the attendants, requesting them to obey in whatever her Son should command.

In the apartment where the marriage was celebrated, were six water-pots, or cisterns of stone, containing in the whole about fifteen firkins. English measure. In obedience to the command of Christ, the servants filled these vessels with water, and presented some of the liquor to the master of the feast, an officer chosen from among the priests, whose business was to preside at festivals, in order to restrain every intemperance. Being supplied with a liquor of a more delicious quality than he had drank during the former part of the entertainment, he addressed himself to the bridegroom, saying, that, contrary to the usual custom, he had reserved the richest wine till the latter end of the entertainment, and commending so judicious a practice, which he said was a proof of his approbation of his company. The bridegroom could not conceive the meaning of the address of the governor of the feast: but the admiration of the whole company was raised to the highest degree, when, upon being questioned, the servants declared, that at the command of Christ, the water with which they had filled the vessels, was instantly changed into wine.

This wonderful and instantaneous transmutation of

water into wine, was the first miracle that Christ performed before any considerable number of witnesses; and on this occasion the divinity of our Lord was admitted by the whole company, who magnified the power of Jesus throughout the adjacent country.

It is to be observed, that the marriage feasts among the Jews continued for the space of seven days: but yet it cannot be rationally supposed, as some cavillers against the scriptures have profanely endeavored to insinuate, that our blessed Saviour afforded encouragement to inebriety, by an unnecessary supply of intoxicating liquor. He did not command that the whole quantity should be then consumed: but we may very reasonably conjecture; intended the surplus of what would serve for promoting innocent cheerfulness, as a present to the bride and bridegroom, who are universally understood to have been persons by no means in affluent circumstances. It was an ancient custom among the Jews, and the practice is still continued, to make presents at nuptial entertainments; and it was usual for the ancient prophets to afford relief to the indigent. Thus did Elijah by the barrel of meal, and the cruise of oil, which continued to be miraculously replenished for a considerable time; and Elisha, his successor, so multiplied the poor widow's pot of oil, that she was enabled to discharge her debts, and support her children.

After performing the miracle at Cana, our Saviour, accompanied by the Holy Virgin, and his disciples, repaired to Capernaum, which was from this time his most usual place of abode. After remaining about a fortnight, or three weeks, at Capernaum, Christ departed, in order to be present at the approaching great feast of the passover at Jerusalem.

CHAP. XII.

The prophaners of the temple expelled by Christ. His discourse with the Jews on the subject of the expulsion of the traders from the temple, and the prophecy of his resurrection. The lessons of our blessed Saviour to Nicodemus, wherein he explains the purpose of his incarnation. Christ departs from Jerusalem, and baptizes such Jews as resort to him for that purpose. John continues to administer baptism at Ænon. A controversy between some of the disciples of John and the Jews, concerning the baptism practised by our Lord and his forerunner. The disciples reprov'd by John, who bears testimony to the divinity of Christ, and teaches the necessity of faith in him, as the means of eternal salvation. John reprimands Herod for having contracted an incestuous alliance with Herodias, the wife of his brother, Herod Philip, and the daughter of Aristobulus, the brother of both, in consequence of which the Baptist is thrown into prison.

UPON the approach of the passover, our Saviour hastened to Jerusalem, and immediately after his arrival in that city, he repaired to the temple; in the outward court of which he perceived the dealers in oxen, sheep, and doves, and the money-changers, employed in their respective occupations, though the whole edifice was consecrated to divine worship. This abominable prophanation necessarily excited the displeasure and indignation of Jesus, who, making a scourge of small cords, drove all the dealers and their cattle out of the temple, and overturning the counting-tables, the treasures of the money changers were

strewed about the floor. Our Saviour also commanded the dealers in doves immediately to depart, enjoining them, "never more to turn the temple of his Father into a house of merchandise." There was something so commanding and authoritative in the deportment of Jesus, as struck the mercenary traders with dread and veneration; and they shewed not any token of resentment, or the least inclination to resistance, although our Lord had no other weapon than a scourge composed of small cords.

In consequence of the above proceeding, the council assembled, and determined to enquire by what authority our Lord had attempted to introduce a reformation in the temple; and in support of the divinity of his commission, they required him to give an immediate demonstrative proof. Hereupon, our Lord spoke to them in reference to his resurrection. Laying his hand upon his breast, said Jesus, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up in three days." The rulers erroneously imagining, that he spoke of the temple whence he had expelled the traders, observed, that they conceived it a matter of impossibility, that he should be able to rebuild that magnificent structure, which had incurred an immense expence, and employed the labour of six-and-forty-years. The true meaning of Christ was, that the temple of his body should be destroyed, or that he himself should be put to death, and that he would rise from the dead in three days. Thus our Lord delivered his predictions in a figurative stile, according to the practice of the ancient prophets, who were seldom clearly understood, till the accomplishment of their prophecies.

Although our blessed Saviour declined a compliance with the request of the rulers, and other dignified inhabitants of Jerusalem, yet he worked divers miracles in the presence of the common people, in order

to prove the divinity of his mission, and confirm them in the belief of his doctrines.

Great numbers of the people beheld our Saviour with astonishment and veneration, and were perfectly satisfied, that he was the long promised Messiah, “ the “ Desire of all nations,” whose appearance had been so repeatedly predicted by the ancient prophets. But Christ, having the faculty of penetrating into the hearts of men, judged it not prudent to repose any great reliance on their constancy ; foreseeing that many would abandon his cause, when it should be opposed by the Sanhedrim, or grand council of the nation. Therefore he avoided too great a familiarity with the Jews : not that he was unable to defend himself against the utmost efforts either of their strength or cunning, but because it was expedient that he should be subject to the common laws of humanity, and not be put under the necessity of exerting a divine power in his own defence, before the time appointed by his heavenly Father, for being made a sacrifice for the salvation of mankind.

While our Saviour remained in Jerusalem, a Pharisee, named Nicodemus, who was one of the members of the Sanhedrim, and a man of remarkable sanctity, seriously reflected on the great miracles performed by Jesus, and was convinced that nothing less than Omnipotence itself could have effected such wonders, which he was convinced were perfectly consistent with the attributes of the great Father of the universe, as well as exactly conformable to the predictions of the ancient prophets respecting the Messiah, “ the Sun “ of righteousness, who was to rise with healing in “ his wings.” But considering the obscurity of the parentage, and the humility of the appearance of Christ, so opposite to the idea the Jews entertained of the splendor and magnificence of the prince, who was

to establish his throne in the city of Jerusalem, and reduce all the kingdoms and states of the universe to his dominion, he harbored doubts as to the reality of the mission of Christ. In order that these doubts might be satisfied, Nicodemus resolved to obtain an interview with Jesus : but knowing that the rest of the members of the Sanhedrim were enemies to his person, and strenuous opposers of his doctrines, he determined to make his visit privately by night, lest he should render himself obnoxious to the censure and enmity of his colleagues in the government.

In pursuance of this resolution, Nicodemus repaired to Christ, and accosted him thus : “ Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God ; for no man can do those miracles that thou dost, unless God be with him.” John iii. 2. Having thus premised, he was preparing to enquire, what it was necessary for him to do, in order that he might become a partaker of the kingdom of God, which he was informed was near at hand. But his question was suppressed, and the erroneous idea on which it was founded, at the same time corrected by Christ, who from his divine faculty of searching into the hearts of men, knew that the admiration of Nicodemus was not so much directed towards the excellency of his doctrines, as towards the miracles he had wrought in confirmation of those doctrines ; and therefore our Lord addressed Nicodemus in the following manner : “ Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” The meaning of this figurative expression is, I declare unto thee, that unless a man be regenerated in spirit, and have his affections transferred from earthly to spiritual objects, he cannot behold the kingdom of God. Nicodemus, being unable to conceive the meaning of our Lord, said, he thought it impossible for “ a man to be born again when he is old.” To this Jesus repli-

ed, by a concise paraphrase on what he had said before : “ Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man
 “ be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter
 “ into the kingdom of God.” Thus our Lord signified, that unless a man became one of his disciples by a baptismal regeneration, and was purified in his heart from all worldly and carnal appetites, so as to live a new and spiritual life, according to the principles of his doctrine, he could not be a partaker of the benefits of his heavenly kingdom.

More fully to explain his doctrine, our Lord proceeded in the following manner : “ The reason and necessity of this regeneration are clearly evident ; and
 “ the regeneration which I preach to you, is of a
 “ pure and spiritual nature, wholly unconnected with
 “ worldly splendor and human passions. The man
 “ who refuses or neglects to embrace the doctrines
 “ of christianity, whose initiatory ordinance is baptism, cannot obtain admittance to the kingdom
 “ of heaven.—My doctrine of regeneration must
 “ not be doubted of, because its operation is not apparent to mortal eyes. Nothing will your boasted
 “ descent from Abraham avail you ; for, as the issue
 “ of that patriarch, you are subject to every species
 “ of sin and infirmity ; but your eternal salvation
 “ must wholly depend on a spiritual mental regeneration, and a renovation of heart. Because the
 “ operation of the Holy Spirit is concealed from the
 “ knowledge of man, let him not, therefore, doubt its
 “ truth. Among the ordinary occurrences of nature,
 “ there are matters, of which, though they are invisible, you entertain no doubt. Thus with regard
 “ to the wind, which produces very discernible effects, and yet where it takes its rise, and what becomes of it when it ceases, no man can determine.”
The wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh,

and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit. “Thus it may be truly said, that a man
 “is renewed, when the effects of his renovation are
 “discernible, although the manner whereby the in-
 “fluence of the Spirit is conveyed to him, and the
 “particular method of its operation upon the facul-
 “ties of his soul, cannot be precisely ascertained.”

Still unable to comprehend our Saviour's doctrine of regeneration, Nicodemus asked, “How these
 “things could be?” Whereupon our Lord said that,
 “If he who was a ruler in Israel, and one of the
 “teachers of the people, was unable to understand
 “the matters he had so clearly explained, there was
 “but little probability of his comprehending the sub-
 “limar truths he should deliver concerning the king-
 “dom of God, and the glorious state of the saints
 “in heaven. If you discredit the spiritual opera-
 “tions in this lower world, which I have explained
 “to you by similitudes, deduced from matters mere-
 “ly corporeal and earthly, can you believe in me, when
 “I inform you of my descent from heaven, and my
 “abode there at the same period of time, and of other
 “matters concerning the kingdom of God? No man
 “hath ascended into heaven, but he who descended
 “from thence, even the Son of man; and he alone is
 “endowed with power to communicate to you the
 “immediate will of his heavenly Father.”

“But, continued our Lord, this Son of man, great
 “and glorious as he is in his divine nature, must yet
 “yield his life as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind.”
*The Lord said unto Moses, make thee a fiery ser-
 pent, and set it upon a pole; and it shall come to pass,
 that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it,
 shall live.—And Moses made a serpent of brass, and
 put it upon a pole; and it came to pass, that if a ser-
 pent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent*

of brass, he lived. “ In like manner, said our blessed Saviour, must the Son of man be lifted upon a cross, that whosoever believeth in him, shall not perish by that death which the old serpent brought upon the sons of Adam, but being delivered therefrom by this antitype of the brazen serpent, shall enjoy everlasting life. Thus hath the Almighty manifested his unbounded love to mankind, and he hath sent his only Son to assume the nature of humanity, to afford them an example of sanctity and holiness, and, at length, to die for their sins, to rise from the dead, and ascend into heaven. In the abundance of his unmerited grace and mercy, the Almighty Creator of the universe, has sent me, his only Son, to purchase, by the effusion of my blood, the eternal salvation of all men, who shall repose their faith on the divinity of my mission, and the efficacy of my atonement, and conform to the principles of my gospel.” *He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.*

These lessons of our blessed Saviour did not fail of their proper effect; for Nicodemus afterwards became one of his most zealous advocates in the Sanhedrim; and, after the crucifixion, he assisted the pious Joseph of Arimathea, in removing the body of our blessed Redeemer from the cross, and in depositing his sacred remains in the sepulchre.

Upon the conclusion of the passover, Christ, accompanied by his disciples, repaired into a different part of Judea, where he remained about seven or eight months, during which time he continued to preach the kingdom of God, and, by the ministry of his disciples, baptized a great number of converts.

In the interim, John remained at Ænon, in that part of Samaria, which is near the river Jordan, and at no considerable distance from Scythopolis and Salim. This situation was preferred by John, on account of its being rendered extremely commodious for administering baptism, by the pools of clear water which abounded in the neighborhood. Hither the people resorted to John in great numbers, and complied with the ceremonies of his institution.

A controversy at this time occurred between the Pharisees and some of the disciples of John, concerning the reception of penitents by baptism. The Pharisees demanded of the disciples, what necessity there was for baptizing the Jews, since they were born in holiness; and why, if the baptism of their master was sufficient, that rite was afterwards administered by Jesus? adding, that this practice seemed to imply, that Jesus had the power of conferring a degree of purification superior to that of John. The Pharisees reposed no confidence in the efficacy of the baptism, either of Christ or his fore-runner: and therefore it is probable, that they preferred the baptism of Jesus, in the present instance, merely from a spirit of opposition and controversy.

In consequence of what the Pharisees had advanced, the disciples were exceedingly disturbed; and having yet no precise and determinate ideas as to the superior divinity of the mission of Christ, and being anxious for supporting the honor of their master's character, they repaired to John, observing to him, that they supposed him to be the most proper person for administering the ordinance of baptism; and yet the followers of Jesus were so numerous, and his fame was so great and extensive throughout Judea, that the converts to their master, and likewise

his reputation, must necessarily be diminished in the same proportion.

In reply to the representations of his disciples, John said, that to arrogate to himself an authority which belonged to another, was inconsistent with the character of a good man, and therefore I dare not presume to put myself upon an equality with the blessed Jesus. You can yourselves bear testimony, that I declined those honors that were offered me, under the supposition of my being the Messiah; and that at the same time, I declared, that I was only the messenger sent by heaven to prepare the minds of the Jews for his reception.

I must now, continued the Baptist, inform you of further particulars in relation to Christ. He must daily experience an increase of reputation and knowledge: but my fame must decline in the same proportion, for I am no more than his harbinger; and the exercise of my office must cease, when he manifests himself to the world. He is superior not only to me, but even to Moses himself, and all the great prophets who have appeared upon earth. — He cometh immediately from heaven, not by his mission alone, but by his origin; and his office in this sublunary sphere is, to instruct mankind in the divine will of his eternal Father. He is infinitely superior to all who derive their birth from mere earthly progenitors, as well in the spiritual nature of his doctrine, ordinances, and promises, as in the excellency of his person; for he testifies to the world what he hath seen by the irradiation, and heard by the immediate dictates of the Holy Ghost dwelling within him.

Those who believe in the divine testimonies of Jesus, do in effect profess that they admit for certain

truths, whatever proceedeth from God; for, continued the Baptist, the doctrines which Jesus promulgates, are not to be understood as the expressions of the mind of man, but as divine and sacred oracles. Former prophets had the Spirit conferred upon them in a limited manner, being commissioned at particular times to impart particular revelations: but Christ always speaketh the words of God; for the Spirit is without restriction given to him, "in whom are all the hidden treasures of wisdom and knowledge." The Father hath intrusted his beloved Son with the entire knowledge and revelation of his divine will, and likewise invested him with full power to distribute rewards and punishments, according to his own good pleasure: and therefore he that believeth on the Son, may be sure that he is entitled to, and will infallibly enjoy eternal felicity: but those who impiously reject the authority and doctrine of Christ, shall inevitably be condemned to groan under the everlasting displeasure of Almighty God, as a punishment due to their former transgressions, and the additional sins of obduracy and impenitence.

A short time after John had borne the above testimonies to the divinity of the mission of our Saviour, he travelled into the tract of country, which was under the government of Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee, who esteemed, or pretended to esteem, the Baptist on account of his preaching, and the many virtues and admirable qualities he possessed. Having espoused Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, and daughter of Aristobulus, the brother of them both, and this while Philip was yet living, John severely reproved him for having engaged in this incestuous intercourse, in direct violation of the positive law of Moses. This conduct in John inflamed the enmity of Herodias to the most extravagant degree, and she practised a variety of stratagems for

causing him to be put to death. Herod, who was naturally of a cruel and vindictive disposition, would have gratified her in this respect, had he not apprehended that an insurrection among the Jews would ensue, if he proceeded so far as to gratify the revenge of Herodias, by sacrificing the life of John, who was highly revered, and esteemed as a prophet, by a very considerable part of his subjects.

However, though Herod deemed it not prudent to put John to death, he caused him to be made a prisoner in the castle of Machærus, situated beyond the Jordan, in the tribe of Reuben, to the North-East of the lake of Asphaltites, and near the spot where the Jordan discharges itself into the Dead Sea; and in this place he was to remain, as an object of the future vengeance of the tyrant Herod.

CHAP. XIII.

A resolution formed at a consultation of the Pharisees, and intelligence of the imprisonment of John being communicated to Jesus, he departs from Judea towards Galilee. In the course of his journey he meets a woman of Samaria, with whom he discourses of the Holy Spirit, under the similitude of living water. He informs the woman of the secret circumstances of her life, and explains to her the nature of the true worship of God. Christ acknowledges himself to be the Messiah. The Samaritan woman calls her neighbors to Jesus, and they believe in his doctrines.

OUR blessed Redeemer employed some considerable portion of time in Judea, in administering baptism to the vast multitudes who resorted to him from various parts; and his great success in obtaining converts to his doctrines, alarming the Pharisees, they assembled for the purpose of devising measures for the abolition of this new sect, which had taken its rise in the very heart of, and was rapidly diffusing itself throughout Judea, and which they deemed repugnant to their authority. The result of the consultations of the Pharisees, and the imprisonment of John the Baptist, being communicated to Jesus, he departed from Judea towards Galilee.

Though Jesus did not himself baptize, that ordinance was practised under his auspices, by the ministry of his disciples; and as he could not, therefore, be considered as a disciple of John, he had no apprehensions of danger either from Herod or Herodias, whose enmity was solely directed against the

person of the Baptist; and he was besides conscious that the Sanhedrim, the members of which were his most inveterate enemies, had but a very inconsiderable share of influence over the tetrarch of Galilee, though their power in Judea was so extensive, that he had every reason that prudence could suggest, for carefully defending himself from the effects of their hatred and envy.

Passing through Samaria, our blessed Saviour arrived about noon in the neighborhood of a town called Sychar, adjacent to the fields which Jacob had given to his son Joseph, when he made his last will and benediction. Near the town was a well which had been sunk by Jacob, and which bore the name of that ancient patriarch. While his disciples were gone into the city to purchase bread, our Lord, being fatigued by travelling in so warm a country, sat down by the side of the well, in order to repose himself. A woman coming to the spot to draw water, when she had filled her pitcher, the humble Jesus requested that she would permit him to drink. Perceiving that he was a Jew, the woman was astonished at his request, for an ancient and inveterate enmity subsisted between the Jews and the Samaritans; and the former were prohibited from accepting any favor from the latter, under the penalty of an anathema. The Jews were permitted to purchase commodities of the Samaritans, and therefore our Saviour's disciples went into the city to buy bread; but they were restricted from receiving from them even a drop of water, by way of benevolence; and the violation of this injunction, was deemed a crime equal to that of eating swine's flesh.

However, our Lord perceiving the woman's surprise, he said to her, that, if she knew the opportunity that was then offered, and the character of her

supplicant, instead of expressing surprize, she would gratify his request, and ask in return for living water, issuing from the fountain of eternal salvation, which he was willing to grant upon her solicitation. Understanding the words of Jesus in the common acceptation, the woman imagined that he suggested to her his power of supplying her with water flowing from a perpetual spring, which she deemed an impossibility in that climate, where the sun had so powerful an influence, as to dry up the springs at certain seasons; and therefore she asked, if he was greater and more powerful than Jacob,* who had sunk the well, and bequeathed it to the posterity of Joseph, who had drank of it himself, as well as his family and cattle? adding, that there was no other living water throughout the country. Jesus replied, that whoever drank of this well, would presently thirst again; but whoever should receive of him the living water, should have a never-failing spring within him, which would yield continual refreshment and comfort to him here, and as it flowed from the inexhaustible fountain of divine grace, would insure to him the enjoyment of eternal felicity.

Still ignorant of the meaning of the simple and natural allegory of the great Preacher of Israel, the woman requested that he would supply her with the living water, that she might no longer be under the necessity of having recourse to the well.

After reproving her for endeavoring to turn his pious exhortations into contempt, Jesus addressed the woman in a different stile. He desired she would go to the city, and return to him with her husband.— Upon this, she acknowledged that she had no husband. Our Lord then observed, that though she had

* The Samaritans pretended that they were the issue of Jacob.

then no husband, she had been five times married, and as often divorced for her adulterous practices, and that she then cohabited with a man, to whom she was not espoused. These facts the woman ingenuously acknowledged; and expressed the highest admiration, that a perfect stranger to her should be acquainted with the secret occurrences of her life.—Hence conceiving an extraordinary opinion of the knowledge and power of Jesus, she proposed to him the following question, which had been much agitated between the Jews and Samaritans: “Whether, as the Jews insisted, sacrifices to God should be made only at Jerusalem, or, according to the opinion of the Samaritans, upon mount Gerizim, where the ancient patriarchs were accustomed to offer their oblations?”

In answer to this question, our Lord informed the woman, that the time was approaching, when men should not sacrifice to God either at Jerusalem, or on mount Gerizim; when carnal oblations should not be offered, but those of the Spirit; and when those of the Spirit only would be acceptable to God, through the mediation of his only Son. “God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.” John iv. 24.

Waving a more particular discussion of the point in question, the woman said to our Saviour, that she was persuaded, when the promised Messiah should appear, all the contentions between the Jews and the Samaritans would be reconciled, and all obscurities in matters of religion would be fully explained. Jesus availed himself of this opportunity of declaring to the woman, that he was himself the Messiah.

In the mean time, the disciples of Jesus returned, and though they were surprised at his condescension

in conversing with an inhabitant of Samaria, all of whom were professed enemies to the Jews, and to the religious ordinances practised at Jerusalem, yet they presumed not to question him on the subject.

Immediately after our Lord had declared himself to be the Messiah, the woman hastened into the town, and publicly proclaimed, that the great Saviour and Deliverer of mankind, was then sitting by the well of Jacob; adding, that he had related such particulars concerning herself, as could not possibly have been known to any person, whose intelligence did not surpass the limits of human understanding. “And this person, said she, is the Messiah, who has been so long and so impatiently expected, both by the Samaritans and the Jews.” The information of the woman at once astonished the people of Sychar, and excited their curiosity to behold a person, whose appearance had been predicted by Moses and the other prophets; and, conducted by the woman, great numbers of them resorted to Jesus.

During the absence of the Samaritan woman, the disciples presented to Jesus the bread they had purchased in the city, and entreated him to eat: but being absorbed in divine meditation, our Lord declined receiving any refreshment, saying, he had bread which would yield him infinitely more satisfaction than that they presented. Interpreting these words in their literal meaning, the disciples concluded, that some person had conveyed food to Christ during their absence: but perceiving their error, he explained the mystery, by saying, he did not mean natural, but spiritual food; for by a punctual execution of the commands of his divine Father, he received more comfort and refreshment, than from any kind of food that the earth would afford; adding, that the satisfaction he should derive from the conversion of the Samaritans,

he should infinitely prefer to any sensual gratification

Jesus being now surrounded by great numbers of the inhabitants of the town, and the adjacent parts, he addressed his disciples in the following manner : *Say ye not, there are yet four months, and then cometh the harvest? Behold, I say unto you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest.* John iv. 35. “ But my spiritual harvest “ approacheth much sooner ; for behold the multitudes who are thronging to me, though the word of “ God has been but a few minutes sown in their hearts ; “ therefore you perceive, that the corn I allude to, is “ already ripe ; for the minds of the people are already “ prepared for the reception of my doctrine ; and “ great shall be the reward of those, who reap the fruit “ of which I speak ; or, in other words, who convince the people of the necessity of reposing faith in “ me. All the benefits to be expected from the material fruits of the earth, consist in the sustenance of “ a frail and mortal body : but this spiritual harvest, “ on the contrary, shall be productive of eternal salvation. As you labour with me in this great harvest “ of souls, so shall you participate in the glorious recompence of perpetual bliss in the kingdom of my “ heavenly Father.” *He that reapeth, receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal ; that both he that soweth, and he that reapeth, may rejoice together.* John iv. 36.

The discourses of Christ had so powerful an influence upon the minds of the people, that the majority of them were converted to the principles of his doctrine, and were fully persuaded, he could be no other than the great Messiah, and therefore they earnestly solicited him to take up his residence in their city. Our blessed Redeemer so far complied, as to remain with

them two days, which time he employed in preaching to them the kingdom of God. Upon the departure of Jesus, the converts to his gospel said to the woman who had informed them, that the Redeemer of mankind was sitting near Jacob's well, "Now we believe, " not because of thy saying ; for we have heard him " ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, " the Saviour of the world." John iv. 42.

CHAP. XIV.

Christ proceeds into Galilee, where he preaches the gospel with great success. He performs a miraculous cure upon the son of a nobleman of Capernaum. He preaches in the synagogue at Nazareth, where he becomes the object of popular admiration: but upon reproaching the Nazarenes with infidelity, they are exasperated against him, and endeavor to throw him from a precipice. He enforces the necessity of repentance to the people of Galilee.

AFTER John had continued to preach the doctrine of Christianity for the space of three years and an half, a period was put to his pious labors by his imprisonment in the castle of Machærus, by the command of Herod: and now our blessed Redeemer was urged by the powerful influence of the Holy Ghost, to engage in the public discharge of his prophetic office.

Proceeding from Judea towards Galilee, our Saviour preached in divers Jewish synagogues, and in all the towns through which he passed, instructed the people in the necessity of repentance, and a reformation of life. The fame of the great Preacher of Israel was not confined to the limits of the countries which he honored with his divine presence, but was spread throughout all the adjacent territories.

The doctrine which our Lord preached to the Jews during his journey, was to the following effect: “The
“time for the appearance of the Messiah, predicted
“by the ancient prophets, is now arrived: and this
“nation is threatened with the dreadful judgment of
“God, to avert the effects of whose anger, will be im-

“ possible to those who obdurately persist in rejecting
“ the gospel, a firm and pious belief in which, will in-
“ fallibly secure a participation in all the benefits of
“ the kingdom of heaven.”

While our Saviour was pursuing his journey from Judea towards Cana, a noble inhabitant of Capernaum, who held a distinguished office under Herod the tetrarch, earnestly supplicated that he would visit and relieve his son, who was lying at the point of death. Lest it should be supposed, he had not power to restore health, but in the presence of the afflicted, he declined going to Capernaum, but complied with the other part of the father's request, dismissing him with an assurance that his son was recovered. Upon his return home the nobleman met his servants, who were hastening to him with the joyful intelligence of his son's unexpected and perfect recovery. Upon enquiring as to the precise time when the unfavorable symptoms abated, he found that “ the fever left him,” immediately after Jesus had pronounced the youth to be restored to health, by saying, “ Go thy way, thy son liveth.” John iv. 50. This proof of the divine power of Christ, convinced the nobleman and his whole family, that he was the Messiah, whom the Almighty had promised for the redemption of Israel.

Our Saviour now repaired to Nazareth, the place where he had received his education; and going to the synagogue on the sabbath day, he was preparing to read some lesson from the prophets, agreeable to the practice of the Jews, when the priest who officiated on this occasion, delivered to him the book or* roll of the prophet Isaiah, from which he read the

* The mode of writing, among the Jews, was not upon papers or parchments sewed together, but in one continued page, which was rolled up, in order to preserve it from dust, or other injury, and to render it more portable, and convenient for use.

following passage : “ The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek : he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound ; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.” Having read these words, he returned the writing to the minister, and seated himself. He explained the passage with such force of reasoning, and such peculiar grace and elegance of expression, that he became the object of admiration to his auditors, who knowing his humble birth and mean education, could not conceive by what means he had acquired such extraordinary accomplishments.

Not having been witnesses to any of the miracles which he had actually wrought, they upbraided him with a want of regard to the place where he had received his education. Hereupon, the holy Jesus observed, that when a famine raged in the land of Palestine, a miracle was performed only upon one woman, who was a widow, and an inhabitant of Sarepta, in the territory of the Sidonians, which were an idolatrous people ; and that the prophet Elisha had restored to health Naaman, the Syrian, who was afflicted with the leprosy, while great numbers of the Jews, laboring under the same loathsome disease, experienced no relief.

Thus, said he, for the wise purposes of heaven, miracles have been wrought upon people, whom the Jews, from the erroneous opinion that they were themselves the peculiar favorites of God, deemed objects unworthy the divine benevolence. And, said our Lord, “ Ye will surely say to me, Physician, heal thyself : whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in this country ;” evidently alluding to

the miracle he had lately wrought upon the nobleman's son.

The discourse of Jesus, which accused the Nazarenes of infidelity, and as being unworthy to have miracles performed among them, so exasperated those who heard him, that they hurried him to the brow of the hill, whereon the city was erected, and endeavored to cast him headlong down the precipice. But, by an exertion of the divine power, our blessed Saviour eluded the fury of the desperate Nazarenes; for, rendering himself invisible, he passed unhurt amidst the multitude.

On account of the unworthiness of the citizens, our Lord abandoned Nazareth, and established his residence at Capernaum, situated near the lake of Genesareth, upon the confines of the tribes of Zebulon and Nephthalim. This was the capital of Galilee, and a place peculiarly convenient for the holy purposes of Christ. The city itself was very populous, and the many trading towns on the lake, abounded with foreigners, whom our Lord foresaw would promulgate the fame of his preaching throughout their respective countries.

Lest it should be thought remarkable, that our Saviour did not fix upon Jerusalem as the most proper place for preaching, working miracles in confirmation of the divinity of his mission, and instructing his disciples in the doctrines they were afterwards to publish to the world, it must be observed, that the pride and ambition of the Scribes and Pharisees would not have permitted the constant residence of so celebrated a teacher in the capital of Judea; and therefore, though Jesus occasionally visited the great metropolis, his common abode was at such towns of inferior consequence, as, from their situation, the

disposition of the inhabitants, and other circumstances, were best adapted to the purposes of his holy mission.

It may not be improper to introduce in this place a description of the lake of Gennesareth, and the adjacent country, as written by the celebrated Jewish historian, who was the contemporary of our blessed Saviour. “ The length of the lake of Gennesareth, “ is an hundred furlongs, and it is forty furlongs in “ breadth. It lies upon a fine gravel, and there is no “ river, or even fountain-water, more constantly “ tranquil, or more conveniently to be drawn. The “ quality of this water is so cold, that it will not receive warmth, by being exposed to the sun, even “ in the most intense heat of summer. It is remarkably agreeable to the palate, and in no degree “ partakes of the quality of moorish waters, either “ in respect of the color or taste. The lake derives “ its name from the country by which it is surrounded. It abounds in a great variety of fish, differing materially both in formation and taste, from “ what are to be found in any other waters. The “ lands surrounding the lake of Gennesareth, are so “ surprisingly fertile, and situated in so favorable a “ climate, that palms, nuts, figs, olive-trees, and many other articles, seeming to require a very different “ temperature of air, flourish there in the highest “ perfection. The natural advantages of the country receive every possible improvement from the “ inhabitants, who cultivate the grounds with remarkable skill and industry. This place seems to be “ the spot where nature most delights in reconciling “ contradictions, and where the seasons contend “ which shall be productive of the greatest bounties. “ For ten successive months, grapes and figs abound “ in the highest perfection, as does a strange variety “ of other most excellent fruits, during the whole

“ year. In this country flows a most delightful chry-
“ talline fountain, called Capernaum, which many
“ believe to be a small branch of the river Nile, on
“ account of its producing a certain species of fish,
“ found in no part of the globe, excepting in this
“ fountain, and in Alexandria. This country extends
“ along the lake, thirty stadia, and it is twenty sta-
“ dia in breadth*.”

In the gospels, this lake is frequently called the sea of Galilee, and the sea of Tiberias. It derived the name of the sea of Galilee, from the province of Galilee in general ; it was called the lake of Gennesareth, from that particular tract of Galilee bounding it on the Western side ; and from the town of Tiberias being situated on the Western shore, it received the name of the sea of Tiberias.

* Vide Josephus, translated by Thompson and Price, Vol. II
Page 381, 382.

CHAP. XV.

Christ relieves a person possessed of a demon. At the instance of Peter and Andrew, he cures the mother-in-law of the former, of a fever. Great numbers of diseased persons repair to Jesus, and are restored. Having fervently prayed to his heavenly Father, Jesus continues to preach the gospel. The miraculous draught of fishes. The calling of James and John. Jesus restores a leper to health. Christ returns to Capernaum, where he performs a wonderful cure upon a paralytic.

BEING on the sabbath-day in the synagogue at Capernaum, delivering holy instructions to the people, one of the congregation, who was possessed with an evil spirit, cried out in a loud and discordant tone, "Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." Mark i. 24. Our Lord, who required not the testimony of such confession, commanded the evil spirit to be silent, and instantly to depart from the man. The demon obeyed; and the man, who had been violently convulsed and tormented by the evil spirit, felt no inconvenience result from the affliction from which he was thus wonderfully rescued. This miracle, performed in the presence of a great number of witnesses, was soon proclaimed throughout Galilee, and all the neighboring countries.

At this time, four fishermen, who followed their occupation in partnership, were inhabitants of one house in Capernaum. Their names were Peter, Andrew, James, and John. The two former being

known to Christ, they addressed themselves to him in the synagogue, supplicating that he would accompany them to their dwelling, and administer relief to the mother-in-law of Peter, who was dangerously afflicted with a fever. Our blessed Redeemer complied with their request, and being conducted to the bed-side of the sick woman, commanded the fever to depart; at the same time graciously assisting her with his hand, and desiring her to raise herself up. The woman rose accordingly, and finding herself perfectly restored to her former health and spirits, she “ministered unto him.”

Speaking of this miraculous cure, St. Luke says, that Christ “rebuked the fever.” In the figurative language of scripture, diseases, famine, and inanimate things, are represented as servants to the Almighty. “Before him went the pestilence, and burning diseases went forth at his feet.”

Upon the conclusion of the sabbath, which was at the time of sun-set, vast multitudes of people assembled before the house where Jesus was, and among these were many laboring under various diseases, and others who were possessed with devils. These miserable objects excited the compassion of our beneficent Redeemer, who by no other means than laying his hands upon them, restored them all immediately to full health. Thus was accomplished the prophecy of Isaiah: “Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses.”

Before the dawn of the following morning, Christ retired to a solitary place in the neighborhood of Capernaum, in order that he might not be interrupted by the importunities of the people, while offering up prayers for the redemption of mankind, to his heavenly Father. But Peter and his associates, followed by

great numbers of people, sought our Lord in his retirement, and lamented to him that he had withdrawn himself from them, at a time when they were particularly desirous of being favored with his presence : nor would they depart, till Christ had informed them that he was commanded to visit all the neighboring towns and villages, and proclaim to the inhabitants the near approach of the kingdom of the Messiah.

Our blessed Saviour pursued his journey through Galilee, and preached the gospel in every synagogue in that country ; as he proceeded, he both cured sick persons, and cast the evil spirits out of those who were possessed therewith ; and thus he obtained a great number of converts to his faith.

Being in the neighborhood of the lake of Genesareth, preparing to afford instructions to the people, he was surrounded by such immense numbers, that he was apprehensive he should not be able to carry his design into execution. While considering by what means he should avoid the crowd, Christ perceived two fishing-boats near the shore, in one of which were Peter and Andrew, and in the other, James and John, with Zebedee their father. Hereupon Jesus requested, that Peter would admit him into his boat, and push it to a small distance from the shore, lest any of his followers should attempt to enter ; saying that from the boat he should be able more conveniently to instruct the people who had assembled to hear his discourse.

Having entered the boat, our Lord addressed himself to the multitude, who preserved a profound attention, while he recommended to them, in his usual energetic and persuasive stile, the necessity of reposing entire confidence in the sublime truths of the gospel, as the indispensable means of eternal salvation.

Having concluded his discourse, Christ desired Peter to remove his boat to a greater distance from the shore, and throw out his net. Hereupon, Peter and Andrew informed him, that during the whole night, they had exerted their utmost endeavors, but had failed of taking any fish; and therefore they imagined, that throwing out the net again, would not be attended with success, but yet, with the utmost willingness, they would obey his command. They had no sooner cast the net into the water, than it inclosed so prodigious a quantity of fish, that the meshes of the net were broken in several places. Calling to their associates who were in the other boat, by their assistance the net was with difficulty drawn out of the water, and as many fishes were taken at this wonderful draught, as could conveniently be conveyed to shore by both vessels.

This miracle excited the astonishment of Peter, who prostrating himself before Jesus, declared, that the sins he had committed, rendered him unworthy of being honored with the company of so divine a personage, whom the infirmities of his nature might render him liable to offend: "depart from me, said Peter, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." The companions of Peter were also amazed and terrified: but our Saviour addressed himself to them in so gracious and condescending a manner, as entirely to appease the perturbation of their spirits.

Christ said to Andrew and Peter, "Be of good comfort: being my disciples you shall become fishers of men." Hereupon they landed, and proceeded towards the other vessel, in which were John and James, who, although they assisted in drawing up the net, were ignorant that it had been thrown into the water at the command of Christ, and were at this time employed in repairing the meshes of the net:

and we may naturally suppose, that they were not witnesses to the miracle, of which had they known Jesus to be the author, they would certainly have behaved to him with greater attention and respect.—Our Saviour also commanded James and John to follow him, and they obeyed without hesitation, the vessels being left in the care of their father Zebedee, and the persons they had hired to assist them in their occupation.

Attended by these disciples, our Lord continued his progress through Galilee, to which country his reputation was not confined: for it was extended throughout Cælosyria and other countries. Demoniacs, lunatics, and others afflicted with the most dreadful diseases, which were deemed irremediable, by the utmost art of man, were brought to him from very distant parts, and he wrought perfect cures upon them with the utmost facility. In consequence of these great miracles, a prodigious number of disciples resorted to Jesus from Decapolis, Jerusalem, the different parts of Judea, and the towns beyond the Jordan.

In passing through one of the towns of Galilee, our Saviour was accosted by “a man full of leprosy, who seeing Jesus, fell on his face and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” Luke v. 12. Compassionating the sufferings of this unhappy man, the benevolent Jesus stretched forth his hand, and touching him, said, “Be thou cleansed.” These words were no sooner pronounced, than all the man’s afflictions were removed. Jesus now commanded him immediately to repair to Jerusalem, and present himself to the priest, whose office was to determine whether lepers were perfectly cured, in order that his restoration might be authenticated, and publicly proclaimed; and, at the

same time, he reminded him of the necessity of presenting the gifts required by the law of Moses, and of conforming to all the legal institutions. Jesus also admonished him, as he had done the other persons he had relieved, not to divulge in what manner he had recovered his health. The motive of our Lord in giving these precautions was, that he might not expose himself to the effects of the envy and malice of the Scribes and Pharisees, who from their aversion towards him, and the malignity of their dispositions, he was apprised would have reproached him as an invader of the sacerdotal order, and probably have falsely pronounced the man not cleansed. Christ was desirous that his miracles should not be universally known, till he had instructed the people in the spiritual nature of his kingdom, and explained to them, that his throne was not to be established in the earthly, but in the heavenly Jerusalem; for he was acquainted with the violent and capricious temper of the populace, and had reason to apprehend, “that they might come “and take him away by force, and make him king.”

The fame of Jesus was now so great and universal, that immense numbers of people daily attended to hear him preach the gospel, and to be cured of the many bodily afflictions to which human nature is subject. The continual fatigue to which the benevolent Jesus exposed himself, for the spiritual and bodily advantage of mankind, at length rendered a temporary retirement necessary: he therefore repaired into the wilderness, that he might invigorate his body by repose, and his spirit by prayer and other devotional exercises.

Having sojourned some time in Peræa, Christ embarked on the lake of Gennesareth, and sailed for Capernaum, where he had no sooner arrived, than great numbers of people resorted to him; and among these

were many of the Pharisees and doctors of the law, who seated themselves in the porch of the house where our Lord resided. In the presence of the Pharisees and the doctors, Christ wrought cures upon all the persons who applied to him for relief; and the astonishing effects of his divine power brought such a concourse of people about him, that all access to the house was intercepted.

While our Saviour was preaching to the multitude, a paralytic, lying on a couch, was brought towards him on the shoulders of four men, who endeavored to force a passage through the croud, that they might lay the patient at the feet of our Lord, and supplicate his compassion in behalf of the miserable object. Disappointed in their endeavours to approach Jesus, they got into the gallery of the house, and ascending thence to the top of the porch, they drew up the sick man in his couch. Then unroofing a part of the building, by means of ropes they lowered the patient into the middle of the porch, placing him before Jesus; who perceiving the strong persuasion which these people entertained of his divine power, and their confidence in his ability to administer relief to the diseased, he addressed himself to the paralytic to the following effect: “ * Son, be of good comfort; thy sins are forgiven thee.”

The Pharisees and the doctors of the law, in a private conference, agreed that Jesus had been guilty of blasphemy, and that God only had power to forgive sins, for they were ignorant that Jesus spoke by the divine Spirit. Perceiving their sentiments, our Lord said to them, “ Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier to say, Thy sins be

* The meaning of Christ was, that the punishment of his sins, (i. e. his distemper) was remitted.

“ forgiven thee ? or to say, Arise and walk ? But that
“ ye may know that the Son of man hath power on
“ earth to forgive sins (then saith he to the sick of
“ of the palsy) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto
“ thine house.” The man, finding himself immedi-
ately relieved from his afflictions, obeyed the com-
mand of Jesus, magnifying the power of God for hav-
ing experienced so miraculous a delivery. This
event struck the people with a religious awe, and
they praised God for having bestowed upon the Son
of man the wonderful power of healing, with a word,
every distemper incident to human nature.

CHAP. XVI.

The calling of Matthew. The reason of the conversation of Jesus with the publican. The similitudes and reasons of our Saviour, explaining why he did not exact from his disciples severities equal to those endured by the disciples of John and the Pharisees. Christ performs a miraculous cure at the pool of Bethesda. The Pharisees are exasperated against Jesus, and accuse him of violating the sabbath. Our Saviour proclaims himself to be the Son of God, the object of divine worship, and the future judge of mankind. He appeals to John for a confirmation of his divinity; and to the miracles he had wrought as well as to the scriptural writings. Christ reproveth the Pharisees for their unbelief in him, and asserts that they shall be proved guilty by the writings of Moses.

AFTER having performed the surprising cure related in the preceding chapter, our blessed Saviour quitted the city, and directed his course towards the banks of the lake of Gennesareth, in order to instruct the vast concourse of people by whom he was followed, in the principles of Christian piety. In his way, he observed a publican, whose name was Levi, or Matthew, sitting in the office where the customs were levied at the port of Capernaum. This man Christ commanded to follow him; and abandoning the duties of his office, he immediately obeyed. From this time Matthew followed a more honorable employment; for he proved a worthy disciple of the great Saviour of the world, through whose divine favor he became both an apostle and an evangelist.

A short time after the conversion of Matthew, he provided a superb entertainment for Jesus and his disciples; and on this occasion he gave invitations to all the publicans of his acquaintance, who were, in general, persons of dissolute and abandoned manners, as well as to many others of a similar description. Hereupon the Scribes and Pharisees insolently demanded of the disciples of Jesus, by what means they could reconcile the conduct of their master, who, at the time that he professed such rigid principles of religion, should be guilty of so great an inconsistency of character, as to associate, at a public feast, with tax-gatherers and other persons of equally dissipated, abandoned, and irreligious manners? This question to the disciples being overheard by our Saviour, he replied, “that, in the present instance, he acted from
 “the same motives that induced a physician to visit
 “his patients; to convert them to a soundness of
 “mind, as the business of the other was to restore
 “health of body.” Our Lord further informed them,
 “that the object of his mission was not so principally
 “to urge the necessity of a continuance of the faith
 “of the righteous, as to call sinners to repentance; and
 “added, that to guide sinners into the paths of righ-
 “teousness, was far more acceptable to God, than an
 “observance of the ceremonials of the Mosaical in-
 “stitutions.” *I desired mercy and not sacrifice; and
 the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings.*

The Scribes and Pharisees, with some of the disciples of John, repaired to Jesus, and demanded of him, for what reason his disciples were excused from fasting and other severities, to which they were themselves under the necessity of submitting. Hereupon, our Lord said, the guests who are invited to a wedding, are not to fast and afflict themselves while they continue with the bridegroom: “but the time will
 “come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away

“ from them, and then they shall fast.” He was unwilling to impose fasting and severities upon his disciples: but when he should be taken from them by death, the proper time of their fasting would arrive. He added, that to have commanded his disciples to the observance of abstinence, and other rigid restrictions, at a time when he was employing them to preach the gospel, would have been extremely improper; for said our Lord, “ as no prudent man
“ would patch a tattered garment with new cloth,
“ which would injure rather than improve it; or put
“ new wine into old leathern bottles, which upon the
“ fermentation of the liquor, would burst: in like
“ manner am I loth to hazard the alienation of my
“ disciples, by putting them under severe restrictions;
“ for the corrupt nature of man is such, as not to admit of immediate reformation.” Therefore our Saviour observed, that he did not exact austerity of discipline, but deemed it more prudent gradually to inure the minds of the people to his doctrine, which they might reject, if too severe trials were imposed upon them.

Upon the approach of the passover, Jesus, according to his usual practice, went to Jerusalem, to celebrate the festival, in obedience to the directions of the law. Near the sheep-market, in this city, was a pool, and adjoining thereto a building consisting of five porches, called Bethesda, or the house of mercy. These porches were destined for the reception of patients deemed irrecoverable by the skill of the physicians, and they were to wait for the troubling of the water, when they were to bathe therein for the recovery of their health. At a certain season each year, an angel descended, and stirred up the waters of the pool of Bethesda, and the person however afflicted, who had the fortune first to step into the waters,

after their angelical commotion, was instantly restored to health.

Approaching this pool, our blessed Saviour observed a man, who having labored under a violent disease for eight and thirty years, was reduced to a state of the most deplorable imbecility. Upon being asked by our Lord, whether he was not desirous of a cure, the man replied in the affirmative, adding, that having no person to afford him assistance, he had made frequent attempts to get first into the pool, but had as often been disappointed, by some person of greater strength and activity. Compassionating the case of this miserable sufferer, Jesus resolved to make his recovery instrumental in the manifestation of his own divinity; and therefore he said, "Arise take up thy bed and walk?" These words were no sooner delivered, than the man, finding himself relieved from his afflictions, in obedience to the command of Christ, departed with his bed on his shoulders.

The descent of the angel unquestionably was to impart a healing quality to the water; and the purpose of this angelical dispensation was to preserve a lively sense of the providence of the Almighty, during that interval, when there was an entire cessation of prophecies. A single cure at each angelical commotion of the water, plainly evinced the event to be miraculous; for had many persons been restored, the cures would probably have been attributed to the sanative quality of the water.

The cure of the impotent man was effected on the sabbath; and, when he departed with his bed on his shoulders, the Jews, imagining that he had forgot the time, observed to him that he was guilty of prophane- tion in carrying a burden on that sacred day. Con-

vinced that the person who had so miraculously restored him to health, must be a prophet, and consequently that he would not enjoin him to an unlawful act, the man justified his conduct, urging, that one who possessed such extraordinary powers, which could not but be derived immediately from heaven, must necessarily be incapable of commanding him to act in an unlawful or improper manner. "He " that made me whole, the same said unto me, take " up thy bed and walk."

The Jews enquired, by the command of whom it was, that he followed the servile employment of carrying a burden on the sabbath-day, thereby committing a daring violation of the law? but not knowing the name of Jesus, he looked round, in order to point him out to the enquirers. However, immediately after performing the cure, Jesus retired from the crowd, in order to avoid the malice of the Scribes and Pharisees.

Some time afterwards Jesus met, in the temple at Jerusalem, the person he had cured at the pool of Bethesda, and said to him, that, since by the favor of the Almighty, he had been relieved from those terrible afflictions, which were meant as a chastisement for his iniquities, it now behoved him, wholly to abstain from those irregular courses which he had been accustomed to pursue, lest his ingratitude and impiety should render him the object of more grievous sufferings than those from which he had been so lately delivered. Having paid grateful acknowledgments to his heavenly physician, the man, with a view to exalt the honor of his benefactor, informed the Scribes and Pharisees, that it was Jesus of Nazareth, who had so wonderfully restored him to health; congratulating them, at the same time, on the opportunity they had of beholding so great a prophet.

But this information had an effect entirely opposite to what the man expected ; for, instead of yielding the honor due to Jesus on account of his numerous acts of benevolence and mercy, the rulers of Israel tumultuously attacked him with the most opprobrious language, and, at length, because he had done an act of goodness on the sabbath, adjudged, that he had been guilty of a crime, for which he deserved to be put to death. They now entered into consultation for devising the means of depriving our blessed Redeemer of life : for the Romans had taken from them all authority in capital causes, and they dared not gratify their inveterate malice, by transgressing the limits of the power with which they were invested.

However, Christ vindicated his conduct by the most irrefragable arguments, and by appealing to the excellency of the works he had performed. He observed, that his heavenly Father distributed blessings on mankind without regard to any particular season ; and that he could not deserve the censure they had cast upon him, on pretence of his having violated the sabbath, since, in the action alluded to, he had only followed the example of God, who on that day did not abstain from performing good and salutary works.

These observations of Christ, more violently exasperated the Jews, who supposed that he meant to insinuate, that it was unnecessary to observe the sabbath ; and they deemed him guilty of blasphemy, in claiming a peculiar relation to God, and in declaring that he acted like a God, whereby they said, he placed himself upon an equality with the Deity himself.

Hereupon, our Lord said, that though they admitted the conclusion they had drawn, so far as it respect-

ed his having pronounced himself the Son of God, and equal with the Father ; yet by this declaration he had not been guilty of impiety, or placed himself in opposition to the great Creator of the universe.—
 “ Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do ; for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth his Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doth ; and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.” John v. 19, 20. The blessed Jesus added, that he had not only the power of healing the sick, but also that of restoring the dead to life ; and that the Father had appointed him the judge of mankind on the day of resurrection, when he would deal with each man according to his works. “ Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth ; they that have done good, to the resurrection of life ; and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation.” John v. 28, 29.—
 In this judgment, our Saviour said, he should be actuated by no impulse that was not perfectly corresponding with the divine pleasure of the heavenly Father, whose terms of absolution and condemnation he should faithfully pronounce on the great day of retribution. “ And my judgment is just, because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father, which hath sent me.” John v. 30.

Our Lord further said, they would not be deserving censure, if they doubted the veracity of a person pretending to be delegated from God, and yet having no testimony in confirmation of his mission ; for he could not be a true prophet. But to confirm the divinity of his own mission, Christ appealed to the testimony of John the Baptist, who, he reminded them,

had proclaimed him to be the promised Messiah to the deputation of priests and Levites. The Baptist, he said, shone forth among them, and by the light of his doctrine, dispelled the clouds of their ignorance: and as they had acknowledged him to be a true prophet, and a man of unquestionable virtue and sanctity, his testimony must necessarily deserve full confidence.

But he appealed to more powerful evidence than that of John the Baptist; the sacred word of God himself, from whom he derived the power of working miracles, and who at the time of his baptism, had, by the visible descent of the Holy Ghost, and a voice from heaven, solemnly pronounced him the Messiah, as could be witnessed by multitudes of people, part of whom were, in all probability, then present.

The Jews had long expected the Messiah, but they supposed he would affect all the splendor and magnificence of a powerful temporal monarch; and that he would not only restore the lustre of the throne of David, but establish his authority throughout all the kingdoms of the earth. Hence then, they were averse to acknowledge the divinity of Christ, notwithstanding the proofs of his mission were so utterly incontestible; for had they confessed Christ to be the Messiah, they must of course have abandoned the expectation they had so long cherished of beholding the splendid and glorious earthly kingdom, which they imagined would be established by the Son of God.

Our Lord, therefore, recommended them to consult the holy scriptures, and particularly the writings of the prophets, where they would find the character of the Messiah fully displayed, and be convinced, that many of the predictions concerning him were already authenticated. Our blessed Saviour added, that Moses, their great legislator, in whose writings they pre-

tended to repose implicit confidence, concurred with him in accusing them of infidelity. “ Had ye believed “ Moses, ye would have believed me ; for he wrote of “ me : but if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye “ believe my words ?” John v. 46, 47.

CHAP. XVII.

The disciples of Jesus gather some ears of corn to appease their hunger, on the sabbath, and are accused of profanation by the Pharisees. Our Lord excuses his disciples, and instances the cases of David and the priests. He reasons on the use of the sabbath, exposes the futility of the observations of the Pharisees, and performs a wonderful cure. To avoid the malice of the Pharisees, our Saviour embarks on the lake of Gennesareth. He cures various diseases, and relieves persons possessed with demons. Application of a prophecy of Isaiah to our blessed Saviour.

SOON after our Lord had attended the celebration of the passover at Jerusalem, accompanied by his disciples, he set out on his return out of Judea into Galilee; and passing through a corn-field on the sabbath-day, his disciples plucked some ears of grain, to appease their hunger. This being observed by the Pharisees, who kept the sabbath with superstitious exactness, they informed Jesus of the circumstance, and discharged against his disciples the most spiteful and acrimonious reflections, on account of their supposed profanation of the sacred day.

In justification of the conduct of his disciples, our Saviour reasoned with the Pharisees, shewing them that works of necessity were to be permitted, though they oppose a ritual command. He mentioned, that in the days of Abiathar, the high-priest, David, having no other means of satisfying his appetite, entered the temple, and not only eat himself of, but distributed among the persons composing his retinue, the bread

which had been consecrated to God, and which the priests only were lawfully authorized to eat. He also instanced, that, according to the law of Moses, sacrifices were to be offered to God on the sabbath ; and observed, that though the priests who made such oblations, committed a sort of profanation, they were notwithstanding held perfectly guiltless. It was the necessity of David's circumstances, said our Lord, that excused his making use of the consecrated bread ; and that the necessary service of the temple absolved the priests who made oblations on the sabbath. Fatigued with accompanying him, his disciples had gathered a few ears of corn, for the purpose of recruiting their strength. He was himself an object of higher veneration than the temple, or any thing thereunto appertaining ; and consequently if the service of the temple could excuse the labor of the priests from being a profanation, much more would the service which his disciples owed to him, excuse their eating a few ears of corn, which they had plucked, for enabling them the better to discharge their sacred duty. If they would consider what was evident from the words, as well as the works of the Almighty, they would find that charity towards persons in distress, was more acceptable to him than a rigid observance of his own ritual institutions. Therefore, he said, the ceremonials of the day might, in cases of necessity, be dispensed with : and our blessed Redeemer concluded with pronouncing himself to be the Messiah, and with asserting, that he had the power of granting a dispensation to his disciples. Thus our Lord incontestibly proved, that works of mercy should not be omitted, though they might be attended with an infringement of some of the most sacred institutions of the ceremonial law.

A short time after the above controversy with the Pharisees, our Saviour entered one of the synagogues of Jerusalem, and observing a man who had been de-

prived of the use of his right-hand by the palsy, he approached towards him. The Scribes and Pharisees justly imagining, that his design was to restore the man to the use of his limb, attentively watched for an opportunity of accusing him to the people as a sabbath breaker, even at the time when they were themselves employed in a most abominable kind of profanation; that of seeking the life of one from whom they had sustained no injury, but who was continually laboring for the salvation of mankind in general. Our Saviour was apprized of the designs of the Pharisees, but, disregarding equally their malice and their power, he placed the man in the middle of the synagogue, that the whole congregation might behold his miraculous cure.

Hereupon, the Pharisees asked our Lord, whether it was lawful to perform cures upon the sabbath-day? and they hoped that his reply would afford them grounds for an accusation. But, waving an answer to their question, Jesus exposed the superstition and malice of his adversaries, by proposing to them the following question, and subjoining some pertinent observations: "Is it lawful on the sabbath-days, to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?" Luke vi. 9. He then remarked, that the very persons who exclaimed against him for performing works of goodness on the sabbath, were those who profaned the day by seeking the life of one who had offered them no kind of provocation. Pretending not to understand this severe rebuke, they remained in sullen silence. Our Saviour now said to them, "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? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath-day." Matt. xii. 11, 12. Too obstinate to acknowledge conviction, and unable to con-

fute the arguments of Christ, the Pharisees continued silent, revolving in their minds the means of inflicting some dreadful punishment upon our blessed Redeemer.

The obstinacy of the Pharisees excited the indignation of the meek and benevolent Jesus, who, after regarding them with sternness and anger, that, if possible, he might impress their minds with a conviction of their errors, he turned towards the lame man, and in the most gracious and encouraging manner, commanded him to stretch forth his hand. No sooner had the man obeyed, than "his hand was restored whole as the other."

This miracle raised the admiration of the whole congregation; and though the Pharisees were equally incapable of controverting the arguments that Jesus had advanced, of injuring his reputation, yet they determined not to relinquish their malicious designs; but, on the contrary, they united with the Herodians, or Sadducees, with whom they had before lived in a state of the most inveterate enmity, in order to concert measures for effecting the destruction of Christ.

To elude the machinations of his enemies, our blessed Saviour, accompanied by his disciples, retired to the banks of the lake of Gennesareth, where he was resorted to by vast numbers of people from different parts of Judea, as well as from Idumea, Perea, Phœnicia, and the borders of Tyre and Sidon.

The great concourse of people, by whom our Lord was constantly surrounded, induced him to order a vessel to be in readiness, that, if occasion should require, he might embark, in order to avoid the crowd. All whom he either laid his hands on or spoke to, were immediately relieved from their diseases, howe-

ver miserably afflicted; and those who even touched his garment, experienced the same benefit. Those who were possessed, no sooner saw him than they prostrated themselves at his feet; and the evil spirits, making use of the voice of the men, proclaimed Jesus to be the Son of God. As he had done on former occasions, he commanded them to be silent, probably lest his followers, many of whom still believed that he would establish an earthly kingdom, should foment a tumult, and thereby afford his enemies an opportunity of accusing him of seditious practices. This instance of the mild and peaceable disposition of Jesus, was perfectly consistent with the following prophecy: "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my Spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law." Isaiah xlii. 1—4.

CHAP. XVIII.

After fervently praying to the Almighty during a whole night, the blessed Jesus appoints the twelve apostles. Accompanied by the apostles, he repairs into the plains, and from thence proceeds to Capernaum. He ascends a mountain, and in the course of a most admirable sermon, pronounces the eight beatitudes. The character and duty of the disciples of Christ. That he came to fulfil the law. Of murder, unprovoked anger, reconciliation, adultery, lust, divorce, perjury, profane swearing, retaliation, love to our enemies, charity, prayer, the Lord's prayer, fasting, love of riches, worldly care, judging others, blind guides, the prostitution of holy things, efficacy of prayer, doing as we would be done by, the strait and wide gates, fallacious teachers, and unsound professors of religion.

A SHORT time after Jesus had retreated to the lake of Gennesareth, in order to avoid the malice of the Pharisees and their adherents, leaving his disciples in the hilly part of Galilee, he retired to a house of prayer, situated on a mountain, where he employed the whole night in fervent and uninterrupted devotion to his heavenly Father. At the dawn of the next morning, he returned to his disciples, twelve of whom he selected to be constantly employed in his service. To these twelve he gave a Hebrew name, the Greek of which is apostle, and it signifies messenger; for his design was to send them to various parts, with the good tidings of his approaching kingdom. That the apostles might the more effectually execute the duties

of their office, and that their preaching might be more acceptable to the people, he invested them with the power of curing every kind of disease, casting out evil spirits, raising the dead, and of performing other miracles.

The following were the persons whom our Lord appointed his apostles : Simon, to whom, as we have before related, Jesus gave the name of Cephas, or Peter, upon the first time of seeing him ; Andrew, the brother of Simon ; James and John, the sons of Zebedee, whom he called Boanerges, or sons of Thunder ; Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, who was also named Levi ; Thomas, whose surname was Didymus ; James, the son of Alpheus ; Judas, the brother of James, called also Thaddeus ; Simon, surnamed the Canaanite, or Zelot ; and Judas Iscariot, by whom Christ was betrayed.

Accompanied by the above-mentioned persons, our Lord descended from the hilly part of the country into the plains, where he was joined by the rest of his disciples. Vast multitudes of people repaired to him from Jerusalem, and all the other parts of Judea, as likewise from the cities of Tyre and Sidon, and their adjacencies, and all the maritime parts of Phœnicia, in order to hear him preach, or be restored to health. Having preached the gospel with great success, and cured vast numbers of sick persons and those possessed with devils, our blessed Redeemer returned to Capernaum, and took up his residence in the house where he had formerly sojourned. Such immense numbers of people now came to him to be relieved from their infirmities, that he was scarcely able to eat or drink, or allow himself any of the other common refreshments of nature. The continual molestation he met with so affected our blessed Lord, that a rumour was circulated, purporting, that he was fallen into a swoon,

or was beside himself *; in consequence of which, some of his relations, who resided at Capernaum, hastened to afford him assistance.

To avoid the inconvenience consequent on his being perpetually surrounded by immense crowds of people, our Saviour again went into the mountainous part of the country, and being followed by a great number of disciples, he preached to them that truly admirable sermon, wherein he pronounced the eight beatitudes.

Before we proceed to our account of that excellent discourse, wherein our Lord has, in a great measure, explained and rendered perfect the moral law of Moses, we deem it necessary to take notice of a question which has been much agitated, though with but little success. This question is, whether the sermon of our Lord mentioned in the sixth chapter of St. Luke, be the same that is recorded in a more copious manner in the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of St. Matthew, or a discourse of a similar tendency delivered at a different time and place. We have ventured according to the opinion of M. Le Clerc, and other ingenious critics, to connect the two discourses, and paraphrase them jointly.

The variation in the gospels of the two evangelists, and the brevity of St. Luke seem to have been occasioned by that evangelist writing from short notes received from those who were present, he himself

* We have given a double meaning to the word, which in our version of St. Mark, is rendered, "he is beside himself;" for some imagine, that the evangelist only meant that he had fainted, or was near fainting, through fatigue and fasting; and others suppose that his friends thought him guilty of some excesses in his behaviour, occasioned by a vehement commotion of his mind, not being sensible that he was then shewing himself in the full splendor of his prophetic office.

not having been a witness to the facts, as St. Matthew was. It follows, then, in passages that are nearly of a similar import, that he is to be interpreted according to St. Matthew; and that his additions are to be inserted where facts appear to have been omitted by the other, as in the instance of the woes denounced, which St. Matthew, though so very copious, has not mentioned. St. Matthew was not observant of strict chronological order; but St. Luke, at the beginning of his gospel, declared his intention to write "in order, from the very first." Therefore we have, in the preceding part of our work, anticipated St. Matthew in some particulars, in order to make him correspond with the other evangelists, and especially with St. Luke.

It is unquestionable that both discourses were written with the same intention; to elucidate, and render more perfect the moral laws of the Jews, and vindicate them from the sophistical interpretations of the Scribes and Pharisees, who had perverted their genuine meaning in a great variety of instances. Whether the admirable discourse, which we shall presently insert, was delivered at several times, is a question of great uncertainty: but even supposing the latter to have been the case, they may with great propriety be united, since they are calculated for the same end, and will be found to afford very material elucidations to each other. Here follows the excellent sermon preached by our blessed Saviour upon the mountain.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven; and those, however exalted their condition, who are yet humble and lowly in their minds and affections, shall enjoy the blessings of the reign of the Messiah. Blessed are they that mourn through a sense of their spiritual wants and infirmi-

“ ties ; for they shall be comforted with an assurance
“ of eternal salvation. Blessed are they who are of
“ a meek, submissive, quiet, and courteous temper ;
“ for they shall not, like the seditious and turbulent,
“ be deprived of their possessions, but they shall en-
“ joy the benefits and protection of government.—
“ Blessed are they whose desires are exalted above
“ sensual gratifications, and who are as anxious to
“ obtain the favor of the Almighty, as the hungry man
“ is to have meat, or the thirsty drink ; for such shall
“ assuredly be admitted to the heavenly kingdom.—
“ Blessed are the merciful ; for they shall obtain mer-
“ cy : God shall deal with them as they deal with
“ others : he shall answer their requests in time of
“ necessity, and be abundantly merciful to them on
“ the great day of account. Blessed are they whose
“ hearts are purged from all evil thoughts and inclina-
“ tions ; for they shall be admitted into the presence
“ of God. Blessed are they who labor to reconcile
“ men who are engaged in contentions ; for in so do-
“ ing they imitate the Almighty, who is stiled the
“ God of peace : they shall be acknowledged as the
“ children of the Most High, and as such be reward-
“ ed. Blessed are they who suffer persecution for act-
“ ing according to the dictates of a good conscience,
“ and for their steady adherence to truth and virtue ;
“ for they shall be rewarded with the kingdom of hea-
“ ven, from which their persecutors shall be exclud-
“ ed. And blessed shall ye be, when men shall re-
“ vile and persecute you, and falsely say all manner
“ of evil against you, for your faith in me. Ye have
“ reason to rejoice in these injuries, since God will
“ reward on you their multiplied revilings and slan-
“ ders, with multiplied recompence in the world to
“ come. Thus were the immediate prophets of God
“ formerly reviled and persecuted ; and if you imi-
“ tate them in patiently suffering, you shall everlast-
“ ingly enjoy the favor of the Almighty.

“ But wretched indeed are they, whose characters
“ are opposite to such as I have already mentioned.
“ Woe unto you that are rich, and withhold relief
“ from the indigent : you have received your conso-
“ lation in your wealth, and are unworthy the rewards
“ of heaven. Woe unto you that luxuriously indulge
“ your appetites, and out of your abundance, bestow
“ nothing to alleviate the necessities of the poor ;
“ hereafter, your sufferings shall be more intolerable
“ than the keenest hunger. Woe unto those who
“ constantly indulge a levity of temper, and rejoice
“ only in the vain pomp, and uninterrupted prosperi-
“ ty of this transitory life ; the time shall arrive, when
“ their mirth shall be turned into unceasing grief and
“ anguish. Woe unto such, as by propagating falla-
“ cious doctrines, seek to obtain praise and populari-
“ ty ; for in former days, the false prophets, by ac-
“ commodating their doctrines to the lust of the flesh,
“ gained the applause of men, but at the same time,
“ incurred the displeasure of a just and Almighty
“ God, whose true messengers suffered reproach, de-
“ famation, and obloquy.

“ All you who embrace my gospel, resemble those
“ salt ashes that are employed in manuring the earth,
“ which, if they lose their saltness, are of no further
“ use. Thus in your words and actions, you are to
“ incite mankind to virtuous pursuits ; and if you fail
“ in this, there is no one upon earth who can reclaim
“ you : so if you prove deficient in your duty, like
“ the ashes that have lost their saline quality, you
“ will become an unprofitable burden upon the earth.
“ You are like to a light, giving lustre to the whole
“ globe ; and therefore it behoves you, that your doc-
“ trine be not obscured by any conduct tending to-
“ wards vice. You are to be made conspicuous by
“ the light of your doctrine, and a life of uninterrupt-
“ ed sanctity, that by observing a perfect agreement

“ in your professions and practice, mankind may be
“ induced to praise your heavenly Father, and give
“ him earnest thanks for his goodness in sending
“ such men into the world, to dispel the darkness of
“ error by the effulgency of eternal truth.

“ Because I mention some things that are not con-
“ sistent with the common notions entertained by the
“ Jews, imagine not, therefore, that I mean to insi-
“ nuate, that you are no longer under the obligation
“ of the laws of Moses and the prophets. I am, on the
“ contrary, sent by the Almighty, more fully to ex-
“ plain those holy institutions. Every part of the
“ moral injunctions of Moses and the prophets, shall
“ remain uncanceled till the end of time.

“ You are sensible, that when the law was deliver-
“ ed to your ancestors, the Almighty himself consti-
“ tuted murder a capital crime : but I am further to
“ inform you, that not only murder, and other enor-
“ mous transgressions, shall be punished hereafter,
“ but also those of less magnitude, even such as are
“ scarcely deemed deserving censure. Whosoever
“ shall yield to the impulse of unprovoked and vio-
“ lent anger, shall suffer such punishment as may be
“ compared to that capital one inflicted by the inferi-
“ or councils. But he who shall accustom himself to
“ the vice of scoffing and jeering at his neighbor,
“ shall hereafter be sentenced to as severe punish-
“ ment, as those who are condemned by the superior
“ council for the most atrocious crimes. The man
“ who shall outrageously defame and vilify his neigh-
“ bor, shall suffer no less torment than those who are
“ burnt alive in the valley of Hinnom. Therefore,
“ when you have brought your victim to the altar, if
“ it occurs to your memory that you entertain an en-
“ mity against any one, leave your victim at the al-
“ tar, and exert your utmost efforts for effecting a re-

“ conciliation : having made your peace with men,
 “ return and perform your sacrifice, which will then
 “ be acceptable to God. Being threatened with law
 “ for the recovery of a debt, the dictates of common
 “ prudence will teach you the necessity of a compro-
 “ mise, lest your creditor enforce rigorous proceed-
 “ ings, and by the sentence of the court you be con-
 “ fined in prison, there to remain till you discharge
 “ the full demand. In like manner, by an early re-
 “ formation, make your peace with God, lest by an
 “ obstinate perseverance in your iniquities, you be
 “ consigned to eternal perdition by the judgment of
 “ your offended Creator.

“ In the decalogue, God has prohibited adultery,
 “ which crime he has since pronounced to be capital :
 “ but I declare to you, that there is criminalty even
 “ in the vicious dispositions of the mind ; and that he
 “ who suffers himself to be inflamed with lustful ideas
 “ towards the wife of another man, is an adulterer in
 “ his heart, and shall be punished by God according-
 “ ly. It may be said, that a beautiful woman must
 “ necessarily excite desire. But be it known, that
 “ if the eye is the cause of sin, it will be proper to
 “ pluck it out ; since it is infinitely better that the
 “ loss of one member should be sustained, than that,
 “ by the abuse of it, the man should be condemned to
 “ perpetual punishment. So if the right hand lead to
 “ the commission of any sin, it ought to be cut off *.

“ Moses said to your forefathers, that to repudiate
 “ his wife, it was only necessary for the man to exhi-
 “ bit a bill of divorce, certifying, that the woman was
 “ dismissed by her husband ; and it was supposed,

* The plucking out the eye, and cutting off the hand, are not to be understood in the literal sense. The phrases only mean, that the cause of sinning ought to be removed, though at the expence of whatever is most pleasing and convenient to us.

“ that she was left at liberty to marry some other man:
“ but I say, whoever dismisses his wife, for any cause
“ but adultery, is guilty of sin ; for he thereby lays
“ an occasion and opportunity of sin in her way, and
“ whoever marries her is an adulterer.

“ You have been informed, that your ancestors
“ were prohibited from forswearing themselves, after
“ having been adjured by God ; and that, out of re-
“ verence to the Deity, they were commanded to per-
“ form what they thus promised : but they were not
“ forbid to swear upon any occasion whatsoever, nor
“ were there any punishments assigned to the viola-
“ ters of those oaths which you are accustomed to
“ use on the slightest occasions. I admonish you,
“ that God is offended with every kind of perjury ;
“ for it is to him you appeal in all your oaths, though
“ in some more obscurely than in others. Swear not
“ by heaven, nor imagine that you avoid perjury when
“ you falsify this oath ; for you swear by heaven, as
“ it is the throne of God, and therefore have respect
“ to him. Swear not by the earth, nor ever falsify
“ such an oath ; for you swear by it as considering
“ it the footstool of the Almighty, and therefore God
“ is appealed to in your oath. Swear not by Je-
“ rusalem, because by so doing, you allude to the
“ city, which is, as it were, the seat of the King of
“ kings, who is appealed to in the oath. Swear not
“ by your head ; for at that time you cannot but
“ think of God, under whose immediate protection
“ you are ; you yourselves not being able to make so
“ much as a single hair, either black or white. In
“ ordinary discourse, carefully abstain from every
“ species of swearing, and on no occasion whatever,
“ be guilty of violating an oath. Let what you say
“ be believed, merely upon your own affirmation or
“ denial, and discharge all your promises with rigid
“ punctuality. The origin of all kinds of swearing is

“ the intention and practice of deceit, which you are
“ carefully to avoid.

“ Your forefathers were instructed, that, in case of
“ injury, it was allowed by the law of Moses to insti-
“ tute a cause against the offending party, and there-
“ by compel him to submit to a legal penalty, or to
“ make restitution for the damage sustained. But I
“ admonish you, rather to bear an injury, if it be not
“ inconsistent with your safety, and the damage be
“ not too considerable to be borne. By submitting
“ to one injury, it is true, that encouragement is fre-
“ quently given for another : but still it is better to
“ hazard being treated in an ungenerous manner, than
“ to commence a suit upon a frivolous occasion. If
“ a man has defrauded you of a small part of your
“ estate, it is more prudent to submit to the loss,
“ than engage with him in a fatiguing and vexatious
“ controversy. If a man make a requisition, which
“ will be attended with inconvenience, grant even
“ more than he requests, rather than have recourse
“ to violent opposition. If a poor man solicits the
“ loan of money, refuse him not, although there be
“ danger of losing both principal and interest, pro-
“ vided, however, that you can relieve his necessi-
“ ties without essential injury to yourself.

“ By Moses your ancestors were taught, that there
“ should subsist a mutual intercourse of kindness
“ between persons of the same family, and observers
“ of the same religious obligations ; but that they
“ should avoid all familiarity and friendship with other
“ people, that they should never enter into a league
“ or covenant with those who had discharged against
“ them violent imprecations, and that they should
“ wage perpetual war with some of the idolatrous
“ nations. But from me you are now to receive dif-
“ ferent precepts : learn to love your enemies, and to

“ act as friendly towards them as towards those of
“ your own persuasion ; to oppose blessings to their
“ curses, and affection and beneficence to their inju-
“ ries and hatred ; and to requite those who persecute
“ you on the score of your religion, with prayers to
“ the Almighty in their behalf. Thus conducting
“ yourselves, you will be the imitators of your hea-
“ venly Father, and render yourselves worthy to be
“ called his sons ; for he is thus benevolent to all
“ mankind, blessing alike the good and the bad with
“ the common influence of the sun and fruitful rains.
“ If you love those who bear an equal affection to-
“ wards you, can you, on that account, expect to be
“ rewarded by God ? The very publicans, and other
“ of the most abandoned classes of mankind, return
“ love for love. If you confine your friendship to
“ those of the same family or the same religion what
“ do you more than the most profligate ? The very
“ publicans act in the same manner. If you confer
“ benefits only upon those from whom you have re-
“ ceived obligations, can you, therefore, consider
“ yourselves as intitled to the favor of God ? The
“ most abandoned of men may boast of the same
“ conduct. If you lend to those only of whom you
“ have yourselves borrowed, or merely with an inte-
“ rested view, can you, on that account, expect to
“ be rewarded by the Almighty ? According to the
“ common practice of mankind, the wicked perform
“ acts of friendship towards each other.

“ Be careful that you do not exercise your bounty
“ from motives of ostentation ; for if the applause of
“ men is your only object, you must not expect to be
“ rewarded by God. When you are inclined to af-
“ ford assistance to the indigent, do not make procla-
“ mation of your liberality in public assemblies, after
“ the example of the hypocrites. Let your alms be
“ distributed in private, and, according to the proverb,

“ *Let not your left hand know what your right hand doth*; and God shall reward you in the presence of men and angels.

“ When you pray to God, do not imitate those hypocrites in religion, who frequent the synagogues not from the principles of zeal and devotion, but in order to obtain the reputation of sanctity. When you are disposed to offer up petitions to heaven, retreat from the observation of men, and pour forth your fervent prayers to God, who will publicly reward your secret devotion. In your prayers do not frequently repeat the same words, like the Heathens, and some of the Jews, who rather hope to obtain what they request by pronouncing particular phrases and forms of speech, and an abundance of words, than by a devout affection of the mind; be careful then to avoid their example; for God is acquainted with your wants before you make your requests; and he is ever ready to comply with the petitions of those who are of a devout and pious disposition. When you pray, address yourself to the heavenly Father in the following, or a similar manner.

“ Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, for ever.

“ Thus you are to supplicate God for the pardon of your sins, in like manner as you forgive those who have trespassed against you; and unless you are yourselves of a merciful disposition, it will be in vain for you to expect the mercy of heaven.

“ When you observe a religious abstinence, do not,
“ like the hypocrites, appear abroad with the outward
“ signs of mortification. When you fast, appear
“ abroad as at other times, in your usual apparel, with
“ your head anointed, and your face washed, accord-
“ ing to the custom of the place. Let not men be ac-
“ quainted with your fasting; suffice it if it be known
“ to your heavenly Father, who will publicly reward
“ your private devotion.

“ Be not solicitous to obtain earthly riches, which
“ are of very uncertain tenure; but endeavor con-
“ stantly to increase your treasures in heaven, where
“ their inestimable value cannot suffer diminution.
“ Thus you will be exempted from the anxiety atten-
“ dant on riches; for since the mind generally ac-
“ companies the riches, if these are in danger, the
“ mind must necessarily be disturbed.

“ No man can serve two masters with equal fideli-
“ ty; for he will have a preference to one, whose
“ commands he will punctually execute; while those
“ of the other he will treat with indifference. There-
“ fore, if you would serve God with earnest devo-
“ tion, you must detach your mind from an anxiety
“ after worldly riches, that your obedience to the di-
“ vine commands may not be interrupted.

“ God, who hath given you life, will provide you
“ with food for preserving existence; and also with
“ apparel for defending your body from the inclemen-
“ cy of the seasons. The birds make no provision
“ against times of scarcity, and yet by the providence
“ of God, they are furnished with sufficient food. Be
“ assured then, that if you punctually discharge the
“ duties required of you by the Almighty, the ne-
“ cessaries of life will be abundantly granted to you
“ by his gracious providence. Therefore neglect not

“ the exercise of any duty, through a solicitude con-
“ cerning future events. Every day is productive of
“ uneasiness ; and it is highly imprudent to anticipate
“ evil.

“ Judge no one rashly, lest you be condemned for
“ thy severe and rash censure ; rather absolve such
“ crimes as will admit of pardon, that you may ob-
“ tain the favor of God ; for you shall be judged with
“ the same severity that you have exercised against
“ others. Before you reprehend the conduct of other
“ men, examine your own hearts, that you may know
“ whether they are not defiled with equal, or more
“ enormous corruptions than those with which you
“ mean to reproach others. Before you attempt to
“ reprove the vices of other men, divest your hearts
“ of your own abominable defilements.

“ Be careful that you do not prefer the fallacious
“ doctrines of sinful men, to the injunctions of the
“ prophets, and the precepts which I now pronounce ;
“ for if you act according to the directions of men
“ who are unacquainted with the laws of God, your
“ conduct will be as imprudent as that of a blind man,
“ who chooses another, laboring under the same in-
“ firmity, for his guide. As we should not throw
“ jewels to swine, nor offer consecrated bread to dogs,
“ so we should not display the constitution and laws
“ of the kingdom of heaven, to men who, without ex-
“ amination, are obstinately determined to reject and
“ ridicule our instructions.

“ In your religious course of life, ask of God what-
“ ever you have occasion for, and it shall be granted.
“ Assiduously employ yourself in acquiring know-
“ ledge ; and supplicate the divine assistance, that
“ your endeavors may be crowned with success.—
“ Strike against the door that conceals from you the

“ knowledge that it is your interest to obtain, and it shall be opened. They, who with a religious zeal, pursue an enquiry after truth, certainly shall not be disappointed.

“ Should a son request his father to supply him with something necessary, could the parent be so wicked as to give his child something destructive ; as, instead of a loaf or a fish, a stone or a serpent ? If you, then, who are defiled with so many vices, are accustomed to bestow acts of kindness upon your children, how much more indulgent will God, whose bounty is infinite, and who is the common Father of mankind, be to those who request what it is expedient should be granted ?

“ Act bountifully towards others, that you may render yourselves worthy the favor of God, who will reward your liberality, not only in restoring to you what you have generously parted with, but also in conferring upon you more valuable benefits, wherein he will have respect to your charity towards others. If you deem others under obligations to you, consider, that by the common ties of humanity, you are under equal obligations to them. This precept includes the substance of what is contained in the law of the prophets, concerning the mutual offices and obligations of men towards each other.

“ The gate of life is strait, and the path leading thereto is narrow and unfrequented ; but the gates of destruction are wide, and the road constantly abounds with passengers hastening to the goal of misery. If you would earnestly pursue happiness, you must take the narrow and less frequented way. Though pleasure is so nearly allied to destruction, its votaries are exceedingly numerous ; but an au-

“stere and self-denying course of life, is attractive
 “only to a very inconsiderable number, comparative-
 “ly with those who are addicted to carnal gratifica-
 “tions.

“Be careful that you do not suffer yourselves to be
 “imposed upon by false prophets and fallacious teach-
 “ers, who from their external appearance, seem to be
 “as harmless as lambs, but are inwardly as rapacious
 “as wolves. Though at first they may deliver les-
 “sons in no respect inconsistent with the divine laws,
 “yet the mask of dissimulation will soon be removed,
 “and you will then be convinced that their professions
 “are entirely repugnant to their practice. As trees
 “are distinguished by their several kinds of fruits,
 “and as we do not expect fruit from a tree that is na-
 “turally barren, nor good fruit from wild and uncul-
 “tivated plants; so the man whose heart is corrupt-
 “ed, cannot steadily pursue a course of virtue, nor
 “can he whose practices are vicious, deserve the
 “character of a good man. As a worthless tree
 “is cut down for burning; so shall men of depraved
 “morals be cut off by God, and be doomed to pun-
 “ishments proportioned to their demerits. They
 “whose minds are stored with virtue and generous
 “principles, will advance nothing that does not agree
 “with the excellency of their disposition: but men
 “of depraved morals, though they are in general
 “artful enough to conceal the most disgusting part
 “of their iniquitous designs, cannot fail of occasi-
 “onally exposing the horrid deformity of their prin-
 “ciples. Thus, as we judge of the different species
 “of trees by the fruit they bear, are we to distinguish
 “men by their words and actions.

“An outward profession of being my disciple, or
 “the mere acknowledging me as Lord and Master,
 “shall not intitle any one to the rewards of the king-

“ dom of heaven, which shall be conferred only upon
“ those who comport themselves in due obedience to
“ the commands of my heavenly father. On the great
“ day, when I shall distribute rewards to the pious,
“ many will urge that they have been prophets in my
“ church, that they have cast out evil spirits, and
“ wrought miracles : but to these I shall say, that as
“ they did not unite sanctity of manners with the gifts
“ I had conferred upon them, they are unworthy to be
“ called my disciples, and are therefore not to expect
“ the blessings of my heavenly kingdom.

“ Whoever regulates his conduct according to the
“ rules of my doctrine, will resemble a wise architect,
“ who being to construct a house near the bank of a
“ river lays the foundation deep, and upon a rock. A
“ house thus built will be able to resist the violence of
“ storms and tempests, nor will it be undermined by
“ the overflowing of the waters : and the man who
“ lives agreeable to my doctrine, so fortifies himself
“ by piety and virtue, as to secure himself against
“ the weak efforts of worldly hopes and fears. But,
“ on the contrary, the man who rejects my doctrine,
“ resembles an improvident builder, who lays the
“ foundation of a structure in the sand near a river,
“ and vainly imagines that the building will resist
“ the force of tempests and inundations.”

Our blessed Saviour now concluded his discourse to his disciples, which demands the most serious attention of the Christian reader, since it is a most admirable compendium of our religious and moral obligations.

CHAP. XIX.

Our Saviour descends from the mountain, and proceeds to Capernaum. He performs a miraculous cure upon the servant of a centurion. Jesus restores to life the son of a widow. John sends his disciples to Christ, who addresses the people concerning the Baptist. Jesus reproaches the inhabitants of the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, for their want of faith in him.

HAVING concluded his most admirable sermon, our blessed Redeemer descended from the mountain, and repaired to Capernaum, attended by a great concourse of people. Soon after his arrival at his usual place of residence, some * messengers from a Roman centurion went to our Lord, and earnestly requested that he would accompany them to their master's house, and restore to health one of his servants, who was dangerously afflicted. They added, that the centurion, who by their agency supplicated his assistance in behalf of his favorite servant, was a man of singular goodness, and that since his residence at Capernaum, he had bestowed great favors upon the people, particularly in constructing a synagogue entirely at his own expence.

Our Saviour accompanied the messenger towards the centurion's house, and upon his approach, that officer's friends communicated to him a message to the following purpose: that the trouble of personally

* St. Matthew and St. Luke do not precisely agree in this narrative: the former says, the centurion came himself to Christ. But in a preceding part of our work, we have observed, that "what a man employs another to do, he may be said to do himself."

attending the sick was deemed unnecessary by his master, who was conscious he had power to effect a cure by the speaking only of a single word; that the centurion deemed himself wholly unworthy to entertain so great a prophet as Christ, and therefore omitted to wait upon him in person, and had recourse to the mediation of the Jewish elders for obtaining his request; that he was subject to the command of superior officers, but yet had authority to employ the soldiers of his company according to his own discretion; and so Christ, who was the Governor of the universe, had angels at his command, whom he might dispatch to cure his servant.

Jesus expressed his approbation of the confidence which the centurion entertained of the Divine Power with which he was invested; and declared to the multitude of people by whom he was surrounded, that among the Jews he had not found a man, whose sentiments concerning the Divine Power were so just and elevated as those of the centurion; "Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel:" and our Lord further said, that as the faith of the centurion, which intitled him to a participation of the benefits of the kingdom of heaven, surpassed that of the Jews; so it should also come to pass, that great numbers of heathens from the remotest quarters of the globe should repose faith in him, and share the felicity of the kingdom of heaven with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, those founders of the Jewish nation, while many of the Jews should be excluded from the enjoyment of those glorious advantages. "And I say unto you, that many shall come from the East and the West, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Mat. viii. 11, 12. Hav-

ing thus declared the gracious intention of his heavenly Father, with respect to the Gentiles, the blessed Jesus dismissed the friends of the centurion, informing them, that in consideration of his exalted faith, his servant should be healed. Upon the return of the elders to the centurion's house, they found that his servant was perfectly restored to health, precisely at the time when our blessed Redeemer pronounced that he should be cured.

On the following day, our Lord went to another city in Galilee, called Naim*, attended by many of his disciples, and a great number of other persons; and upon entering the town, they beheld the funeral of a youth, the corpse being followed by a great number of the citizens. "Behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." Luke vii. 12. Compassionating the poignant distress of the unhappy mother, deprived of her only son in the flower of his youth, when he might have rewarded his mother's toils, by supplying the place of that husband whose loss she had long deplored, and of whom the deceased youth had been the only surviving image, the balm of all her grief, and the hope of her afflicted soul, the benevolent Jesus bid her be of comfort, and approached towards the corpse. Upon his touching the bier, the funeral procession stopped, and a profound silence was observed by the multitude, who, by the superior grace and dignity in the deportment of Jesus, were struck with veneration; and they imagined, that he meant to deduce some fine lessons of morality from the circumstances of the decease of the young man, and the affliction of his mother. Our blessed Redeemer, in an audible voice, now said, "Young man, I say unto thee, arise."

* Naim, or Nain, was a city pleasantly situated on the extreme borders of Issachar, towards Samaria, two leagues from Nazareth, and not much farther from Mount Tabor.

This command was no sooner pronounced, than “ he that was dead, sat up, and began to speak ; and he restored him to his mother.” The spectators were struck with a holy and awful fear ; “ and they glorified God, saying, that a great prophet is arisen up among us ; and that God had visited his people.” The fame of this miracle, by which was fully accomplished that prophecy of Christ, expressing that “ the dead should hear his voice,” was with great rapidity circulated throughout Judea and the adjacent countries.

John the Baptist still remained a prisoner in the castle of Machærus ; but Herod so far remitted the rigor of his sentence, as to allow his disciples the privilege of visiting and conversing with him. The disciples informed John of the many great miracles Jesus had wrought ; and the Baptist, who had been instructed by divine revelation, that Christ was the Messiah, wondered that, since he had for a considerable time publicly exercised his sacred ministry, no greater alterations had been effected in the affairs of the Jewish nation. He therefore commissioned two of his disciples to wait upon Jesus, and propose to him the following question : “ Art thou he that should come, or look we for another ?”

When the disciples came to Jesus, he was employed in preaching the gospel, casting the evil spirits out of human bodies, restoring sight to the blind, and healing persons afflicted by various infirmities. Christ did not give a direct answer to the disciples, but ordered them to relate to their master, the particulars of the miracles they had seen him perform ; adding that it would be prudent in him not to be offended, that no miracle had been wrought for releasing him from prison.

It is not to be supposed, that John sent his disciples to propose the above question, because he was doubtful whether Christ was the Messiah; for of that fact he was convinced, at the baptism of our Lord, by the visible descent of the Holy Spirit, and the voice from heaven pronouncing him the Son of God. But the Baptist sent his disciples to Christ, that they might be assured of the identity of the person of the Messiah, and that they might intimate to him his own impatience of imprisonment, and that he expected the Son of God would exert his divine power for procuring his release, in order that he might again exercise the sacred function of preaching the gospel.

By our Lord saying, "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me," it is evident, that his design was to instruct the Baptist in the necessity of submission and humility. But lest those who had overheard his discourse with the disciples, should imbibe an opinion injurious to the character of John, our blessed Saviour deemed it expedient to delineate his principles and practice in their proper point of view. Our Lord commended the courage and fortitude of John, which were not "like a reed to be shaken with the wind." He mentioned his austere and mortified life, reminding the people that he was not, like those who frequented the palaces of kings, clothed in soft and gaudy apparel. Thus our Lord intimated, though, it must be confessed, somewhat obscurely, that the reign of the Messiah should not resemble that of a terrestrial monarch, since John, who was the forerunner of him, had in no instance addicted himself to worldly pomp and splendor. Christ said, John was not only a prophet, but of a character more exalted than that of a prophet; for of him God had said, by the agency of Malachi, "Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee."

Jesus further said, that the meanest person who should become a member of his church, should be greater than John; and the propriety of this will be apparent, if it is considered, that although the Baptist was superior to all the other prophets, because he received clearer revelations concerning the Messiah, he was, notwithstanding, exceeded by the apostles; for John had been acquainted with Christ only by revelation and transient interviews; whereas the apostles, by their constant attendance on his person, gained a more perfect knowledge of his character, disposition, and doctrines; and they were actually employed in establishing the kingdom of the Messiah, for which it was the business of the Baptist only to make preparation. Hence then it appears, that, truly exalted as was the character of the Baptist, he was surpassed by the disciples of Christ, with respect to the dignity of their office.

Their pretended mortifications being exceeded by the real austerities practised by the Baptist, the Scribes and Pharisees insolently asserted, that his abstemiousness, and other instances of severe self-denial, were the result of his being possessed with an evil spirit, by the influence of which he was driven into the desert, to the total neglect of his sacerdotal duties. To rescue the character of the Baptist from this invidious and slanderous accusation, our blessed Redeemer said, that from the same apostacy of spirit, they rejected his doctrines, although his conduct had been so opposite to that of John. Though they were conscious that Jesus was strictly temperate in his manner of living, they calumniated him as one who gave much indulgence to the carnal appetites. "The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, behold a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners; but wisdom is justified of her children." Matt. xi. 19. Hav-

ing exposed the hypocrisy and impiety of the Scribes and Pharisees, our Lord proceeded to reproach the inhabitants of those cities where he had wrought his greatest miracles. Notwithstanding the efforts he had made to reclaim the inhabitants from their iniquitous courses, and the many evidences he had afforded of the divinity of his mission, great numbers of the people still persevered in obstinately withholding a belief in his gospel, and in the practice of their ancient abominations. “Woe unto thee, Chorazin*! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works that have been done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, in the day of judgment, than for you. And thou Capernaum, that art exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works that have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment, than for thee.” Matt. xi. 21, 22, 23, 24.

Having denounced these judgments upon the cities whose inhabitants had rejected the conditions he had offered for securing their eternal salvation, he concluded his discourse with the following most affectionate and important invitation, which must indelibly impress the hearts of all who do not labor under the grievous misfortune of the most gross insensibility: “Come to me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart,

* It is imagined, that Chorazin was situated on the sea of Galilee, about two miles from Capernaum. That our Saviour visited this place, is evident from the above text; but the particulars of the fact are not recorded

“and ye shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke
“is easy, and my burden is light.”

Our glorious Mediator now addressed himself to God, thanking him, that by the wisdom of his providence, the gospel had been received by the illiterate classes of mankind, although it had been rejected by those who were most celebrated for learning. Then addressing himself to the people, he said, the doctrines he recommended to them, he received from his heavenly Father, of whose secret determination no one could be acquainted but the Son, and those to whom he should reveal it. He exhorted them seriously to observe his precepts, whence they would be convinced, that he was entirely free from every tincture of that pride and arrogance for which the rabbies were so remarkable. He only required, that they would regulate their conduct according to a system of strict morality and unaffected sanctity, whereby they would inevitably insure to themselves the enjoyment of a perpetual state of the most perfect bliss, which could not be attained by a mere observance of the Jewish ceremonies.

CHAP. XX.

Christ accepts an invitation to the house of Simon, the Pharisee. The feet of our Saviour anointed by a repentant woman. Jesus proposes a question to the Pharisee, and receives an answer, which he applies to the case of the woman, whose sins he pardons. Christ continues his progress through Judæa, accompanied by his twelve apostles, together with Mary Magdalene, and several other women on whom he had wrought miracles. Jesus performs a wonderful cure, in consequence of which he is wickedly traduced by the Pharisees. Our Saviour delivers certain similitudes, and deduces arguments therefrom. He reproves the Pharisees, and refuses to give them a demonstration of his power to perform miracles. The Virgin Mary repairs to Jesus, on occasion of which he says, all who live according to the rules of his Gospel, are related to him in a spiritual sense.

THOUGH the majority of the Pharisees were inveterate enemies to Jesus, some of that sect behaved towards him with much greater respect and complacency than others. Among this number was a man named Simon, who gave our Lord an invitation to his house, which was accepted; and while Jesus was partaking of the Pharisee's entertainment a very remarkable incident occurred.

A woman who had led a dissolute course of life, but had lately been reclaimed by the gospel of Christ, hearing that the great Preacher of Israel was to be present at the banquet, procured a box of ointment, and repaired to the Pharisee's house. Upon entering

the apartment where the entertainment was given, she placed herself near our blessed Saviour, and wept so excessively, that her tears fell upon his feet, which she wiped with the hair of her head, and kissed, and anointed them.

This circumstance being observed by the Pharisee, he imagined, that had Jesus been a prophet, he must have known the profligacy of the woman's disposition, and would therefore not only have discouraged her freedom, but also have refused to permit her to touch, or even approach him, lest the people should thence take occasion to brand his character with reproach. Our Lord, being perfectly acquainted with the reflections of the Pharisee, by that intuitive faculty which he derived immediately from heaven, said, he meant to propose a question to the Pharisee; who thereupon said, he was ready to attend to what his guest should enquire, and would return the most satisfactory reply in his power. "A certain man, said our Lord, had two debtors, to one of whom he had lent five hundred, and to the other, fifty pieces of money; and being both unable to discharge their respective demands, the creditor benevolently forgave them. Now the question I propose is, Which of the men had the deepest sense of gratitude?" To this the Pharisee replied, that in all probability, the man excused from the largest demand, would yield the most grateful acknowledgments to his benefactor; for that the benefits required a proportionate return of gratitude. Jesus approved the Pharisee's answer, and turning towards the woman, said, "Behold an instance of the very case I have propounded to you. You, who consider yourself under no extraordinary obligation to me, have received me no otherwise than as a common acquaintance; but this woman, who deems herself under the highest obligations to me, for having reclaimed her from

“ her evil courses, hath in your presence, afforded a
“ signal demonstration of gratitude. When I enter-
“ ed your dwelling, the common civility of offering
“ me water to wash my feet, was omitted ; but she
“ hath bathed them with her tears, and wiped them
“ with the hair of her head : when I came here, you
“ scarcely received me with a common salutation ;
“ but she hath continued to kiss my feet : you did
“ not supply me even with the oil for the purpose of
“ anointing my head : but she hath anointed my feet
“ with costly and precious ointment. Her gratitude
“ proceeds from a consciousness of the salutary ef-
“ fects of my gospel, and an experience of my power
“ to pardon her great and repeated transgressions :
“ but such as have received pardon but for a small
“ number of offences, and those not of considerable
“ magnitude, are seldom found so zealous in their
“ acknowledgments.”

At once to reward and encourage her piety, our Saviour informed the woman, that her transgressions were pardoned. Hereupon, the company expressed astonishment that Jesus should assume the authority of pronouncing pardon to a sinner, which they conceived to be a power belonging only to God. Though they did not declare their sentiments in words, Jesus was perfectly acquainted with what passed in their minds : and turning towards the woman, he said, “ The faith thou hast reposed in me, as the immediate messenger of God, hath had a salutary effect ; depart therefore, and be assured of thy salvation.”

Soon after our Lord’s visit to Simon the Pharisee, he pursued his progress through Judea, and according to his usual custom, proclaimed his gospel in the several cities and villages through which he passed. Our Saviour was in this journey constantly attended by the twelve apostles, and likewise accompanied by

several females, on whom he had wrought miracles, by curing them of various dreadful distempers, or relieving them from the possession of evil spirits. The most remarkable of these women, were Mary, surnamed Magdalene, out of whom our Lord cast seven demons; Joanna, the wife of Chuza, an officer of Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee, and Susanna; and they ministered to Jesus and his disciples, by employing themselves in all necessary domestic offices.

Our blessed Redeemer being thus employed in propagating the principles of his gospel, he obtained a considerable addition to the number of his disciples; and among the afflicted persons who were brought to him for cure, was a man possessed of an evil spirit, by the influence of which he was most grievously tormented. This man Jesus immediately restored to the perfect use of the faculties of sight and speech, in the presence of a great concourse of people, who, on account of the great miracle he had performed, supposed him to be that king whom it had been predicted should descend from David, and rule over Israel. However, some of the Pharisees and doctors of the law, who had come from Jerusalem purposely to injure the reputation of Jesus, propagated a report among the multitude, that it was not by a divine power that Jesus cast out evil spirits; but by the assistance of Beelzebub, the superior of the evil spirits, by which demon he was himself possessed, and by the influence and authority of which he acted. This report being communicated to Jesus, he refuted the calumny by the following similitudes:

“ Should a kingdom, a city, or a family, be dis-
“ tracted by internal feuds and contentions, {the king-
“ dom, city, or family must inevitably be subject to
“ very imminent danger. In like manner, if the evil
“ spirits are in a state of opposition to each other,

“ their empire must soon decline, and they will no
 “ longer be formidable enemies to mankind. Though
 “ you aver that I cast out demons by the authority
 “ of Beelzebub, you are incapable of producing any
 “ rational arguments in support of your wicked ca-
 “ lumny. That I expel demons from the bodies of
 “ men, is a fact that you will not have the unexam-
 “ pled effrontery to deny; and hence it follows, that
 “ I have been sent by God to men, to proclaim the
 “ joyful tidings of the near approach of the kingdom
 “ of the Messiah.

“ It cannot be supposed, that a robber would at-
 “ tempt committing depredations upon the property of
 “ another man, possessed both of strength and valor
 “ sufficient to defend himself, at a time when he was ap-
 “ prized of the villainous intention, and prepared for
 “ defence. The robber could only hope from the suc-
 “ cess of his iniquitous design, after having bound, or
 “ otherwise secured the party for making resistance.
 “ Thus it is, that I lay waste and destroy the empire
 “ of the demons. *He that is not with me, is against*
 “ *me; he that gathereth not with me, scattereth*
 “ *abroad.* This proverbial expression signifies, that
 “ those who remain neuter in a contest, are frequent-
 “ ly deemed enemies. But for what reason is it, that
 “ you suspect me to be a favorer of those evil spirits,
 “ since I am so far from being an unconcerned spec-
 “ tator of the misfortunes with which they afflict
 “ mankind, that I oppose them on every opportunity
 “ that occurs, and never without complete success.
 “ It being then manifest, that my design is, by effect-
 “ ing the destruction of the empire of the devil, to
 “ enlarge and firmly establish the kingdom of God,
 “ you are to observe, that in traducing my fame you
 “ are guilty of the most abominable of all iniquities,
 “ and render yourselves obnoxious to the most dread-
 “ ful of all punishments, for any other sin, men shall

“ obtain pardon by sincere repentance : but this abo-
“ minable slander of the miracles I have wrought by
“ the power of the Holy Ghost, shall never be forgi-
“ ven those who have been witnesses of them ; for
“ such men must be so vilely degenerated, as scarce-
“ ly to admit of the possibility of reformation. Those
“ who vilify my character, being strangers to me,
“ and to the actions by which I manifest my authori-
“ ty ; but, upon discovering their error, whoever
“ shall retract their calumnies, and have recourse to
“ sincere repentance and fervent prayer, shall obtain
“ forgiveness. But having been witnesses to the mi-
“ racles I have performed, whoever shall obstinately
“ continue to calumniate them, must not expect the
“ mercy of God.

“ Judging from the fruit it produces, either pro-
“ nounce the tree to be good ; or, if you condemn it,
“ in proof of the justice of your condemnation, pro-
“ duce the bad fruit it hath brought forth. Since I
“ exhort you only to the pursuit of virtue, your in-
“ ference ought to be, that I am actuated by a zeal
“ for promoting the cause of virtue ; or, if you con-
“ demn my actions as proceeding from an evil disposi-
“ tion, you should warrant your censure by produc-
“ ing some instance of the ill effects of my doctrinc.
“ But oh, ye degenerate race of men, it will be impos-
“ sible for you to pronounce candid decisions, while
“ you remain thus debased by your abominable ini-
“ quities. But, in the discourses of good men, there
“ is ever a beautiful harmony ; and the language of
“ truth will ever impress the mind with convic-
“ tion, except when directed to those, who being im-
“ mersed in infamy, are incapable of admiring the ex-
“ cellency of virtue. But I apprize you, that those
“ men shall hereafter be punished with the utmost se-
“ verity, who shall, either by words or actions, en-
“ deavor to detach their fellow creatures from the pur-

“ suit of virtue ; for though no evil consequences
“ may result from this species of sin, your words shall
“ condemn you, they being the evidences of the dis-
“ position of your mind.”

Having concluded his discourse, Jesus was requested by the Pharisees and doctors of the law, to perform some miracle in their presence. Demands of this nature Christ was not accustomed to reject, when made by those who were desirous of conviction from a principle of piety : but knowing that the request of the Scribes and Pharisees proceeded from a very different motive he addressed them to the following effect.

“ Whatever may be their pretensions to the true
“ worship of God, the people of this depraved and
“ vicious age, require of me a miracle, notwithstanding those I have already performed are so numerous : but they shall receive no other miracle from
“ me, than one resembling that of the prophet Jonas.
“ As that prophet, after remaining three days in the
“ belly of the whale that had swallowed him, was delivered from the stomach of the animal, without
“ sustaining the least injury ; in the like manner shall
“ I arise from the dead, after having been interred
“ three days in the sepulchre.” In the great day of judgment, the example of the Ninevites shall be objected to the people of the present age, and shall be one argument for their condemnation ; for the preaching of the prophet produced repentance in the people of that city, but the Jews of these days remain wholly unaffected, either by the preaching or miracles of a person, infinitely superior in every respect to Jonas. They shall also be reproached with, and condemned by, the example of the queen of the Sabæans, who, from the remotest part of Arabia, came to be a witness of the great wisdom of Solomon ; and after re-

turning to her own dominions, expressed the utmost admiration, at the exalted abilities the king had displayed in his several discourses : but among the Jews of this time, there is one whose powers are so superior, as not to admit of comparison with those of Solomon, and yet the doctrines of this person are disregarded. But punishment hereafter shall be inflicted upon those who obstinately persevere in their infidelity.

Having been dispossessed from the body of some person, the evil spirit wanders about in search of a place of rest ; but being disappointed, the demon resolves to return to his former place of habitation. And, if after being dispossessed, the person does not amend his life, the evil spirit will again find admittance not only for himself, but for other demons also, whose operations will be more intolerable than those from which the person had been relieved. Thus will the just vengeance of God be inflicted upon those who are not sincerely penitent. If after all the miracles I have wrought among them, and the endeavors I have exerted for purifying the hearts of the Jews from their abominable iniquities, those people continue to disregard my words and my works, they shall be given up to the government of their own abandoned hearts, whereby they will incur the utmost severity of the divine displeasure.

While our blessed Redeemer was delivering the above discourse to the multitude by whom he was surrounded, his mother, and some other of his relations, came to the spot, and being unable to force a passage through the crowd, they expressed a desire of speaking with him. Hereupon Jesus stretching forth his hand, and looking round upon his disciples, and the other auditors, in a manner that seemed to intimate that he required their particular attention,

he spoke in the following manner : “ All those who
“ seriously attend to my doctrines, and live in strict
“ obedience to the laws thereof, are of my family.
“ They are, in a spiritual sense, to me instead of a
“ mother, and other the nearest relations : and I am
“ commanded to be careful of their safety, and not
“ to confine my attention to those who are allied to
“ me by the ties of blood.”

CHAP. XXI.

In order to avoid the inconvenience of being surrounded by a vast number of people, Christ goes into a boat, and preaches to the multitude. He compares his preaching the gospel to a man employed in sowing seed. Jesus explains to his disciples, the reason of his using similitudes. He explains the parable of the man sowing of seeds, and after illustrating what he had said on that subject, delivers a caution to his disciples. Christ delivers several parables concerning the gospel. Why he gave instructions in a figurative stile. Our Lord's explanation of the parable of the tares. He delivers other parables, and leaves the country.

ON the day when our Lord had declared, that all who lived according to the rules of his gospel, were spiritually related to him, he went to the lake of Genesareth, where he commenced a discourse to the people. In a short time the concourse of people became very great, and to avoid the pressure of the crowd, he went into a small boat, and, putting off a little from the shore, preached to the multitude, describing to them in similitudes, the various tempers and dispositions of his auditors, and the different manner in which his publishing the gospel operated upon them.

“ A husbandman went forth, said our Lord, to sow
“ grain, and while he was employed in that occupa-
“ tion, part of the seed fell upon the highway, which
“ was not separated from the field by an inclosure,
“ and this seed produced no profit, partly by being
“ trodden under foot, and partly by being picked up

“ by the birds. Some of the seed was thrown upon sto-
 “ ny places, and this quickly sprung up ; but not being
 “ buried deep enough in the ground, the roots were
 “ soon destroyed by the vehement heat of the sun. Part
 “ of the seed was thrown among thorns and briars,
 “ which prevented the grain yielding any fruit. But
 “ part of the seed was distributed in a fertile soil ;
 “ and this yielded so abundant an increase, that the
 “ produce of some grains was from thirty to sixty,
 “ and from other grains, even an hundred fold.” By
 this just and forcible similitude, our blessed Saviour
 alluded to the different classes of his auditors ; some
 of whom wholly suppressed his doctrines, while the
 hearts of others were productive of the fruits of righ-
 teousness.

The multitude being departed, the disciples of Je-
 sus enquired of him, the reason of his so frequently
 delivering instructions to the people in similitudes,
 the meaning of which was not obvious to all capaci-
 ties ; and they requested an explanation of what he
 had said respecting the husbandman sowing the grain.
 Hereupon our Lord said, “ Because it is given unto
 “ you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of
 “ heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoe-
 “ ver hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have
 “ more abundance ; but whosoever hath not, from
 “ him shall be taken away, even that he hath.—
 “ Therefore speak I unto them in parables ; because
 “ they seeing, see not ; and hearing, they hear not,
 “ neither do they understand.” Mat. xiii. 11, 12, 13.

Thus our Lord intimated, that God had discovered
 to them things concerning the heavenly kingdom of
 the Messiah, though he had not made such explicit
 revelations to other people ; that his delivering his
 instructions in parables should be of no disadvantage
 to those who believed in his doctrines, which would

be found obvious and in every respect intelligible to unprejudiced minds; that the Pharisees and their adherents, were obstinately determined against yielding to the clearest conviction, and therefore he spoke to them in parables since it would be entirely ineffectual to attempt the conversion of those who were so blind, that in seeing, they saw not; and so wilfully deaf, that in hearing, they heard not. What Isaiah had predicted, our Lord said, was fully verified in the obstinacy of the Jews: "By hearing, ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing, ye shall see, and shall not perceive. For this peoples heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." To understand the true meaning of this passage, we must observe, that the phrases in the above quotation, both in sacred and profane writers, are proverbial, and relate to people who were so regardless as to securing their salvation, that they persevered in a conduct, directly opposite to the clearest intimations, and the strongest convictions of their religious duties. Thus the prophet Jeremiah, to a rebellious people, who had cast off all fear of God, addressed himself in the following manner: "Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding, which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not." As another instance of this figurative and sententious mode of delivery, we mention the words of God to Ezekiel:—"Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not; for they are a rebellious house." Hence we may collect the meaning of our Saviour, when assigning a reason for speaking to the multitude in parables. He did not deem it proper to afford the unbelievers a clearer

knowledge of matters, which they were predetermined to despise and neglect. But to those who obeyed his precepts, he was willing to explain the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, since they were disposed seriously to attend to them.

Our Lord now proceeded to explain to his disciples the meaning of the parable of the husbandman sowing the seed. “The sower, is he who publisheth the precepts of religion, or impresses the word of God upon the hearts of his auditors; the seed is descriptive of the doctrines of true religion; and the various kinds of soil, represent the several classes of hearers. The highway is an image of those who attend to the gospel, but in so negligent a manner, that it makes but a slight and transitory impression upon their hearts.” *When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart; this is he that received seed by the way-side.*

But we are not hence to infer, that satan hath power to divest men of their religious knowledge, by the mere efforts of his own will; for he can only succeed in consequence of the opportunities which are voluntarily afforded him of exercising his temptations.

Our Lord said, the stony ground meant those, who so far received the word of God into their hearts, that it was manifested by a partial reformation, and a temporary practice of virtue, which, like the vegetable productions, decay through a deficiency of soil to contain the nutritive quality of the invigorating rains, and to defend the roots from the vehement influence of the sun. “He that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy received it: yet hath he not root in

“ himself, but dureth for a while ; so when tribulation or persecution ariseth, because of the word, “ bye and bye he is offended. Mat. xiii. 20, 21.— The earth incumbered with thorns and briars, our Lord said, was descriptive of those who received the word into their hearts, but permitted it to be annoyed, and suppressed by worldly cares and pleasurable pursuits. “ He also that received seed among the thorns, “ is he that heareth the word ; and the care of this “ world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the “ word, and he becometh unfruitful.” Mat. xiii. 22.

In opposition to the unprofitable hearers of the word, Jesus said, the fertile soil represented those who received the word of God with gladness, and in whom an abundant increase of sanctity was produced, in proportion to the agreement and congeniality of the divine commands with the goodness of their hearts.

Having concluded his interpretation of the parable, our Lord continued to address himself to his disciples, explaining to them by the similitude of a lighted lamp, the use to which he expected they would apply his pious instructions. Their understanding, he informed them, was to illuminate the minds of mankind, as a brilliant lamp, placed in the middle, enlightens the whole apartment. He did not propound his doctrines with a design that they should not be understood ; for whoever supposed them to contain intricacies, upon mature deliberation would find them both obvious and in every respect incontrovertibly just.

Our Saviour informed his disciples, that although it was then expedient to conceal some parts of the doctrines of the gospel from the people, yet the proper season for him to give a more copious and explicit exposition of those great truths which were essen-

tial to salvation, and which it would be their duty to promulgate to the world. He admonished them to listen to his discourses with the most rigid attention; adding, that since they had the opportunity of hearing, and the capacity of understanding his doctrines, it must be entirely the consequence of their own neglect, if they were not fully qualified for the important trust reposed in them, according to their fidelity and zeal, in the discharge of which, their future rewards should be proportioned. “Take heed what you hear; with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to ye: and unto you that hear more shall be given.” Mark iv. 24.

Our blessed Redeemer now turned towards the people on the shore, and delivered to them the parable relating to the husbandman, who having sown his field with wheat, an enemy came, and with a view to injure him, privately sowed tares among the more valuable grain. Upon observing the tares growing among the wheat, the servants communicated the circumstance to the husbandman, and, lest the wheat should be damaged, advised him to cause the tares to be rooted up. But he refused to comply with the advice of his servants, saying, that though the tares would rob the wheat of a part of its proper nutriment, a consequence equally bad would ensue from extirpating the tares, which could not be done without considerable injury to the corn: and he further informed them, that, at the time of harvest, he would direct the reapers to collect the tares into bundles, in order for being burnt, and to convey the corn into the granaries. “The kingdom of heaven, said our Saviour, is likened unto a man, which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up and brought forth fruit, then appeared tares also. So

“ the servant of the housholder came, and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in the field ? From whence then hath it tares ? He saith unto them, an enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, wilt thou that we go, and gather them up ? But he said, nay ; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest ; and in the time of harvest, I will say to the reapers, gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them : but gather the wheat into my barn.”
Matt. xiii. 24, &c.

Our Saviour made use of similitudes in his discourses to the people, because it was not expedient that he should then express himself in a more clear and explicit manner ; for, it is unquestionable, that they would have been disgusted, had he plainly declared, that the office of the Messiah was only to reclaim them from their iniquities ; that a new religion was to be established, and that consequently the Jewish rites and ceremonies were to be abolished. Therefore Christ delivered the divine truths of his gospel in metaphorical language, whereby he concealed such matters as would have provoked the violent passions of the unprepared Jews, and have disposed them more obstinately to resist the principles of Christianity. “ I will open my mouth in a parable ; I will utter dark sayings of old.” Psalm lxxviii. 2.

Upon the return of Jesus to the place of his habitation, his disciples requested that he would give them an explanation of the parable of the tares ; and, in compliance with their request, he said, “ I am the sower of the corn ; the field is the earth ; the seed is descriptive of those who conduct themselves in obedience to the rules of my gospel, and shall partake of the blessings of the kingdom of heaven ; the tares are

“ the wicked men, who are every where dispersed
“ among the good, and who shall be excluded from
“ a state of future bliss ; the enemy, who privately
“ sowed the tares among the wheat, is Satan, who,
“ by concealed artifices and wicked machinations,
“ endeavors to undermine and corrupt the integrity
“ of man ; the harvest signifies the end of the world,
“ and the day of judgment ; and the angels of God
“ are represented under the similitude of the reapers.
“ As the tares are gathered together to be burnt, so
“ shall I send the angels to execute my will, and se-
“ parate the good from the bad, and to consign the
“ latter to a state of perpetual torment, when all
“ their lamentations and complaints of misery will
“ prove ineffectual, while those of the former de-
“ scription shall be transported into the regions of
“ eternal and ineffable bliss.”

Our Lord now delivered the parable of the mustard-seed, which, though of a diminutive form when sown, increases in Palestine and other eastern countries, sufficiently to afford shelter to birds. Under the similitude of this plant, he intimated, that the gospel, though but little regarded upon its first introduction, on account of the weakness of the persons by whom it was preached, and the small number and obscure conditions of those by whom it was received, would, notwithstanding, in process of time, grow to an astonishing magnitude, pervading the whole globe, and affording spiritual nourishment to all true believers, who should be intitled, equally with the Jews, to enjoy the blessings of the kingdom of the Messiah.

“ The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mus-
“ tard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field.
“ Which, indeed, is the least of all seeds ; but when
“ it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and be-
“ cometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and

“ lodge in the branches thereof.” Matt. xiii. 31, 32.

This parable was admirably calculated to inspire his disciples with a resolution to persevere in the duties of their holy office, notwithstanding their ministry should, at the beginning, meet with opposition from the learned, the rich, and the powerful.

Our Saviour compared the doctrine of his gospel to riches, which after being a long time concealed in the earth, had been casually discovered by a traveller, who, though transported at his good fortune, dissembled his joy, and sold all his property, in order that he might purchase the field, and thereby secure the treasure to himself, which would otherwise become the property of the owner of the ground. Hence our Lord inferred, that it behoved men to exert their utmost efforts for securing their eternal salvation, and to part with every worldly acquisition, rather than be deficient in the knowledge of the evangelical doctrine, though so long concealed, and as yet so little celebrated. A dealer in jewels having met with a stone of extraordinary value, by the purchase of which he hopes to make a considerable addition to his fortune, will sell all his other effects, if necessary, in order to enable him to make this purchase. Thus it is with those who embrace my gospel: rather than suffer the opportunity to escape of being instructed in its divine precepts, they will hazard the loss of all their worldly possessions. The preaching of the gospel is like a net, which being let down into the sea, encloses a great number of fishes of various kinds. Dragging the net ashore, the fishermen preserve the good for use, and cast away the refuse. In like manner shall it happen at the day of judgment, when the angels, separating the righteous from the ungodly, shall cast the latter into a place of eternal punishment,

where nothing shall be heard but miserable groans and lamentations.

Christ now asked his disciples, whether they understood the meaning of the similitudes he had delivered; and being answered in the affirmative, he informed them, that they and all others, who like them, were acquainted with the laws of Moses and the prophets, and likewise his own doctrines, resembled the master of a family, who having fruit of the preceding and the present year, would make use of both for the sustenance of his family, as occasion should require. Having pronounced these parables, partly in the presence of the multitude, and partly to his disciples in private, at Capernaum, or in the adjoining country, our blessed Redeemer embarked on the lake of Genesareth, in order to be conveyed to Gadara.

CHAP. XXII.

Our Saviour crosses the lake of Gennesareth, and gives an answer to a lawyer, who proposed to accompany him. He obviates the excuse of a person who desired to be admitted among the number of his disciples, on condition of remaining at home till after the decease of his aged father. He appeases a violent storm, and reproves his disciples for a want of confidence in him. Meeting two men possessed with evil spirits, they request that Christ will not torture them. He dispossesses the demoniacs, and suffers the evil spirits to enter into a herd of swine.—The swineherds publish the news; in consequence of which, the people of Gadara request Jesus to evacuate their country. Christ re-embarks for Capernaum, and the demoniacs publish the fame of his miracles. Upon his return, Jesus is met by a vast concourse of people on the banks of the lake of Gennesareth. The ruler of the synagogue solicits Christ to restore his daughter to health. In his way to the ruler's house, Christ meets a woman, whose afflictions are removed by her touching his garment. Intelligence is brought of the decease of the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue, and Jesus repairs to the house, and restores her to life. Christ relieves two men afflicted with blindness, and heals a demoniac.

TOWARDS the evening of the day on which Christ pronounced the parables mentioned in the preceding chapter, being on the western side of the lake of Gennesareth, attended by his disciples, he ordered them to procure a vessel to transport him towards Gadara, on the opposite side of the lake. Being rea-

dy to embark, our Lord was accosted by a lawyer, who said, he was desirous of following him wherever he should go; imagining, in all probability, that he should have an opportunity of advancing his fortune. Hereupon Jesus said, that all places on earth were alike to him; that foxes had holes, and trees afforded shelter to birds; that the most miserable of men had some place of habitation to repair to, but that he himself was destitute of any settled place of habitation, and was ignorant where he could entertain or accommodate his followers. Thus our Lord admonished his disciples, that they had no reason to hope he would establish an earthly kingdom.

Another person came to Christ, and declared, that he was desirous of following him; but requested that he might be permitted to attend upon his aged father during the short time he had to live; and immediately after his interment, he would return to Jesus, and remain in his service to the end of his life. Our Saviour observed to this man, that the concerns of the kingdom of heaven were to be preferred to all worldly considerations; and therefore he directed the man to follow him, and leave the care of the funeral to those who might themselves be termed dead in respect of the spiritual life of the soul; or, in other words, those who had refused to conform to the precepts of the gospel.

Our Saviour and his apostles now embarked, and they were followed by several vessels crouded with people, who were desirous of hearing the doctrines, and being witnesses to the miracles of Jesus. Being fatigued with the labors of the day, Christ went to the stern of the vessel, and there composed himself to sleep. A sudden and violent hurricane now arose, and the ship was presently almost filled with water, and apparently in the utmost danger of sinking. The

instantaneous destruction that seemed to await them, threw the apostles into the utmost consternation; and going to Jesus, they exclaimed, "Master, master, we perish?" Being awakened by the vehement exclamation of his apostles, our Lord, with a loud and awful voice, commanded the tempest to cease; and the contention of the boisterous elements immediately subsided. "Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm."

Jesus reproved his apostles for entertaining apprehensions of danger while they were in his company; observing, that since they had been witnesses to many of the miracles he had performed, they were highly reprehensible in manifesting a doubt as to their being under the immediate protection and care of Omnipotence, since the voyage had been undertaken by the express command of the Son of God.

However, so powerful an effect had the horrors of the tempest upon the minds of the apostles, that, for a moment, the recollection of the divine power of Christ, was absorbed by their terror and consternation; and they exclaimed, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and sea obey him!"

Soon after the storm, they disembarked on the eastern side of the lake, near Gadara, a town inhabited by Heathens, and situated opposite to Galilee. Upon landing, our Lord perceived two men possessed with evil spirits coming from the tombs and sepulchres. They had been frequently bound with chains and fetters, but so powerful and furious were they, that all endeavors to restrain them had proved ineffectual. They had long avoided the society of men, and, entirely naked, wandered day and night amidst the repositories for the dead, and in desert places, making dreadful outcries, cutting and tearing their flesh

with rugged and sharp stones in the most terrible manner, and violently assailing the passengers who were so unfortunate as to fall in their way. The demoniacs, perceiving Jesus at a distance, prostrated themselves, and cried out, "What have we to do with thee, O Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? We adjure thee by thy heavenly Father, not to torment us, since the time appointed for our consignment to the place of perpetual punishment is not yet arrived." That his disciples might judge of the degree of the misery of these men, and that his intended cure might be the more conspicuous, Jesus asked the evil spirits, by what name they were called? And making use of the organs of the men, they replied, "Legion, for we are many;" and at the same time they intreated, that he would not condemn them to the place of torment; but, if he was determined to expel them from the bodies of the men, that he would permit them to enter a herd of swine that were grazing at some distance.

Thus Satan, though conscious of the irresistible power of the Son of God, meant to excite against him the malice of the people of Gadara; for his motive in gaining possession of the herd of swine, was immediately to destroy those animals, in order to inflame the inhabitants with an implacable enmity against Jesus.

Although our Lord was apprized of the subtle design of Satan, he permitted the evil spirits to enter the swine, which, to the number of about two thousand, immediately after they became possessed, precipitated themselves from the rock into the lake, and "perished in the waters." The evil spirits had no sooner quitted the bodies of the demoniacs, than they became perfectly serene, and capable of the full exercise of their rational faculties.

Jesus was induced to suffer the demons to enter the herd of swine, that he might afford his disciples an incontestible evidence, that the men were really possessed by the apostate spirits; and at the same time, that he might himself be informed, whether the people of Gadara would be more afflicted by the loss of their swine, than rejoiced on account of the recovery of the demoniacs. The swineherds, who were witnesses to the events above related, hastened into the city, and published abroad the particulars of the wonderful restoration of the demoniacs, and the destruction of the swine, to the great astonishment of the inhabitants, who came in a body to Christ in order to be assured of the truth of what the swineherds had asserted. They were amazed to behold the two men who had been possessed, reposing themselves near Jesus, clothed in decent apparel, and perfectly restored to the use of reason.

Having trespassed against the law of Moses by keeping swine, the people of Gadara were apprehensive that Jesus would inflict upon them a punishment still more severe; and therefore they requested, that he would depart from their country. Finding that they did not consider the cure of the demoniacs as an advantage adequate to the loss of their swine, and that they preferred the acquisition of wealth, and the indulgence of their carnal appetites, to the blessings to be derived from an observance of the word of God, our Saviour determined to comply with the imprudent request of the Gadarenes. Re-embarking on the lake, and being on the point of sailing for Capernaum, the two men who had been rescued from the tyranny of Satan, came to our Saviour, and requested permission to accompany him. But Jesus dismissed them, ordering them to publish among their countrymen the great benefits that had been bestowed upon them by the power of God. In obedience to the command of

Jesus, they departed, and proclaimed throughout the region of Decapolis the particulars of their miraculous cure; which excited the admiration of their countrymen, as well as those foreigners who heard their relation.

Upon the arrival of our Lord on the western coast of the lake of Gennesareth, he found a vast concourse of people waiting to congratulate him on his return. Immediately after quitting the vessel, Jesus commenced a discourse to the multitude; soon after which he was interrupted by one of the rulers of the synagogue, who, prostrating himself at the feet of our blessed and ever compassionate Redeemer, earnestly supplicated, that he would accompany him home, and restore his daughter to health, she being then at the point of death. Our Lord signified that he would comply with the præfect's request, and they departed together, followed by the twelve apostles, and a vast concourse of people.

Among the croud was a woman, who for the space of twelve years, had been afflicted with a dreadful eruption of blood; for obtaining a cure for which, she had, but without effect employed a great number of practitioners in physic, to the entire ruin of her fortune. As our Saviour passed, the woman "came, and touched the hem of his garment: for she said within herself, If I may but touch his clothes, I shall be whole." In this confidence she was not deceived; for no sooner had she touched the border of the garment of Christ, than "her issue of blood dried up."

Jesus was acquainted with the thoughts of the woman, and that by touching his garment she had obtained a cure; and for a more full manifestation of her faith, and that he might have an opportunity of yield-

ing her both instruction and comfort, he enquired who had touched him. Surprized at this question, his disciples, who were ignorant of what had happened, said to Jesus, "Thou seest the multitude thronging and pressing thee, and sayest thou, who touched me?" But Christ said, he had been touched with a design, for he was conscious that a miracle had been wrought in favor of some person : and the woman imagining that she was discovered, prostrated herself at the feet of Jesus, and acknowledged, in the hearing of the multitude, that she had received a perfect cure, merely by touching the hem of the garment of our blessed Saviour. Perceiving that the woman was apprehensive of having given him offence, our Lord spoke to her in the most endearing and encouraging stile, saying, "Daughter, be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole." Mat. ix. 22.

While our Saviour was speaking, intelligence was brought that the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue was dead, and that it was therefore unnecessary Jesus should take the trouble of proceeding any further. This news poignantly afflicted the præfect ; but Christ advised him to moderate his grief, assuring him, that if he had a proper sense of the power and goodness of God, his daughter should yet do well.—The præfect had been a witness to the miraculous cure which the woman had obtained, only in consequence of touching the garment of Jesus ; and the knowledge of this wonderful event, served to confirm his faith in the unbounded power of God.

Arriving at the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and finding the people of the family employed in making preparations for the funeral, our Lord informed them, that what they were doing was wholly unnecessary, for that "the maid was not dead, but sleeping." But knowing that the vital principle had

departed from her body, they “laughed him to
“scorn.”

It is proper here to observe, that when speaking of death, the Jews term it sleep; thereby intimating a belief, that notwithstanding the dissolution of the body, the spirit still survives. But our Saviour used the word with singular propriety, for he thereby intimated, that although the maid was then locked in the cold embraces of death, yet she was presently to be rescued from the power of the king of terrors, with as little difficulty as a person is awakened from sleep. Thus our Lord with his accustomed modesty and humility, declined the honor that must necessarily result from his restoring the præfect's daughter to life. Jesus now entered the apartment where the corpse lay, but suffered none to accompany him, except the apostles Peter, James, and John, and the parents of the deceased. Taking her by the hand, in a gentle accent he said, “Maid, arise;” and to the amazement of her parents, as well as the three apostles, the divine command was instantly obeyed. The maid arose, not with any appearance of langour or lassitude, but with every indication of the most vigorous health, notwithstanding so sudden a transition, from a state of annihilation to an entire renovation of all the vital powers. Christ, who never courted the applause of men, forbid the parents to speak of the miracle he had wrought upon their daughter: but notwithstanding this prohibition, the wonderful power of Jesus was quickly spread through the country, to the confirmation of the belief that he was the Messiah.

Leaving the ruler's house, our Lord was followed by two men afflicted with blindness, who implored relief, crying, “O Son of David, have mercy on us.” Upon asking them whether they had full persuasion of the power with which he was invested, they repli-

ed in the affirmative, and repeated their supplications for relief. Hereupon Christ touched their eyes, saying, "according to your faith, be it unto you;" and they instantly recovered their sight.

A man possessed with an evil spirit, by the influence of which he was deprived of the power of speech, being now brought to Jesus, he commanded the demon to depart; and being relieved from his infirmity, the man addressed himself to the people in articulate language. These miracles excited the astonishment of the multitude, who declared that such wonderful works greatly surpassed the power of the ancient prophets. "It was never seen so in Israel." Matt. ix. 33.

It has been objected by infidel writers, that it is not probable, that there was a herd of swine in Gadara: but a few words only will be necessary to refute this suggestion. It is true, that by their laws, the Jews were prohibited the eating of swine's flesh, and that by their later institutions, they were not allowed to keep swine. However, Gadara, the metropolis of Peræa, was not a Jewish, but a Greek city, inhabited principally by Heathens; and therefore there can be no reason for supposing that swine were not kept there, and in the adjacent country.

Writers of the same class also pretend, that none of the rulers of the synagogue had faith in Jesus; and that Jairus, the father of the maid whom our Lord restored to life, never had existence but in imagination. But in contradiction to this, may be adduced the case of Nicodemus, who, being both a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews, acknowledged Jesus to be "a teacher come from God," and advanced this general reason as the foundation of his faith: "No man can do those miracles that Jesus doth, except

“God be with him.” And we are assured by St. John, that, “among the chief rulers also, many believed “on him;” though, from an unwillingness to engage in a contention with their associates, “they did “not confess him.”

CHAP. XXIII.

Our Saviour repairs to Nazareth, and is again treated with contempt by his countrymen. He continues his progress through Galilee. Christ determines to send forth his apostles, and accordingly gives instructions for the regulation of their conduct in the discharge of their holy ministry, and invests them with the power of working miracles. The apostles separate, and proceed to exercise their ministry.

ABOUT a year having elapsed since his countrymen endeavored to cast our blessed Saviour from the summit of a mountain, he again repaired to Nazareth, hoping, that the miracles he had wrought, and the great reputation he had acquired, might have disposed the minds of the people to a more favorable reception of the divine truths of the gospel.

On the sabbath-day he entered the synagogue, and discoursed to the people, in a stile of such cogent reasoning and persuasive eloquence, that his auditors enquired of each other, whether the preacher was not the son of Joseph and Mary; at the same time expressing great astonishment, that he should have been able to acquire such a superiority of knowledge and other great qualifications, since he had resided among them during the greatest part of his life, and had employed the most considerable portion of his time in pursuing the humble occupation of his father.

Upon their refusing to repose faith in him, Jesus observed to the Nazarenes, that it was usual for prophets to be held in higher estimation by strangers than their own countrymen; and this proverbial

phrase he had applied to them on a former occasion, a short time previous to their horrid attempt to throw him from the precipice. The relation of the miracles he had performed, not being sufficient to induce the people to put faith in him, he declined making them witnesses of the more signal instances of his divine power : but, notwithstanding their unconquerable obstinacy, he condescended so far, as even in their presence, to restore to health some afflicted persons, by laying his hands on them.

Departing from Nazareth, our blessed Saviour continued his progress through other parts of Galilee, giving health to the sick, and proclaiming the near approach of the kingdom of heaven.

The condition of the Jews was, at this time, truly deplorable ; for they had no settled and determinate sentiments on the subject of religion, being kept in a state of continual doubt and perplexity, by the factious contentions of the Sadducees and Pharisees. Our blessed Redeemer compassionated these miserable people, who, as so many sheep without a shepherd, were wandering to their destruction. That the sheep of Israel might be guided from the mazes of error and superstition into the paths of righteousness and truth, the blessed Jesus determined to send his apostles abroad, to publish the doctrine of the Gospel.

Addressing himself to his apostles, our Lord said, that it was expedient intercessions should be made to the Almighty, who by his servants, the prophets, had sown the seeds of piety in the hearts of the Jews, that he would not permit so rich a harvest to be lost through a deficiency of laborers. The hearts of many were prepared for the reception of the divine doctrines of the gospel ; for the promotion of which, it

was now only necessary, that the people should have proper instructors. "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest." Matt. ix. 37, 38. Our Lord now invested his apostles with the power of working miracles, and commissioned them to preach the gospel in various parts of Galilee; and preparatory to their punctual discharge of their sacred ministry, he addressed to them the following discourse:

"In your first progress, direct your attention entirely to the conversion of the Jews, that after their various wanderings, like strayed sheep, they may at length return into the right sheep-fold. This is the time of your probation: therefore go not into any Heathen or Samaritan city, but inform the Jews only of the glad tidings of the approach of the kingdom of the Messiah. Assure them, that a life of strict piety and good works, is the only means whereby they can be intitled to participate in the blessings of the kingdom of heaven. That you may demonstrate the authenticity of the commission which you now receive from me, I authorize you in my name to cleanse lepers, to expel evil spirits from the bodies of men, to cure all distempers, and to revive the dead. You shall have the advantage of these gracious assistances, on condition that you make use of them for the benefit of mankind, with a freedom like that with which they are thus bestowed upon you. Be not anxious to provide yourselves with the means of subsistence, apparel, or money to defray the expences of your travelling: but remember that you are under the protection of God; and rest assured, that the people to whom you proclaim the gospel, will supply you with all necessaries.

“ Upon entering any town or village, let your first
“ business be to make enquiry into the moral dispo-
“ sition of the people, and whether they expect the
“ establishment of the kingdom of the Messiah ; and
“ during your abode in the place, do not forsake the
“ house of the man who entertains you, lest your de-
“ parture should alienate his mind from you. When
“ you are first admitted into the family, supplicate
“ God to bless all the persons of whom it is compos-
“ ed ; and if they are people worthy the blessing of
“ heaven, God will grant your prayers in their be-
“ half : but if they are undeserving, your prayers
“ will be ineffectual with respect to them, but your
“ own piety will be abundantly rewarded. If the
“ people of any town or private family refuse you en-
“ tertainment, deeming the purpose of your mission
“ unworthy their attention, upon your departure clear
“ the very dust from your feet, thereby signifying,
“ that you will have no intercourse with men of such
“ impious principles. And be assured, that, on the
“ great day of judgment, the people of Sodom and
“ Gomorrah shall not be punished with so much
“ severity as those who refuse to hear, or, having
“ heard, hold your doctrine in contempt.

“ I send you now as a sheep unto a company of
“ wolves ; you are of a meek and inoffensive temper,
“ but you are to go amidst a barbarous and violent
“ people. You must therefore, so prudently conduct
“ yourselves, as not to inflame their passions by re-
“ proving them with too much severity, nor by un-
“ reasonable interpretations of those truths to which
“ they are at present so extremely averse : but be
“ careful that this caution do not degenerate into
“ worldly craft, so as to induce you to a violation of
“ your duty, in giving countenance to the practice of
“ vice. Combine the sagacity of the serpent with the
“ harmlessness of the dove. Pursue every measure

“ that is expedient for securing yourselves against the
“ artifices of the Jews, who will persecute you for
“ preaching the gospel, and exhibit complaints against
“ you before the Jewish magistrates, and thereby
“ cause you to undergo the discipline of being whip-
“ ped. They will even compel you to plead for your
“ lives before the Roman governors, on account of
“ your being my disciples : and this persecution will
“ render the gospel more conspicuous both among the
“ Jews and the Gentiles. But be not solicitous as to
“ the manner of making your defence : for the holy
“ Spirit of God shall abundantly supply you with ar-
“ guments, to controvert the malicious accusations of
“ his enemies. The Jews and the Gentiles shall im-
“ peach their nearest relations, and surrender them
“ into the power of the persecutors, for their adher-
“ ence to my gospel. In consequence of your being my
“ disciples, you will incur the general detestation of
“ the wicked, who will subject you to infinite mortifi-
“ cations ; but whoever shall despise their threats, and,
“ in despite of the utmost force of their vengeance,
“ shall persevere to act in obedience to my instruc-
“ tions, although they be punished with death, yet
“ shall they obtain the reward of everlasting life.—
“ Being persecuted by the Jews, fly from one to ano-
“ ther city ; and be assured, that before you have vi-
“ sited all the Jewish cities, the impenetrable obdu-
“ racy of their hearts shall be punished with the ut-
“ most severity of the divine vengeance.

“ A proverbial saying is current among you, im-
“ porting that the scholar will have no cause for com-
“ plaint, if he receive not harsher treatment than his
“ teacher. Since the Pharisees have attributed my
“ miracles to the power of Beelzebub, and have tra-
“ duced me as being possessed by that prince of the
“ evil spirits, you, who are my scholars and mini-
“ sters, must not hope to escape their defamation.—

“ However, dread not their accusations ; for neither
 “ shall the wickedness of their artifices, nor the vir-
 “ tue of your intentions remain for ever concealed.—
 “ Be assured, that there is nothing so secret that shall
 “ not one day be disclosed. The instructions I now
 “ give you in private, I authorize you publicly to pro-
 “ claim ; and what I now seem to whisper, you are
 “ to publish from the tops of houses, that it may be
 “ known to all mankind. Dread not the malice of
 “ man, whose power only extends to the destruction
 “ of the body, but cannot affect the soul.

“ Stand in awe only of him, who after life can con-
 “ sign both body and soul to perpetual torment.—
 “ There is no occurrence with which the Almighty
 “ is not acquainted, nor can any event happen with-
 “ out his permission : and in the execution of your
 “ ministry, you will be constantly under the protec-
 “ tion of his good providence. Not even a sparrow
 “ dies without his knowledge and permission : and
 “ therefore you may be assured, that you will be the
 “ objects of his bounty, being men selected as the
 “ messengers of my gospel. Fear not then, but rest
 “ satisfied, that the power who provides for the most
 “ inconsiderable animal that exists, will be more pro-
 “ vident for the benefit of you, who are of such su-
 “ perior value.

“ Whoever shall constantly acknowledge himself
 “ to be my disciple, by conforming strictly both in
 “ words and actions to my will, shall be owned by
 “ me before my heavenly Father : but whoever, either
 “ in order to elude persecution, or with any other
 “ purpose, shall disavow being my disciple, shall
 “ be disclaimed by me before my heavenly Father.—
 “ Imagine not, because my doctrine breathes univer-
 “ sally love and charity, that men will abandon all ani-
 “ mosities, and exercise kindness and friendship to-

“wards each other. But on the contrary, my gospel, which so strongly recommends the practice of those virtues, shall prove the cause of the most violent feuds and contentions. Brothers shall betray brothers ; fathers their sons, and sons their fathers ; servants shall become the professed enemies of their masters, and discord shall prevail in private families, on account of my gospel.

“Whoever shall prefer the advantages that may probably accrue to them from their parents, children, or other relations, to an obedience to my doctrines, shall be adjudged unworthy to be admitted among the number of my disciples. Whosoever shall reject my doctrines from the hope of securing his life, shall be often punished in this world : but those, who, on the contrary, shall profess themselves my disciples, shall not be disappointed of their hopes, but frequently preserve their lives by those very means which the others avoided, as tending to their destruction. They who shall receive you, as being sent by me, and rely upon you as being the messenger of my gospel, shall be rewarded as if he had believed on me, and received me in person ; and whoever believes on me, must necessarily believe on my heavenly Father also.—Whoever receives a prophet sent by me, and accounts him a true one, shall be as much rewarded by me as the prophet himself ; and whosoever shall receive and own a good man, though he may thereby incur both hatred and contempt, shall receive as great rewards from me, as the good man, provided he steadily pursues a course of virtue : nor shall he be unrewarded, who makes a hearty tender of the least good offices to any of my disciples.”

Having given this commission to his disciples, he ordered them to go to different places and publish the

gospel, and for the same purpose, our Lord himself repaired to another part of the country. According to the command of their divine Master, the apostles commenced their holy ministry, exhorting the Jews to a speedy and sincere repentance, and confirming the divinity of their mission by casting out evil spirits, and healing the sick by the power delegated to them by Jesus.

During the solemn publication of the gospel, Herod, the tetrarch of Galilee, provided a superb entertainment in celebration of the day of his nativity; and on this occasion he gave invitations to all his courtiers, the principal officers of his army, and the nobility of Galilee. In the course of the entertainment, Salome, the daughter of Herodias by her former husband Philip, danced so much to the satisfaction of Herod, that, in the excess of his admiration, he commanded her to make some request; which he said he would not refuse, even if it was to part with half his kingdom, and this promise he confirmed with a solemn oath. Salome consulted her mother, who peremptorily commanded her to require of Herod, the head of John the Baptist. Returning to the king, Salome, in obedience to her mother's injunction, demanded that he would perform his promise, by delivering to her the head of the Baptist in a charger.—Astonished and shocked at this cruel request, the king hesitated for some time; but, at length, that he might not violate his oath, he commanded one of his officers to repair to the castle of Machærus, and cause John to be immediately beheaded.

In the presence of the whole company, the head was brought in a charger, and presented to Salome, who immediately carried it to her mother. The bloody spectacle yielded a barbarous satisfaction to Herodias, whose aversion to John had been excited, by his hav-

ing endeavored to reclaim her from her adulterous course of life. Thus was the life of this great and good man, the harbinger of our blessed Saviour, who declared him to be "more than a prophet," cruelly sacrificed, to gratify the revenge of an abandoned woman, and to prevent Herod from breaking a rash oath, his observance of which, branded his character with indelible infamy. The disciples of John no sooner received the melancholy news of the barbarous murder of their venerable master, than they went to Herod and solicited that he would order the body of their deceased master to be delivered to them: the king complied with this request, and the disciples deposited the remains of the Baptist in a sepulchre; after which they repaired to Jesus, and communicated to him the particulars of the melancholy fate of their master, who they were conscious had esteemed Christ to be the Messiah. Writing on the subject of the defeat of Herod by Aretas, king of Petra, Josephus does justice to the character of John in the following manner:

"It was at this time the prevailing opinion among the Jews, that the above disaster was a proof of the vengeance of heaven against Herod and his army, on account of John, surnamed the Baptist, whom this tetrarch had caused to be inhumanly murdered. Now the Baptist had not been guilty of any crime. His custom was to exhort the Jews to the love and practice of every virtue: he principally insisted on their lives being regulated by the rules of piety and justice; urged the necessity of regeneration by baptism and a new life; and insisted that it was not by abstaining from any particular offence, but by a constant course of goodness, that they could receive the benefit of such regeneration.

"The Baptist had now acquired great credit and

“ authority among the people by the holiness of his
 “ life ; and this was evident by the number of his dis-
 “ ciples, and the veneration they entertained for his
 “ doctrine. In fact, they seemed to be so totally de-
 “ voted to his will, as to be altogether under his in-
 “ fluence ; insomuch, that Herod was jealous lest his
 “ high degree of reputation should tempt them to re-
 “ volt. To prevent, therefore, the dreadful conse-
 “ quences, he determined on his destruction before
 “ he could have an opportunity of perpetrating any
 “ act of mischief, rather than wait the event, and re-
 “ pent after the act was committed. Urged by this
 “ consideration, he dispatched him to Machærus as a
 “ prisoner, directing that he should be immediately
 “ put to death ; and the sentence was executed agree-
 “ able to the instructions ; but the impiety of the deed,
 “ was followed by an almost immediate divine ven-
 “ geance on Herod ; agreeable to the idea of the
 “ Jews, that he had been punished for spilling the
 “ blood of that holy man.”

When denouncing the terrible judgments that shall fall upon those who reject his gospel, our Saviour frequently alludes to Sodom and Gomorrah, and therefore we shall introduce some account of those cities. When Abraham first went to sojourn in the land of Canaan, Sodom was a city of great reputation. It was pleasantly situated in the plain of Jordan. This plain “ was well watered every where, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest out of Zoar.” In the lower part of the plain, were the cities of Gomorrah, (which our Lord joins with Sodom, on account of its having been the next inferior in point of grandeur) Admah, Zeboim, and Bela, otherwise called Zoar. This tract of land was called Pentapolis by the Greek writers, on account of its containing the five cities. The inhabitants of these cities were, “ wicked and sinners

“ before the Lord, exceedingly ;” for they were ad-
dicted to the most abominable and unnatural lust.
Zoar being exempted from the general punishment,
“ the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brim-
stone and fire, from the Lord out of heaven. And
“ he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all
“ the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew
“ upon the ground.” Gen. xix. 24, 25.

It is supposed, that the plain wherein the cities stood, was inflamed by lightning, and that its destruction was exceedingly rapid ; for it is known, that the soil abounded with bitumen. The tract of ground was afterwards overflowed by the waters of the Jordan, which so diffused themselves, as to form the Dead Sea, or the lake of Sodom ; called also Asphaltites, on account of the asphaltus, or bitumen, with which it abounds.

It is a matter of uncertainty, whether Sodom was within, or upon the borders of that space of land which is now possessed by the sea. According to the account of Josephus, the ruins of the cities were to be seen in his time ; and this author says, the fruits growing in the neighborhood of the lake of Sodom, though of a beautiful appearance, upon being gathered, mouldered to dust.

The following curious account of the lake, and circumjacent country, is extracted from Maundrell’s Journey from Aleppo : “ The Dead Sea is enclosed
“ on the east and west with exceeding high moun-
“ tains ; on the north it is bordered by the plain of
“ Jericho, on which side also it receives the waters of
“ the Jordan ; on the south it is open, and extends
“ beyond the reach of the eye. It is said to be
“ twenty-four leagues long, and six or seven broad.

“ On the shore of the lake we found a black sort of
“ pebbles, which being held in the flame of a candle,
“ soon burns and yields a smoke of an intolerable
“ stench. It has this property, that it loses only of its
“ weight, but not of its bulk, by burning. The hills
“ bordering upon the lake, are said to abound with
“ this sort of sulphureous stones. I saw pieces of it at
“ the convent of St. John, in the wilderness, two feet
“ square. They were carved into basso-relievo, and
“ polished to as great a lustre as black marble is ca-
“ pable of, and were designed for the ornament of
“ the new church at the convent.

“ It is a common tradition, that birds, attempting
“ to fly over this sea, drop down dead into it; and that
“ no fish, nor other sort of animal, can endure these
“ deadly waters. The former report I saw actually
“ confuted, by several birds flying about and over
“ the sea, without any visible harm; the latter also I
“ have some reason to suspect as false, having ob-
“ served amongst the pebbles on the shore, two or
“ three shells of fish, resembling oyster-shells. These
“ were cast up by the waves at two hours distance
“ from the mouth of Jordan, which I mention, lest
“ it should be suspected, that they might be brought
“ into the sea that way.

“ As for the bitumen, for which this sea hath been
“ so famous, there was none at the place where we
“ were: but it is gathered near the mountains on
“ both sides, in great plenty: I had several lumps of
“ it brought to me at Jerusalem. It exactly resem-
“ bles pitch, and cannot be distinguished from it, but
“ by the sulphureousness of its smell and taste.

“ The water of the lake was very limpid, and salt
“ to the highest degree; and not only salt, but also
“ extreme bitter and nauseous. Being willing to

“ make an experiment of its strength, I went into it,
“ and found it bore up my body in swimming with an
“ uncommon force. But as for the relation of some
“ authors, that men wading into it, were buoyed up
“ to the top as soon as they go as deep as the navel,
“ I found it upon experiment not true.

“ Being desirous to see the remains, if there were
“ any, of those cities, anciently situated in this place,
“ and made so dreadful an example of the divine ven-
“ geance, I diligently surveyed the waters as far as
“ my eye would reach. But neither could I discern
“ any heaps of ruins, nor any smoke ascending above
“ the surface of the waters, as is usually described in
“ the writings and maps of geographers. But yet I
“ must not omit what was confidently attested to me
“ by the father-guardian, and the procurator of Jeru-
“ salem ; both men in years, and seemingly not des-
“ titute either of sense or probity, namely, that they
“ had actually once seen one of these ruins ; that it
“ was so near the shore, and the waters so shallow at
“ that time, that they, together with some Frenchmen,
“ went to it, and found there were some pillars, and
“ other fragments of buildings. The cause of our
“ being deprived of their sight was, I suppose, the
“ height of the water.

“ On the west side of the sea is a small promonto-
“ ry, near which, as our guides told us, stood the mo-
“ nument of Lot’s metamorphosed wife : part of
“ which, if they may be credited, is visible at this day.
“ But neither would the present occasion permit us
“ to go and examine the truth of this relation ; nei-
“ ther, had the opportunity served, could we give
“ faith enough to this report, to induce us to go on
“ such an errand.

“ As for the apples of Sodom, so much talked of,

“ I neither saw nor heard of any hereabouts. Nor
“ was there any tree to be seen near the lake, from
“ which one might expect such a kind of fruit ; which
“ induces me to believe, that there may be a greater
“ deceit in this fruit, than that which is usually re-
“ ported of it ; and that its very being, as well as its
“ beauty, is a fiction, only kept up, as my Lord
“ Bacon observes many other false notions are, be-
“ cause it serves for a good allusion, and helps the
“ poets to a similitude.”

CHAP. XXIV.

The return of the apostles of Christ. Our Saviour crosses the lake, and is followed by great multitudes of people. He feeds five thousand men, exclusive of women and children, with only five loaves, and two small fishes. Jesus commands his apostles to cross the lake, and in their passage they meet a dreadful storm. Christ walks upon the surface of the sea towards the vessel in which were the apostles. At the command of Jesus, the apostle Peter walks upon the waters. Christ appeases the tempest, and the apostles proclaim him the Son of God.—Our Lord disembarks and proceeds to Capernaum, followed by a great concourse of people, among whom he performs divers cures. Upon their requiring of him a miracle, Jesus addresses the multitude in a mystical discourse concerning his own body and blood. A contention arises among the people with regard to what Jesus had said. Our Lord pursues his allegorical discourse. The obscurity of his doctrine offends the auditors of Christ, who reproves his apostles, in consequence of their having murmured at his discourse. Several of his followers having left him, our Lord asks his disciples, whether they will desert him also. Jesus hints at the treachery of Judas Iscariot.

THE twelve apostles who had been dispatched to proclaim the gospel, returned to Jesus, and informed him of the success that had attended their embassy. They expressed themselves deeply concerned on account of the barbarous massacre of John the Baptist, who they were sensible had been greatly beloved of Christ, and who they had themselves highly venerated,

some of them having been his disciples previous to their appointment to the apostleship.

Our blessed Saviour commanded his apostles to accompany him to a solitary place adjacent to Bethsaida, that, being relieved from the importunities of the multitude, they might have an opportunity of reposing themselves, after the fatigues they had sustained in the discharge of their public ministry. Embarking on the lake of Gennesareth, they steered towards the eastern shore, and landed in a desert part of the country. Observing the course of the vessel in which Jesus sailed, a vast multitude of people travelled round the lake on foot, and resorted to him, his miracles having excited their admiration, and his preaching having inspired them with a most earnest solicitude to obtain further information as to the principles of his divine doctrines.

Though his design of secluding himself with his apostles was frustrated, our Lord received them in his usual beneficent and gracious manner. He considered them as defenceless sheep, without a pastor to guard them from the power of the infernal wolf, who was perpetually watching for opportunities of seducing them into the paths of iniquity. The blessed Jesus, that "good shepherd, who came to lay down his life for the sheep," tenderly compassionated the truly deplorable situation of these people, to whom he administered spiritual relief, and many of them he relieved from various afflictions.

While Jesus was discoursing to the people, his apostles reminded him that the day was far declined; and therefore intimated, that it would be proper to dismiss the multitude, that they might procure refreshment and lodging in the neighboring towns and villages. After looking round upon the people, Jesus

asked Philip whether he could procure bread sufficient to satisfy the appetites of the whole company. Knowing the small stock of money they were possessed of, Philip said in reply, "two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little." John vi. 7. It is not to be supposed, that our Saviour put the question to Philip, in consequence of any doubt as to the means of procuring refreshment for the people, for he had determined to feed them in a miraculous manner. Our Lord demanded what quantity of provisions could be collected among the multitude; and having made enquiry, Andrew, the brother of Peter, presently returned and informed Christ, that only five barley loaves and two fishes could be obtained; observing, that so inconsiderable a supply could have no effect as to sufficing the appetites of so great a number of people.—However, our Lord commanded the loaves and fishes to be brought to him; that the people should seat themselves upon the grass, and that his apostles should range them in regular order, separating them into companies composed of hundreds and of fifties, that the number of people might be ascertained with the greater ease and accuracy.

This immense number of people being arranged in regular order, Jesus took the five loaves and two fishes in his hands, and addressed himself in prayer to heaven, thanking his almighty Father for his infinite beneficence in conferring upon him the power of relieving the wants of mankind. After this, by the operation of his supernatural power, our blessed Redeemer multiplied the loaves and fishes into a quantity of provisions sufficient to satisfy the appetites of five thousand men, exclusive of women and children, of whom there were an immense number. "And Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to

“ them that were set down ; and likewise of the fishes, as much as they would.” John vi. 11. Upon the conclusion of the repast, our Lord directed his apostles to collect the fragments, that no part of the provisions thus miraculously produced, might be wasted ; and being gathered together, they were found to be as much as could be contained in twelve baskets.

This magnificent proof of the divine power of Jesus, whereby he sufficed, in all probability, more than ten thousand, excited the amazement of the people, and inspired them with the well-founded opinion that he was the Messiah ; and, in the height of their transports, they proposed to take away Jesus by force, and make him king ; after which they concluded, he would assume the title of the Messiah, whose appearance they had so long expected, and under the auspices of whose reign they expected the full enjoyment of every temporal felicity.

Knowing the intentions of the people, and that his apostles were disposed to second their endeavors for investing him with the powers of an earthly sovereignty, he commanded the apostles immediately to repair to their boat, and direct their course towards the shore opposite to the city of Bethsaida ; saying he would himself remain, and dismiss the people. Though the apostles did not oppose his will, they expressed great reluctance in departing without Jesus, who was, therefore, under the necessity of repeating his command. After the departure of the apostles, our Lord prevailed upon the multitude to disperse, and then retired to the summit of a mountain, where he employed the evening in pious meditation, and ardent prayers to his heavenly Father.

Had the miracle of the loaves and fishes been per-

formed in any of the towns or villages, the Pharisees in the ancient days, and the infidels of the present time, probably might have pretended, that Jesus had provisions secretly conveyed to the place : but this wonderful instance of the power of God, was exhibited in a desert and uninhabited spot, where there was no possibility of procuring the means of sustenance ; and hence it is indisputably proved, that “ God can furnish a table in the wilderness.”

By this miracle we are instructed, that it is God, according to the emphatical words of David, “ who visiteth the earth, and blesseth it : who maketh it very plenteous, and watereth her furrows, and sendeth rain into the vallies thereof ; who maketh it soft with showers, and blesseth the increase of it ; who crowneth the year with his goodness, while his clouds drop fatness ; making the vallies stand so thick with corn, that they laugh and sing.”

The secret operations, and ordinary productions of nature, are subjects of as great admiration, and as strong convictions of the unbounded power and goodness of God, as those stupendous works, which, because they are less frequent, are the more particularly observed. Christ fed five thousand men, besides women and children, by the multiplication of five loaves and two dried fishes : but this number bears a very inconsiderable proportion to the multitudes, who are daily sustained by the regular produce of the seasons. To an attentive observer, the Divinity will be as apparent in the common productions of nature, as in the miraculous supply above recorded ; it will be equally seen in the wine produced from the moisture of the earth filtrated through the diminutive ramifications of the vine, as in the instantaneous transmutation of water into wine at the marriage entertainment at Cana ; and the divine Power is as clearly ma-

nifested in the vegetation of grain for the sustenance of man, as in the bread and fishes miraculously multiplied for sufficing the appetites of so vast a concourse of people. Utterly inattentive as the Jews were to the word of God, and likewise to his unlimited power, manifested in every part of the productions of nature, it was the divine will of heaven, occasionally to depart from the common order of things, that the people might be roused from their deplorable state of insensibility.

In persuance of the command of Jesus, the apostles embarked at the beginning of the night ; but they had not proceeded beyond the middle of the lake, when they were overtaken by a violent tempest. The storm raged with such excessive violence, that, after having been some hours threatened with momentary destruction by the contending elements, at about the conclusion of the fourth watch, or five o'clock in the morning, they were not more than a league from the place where they had embarked.

When every hope of being able to gain their destined port had abandoned them, and when they trembled with the terror of being swallowed by the waves, the blessed Redeemer of the world came to the relief of his apostles, walking on the surface of the foaming billows, with as much facility as if he had been travelling on land. Perceiving the approach of Christ, his apostles were thrown into the utmost consternation, imagining that he was a spectre, or a person possessed with an apostate spirit. Observing their terror and amazement, their great and affectionate Master said to them, " Be of good cheer ; it is I ; be not afraid." Their doubts being not yet appeased, Peter exclaimed, " Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water." In obedience to the command of Christ, Peter descended from the

vessel, and walked upon the waves to meet Jesus : but, “ when he saw the wind boisterous, he was “ afraid ; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, “ Lord save me.” Hereupon Jesus stretched forth his hand to assist Peter, whom he, at the same time, reprov'd, because his faith had abated upon the tempest becoming more outrageous, even at the time when he was exercising the miraculous power of walking on the surface of the sea ; informing him that the doubts he entertained, were the cause of his being in danger of sinking. “ He stretched forth “ his hand and caught him, and said unto him, O thou “ of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt ?” Immediately after, Jesus and Peter came into the vessel, the storm entirely ceased, and in a short time they arrived at the place of their destination, in the neighborhood of Capernaum.

The miracle of Christ walking upon the sea, and enabling Peter to do the same, and that of his appeasing the tempest, inspired the apostles with a more noble idea than they had before conceived of Jesus. Notwithstanding they had been witnesses to his miraculously supplying food for five thousand men, exclusive of women and children, they were not actually convinced that he was the Messiah ; but the proof he had so lately afforded, of having unlimited dominion over the elements, impressed their minds with a full persuasion of his heavenly origin, and accordingly they “ worshipped him, saying, of a truth, “ thou art the Son of God.”

Upon the debarkation of our Saviour, vast numbers of people resorted to him. Among the crowd were such an abundance of sick people, that our Lord could not attend to the particular complaints of each ; therefore they besecched him, “ that they might only

“ touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched, were made perfectly whole.” Matt. xiv. 36.

We have already mentioned, that after miraculously feeding the multitude, Christ prevailed upon them to disperse: but yet they did not, according to his injunction, return to their respective habitations; for though Christ had declined being placed on the throne, they imagined that he would consent on the following day: and that he had dispatched his apostles to the other side of the lake, to make preparations for that purpose. These hopes induced them to remain in the solitary desert, and to take up their lodging in the caverns of the rocks and mountains.

They had observed him to retire to the summit of the mountain; and therefore they went in search of him early in the following morning: but being disappointed in their expectation of finding Jesus, they concluded that he must have crossed the lake in one of the boats belonging to Tiberias, which had taken shelter in a creek at the bottom of the mountain.

Crossing the lake, a great number of these people repaired to Capernaum, where they found Jesus preaching in the synagogue; and having informed him, that they had industriously sought him on the other side of the lake, enquired the reason of his having privately retired from them. Hereupon our Lord said, they had not sought him, because the miracles he had wrought in their presence had convinced them of the divinity of his mission, not from a desire of profiting by his instructions, but, because having been plentifully fed by him, they expected he would continue to supply their necessities by similar exertions of his power. “ Verily, verily, “ I say unto you, ye seek me, not because ye saw the “ miracles, but because ye did eat the loaves and were

“filled.” If they followed him from motives of worldly interest, our Lord informed them, that their expectations would be disappointed; that their great and principal care should not be directed towards the attainment of the food which can nourish the body for a short time, but to that which would nourish their souls, and render them incorruptible and immortal, by the communication of divine knowledge and grace. “Labor not for the meats which perish, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you; for him hath God the Father sealed.” John vi. 27. The prophets were accustomed to introduce in their writings metaphors of meat and drink, to signify wisdom and knowledge: but the Jews were nevertheless, entirely ignorant of our Lord’s meaning; supposing that by the meat enduring to everlasting life, he alluded to some delicious animal food, which would render them immortal, and which was only to be procured under the government of the Messiah.

Expecting that Christ would direct them to rise against the Romans in vindication of their liberties, and then by the terror of fire and sword; establish the sovereignty of that powerful prince so long promised to the Jewish nation, they enquired of him, what they should do for erecting the kingdom of the Messiah, and obtaining that excellent food, which he had declared he was authorized by the Almighty to distribute among his followers.

To rectify their error, by explaining to them what God required from them towards establishing the kingdom of the Messiah, Christ said, that they must not expect the blessings of heaven, unless they reposed full confidence in the person sent to them from the God of Jacob, and strictly conformed to the precepts he was commissioned to promulgate. From the dis-

inclination of Christ to erect a temporal kingdom, they now supposed he was not the Messiah, since the character he assumed, did not appear to correspond with that of the magnificent prince, who according to the predictions of the prophets, was to sway the sceptre of Judea; and therefore they informed him, that if he was desirous of their belief, they expected he would perform some miracle more extraordinary than those of Moses, or any of the ancient prophets, in confirmation of what he had said. "They said therefore unto him, What signs shewest thou then, that we may see and believe thee? What dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, he gave them bread from heaven to eat." John vi. 30.

The motive of the Jews in thus magnifying the miracle of the manna, by calling it bread from heaven, and insinuating that this wonder had been wrought by Moses, was to depreciate the divinity of the mission of Christ, and detract from the fame of the miracle of his feeding the multitude with the five loaves and two fishes. They observed, that this was a single meal of terrestrial food, for about ten thousand persons; whereas Moses supported the whole Jewish nation for the space of forty years in the wilderness, by food immediately supplied from heaven. In reply to this objection, Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven: but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven." John vi. 32. The meaning of Christ was, that the manna which fell around the camp in the wilderness, did not descend from heaven, but that it was formed in the regions of the air by the hand of Omnipotence; that by the miracle of the loaves and fishes, was typified the true spiritual and heavenly bread, of which the manna was only a symbolical representation; and that the food which sustained the

Israelites in the wilderness, was sufficient only for a single nation, whereas the benefits of the other would be extended to all mankind.

Among the people were many who listened to the discourses of Jesus with pious attention, and were desirous of being supplied with the celestial food which he had mentioned ; and they said to him, “ Lord, evermore give us this bread ;” whereupon the “ blessed Jesus replied, “ I am the bread of life : he “ that cometh to me shall never hunger ; and he that “ believeth on me, shall never thirst.” John vi. 34.

Christ then addressing himself to those who were prejudiced against his doctrines said, that though the miracles he had performed, were abundantly more than sufficient to confirm the divinity of his mission, yet the obduracy of their hearts suggested to them an erroneous opinion, that he was not the Messiah, because he resisted their solicitations to affect the pomp and splendor of a temporal prince ; but that the season was approaching, when their perverseness would subside, and they would acknowledge the Son of God. Our Lord further said, that he would at all times cheerfully receive the acknowledgement of those who came to pay their submission to him, however mean their circumstances and situations in life ; however degraded they were in their own opinion, and however violently they had opposed his doctrines. He said that he had descended from heaven, not to act according to the common operations of the human mind, by some of which men were excited to return evil for evil, but to bear with their infirmities, and exert every possible means of teaching them the indispensable necessity of sincere repentance, and a strict adherence to the precepts of virtue and sanctity, whereby they would become entitled to reside in the regions of ineffable and everlasting bliss. It was the command of

his heavenly Father, he said, that on the great and awful day of judgment, he should bestow eternal happiness on all who believed in, and conformed to, the precepts of his gospel. “ Jesus said unto them, I am
 “ the bread of life. He that cometh to me, shall never
 “ hunger ; and he that believeth on me shall never
 “ thirst. But I say unto you, that ye also have seen
 “ me, and believe not. And all that the Father giv-
 “ eth me, shall come to me ; and him that cometh to
 “ me, I will in no wise cast out. For I came down
 “ from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will
 “ of him that sent me. And this is the Father’s will
 “ that hath sent me, that every one which seeth the Son,
 “ and believeth on him, may have everlasting life :
 “ and I will raise him up on the last day.” John vi.
 35, &c.

Unable to comprehend the meaning of Christ, the Jews were offended at his telling them, that he was the bread of life, and descended from heaven ; and therefore they murmured among themselves, saying, “ Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father
 “ and mother we know ? How is it, then, that he
 “ saith, I came down from heaven ?” Our Lord re-
 proved them for entertaining sentiments so degrading to his heavenly origin, saying, that the obscurity of his birth, and the humble situation in life of his parents, were circumstances not contradictory to, or inconsistent with his divine extraction ; and that their disbelief in him, was in consequence of their want of faith in the revealed will of his heavenly Father.

Having asserted the divinity of his mission, our blessed Saviour proceeded to a comparison of himself, considered under the allusion of the bread from heaven, with the manna with which their ancestors had been supported in the wilderness. He said, that although their forefathers had fed upon manna in the

deserts of Arabia, they had yielded to the common lot of human nature ; but that the bread he offered to them, would secure to them the blessings of everlasting life. “ Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever : and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove amongst themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat ? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood hath eternal life ; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father ; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is the bread which came down from heaven : not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead. He that eateth of this bread, shall live forever. These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum.”

The people being ignorant of the meaning of the metaphorical expressions introduced in the discourse of Jesus, although the allusions were not uncommon among the Jews, he proceeded to elucidate what he had spoken, still, however pursuing a figurative stile. That he had descended from heaven, he said, was not a circumstance more difficult of belief, than that he should return thither ; of which in the course of a few

months, they would themselves be witnesses ; and they would then be convinced, that his origin was in the blessed regions of his divine Father, and that it was not possible for them to feed upon his flesh in a corporeal manner.

He did not mean, he said, that the expression of eating his flesh, should be understood according to the literal interpretation ; for the material feeding on his body, could not operate to the benefit of mankind. The metaphor was only intended to indicate the necessity of a firm belief in the precepts of his gospel ; and that what he had spoken, was to be understood in the spiritual sense ; for the admission of his doctrine, would be confirmed by the effusion of his blood ; and the death he should submit to, in order to obtain life everlasting for those who believed on him. For the purpose of revealing the precepts of his gospel, he had taken upon himself the nature of humanity ; and it was properly his Spirit, from which mankind were to derive the ineffable blessings of immortality.

Averse to abandoning the flattering hopes they had so long cherished, that the Messiah was to establish an earthly sovereignty, and assume all the splendor and magnificence of a powerful prince, a great number of his auditors refused to acknowledge him as the Redeemer of Israel, and quitted the synagogue in disgust.

Upon the departure of these obstinately incredulous people, our blessed Saviour turned towards his twelve apostles, and with a look of the most endearing complacency, said to them, “ Will ye also go away ? ” To this Peter, in the name of himself and his companions, said, “ Lord, to whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of eternal life ! And we believe, and

“are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.” John vi. 68, 69. Hereupon our Lord, to convince them that the most secret motions of the heart were not concealed from him, and that he was not fearful that his vilest enemy should witness his most retired actions, our Lord said, that from a vast multitude of disciples, he had selected only twelve apostles*, yet one of that number would prove his enemy: and this prediction was verified, in the conduct of Judas surnamed Iscariot.

* The number of apostles being limited to twelve, was probably typical of the reclamation of the twelve tribes of Israel.

CHAP. XXV.

Our Saviour goes to Jerusalem to celebrate the passover. The superstition of the Pharisees severely reprov'd by Christ. He discourses to the people on the subject of inward impurity, and predicts the abrogation of the ceremonials of the Jewish religion. He explains to his apostles what he had said to the multitude. He relieves the daughter of a Syrophœnician woman. Christ repairs to Decapolis, and cures a person who was deaf and dumb. Our blessed Saviour feeds four thousand men, and a great number of women and children, by the multiplication of seven loaves and a few fishes; after which he goes to Dalmanutha, and reproaches the Pharisees and Sadducees. Jesus cautions his disciples, and reprov'es them on account of their not understanding his meaning. At Bethsaida Jesus cures a man afflicted with blindness. Being on the road to Cæsarea Philippi, Jesus questions his disciples as to the manner in which the people speak of him, and also concerning their own opinions. He approves the reply of Peter, and promises that his fidelity and fortitude shall be rewarded by the blessings of futurity. Jesus predicts his sufferings and death, and rebukes the rashness of Peter. He delivers instructions to the multitude, and predicts the fall of Jerusalem.

SOON after the events recorded in the preceding chapter, our blessed Redeemer went, for the third time after his baptism, to celebrate the passover at Jerusalem: and while he remained in that capital, the Jews, who had conceived disgust against him in consequence of the discourse he had delivered in the sy-

nagogue at Capernaum, projected several stratagems against his life. In consequence hereof, our Saviour retired into Galilee, whether he was followed by several of the Scribes and Pharisees, whose view was to avail themselves of every opportunity of attacking him with malicious accusations, founded on forced and unnatural constructions of the precepts of his gospel.

In compliance with an ancient tradition, the Jews had long been accustomed to wash their hands before meals. It is true, indeed, that Moses required external cleanliness as a part of their religious duty ; but this was only to intimate, that the servants of God should be extremely careful to purify themselves from all uncleanness both of the flesh and the spirit. Though there were no laws to enjoin them, many other traditional ceremonies of a similar nature, were common among the Jews ; and the Pharisees affected to conform to them with the most rigid punctuality.

Observing that the apostles of Jesus did not strictly adhere to the custom of washing before meals, the Pharisees repaired to him, and demanded the reason of his permitting his followers to disregard so essential a part of the Jewish religion. To expose the absurdity of such customs, and to reprove the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, our Lord applied to them the following words of the prophet Isaiah : “ This people draw
“ near me with their mouth, and with their lips do
“ honor me, but have removed their heart from me ;
“ and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of
“ men.” He said they were strictly observant of the frivolous traditional ceremonies of men, and at the same time conducted themselves in direct violation to the positive commands of God. The law of the Almighty, as delivered by Moses, said the great Saviour of the world, enjoined children to honor their parents, and maintain and cherish them when reduced to po-

verty by age, sickness, or any of the infirmities and misfortunes incident to human nature ; promising the rewards of the kingdom of heaven to those who obey these precepts, and denouncing perpetual punishment to those who disregard them. But in direct contradiction of this positive command of God, they pretended, said our Lord, that to increase the magnificence of the temple was a more sacred duty, than to alleviate the distresses of those to whom they were indebted for existence ; pretending that the gifts offered to the great Father of the universe, operate more powerfully towards the attainment of salvation, than what is applied to the support of their earthly parents. He further observed, that, according to their principles, it was agreeable to the will of God, that men should permit their parents to perish, through a want of the common means of support, provided the substance that might have relieved their necessities be applied to the aggrandizement of the temple of Jerusalem ; by which doctrine, under the appearance of sanctity, they countenanced one of the most unnatural and abominable species of iniquity of which human nature was capable.

Having thus severely reprehended the intolerable hypocrisy of the Pharisees, our Lord addressed himself to the people, requesting them to reflect on the absurdity of the precepts inculcated by the Scribes and Pharisees, who, though ridiculously solicitous concerning matters of a frivolous and insignificant nature, were wholly regardless of those religious and moral obligations, which were indispensibly necessary to insure eternal salvation ; adding, that, according to their system, to take the common refreshments required by nature, previous to washing the hands, the Almighty deemed an offence of the most excessive magnitude, while they remained perfectly satisfied with themselves under all the accumulated guilt of an abomina-

bly polluted conscience. "There is nothing from
"without a man, that entering into him can defile
"him ; but the things which came out of him, those
"are they that defile the man." Mark vii. 15.

When our Saviour had dismissed the multitude, the apostles, who would gladly have effected a reconciliation between their Master and the Pharisees, observed to him, that those people were exceedingly offended at what he had said, as having a tendency to the entire abrogation of the rites and ceremonies concerning the meats, which, according to the tradition of their ancestors, had been deemed unclean for a long series of years. Hereupon, Jesus said to them, "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." Matt. xv. 13. By this expression our Lord intimated, though somewhat obscurely, that the traditional institutions should be wholly abolished, since they were neither established nor authorized by God. "Let them alone, said Jesus, they be blind leaders of the blind ; and if the blind lead the blind, they shall both fall into the ditch." Matt. xv. 14.

Peter, in the name of himself and his associates, now requested Christ to explain what he had lately said respecting men being defiled by what cometh out, and not by what goeth into the mouth. In compliance with this request, our Lord proceeded to shew them, that meats being of a corporeal nature, could not render men polluted in the sight of God, unless taken to excess or in opposition to the divine command ; and that in the latter case, the pollution must necessarily arise from the man, and not from the meat : but on the contrary, our Saviour explained, that what was offensive to God proceeded from the heart.—
"Those things which proceed out of the mouth, come forth from the heart, and they defile the man.—For

“ out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false-witness, blasphemies ; these are the things which defile a man : but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.”

The doctrines of truth, which were so forcibly inculcated by our blessed Saviour, could not fail to irritate the Pharisees, as they served to divest them of that mask of piety, by means of which they concealed the horrid deformity of their hearts, and became objects of such high veneration in the eyes of the vulgar ; and therefore they concerted various schemes against the reputation, and even the life of our blessed Redeemer.

In order to elude the malice of the Pharisees, our Saviour retired into that part of Galilee, bordering upon those celebrated Gentile cities, Tyre and Sidon, where he proposed to remain some time in concealment ; lest the numbers of people resorting to him, should render him obnoxious to the enmity of the Jews ; but news of the approach of the great Preacher of Israel being dispersed abroad, it was no more possible for him to remain in obscurity, than that the sun in the firmament should remain invisible when he riseth in all his glory “ as a bridegroom cometh out of his chamber, and as a giant rejoicing to run his course.”

Upon the arrival of Christ, a woman of Syrophœnicia*, whose daughter was possessed with an evil

* By St. Matthew, this woman is called a woman of Canaan, and St. Luke stiles her a Gentile of Syrophœnicia. Canaan and Phœnicia are synonymous ; for in the Septuagint version of the Old Testament, the word Canaanitish is frequently rendered Phœnician : and Phœnicia being comprehended in Syria, as Pliny asserts, the woman who on this occasion applied to Jesus, is properly called a Syrophœnician. Some writers assert, that the sea-coast of this country was called Phœnicia, and the more inland part of it Syrophœnicia.

spirit, came to him, and falling at his feet, appealed to him by the names of Lord, and the Son of David, supplicating his compassion in favor of her daughter, who she said was dreadfully tormented by a demon. The woman had been educated according to the superstitious manner of the Greeks, and was one of that abject and irreligious race, with whom our Lord was unwilling to have any kind of intercourse.

The importunate solicitations of the woman, added to the strong expressions of her distress, consequent on the grievous afflictions of her beloved child, however, awakened the compassion of the benevolent Jesus; but it was not immediately upon making her distress known, that she was relieved. The people of the country of which this woman was a native, were such inveterate enemies to the true God, that Christ passed on without deigning to take the least notice of her petition: but still she continued to urge her request with such unceasing vehemence, that the apostles requested Jesus would order her to depart, that he might be no longer disturbed by her importunities. Hereupon Jesus said to them, "I am not sent, but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Finding that she was the subject of conversation between Christ and his apostles, the woman was encouraged to persevere in her supplications; and declaring that she believed him to be the Son of David, the great Messiah, who had been so long promised as the blessed Redeemer of Israel, she fervently besought his compassion in behalf of her daughter, who was "grievously vexed with a devil."

At length, our Saviour condescended to speak to this importunate petitioner, though in a stile that seemed calculated to discourage all further attempts: "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to the dogs." By these words our Lord

meant, that it would be an instance of injustice to deprive the Jews, who were the children of the covenant, of any portion of those blessings which he was sent into the world to bestow; and more particularly to persons of her country, who were aliens to the commonwealth of Israel. Notwithstanding the severity of our Saviour's reproof, the woman preserved her humility, and replied, "Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." Matt. xv. 27. As the dogs are supplied with the scraps that fall from the master's table, amidst the profusion of benefits you distribute among the Jews, let me, though a Heathen, obtain this request. Our Lord, by a very severe trial of her faith, being convinced that this woman entertained a just idea of the divine Power and Goodness, turned towards her, saying, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt: and her daughter was made whole from that very hour." Matt. xv. 28. Upon returning to the place of her habitation, she found her daughter lying on the couch, and that at the very moment when Jesus pronounced that she should be made whole, she was relieved from the power of the evil spirit, by which she had been so dreadfully tormented.

After performing this miracle, our Saviour repaired to the country adjacent to the city of Decapolis, situated on the eastern side of the lake of Gennesareth. Soon after his arrival, a man, who by a violent sickness, had been entirely deprived of his hearing, and nearly of his speech, was presented to him; and those who had the care of this afflicted man, besought that our Lord would yield him relief, by laying his hands upon him. Hereupon, Christ, taking the patient, with his friends, aside from the multitude, "looked up to heaven, and sighed, and said unto him, Ephatha, that is, Be opened. And straitway his ears

“ were opened, and the string of his tongue was loos-
“ ed, and he spake plain. And he charged them that
“ they should tell no man.” Mark vii. 34, 35, 36.

But notwithstanding our Lord's injunction to secrecy, the fame of this miraculous cure was immediately spread throughout the country, either by the man himself, or those who had presented him to Christ. This news raised the admiration of the people, who thought they could not be too liberal in their commendations of so great a benefactor, who, from the modesty he had displayed in wishing to remain unknown as the author of the cure, were fully assured that his object was neither praise nor popularity but solely the advantage of mankind.

The fame of the above miracle brought prodigious numbers of people to Decapolis ; and therefore Christ retired to a barren mountain, near the lake of Genesareth : but he could not remain long concealed, even in this solitary and inhospitable retreat. The people repaired to him in immense numbers, presenting the lame, the dumb, the blind, the maimed, and, in short, those who labored under any kind of bodily affliction, supplicating in their behalf relief from the heavenly Physician. The sight of these miserable objects excited the compassion of our Lord, and he entirely removed the causes of their complaints.

These miracles could not fail of raising the admiration of the people, who were particularly affected by the astonishing cures performed upon deaf and dumb persons ; for it must be observed, that although many of these were born with the infirmities above-mentioned, yet Christ did not confer upon them the faculties of simply hearing and pronouncing articulate sounds ; but he at once conveyed into their minds a full knowledge of the language of their native coun-

try, whereby they were instantaneously enabled to express their own ideas with clearness and precision, and with equal facility to comprehend whatever was meant to be conveyed to them by the use of words. "The multitude wondered when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see; and they glorified the God of Israel." Matt. xv. 31.

The various great works which were performed by our Saviour, detained the people with him three days in the wilderness; and in the course of that time, their provisions were exhausted. Addressing himself to his apostles, our Saviour said, he was unwilling to dismiss the multitude without refreshment, lest those whose habitations were at a great distance should faint, or perhaps perish on the road: and then asking his apostles what provisions they had among themselves, they answered, that they had no more than seven loaves and a few fishes. Commanding the whole company to seat themselves upon the earth, he took the loaves and fishes into his hands, and multiplied them to such a degree, that his apostles distributed among about four thousand men, besides women and children, a quantity of provisions more than sufficient to satisfy their appetites. After the meal, as on the former occasion of miraculously feeding the multitude in the wilderness, our Lord ordered the fragments to be collected; and they filled seven baskets.

Immediately after the above miracle, Jesus, accompanied by his apostles, embarked on board a small vessel, and crossed the lake to the coast of Dalmanutha, in the neighborhood of Magdala. Having heard that Christ had a second time miraculously fed the multitude, the Pharisees were apprehensive that his extraordinary powers would induce the lower classes of the people to acknowledge him as the Messiah;

and therefore they repaired to him presently after his debarkation, determined to exert their utmost efforts for publicly refuting his pretensions to that character.

In pursuance of this plan, they demanded of him a miracle from heaven, as a demonstration of his divine mission ; for they imagined that the Messiah would make his first public appearance in the clouds of heaven, and when upon earth, assume a degree of magnificence, splendor, and power, infinitely superior to what had been enjoyed by the most powerful monarch : and this opinion was founded, on their literal interpretation of the following prophecy of Daniel : “ I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of man, came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away ; and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”

By requesting Jesus to shew them a sign from heaven, the Pharisees meant that he should demonstrate himself to be the Messiah, by a miraculous and visible descent from heaven, and by rescuing the throne of Israel from the usurpation of the Romans.

The signal evidences that our Lord had afforded in confirmation of the divinity of his mission, were greatly more than sufficient to have impressed their minds with just sentiments of his exalted character, had not their incorrigible obstinacy precluded the convictions of truth. Our blessed Saviour lamented the miserable condition to which these people were reduced by their shocking incredulity, and informed them, that

since their minds were so utterly alienated from the service of God, he would perform no miracle to confirm to them the truth of his divinity, which, however, would be still more clearly ascertained when an event should occur bearing a similarity to the miraculous preservation of Jonas in the body of a whale. “A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas.” Matt. xv. 4. Herein our Lord alluded to his burial and resurrection.

Departing from the region of Decapolis, our Lord and his apostles took shipping, and directed their course towards the western shore of the lake. During their passage, Jesus admonished his followers to be extremely careful that they did not suffer themselves to be polluted by the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees; whereby he meant to guard them against the pernicious doctrines of those hypocritical people, who, though rigid observers of a great number of insignificant traditional institutions, were wholly regardless of the principles of true piety. The apostles, who had omitted to purchase bread previous to their embarkation, imagined that Jesus meant in obscure terms to upbraid them with negligence, and to caution them against purchasing bread in future of the persons addicted to either of the sects above mentioned. “Then Jesus said unto them, take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, it is because we have taken no bread. Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread; do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? How is it that ye do not understand, that I spake it not to you con-

“cerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven
 “of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then un-
 “derstood they how that he bade them not beware of
 “the leaven of the bread, but of the doctrine of the
 “Pharisees and of the Sadducees.”

Thus did our blessed Saviour reprove the dulness of the conception of his apostles, who, had they reflected on his usual figurative mode of speaking, must have clearly perceived his meaning; and had they considered by what supernatural means he had twice fed the multitude in the wilderness, they could not for a moment have entertained a doubt, as to the power of Christ to supply them with every article they could have occasion for during their passage.

Upon his landing at the city of Bethsaida, a blind man came to Christ, and besought that he would confer upon him the faculty of seeing. On account of the ingratitude and obstinate incredulity of the people of Bethsaida, and to avoid the urgent importunities of those who were desirous of his publicly assuming the character of the Messiah, our Lord declined performing the miracle in the city. Therefore, taking the blind man by the hand, he led him out of Bethsaida; and having touched his eyes, asked him, whether he could see? He answered, that though he could see, it was so imperfectly, that he could distinguish men from trees only by their motion. Hereupon Jesus touched his eyes a second time, “and he
 “was restored, and saw every man clearly.”

After the above miracle, our Saviour departed from Bethsaida, and retired into the territory of * Cæsarea

* In the Old Testament, this place is called both Laish and Dan. It was given, together with its territories, to Herod the Great, who bequeathed it to his son Philip the tetrarch. In order to ingratiate the favor of Tiberias Cæsar, Philip called it Cæsarea, and gave it the ad-

Philippi. Lest the evil-minded among the vast numbers of people who resorted to him should foment insurrections against the authority of the Romans, our Saviour frequently changed the place of his residence. The neighborhood of the lake of Gennesareth, was particularly convenient for his purpose; the people not being provided with a sufficient number of boats, nor being constantly in readiness to accompany him in his frequent passages across the lake.

During their journey towards Cæsarea Philippi, Jesus retired with his apostles into a solitary place, that his devotions might not be interrupted; and enquired of his companions, since he did not differ from the ordinary race of mankind in his external appearance, what opinion concerning him was entertained by the people in general? In answer to this, they informed Christ that some people supposed him to be John the Baptist revived from the dead, others that he was Elias descended from heaven, and that many believed him to be Jeremiah, or some other of the ancient prophets, restored to life. His apostles having not long experienced the benefits of his doctrines, and not being yet perfectly conversant in the principles thereof, in order to prove their faith, he questioned them as to their own ideas with respect to him. Without waiting for the concurrence of his associates, Simon Peter "answered and said, thou art the Christ, the "Son of the living God." Hereupon our Saviour congratulated him upon his knowledge of this important truth, and informed him, that he had the greatest reason to consider himself as being highly favored of heaven; since the great truth he had proclaimed, could not possibly have been revealed to him by any but the heavenly Father. Jesus

ditional name of Philippi, partly to preserve his own appellation, and partly to distinguish it from another Cæsarea, situated on the Mediterranean Sea.

also told him, that it was not without good reason that he had given him the surname of Peter, signifying a rock or a stone ; to which he would bear a similitude in the soundness of the doctrines he was to preach, and his firm and unshaken adherence to the cause of truth. Our blessed Redeemer added, that neither the most violent persecution, nor the terrors of death, should induce Peter to abandon the cause of truth ; and that his authority in the kingdom of heaven should be so great, that he should have the power of punishing, and granting remission of sins. “ And
“ Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou,
“ Simon-Barjona ; for flesh and blood hath not re-
“ vealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in hea-
“ ven. And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and
“ upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates
“ of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give
“ unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven ; and
“ whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound
“ in heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on
“ earth, shall be loosed in heaven.” Matt. xvi. 17.
18, 19.

Having thus expressed his approbation of Peter, and rewarded his faith by conferring upon him the singular blessings above-mentioned, our Lord commanded his apostles not to divulge their knowledge of his being the Messiah, lest the proclamation of that important truth, should occasion the Jews to attempt investing him with the sovereignty ; whereby those who were but little acquainted with his character, and the purpose of his mission, would be afforded an opportunity of censuring his doctrines, as containing rebellious principles.

It had been decreed by the Almighty, that Christ should be rejected by the rulers of Israel, as an imposter, and subjected to an ignominious and painful

death ; and our blessed Saviour deemed it expedient to decline publicly assuming the character of the Messiah, under such disadvantageous circumstances thereby allowing mankind to form a judgment of the truth of his mission from the salutary precepts inculcated in his preaching, and the great and many miracles which he wrought.

The acknowledgment of Christ to his apostles, that he was the Redeemer of Israel, inspired them with the most elevated sentiments of the dignity of his character : but to suppress any flattering ideas they might have conceived in consequence of the popular opinion that the Messiah was to establish a temporal sovereignty, he informed them of the vile indignities and cruel death he was to sustain by the sentence of the Sanhedrim, the priests, and the doctors of the law ; but that three days after his death he should ascend into heaven. Upon this, “ Peter began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord ; this shall not be unto thee.” Displeased at the presumption of Peter, our Lord severely reprimanded him for having opposed his determination of complying with the will of his heavenly Father ; adding, that his hopes were rather directed towards the conveniencies of this world, than the enjoyment of the blessings of heaven.

Our Saviour now addressed himself to the multitude, teaching them that all who were desirous of becoming his disciples, must dedicate their lives to the service of the true God, and submit to the utmost severity of persecution, and the most deplorable calamities, rather than violate the least of his commands. He informed them, that though it was a severe, it was a necessary duty, cheerfully to endure the afflictions incidental to their temporal existence, by the loss of which they would obtain a life of eternity. “ For

“ whosoever will save his life, shall lose it : but who-
“ soever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall
“ find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain
“ the whole world, and lose his own soul ? Or what
“ shall a man give in exchange for his soul ?” Matt.
xvi. 24, 25.

Our blessed Redeemer further said, that a day was appointed for the distribution of rewards and punishments, when by the especial decree of the Almighty, he should preside in final judgment of the whole human race ; and when the magnificent city of Jerusalem, and all the kingdoms of the earth would be confounded in one common ruin. “ Whosoever, therefore,
“ shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this a-
“ dulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the
“ Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the
“ glory of his Father, with the holy angels.” Mark
viii. 38.

CHAP. XXVI.

Description of Jerusalem, and the temple, with the several revolutions of that remarkable city and building. The modern state of Jerusalem. Description of the cities of Cana and Capernaum. Account of the church of the holy sepulchre. The sepulchres of the kings. The function of the holy fire. Account of St. Peter's prison, St. Mark's church, the houses of Annas and Caiaphas, the church of Cœnaculum, &c. The pool of Bethesda, the potter's-field, valley of Jehosaphat, brook Cedron, pool of Siloam, pillar of judgment, sepulchre of the Blessed Virgin, the vaults of the apostles, mount Olivet, the chapel of ascension, the palace of Pilate. Some account of Beer; with remarks on the country of Palestine.

THE city of Jerusalem, the capital of Judea, was the scene of many of the remarkable passages of the life of our blessed Redeemer. Cana, Capernaum, Tyre, and Sidon, were also rendered famous by being honored as the places of the residence of our Saviour. Some account of these, and other towns and countries mentioned in the evangelical writings, we presume will not be unacceptable to our readers, since we have several times already had occasion to mention these places; and since in the prosecution of this work, we shall often find ourselves under the like necessity.

The ancient names of the capital of Judea, (called by the Greeks and Romans Solyma and Jerosolyma) were Jebus and Salem. By the Hebrews it was called Jeruschalaim, or Jeruschelem, signifying, accord-

ing to Calmet, the vision of peace, or the possession or inheritance of peace.

It cannot be easily ascertained to what tribe Jerusalem originally belonged ; for we read, that Joshua gave it to the tribe of Benjamin, after he had slain the king of Jerusalem, at the famous battle of Gibeon. By what means the natives again obtained possession of the place, and why the Benjamites did not entirely expel them, we are wholly at a loss to decide : but it is certain, that, soon after the decease of Joshua, the place was partly at least, restored to the Jebusites, and that it remained in their possession till the time of David.

On the other hand, it appears that this city was within the division of the tribe of Judah, when we read the following texts : “ As for the Jebusites, “ the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah “ could not drive them out : but the Jebusites dwell “ with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this “ day.” Joshua xv. 36. “ Now the children of Ju- “ dah had fought against Jerusalem, and had taken it, “ and smitten it with the edge of the sword, and set “ the city on fire.” Judges i. 8. “ David took the “ strong hold of Zion : the same is the city of David.” 2 Sam. v. 7. David, who was of the tribe of Judah, was no sooner acknowledged king, than he marched against, and subdued Jerusalem, and there established the seat of his kingdom. The psalmist makes Jerusalem a part of Judah, when he says, “ The Lord “ chose not Ephraim, but the tribe of Judah and “ mount Sion.” To reconcile these texts, it may be said that, being upon the frontiers of the two tribes, Jerusalem sometimes made a part of one, and sometimes a part of the other ; and that, though Benjamin might have the greater right to it, according to the division of Joshua, yet it belonged to Judah by right

of conquest, it having been thrice subdued by that tribe.

Jerusalem is mentioned by Herodotus under the name of Cadytis. Speaking of the expedition of Necho, and of the battle he fought at Megiddo, or, as he calls it, Megdolum, where Joshua was slain, he says, that after the victory there obtained, he subdued the great city of Cadytis, which he describes as a mountainous city in Palestine, of equal magnitude with Sardis in Lydia, which, in those days, was the principal city of the Lesser Asia. The place described under the name Cadytis, could be no other than Jerusalem, which was situated in the mountains of Palestine, and which was the only place that could be mentioned in comparison with Sardis. That, after the battle above-mentioned, Necho subdued Jerusalem, is evident from scripture. "And the king of Egypt made Eliakim, his brother, king over Judah and Jerusalem, and turned his name to Jehoiakim. And Necho took Jehoahaz his brother, and carried him to Egypt."

The capital of Judea is not mentioned either in the scriptures, or by Josephus, under the name of Cadytis: but that it was so called in the time of Herodotus by the Syrians and Arabians, will be clearly evident from the following considerations. By the eastern nations Jerusalem is to this day called by no other names but such as perfectly correspond in signification with the word Cadytis. They distinguish Jerusalem by the appellation of Al-kuds, which word, like Cadytis, signifies holy. From the time of the construction of the temple by Solomon, Jerusalem became the common place of resort for religious worship to the children of Israel; and thence it obtained the epithet of holy. In the Old Testament it is called Air Hak-kadosh, that is, the holy city, or the city of holiness;

and similar instances are to be found in several parts of the New Testament. The same title was given to the Jewish coin; for the inscription upon their sheckles was "Jerusalem Kedushah," or Jerusalem the holy. This coin passing current in the neighboring nations, it caused the words of the inscription to be widely dispersed, and the city to be distinguished by both, or either of them indifferently. For the sake of brevity, and the facility of pronunciation, Kedushah alone, grew into almost general use; as did Kedutha among the Syrians, who were accustomed to change the Hebrew *sb* into *tb*.

The Hebrew was not in use as a vulgar language after the Babylonish captivity; and in the time of Herodotus, the Syriac was the only language spoken in Palestine; and in that dialect, when he travelled through the country, he found it called Kedutha; to which word giving a Greek termination in his history, he named the city of Jerusalem Cadytis. For the same reason that it was called Kedusha in Palestine, and Kedutha in Syria, the Arabs called it Bait Almokdes, signifying the Holy Building, or the Holy City; and these people also used another adjective of the same root and signification, calling the place Bait Alkuds; and at length they distinguished it simply by the word Alkuds or the Holy; and by this name it is still called by the Turks, Arabs, and all other Mahometan nations in that quarter of the world.

The city of Jerusalem was situated upon a rocky eminence: it was almost surrounded by the other mountains at no considerable distance, and therefore had the appearance of being in the midst of an amphitheatre. On the east was Mount Olivet, being separated from the city by the valley of Jehosaphat, which also bounded part of the north; on the south was the valley of Gehinnon, beyond which rose the

mountain of Offence ; and on the west, it was fenced with the valley of Gihon, and the adjoining mountain.

In the days of our Saviour, the city was divided into four parts, separated by walls stretching east and west. That part next the south, overlooking the others, and including Mount Sion, was called the Upper City, but its former name was the City of David. In the midst hereof, David constructed a strong and magnificent castle, which was the residence of the succeeding sovereigns. In the west corner, and upon the wall, stood the tower of David. Here king Herod built a superb palace, containing two houses under one roof, to which he gave the names of Cæsar and Agrippa : and the ornaments of this place were more costly and magnificent than those of the temple.

The lower city, which abounded with inhabitants, according to some writers, was named the Daughter of Sion. On the east of Sion, upon Mount Moriah, stood the glorious temple of Solomon ; and between that superb building and Mount Sion, was his palace, which communicated with the temple by means of a high bridge ; and near this palace was that of the queen, and the house of the grove of Libanus. On a high rock, west of the temple, stood the palace of the Maccabees, which commanded a prospect of the whole city. This edifice was rebuilt by king Agrippa, who made it his usual place of residence. Near this structure stood the theatre built by Herod, and enriched with a number of exquisitely finished pictures, expressive of the conquests, trophies, and triumphs of Augustus. Against the south corner of the temple stood the Hippodrome, also erected by Herod, wherein he instituted divers exercises in honor of the emperor. In the decline of life, when he

supposed he could not long survive, he caused the chief people among the Jews to be shut up and massacred in the Hippodrome; that notwithstanding his character was held in universal abhorrence, his death might be accompanied by a general lamentation.

Within the west wall of the city was Mount Acra, on which steep and rocky spot was a citadel erected by Antiochus, and raised by Simon, who also lowered the extraordinary height of the mount, that it might not surpass the altitude of the temple. Upon this spot, Helena, queen of Adiabeni, built a palace. Being converted from Paganism to the Jewish persuasion, she abandoned the seat of her empire beyond the Euphrates, and established her residence in Jerusalem. She afterwards embraced Christianity; and during the famine which was predicted by Agabus, and happened in the reign of Claudius Cæsar, she greatly alleviated the distresses of the Christians, by supplying them with corn, which she caused to be purchased and brought from Egypt. Near the gate of Ephraim without the city, was the sepulchre of queen Helena, which had three pyramids. In the days of Eusebius this sepulchre was entire.

On the north side of Acra was the amphitheatre of Herod, a superb building, sufficiently spacious to contain eighty thousand people: near this building were the common hall, and the courts of justice.

Nearly adjoining to the north side of the temple, situated upon a steep rock, fifty cubits high, was the tower of Baris, belonging to the priesthood of the Asmonæan race. But when Herod came to possession of the sovereign power, he considered that the place whereon the tower of Baris stood, would be extremely convenient for commanding the whole city, and therefore he constructed upon that spot a large

and strong castle, having at each of the four corners a tower, two of which were seventy, and the others fifty cubits high. In order to ingratiate the favor of Antonius, Herod gave the name of Antonia to this castle. Here the Romans had a strong garrison constantly upon duty, in order to prevent any opposition to their authority from the Jews. On the north side of Antonia was a communication with the house of the Roman president, by means of a gallery which crossed the highway.

The third division of the city was but narrow, its whole length being only about equal to the breadth of the part last described. The west end was entirely occupied by the magnificent palace of Herod, containing within its walls delightful groves, gardens, pools of water, fish-ponds, and other places of entertainment and exercise. On the south-east corner of the wall stood the tower of Mariamne, an edifice of most exquisite workmanship, built in commemoration, and bearing the name of the queen of Herod, by whom she was put to death in a transport of groundless jealousy. On the south-west corner was the tower of Phasaelis, a remarkable strong building, being seventy cubits in height, and in form resembling the tower of Pharus. On the north wall stood the tower of Hippicus, which was erected in memory of the Hippici, the two brothers who were slain in battle. In this division were the houses of many of the prophets, and likewise that of Mary, the mother of John-Mark.

The fourth division of Jerusalem was more to the north than the part last described: it was originally a suburb, and the part where the inferior tradesmen and mechanics resided. The outer-wall hereof was rebuilt by king Agrippa with surprising strength on that side, where alone the city was assailable. The

height of this wall was twenty-five cubits, and it was fortified by ninety towers, standing at the distance of two hundred cubits from each other. The spot whereon stood this division, which was called the New City, as well as a part of that adjoining, is not within the present walls of Jerusalem.

The city of Jerusalem remained in possession of the Jebusites during the times of Moses, Joshua, the judges, and till the reign of David. After the decease of Joshua, it came under the government of the children of Judah: but they were either unable to defend their conquest, or only subdued the lower town, leaving the citadel in the hands of the Jebusites, who are said to have been masters of Jerusalem, either wholly or in part, for the space of eight hundred and twenty-four years. So confident were they in the supposed impregnability of the port, that, when besieged by king David, they placed their blind, lame, and other invalids upon the walls, to shew their contempt of his power. David, however, subdued Mount Sion, and having driven out the Jebusites, and removed from Hebron, established the seat of his empire in that city; which having much enlarged, and rendered surprisingly magnificent, he named the City of David. From this time, if not before, the name of Jebus began to lose itself in Jerusalem, the letter *r* being substituted in the room of *b*, for the sake of a more agreeable sound.

So many great and beautiful works were added by Solomon, that Jerusalem became the most magnificent city of the East. Under the reign of Rehoboam, the son and successor of Solomon, it was taken and plundered by Shishak king of Egypt, who carried away all the treasures of the temple and the royal palace, which had been constructed and embellished by Solomon at an amazing expence.

During the reign of Jehoash, this city was besieged by Hazael, king of Syria; but this prince consented to accept a large sum by way of ransom. To procure the money demanded for the redemption of the city, Jehoash confiscated the treasures of the temple, and of the royal palace.

But notwithstanding the gratuity he had received, in the following year he treacherously sent an army to invest the city a second time; and a desperate battle ensued, in which the troops of Judah were defeated, and several of her most distinguished princes and warriors slain; and at this time Jehoash himself was lingering under a painful illness. Some time after this, Amaziah, the son and successor of Jehoash, having rashly declared war against Jehoash king of Israel, the arms of the latter prevailed, and he made a prisoner of war of the king of Judah, plundered the city and temple of Jerusalem, and destroyed the wall to the extent of four hundred cubits. “And Judah
“ was put to the worse before Israel, and they fled
“ every man to their tents. And Jehoash king of
“ Israel, took Amaziah king of Judah, the son of Je-
“ hoash, the son of Ahaziah at Beth-shemeth, and
“ came to Jerusalem, and brake down the wall of Je-
“ rusalem, from the gate of Ephraim, unto the cor-
“ ner gate, four hundred cubits. And he took all
“ the gold, and the silver, and all the vessels that were
“ found in the house of the Lord, and in the treasures
“ of the king’s house, and hostages, and returned to
“ Samaria.”

About two hundred years after this, Josiah being slain at Megiddo, Pharaoh Necho entered Jerusalem, and took Jehoahaz, whom the people had chosen as the successor of his father in the sovereignty, and carried him into Egypt, where he died. It does not appear from the scriptural writings, that Necho plun-

dered either the city or temple : but he imposed a tax upon the land of Judah of ten talents of gold, and an hundred talents of silver. Necho appointed Jehoiakim to succeed Jehoahaz on the throne ; and this sovereign raised the tax by a capitation upon the people, proportioned to their respective incomes.

In the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim, Nebuchadnezzar made an irruption into Judea, and laid siege to Jerusalem, which was then under tribute to the king of Egypt ; and having subdued the city, he appointed Jehoiakim to govern there as his tributary, though he had before confined him in irons, and formed the design of taking him a prisoner to Babylon. Thus is a reconciliation afforded to the different historical passages, where this event is mentioned ; for some of these imply, that Jehoiakim was conducted to Babylon as a prisoner of war, and others that he continued to exercise the powers of the sovereignty.

Having reigned over Jerusalem for the space of three years, in subjection to Nebuchadnezzar, Jehoiakim fomented an insurrection against the conqueror ; in consequence of which he entered Jerusalem a second time, and having slain his deputy, caused his body to be thrown into a common receptacle for soil.

Jerusalem was afterwards twice subdued by Nebuchadnezzar, and plundered of its wealth, together with the utensils dedicated to the service of the temple ; and almost the whole of the inhabitants were transported to Babylon.

Upon the expiration of the seventy years of captivity, Cyrus published a decree for rebuilding the city of Jerusalem : but it was upwards of eighty years before the walls were completed. From this period till the time when Jerusalem came into the possession of

the Romans, and till it was finally destroyed by Titus, it experienced a variety of revolutions; and the most remarkable of the sieges that the place sustained during this interval, were those conducted by Antiochus Sedetes and Herod; the first of whom took up arms to revenge himself for the affronts he had received from Simon Maccabæus, and the latter to obtain the sovereignty of the Jewish nation. In addition to the calamities the city sustained during these blockades, it was several times pillaged by foreign powers. But notwithstanding these misfortunes, Jerusalem was considerably enlarged, and richly ornamented by the princes of the Asmonæan line, some of whom filled the throne with great splendor and dignity.

The last and most memorable of all the sieges of ancient Jerusalem, was that conducted by Titus, during the government of his father Vespasian. The most consummate skill in the art of war was displayed by the besiegers; and the defence was managed with a degree of courage and fortitude, equal to the intrepidity and perseverance of the assailants. Jerusalem was subdued and utterly destroyed by Titus in the year of the world four thousand and seventy, in the seventieth year after the birth of Christ, and in the sixty-sixth of the vulgar æra.

Having conquered the city, Titus commanded his soldiers to lay it in a state of desolation, excepting only the three spacious and magnificent towers of Phasaelis, Hippicus, and Mariamne, and that part of the wall which inclosed the city on the west side. The victor intended the towers should remain as monuments of the prowess of the Roman arms, and that the wall should serve as a rampart to the camp which he had appointed to guard the country.

It is asserted by Epiphanius, that the house to which the apostles retired after the ascension of our blessed Saviour, was preserved, as were the seven synagogues situated adjacent to this house, upon mount Sion. Eusebius says, that Titus preserved one half of the city, agreeably to the prediction of the prophet Zachariah: "Half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city." According to St. Jerome, mount Moriah, where the temple was erected, and Sion, whereon stood the royal palace, received no injury from the army under Titus. The wall on the west side is supposed to have included half the city; and in this place were situated the towers of Phasaelis, Hippicus, and Mariamne. Admitting that only half the city was destroyed, nothing appears to derogate from the literal accomplishment of the prophecy of Christ; since Titus abolished the temple worship of the Jews, and, to all appearance, abrogated their civil authority; and since, what he left unfinished was completed by the emperor Adrian.

The inhabitants who remained in Judea after the destruction of the temple, were severely taxed by Titus and Domitian. Nerva, the successor of Domitian, somewhat abated of this severity; but, rendered desperate by their calamities, they rebelled against Trajan, the next emperor, when after an immense effusion of blood, they were reduced to a state of the most deplorable distress.

The Jews opposed the authority of Adrian; and their insurrections being fomented to a violent degree by the artifices of the imposter Barchochebas, who arrogated to himself the character of the Messiah, the emperor, to punish the contumacy of the Jews, and to prevent future dissensions, determined to effect the utter destruction of Jerusalem; and this purpose

he, at length, executed, though not till five hundred and eighty thousand of the Jews had lost their lives in the dreadful contest, wherein the slaughter on the part of the Romans was also very considerable.

Adrian entirely rebuilt Jerusalem, and gave it the name of * *Ælia Capitolina*. Great numbers of the Jews, all of whom were prohibited from entering this new city, under the penalty of being put to death, were publicly sold like cattle; and such as could not be disposed of in that manner, were transported into Egypt. A temple was built to Jupiter on the spot where Christ rose from the dead; a figure of Venus, carved in marble, was erected on mount Calvary, where the cross stood; a hog in marble was fixed upon the gate leading to Bethlehem; at which place a grove was planted in honor of Adonis, to whom was dedicated the cave of the nativity of our blessed Saviour. From these facts it appears, that the vengeance of the emperor was directed both against the Jews and Christians, although the latter were not precluded from entering the city, and their bishops were indulged in the privilege of residing there, and exercising the functions of their office.

When the Christians were in state of peace, they constructed a magnificent church on the spot where the temple had stood: but the holy city coming into the possession of the Turks, they built a mosque in the same place. The Christians, and particularly Helena, the mother of Constantine, raised many curious and superb edifices at Jerusalem, and the other places which are most remarkable in the gospel.

* The emperor called the place *Ælia* from his family name, and *Capitolina* in honor of Jupiter *Capitolinus*, to whom it was dedicated.

Upon the return of the Israelites from Egypt, the Almighty was pleased to impose a positive command upon Moses, purporting that he would have a sanctuary, or place particularly appropriated to divine worship. "And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell amongst them. According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it." &c. *Exod. xxv.* The Almighty having revealed to David, that Jerusalem was the place he had appointed for his habitation, it occurred to the mind of that pious prince, that it was extremely improper he should himself reside in a house of cedar, while the ark of the Lord was enclosed only with curtains. David now projected a design of erecting a temple for the God of Israel, in a stile of such superior magnificence, as should render it not wholly unworthy of the patronage of the Divine Being to whose honor it was meant to be dedicated. Though this pious resolution was highly acceptable to God, yet in his infinite wisdom he deemed it not expedient that the project should be carried into execution by David, whom he acquainted, by the agency of the prophet Nathan, that as he had caused a vast effusion of blood in the course of the several wars wherein he had engaged, the honor of building the temple should be reserved for Solomon, his son and successor, who was to be a prince of a pacific disposition. Upon receiving this notice of the divine approbation of his purpose, though not of his personal execution thereof, David humbled himself before heaven, and with ardent zeal poured forth thanks to the Almighty.

Agreably to what had been predicted, soon after his accession to the throne of his father, Solomon began to build a house to the name of the Lord God of Israel, which proved in every respect the most magnificent, rich, and glorious structure that was ever rais-

ed. The following description of the temple and palace of Solomon is extracted from Josephus*:

“ Upon the accession of Solomon to the throne, Hiram, the king of Tyre, sent an embassy to congratulate him on the occasion, and to express the satisfaction he enjoyed upon the government being continued in the family of David, for whom he had entertained a great friendship. Solomon sent the following letter by these ambassadors.

“ *King Solomon to King Hiram, greeting.*”

“ MY father David, be it known to thee, O king, long entertained the design of constructing a temple, and dedicating the same to the honor of God: but the wars of his time compelled him to decline this holy work, which he left to be completed by me, during a state of peace, according to the prediction of the Lord. Praised and blessed be his holy name for the present tranquility of my reign. By the divine assistance, I shall avail myself of the opportunity that is afforded to prosecute this important work. I therefore request that you will permit some of your people to accompany my servants to mount Libanus, and there assist in cutting down materials for the intended structure; the Sidonians having more judgment in that business than we have.— Such rewards as you may judge to be reasonable, shall be given to the workmen.”

“ Solomon’s letter proved highly satisfactory to Hiram, who sent the following reply :

* Vide the works of the celebrated historian, translated by Thompson and Price, vol. i. p. 333.

“ King Hiram to King Solomon.”

“ No circumstance could have afforded me greater pleasure, than that I experience in consequence of the government of your blessed father being transferred to a successor of such eminent virtue and wisdom. Praised be the name of the Almighty for the gracious providence manifested in this happy event. Your request shall be cheerfully granted. Such numbers of the finest cedar and cypress trees as you may have occasion for, I will order to be cut down ; and they shall be transported to such ports as you may appoint, whence they may be conveyed to Jerusalem by your own people. In exchange for this, if you will supply us with such a proportion of corn as may be convenient, it will be considered as a particular obligation ; that being an article most wanted in this island.”

“ The duplicates of these letters are still to be seen in our own and the Tyrian records. I do not, for the sake of embellishing my narrative, mention any matters which are not founded on the authority of truth ; and nothing will be found in my writings, which will not bear the strictest scrutiny. To prevaricate on a subject of this nature, would indeed argue an extreme degree of impiety.

“ Hiram’s letter proved so agreeable to Solomon, that he ordered him an annual present, consisting of two thousand measures of wheat, two thousand vessels of oil, and two thousand vessels of wine, each vessel containing seventy-two quarts. The friendship thus commenced between the kings daily increased, and was manifested by a constant interchange of offices of kindness.

“ Solomon commanded thirty thousand workmen
“ to be selected, ten thousand of whom he ordered
“ to cut wood upon mount Libanus for the space of
“ one month, at the expiration of which time they
“ were to be relieved by a second ten thousand, who
“ were to do duty for a like period, and then to
“ be succeeded by the third ten thousand. Thus
“ they were at liberty to remain at their respective
“ habitations for two months, and, according to the
“ rotation, every fourth month they were to return to
“ labor. Adoniram was appointed superintendant or
“ inspector-general of these workmen. There were
“ besides seventy thousand foreigners, whom David
“ had intended for conveying stones and other ma-
“ terials, eighty thousand masons and stone-hewers,
“ and thirty-two thousand overseers. They were
“ ordered to search for the largest stones for the foun-
“ dation, and to prepare them for use on the mountains
“ where they were procured, and then to convey
“ them to Jerusalem; and in this part of the business
“ Hiram’s men were commanded to assist.

“ Solomon began this important undertaking in the
“ fourth year of his reign, and in that month, which
“ is called Artemisius by the Macedonians, and Jar
“ by the Hebrews; five hundred and nine-two years
“ after the Israelites had come out of Egypt; one
“ thousand and twenty years from the period when
“ Abraham removed from Mesopotamia into the
“ land of Canaan; fourteen hundred and forty years
“ after the flood; and three thousand one hundred
“ and two years from the creation of the world. It
“ was two hundred years after building the city of
“ Tyre, and in the eleventh year of the reign of king
“ Hiram.

“ The foundation was sunk to an astonishing depth,
“ and composed of stones of singular magnitude, and

“ so hard a quality, as to resist the worm and the inclemency of the weather : and being closely mortised into the rock with great ingenuity, they formed a basis adequate to the support of the intended structure. The temple was sixty cubits high, and sixty cubits also in length, and the breadth was twenty cubits ; above this, was another stage, of equal dimensions, so that the height of the whole structure was one hundred and twenty cubits. The walls were composed entirely of white stone : and the front of the building was towards the east. The porch was twenty cubits in length, ten in breadth, and one hundred and twenty in height. Round the outward walls were erected thirty cells, or small houses, communicating with each other, and forming galleries, and at the same time answering the purposes of buttresses, by supporting the walls. These cells were each five cubits broad, and of the same length, and twenty cubits high. Over these were two other floors of the same proportion, and the uppermost of the cells were on a level with the lower story of the fabric. They were fastened together by large beams, so disposed as to make them appear of one piece, and as if they gave additional strength to the walls. Under the beams was a variety of carving, gilding, fretwork, and other curious ornaments. The walls and ceilings were lined with cedar, and the wainscots were embellished with a profusion of splendid ornaments of the purest gold. The fabric was composed of stones polished to the utmost degree of excellence, and put together with such ingenuity, that the smallest enterstice was not to be perceived. The whole, in short, was so wonderfully executed, that it appeared to be the effect of divine providence, rather than of human art.

“ The second story had not, like the lower part, a

“ large door towards the east, but several small doors
“ were made to enter from the sides. The king caus-
“ ed winding stairs to be cut in the wall, which stairs
“ led to the upper part. The temple was entirely
“ lined with cedar ; and the timbers were joined by
“ iron cramps, whereby great strength and solidity
“ were given to the building. Solomon caused the
“ temple to be divided into two parts, the more in-
“ ward of which was a space of twenty cubits square,
“ called the holy of holies, and declared to be inacces-
“ sible, being particularly consecrated to the Al-
“ mighty. The other space of forty cubits was cal-
“ led the holy temple, and destined to the use of the
“ priests. In the wall dividing the temple, a large
“ cedar door was made, and it was richly gilt and carv-
“ ed, and before it hung a veil of the finest silk and
“ linen, curiously embroidered with historical and
“ other representations in purple, scarlet, and a vari-
“ ety of other colors, in the highest perfection.

“ The king caused two golden cherubims to be
“ made, and he placed them in the holy of holies, and
“ dedicated them to the Lord. They were each five
“ cubits in height, and their wings, which were five
“ cubits long, being stretched out, touched the walls
“ on the north and south sides, and the other wings
“ joining each other, formed a covering for the holy
“ ark. The superb and curious workmanship of
“ these cherubims is beyond the power of descrip-
“ tion. The doors were twenty cubits broad, and
“ and of a proportionable height, and overlaid with
“ beaten gold ; with which precious metal even the
“ floor of the temple was entirely covered. Before
“ the entrance of this place was hung a rich curtain.
“ In short, nothing was omitted which could add
“ splendor and magnificence to this astonishing struc-
“ ture.

“ Solomon being informed that a man in Tyre,
“ named Chiram, was highly celebrated for his skill in
“ the manufacture of metals, sent thither to engage
“ him. This man was also an ingenious architect.—
“ The father of Chiram was an Israelite by extrac-
“ tion, and his mother was of the tribe of Nephthali.
“ The most difficult and curious work was assigned
“ to this artificer, who cast two hollow pillars, the
“ brass of which was four fingers thick ; they were
“ eighteen cubits high, and twelve in circumference.
“ Upon the top of each of these pillars was formed a
“ chapter of brass five cubits high. These were over-
“ spread with a kind of brass net-work ; below them
“ were lilies of the same device, and under these, two
“ rows of pomegranates depended, an hundred in
“ each row. The pillars were fixed in the entrance
“ of the porch of the temple, and that on the right
“ hand side was called Jachin, and the other Boaz.

“ Chiram made a vessel of molten brass, bearing
“ some resemblance to a globe severed in the middle,
“ and from its extraordinary magnitude it was called
“ the sea. It measured ten cubits from side to side,
“ and the metal was four fingers thick. It was sup-
“ ported by a twisted pillar, measuring one cubit in
“ circumference. At the base of this pillar were
“ placed the figures of twelve bulls and oxen, so dis-
“ posed that three faced the east, three the west,
“ three the north, and three the south. The vessel
“ called the sea, would contain three thousand baths ;
“ and each bath is estimated to be nearly equal to ten
“ English pottles. He made ten brazen bases, of
“ equal dimensions, with square sides : the length of
“ them was five cubits each, the breadth four, and the
“ height six. To each base were made four pillars
“ or supporters, and the parts, which were separate-
“ ly cast, were so nicely compacted and incorporated ;
“ that each base and its pillars appeared to be one en-

“ tire piece of work. The figures of a bull, a lion,
“ an eagle, and other representations, were wrought
“ upon the bases; the pillars, and the plates of the
“ borders, were adorned with corresponding images.
“ The whole was mounted on a carriage with four
“ wheels, each a cubit and an half over, the wheels,
“ spokes, nave, and every other part being cast, and
“ put together with surprising ingenuity. Embossed
“ work was introduced, in representation of hands,
“ shoulders, the paws of lions, talons of eagles, and
“ branches of palm-trees, for the purpose of making
“ good the angles: and rests were formed for receiv-
“ ing the lavers. To each of these bases was made
“ a laver of the same metal, being four cubits high,
“ and of an equal measure in diameter. The lavers,
“ each of which would contain forty baths, being
“ placed on the bases, were deposited in the temple,
“ five being disposed on the north, and five on the
“ south side, facing the east. The brazen sea was
“ also deposited in the building; and it was assigned
“ to the use of the priests, who were to wash their
“ hands and feet therein, previous to their approach-
“ ing the altar. The lavers were made use of for
“ cleansing the entrails and other parts of the victims
“ destined for the holocausts.

“ He constructed a brazen altar, measuring twenty
“ cubits long, twenty broad, and ten in depth, on
“ which the burnt-offerings were made; and provid-
“ ed water-pots, flesh-hooks, and boilers of the same
“ metal; and, in short, all the utensils appertaining
“ to the religious ceremonies. Solomon caused an
“ immense number of tables to be made of various
“ forms and sizes, and of inestimable value; and one,
“ which was larger than the rest, was entirely com-
“ posed of pure gold, and on this was placed the
“ shew-bread: on the other tables were placed twen-

“ ty thousand vessels and cups of gold, and forty
“ thousand of silver.

“ In conformity to the injunction given by Moses,
“ Solomon provided twelve thousand candlesticks,
“ one of them, according to the direction of the law,
“ held lights which were kept constantly burning.
“ This candlestick was placed on the south side, op-
“ posite the table for the shew-bread, which was on
“ the north ; and in the middle was the golden altar.
“ The ark of the covenant was kept in the holy of
“ holies, which was divided from the fore part of the
“ temple.

“ Solomon also caused eighty thousand wine cups,
“ ten thousand goblets, and other vessels of various
“ forms, to be made in gold, and twenty thousand in
“ silver. He also provided twenty thousand of the
“ golden measures, called the Mosaical Hin and As-
“ saran, and forty thousand of the same in silver ;
“ eighty thousand golden dishes and plates for steep-
“ ing flour in upon the altar, and double that number
“ in silver ; twenty thousand golden censers for in-
“ cense, and fifty thousand other censers for convey-
“ ing fire from the great to the smaller altar.

“ This great king further provided one thousand
“ pontifical robes, with ephods, suits of precious
“ stones, and other appendages, but there was no
“ crown, except that on which Moses had inscribed
“ the name of the Almighty, and which may be seen
“ at this time : ten thousand silken vests, and a like
“ number of purple girdles for the priests ; two hun-
“ dred thousand trumpets, agreeable to the directions
“ of Moses, and the same number of silver stoles, for
“ the use of the Levites, whose office was to chant
“ hymns sacred to the honor and praise of God ; and

“ four hundred thousand harps, psalteries, and other
“ musical instruments, for accompanying the voice,
“ which were formed of a composition of gold and
“ silver.

“ Nothing was omitted which wealth and industry
“ could add to this glorious work, to manifest the
“ zeal of the founder towards the Almighty, and in-
“ spire others with correspondent affections. That
“ part of the temple wherein the priests only were to
“ be admitted, was guarded by a fence three feet high :
“ the space which was for the reception of such of the
“ public as came with the purity and qualification re-
“ quired by the law, was a quadrangular court, with
“ spacious galleries, and four superb gates, opening
“ to the east, west, north, and south ; and these gates
“ were plated with gold.

“ For the purpose of erecting this temple, the most
“ astonishing hollows were filled up ; for the earth
“ was raised four hundred cubits, in order to form it
“ on a level with the surface of the rock on which the
“ building was raised. The edifice was environed
“ with a double cloister, supported by two ranges of
“ pillars, each of which was hewn in an entire piece
“ from the rock. These cloisters were wainscoted
“ with cedar, the doors were composed of silver, and
“ the roof was fret-work. This stupendous under-
“ taking was completed in seven years ; and, consi-
“ dering the magnificence and ingenuity so astonish-
“ ingly displayed, it may justly be said to have been
“ the work of ages comprised within that period.

“ The temple being brought to a state of perfec-
“ tion, Solomon dispatched letters to the elders of Is-
“ rael and the principals of the different tribes, re-
“ questing them to summon the people to Jerusalem,
“ in order to view the temple, and to assist in re-

“ moving the ark of alliance thither. In the seventh
“ month, which the Hebrews call Thuri, and the Ma-
“ cedonians Hyperberetæus, the populace assembled ;
“ and this was the time for celebrating the feast of the
“ tabernacles which was the most solemn festival ob-
“ served by the Israelites. The holy ark, the taberna-
“ cle of Moses, and the sacred vessels belonging to the
“ altar, were conveyed into the temple by the priests,
“ preceded by the king, the people, and the Levites,
“ who sprinkled the way with the blood of the victims
“ for sacrifice, and perfumed the air with incense, the
“ fragrancy of which extended to a great distance ;
“ and it was of so grateful and reviving a quality, that
“ though the populace had danced and sung all the
“ way, they reached the temple without any sensation
“ of fatigue ; and they concluded, that the Almighty
“ had descended to consecrate the temple, which was
“ dedicated to his worship.

“ Having reached the holy of holies, the place des-
“ tined for the reception of the ark, the people drew
“ back, and left the priests to convey it into the ora-
“ cle, where they fixed it under the two cherubims,
“ which had been made with the points of their wings
“ extending each to the other, so that the ark, which
“ stood just beneath, appeared to be covered and pro-
“ tected thereby. In the ark were deposited the two
“ stone tables, which had the ten commandments en-
“ graven on them, as they had been delivered by God
“ on mount Sinai. In the sanctuary were also placed
“ the candlesticks, table, and golden altar, disposed
“ in the same manner as they heretofore had been in
“ the tabernacle, when daily sacrifices were offered
“ up. Directly opposite to the door was placed the
“ brazen altar, that the grandeur of the worship on
“ the other side might be the better seen. In the tem-
“ ple were likewise deposited, all together, the re-
“ mainder of the holy utensils and vessels.

“ The most respectful care having been taken to
“ place the ark in a proper manner, and the priests
“ being retired, a cloud descended, which so obscur-
“ ed the view, that they scarcely saw each other ; but
“ its effects were so benign, that they appeared not as
“ proceeding from a common cause, but an intimation
“ of the divine pleasure, and of the descent of God to
“ dwell in the temple.

“ As the people were deliberating on this event,
“ Solomon arose, and with equal dignity and devo-
“ tion, prayed as follows ; ‘ O God, who dwellest in
“ eternity, thou who hast created this world, the
“ heavens, earth, air and the sea, from nothing : who
“ fillest all nature with thine unbounded and incom-
“ prehensible greatness ; look with compassion on us
“ who have built a temple to the glory of thy name.
“ May our prayers be heard, O God, and our sacri-
“ fices accepted : though thou art omnipresent, be
“ particularly with thy servants. Nothing is hid from
“ thee : from thine heavens, then, attend to our pe-
“ titions. Have mercy upon us, O God, who hear-
“ est those that constantly worship thee, and rever-
“ ently love and serve thee.’

“ This prayer being ended, Solomon addressed the
“ people on the providence and power of the Almight-
“ ty, informing them, how in visions and dreams,
“ strange things had been made known to David his
“ father, respecting things past and to come, regard-
“ ing himself, the name given him, his succeeding
“ to the government, the raising the temple, his
“ family being established, and the welfare of the
“ people at large : ‘ And now (said he) as many of
“ the prophecies are fulfilled, be you thankful to the
“ Lord, not only for present enjoyments, but for
“ future promises, and consider the blessings bestow-
“ ed, as a prelude to greater yet to come.’

“ Thus saying, Solomon lifted up his hand, and
“ looking towards the temple, exclaimed, ‘ What,
“ O God ! are the most splendid works of man, com-
“ pared with the least of thy bounties ! How shalt
“ thou, who wantest not our services, be requited by
“ those who have nothing to bestow ! All we can offer
“ is the tribute of our thanks and gratitude, a dis-
“ tinction by which men are honored above thy other
“ creatures ; which thanks I now render, for myself,
“ my family, and my people, for thy blessings heap-
“ ed upon us. Accept, then, the words of our mouths,
“ as the only present method of expressing our duty,
“ for thy mercy to my deceased father, who was rais-
“ ed by thee from the sheepfold to the throne ; and
“ for thy bounty to myself, in the ratification of thy
“ most gracious promises and predictions. Continue
“ to us, as to a chosen race, thy blessing ; may the
“ government remain uninterrupted in our family, for
“ a succession of ages, agreeable to thy promise to
“ my father David. Grant this, O God ; and may
“ my people possess those virtues that may make
“ them acceptable to thee. Condescend, O God, to
“ make this temple the place of thy peculiar resi-
“ dence. I am sensible that the heavens and earth
“ are too confined for thy majesty : much less can a
“ building of wood and stone, the work of mortal
“ hands, be worthy of it : yet I cannot refrain from
“ imploring thy protection of it. Preserve it, O God,
“ from the attacks of our enemies, and let thy pos-
“ session of it be its peculiar defence : and if, in fu-
“ ture time, the sins of this people shall call aloud
“ for thy judgments, let their humble supplications,
“ and unfeigned repentance, in this thy house, be
“ accepted as an atonement for their crimes. And I
“ implore this mercy, O God, not only for the He-
“ brews, but for all people who shall worship thee in
“ this place. Thus shall the world know that we are
“ thy chosen people, and that this is thine habitation ;

“ and it will be seen that the Hebrews are devoutly
“ anxious for a general distribution of thy mercies.’

“ Solomon having said this, bowed to the ground,
“ and having worshipped God, arose and offered a va-
“ riety of sacrifices, of the acceptance of which proof
“ was given, by a flash of fire which descended to
“ the altar, and consumed the sacrifices. The mul-
“ titudes who saw this, considered it as a token that
“ God acknowledged the temple, and approved the
“ worship; which so transported them, that they
“ joined in one general adoration of the Deity. So-
“ lomon now returned thanks for so perfect a testi-
“ mony of God’s favor, in which he entreated the
“ people to join him. He then recommended con-
“ stant prayer to God, that they might still experience
“ his grace, by living righteous and holy lives, ac-
“ cording to the laws of Moses; which would certain-
“ ly render them the most happy of all people. He re-
“ minded them that their happiness could be only
“ secured by what had acquired it, the practice of jus-
“ tice and religion. He farther said, it was not so
“ easy to keep what they had obtained, as to pro-
“ cure what they wanted; and urged them not to
“ forfeit, by misconduct, what their virtue had ac-
“ quired.

“ Solomon having finished his exhortations, dis-
“ missed the people, after an offering of 12,000 calves,
“ and 120,000 lambs, on which all the Israelites, with
“ their wives and children, were entertained, being
“ the first blood shed in the temple. Exclusive here-
“ of, the feast of tabernacles was celebrated at Solo-
“ mon’s expence before the temple; which was very
“ splendid and magnificent, and continued for a fort-
“ night.

“ The hurry of public business being ended, every

“ one thought of returning home, after acknowledg-
“ ing the benevolence, good conduct, and wisdom of
“ the king, and offering prayers for his continued life,
“ and the happiness of his people. They returned
“ rejoicing, singing, and praising God : and the te-
“ diousness of their journey was alleviated by the
“ joy of their hearts, and the mutual good humor of
“ the company.

“ Soon after this, God appeared again to Solomon
“ in his sleep, when he heard a voice intimating, that
“ his prayers and sacrifices were accepted ; and that
“ God would preserve him, and dwell in his temple,
“ while himself, his subjects, and their posterity con-
“ tinued faithful in worship, as his father David had
“ done. On this condition it was promised, that he
“ should reach the utmost sublunary happiness ; that
“ the possession of the throne should remain in his
“ family ; and that the sceptre should for ever be
“ swayed by a prince of the tribe of Judah : on the
“ contrary, that if they should depart from their pre-
“ sent worship, and seek strange gods, they should
“ be cut off from the face of the earth, and be no more
“ a distinct people ; but being harrassed by war and
“ other calamities, should wander as exiles and vaga-
“ bonds through the world. Solomon learnt from the
“ voice of God, that if his people apostatized, the new
“ building should be destroyed, and burnt by Barba-
“ rians, and Jerusalem laid in ashes by an unrelenting
“ foe ; so that amazement should arise from the ex-
“ tremity of the distress, that a people lately so favor-
“ ed of heaven, and so distinguished by their riches
“ and splendor, should at once sink to such utter con-
“ tempt : to which themselves would answer, that the
“ forsaking their God, and abandoning the religion of
“ their forefathers, and their country, had brought
“ that judgment upon them.

“ The temple being completed, Solomon began to
“ build a royal palace, which was thirteen years in
“ compleating. He was not so anxious respecting
“ the latter, as the former, which, (as we have here-
“ tofore said) was finished in seven years, owing to
“ the particular aid and blessing of God. The court
“ of Solomon was greatly inferior to the temple, as
“ the latter was designed for the immediate worship
“ of God, the other for the residence of an earthly
“ monarch : but it was adopted to its design, and a
“ credit to the prince and people who built it.

“ The following is a description of this sumptuous
“ edifice. On several rows of pillars an extensive
“ building was erected, resembling a common hall in
“ which trials are heard. Its length was one hun-
“ dred, its breadth fifty, and its depth thirty cubits ; a
“ space but proportioned to receive the numbers con-
“ tinually thronging to it. For security and orna-
“ ment, it had double doors, and was supported by
“ sixteen square columns, enclosed with Corinthian
“ work in cedar wood. A building was erected in
“ the midst of this hall, which was thirty cubits square,
“ and was supported by stout pillars : and here a
“ throne was placed, where the king used to give
“ judgment in person. Next to the hall were the
“ queen’s apartments, with drawing-rooms, which
“ which were adorned with cedar, and built on stones
“ of ten cubits square, which were in part plain, and
“ partly adorned with marble, after the mode custom-
“ ary in temples and palaces.

“ Three depths of elegant hangings adorned the
“ room, in which were carved images of trees, plants,
“ &c. so finely executed as to appear constantly mov-
“ ing. Figures of various colors, on a white ground,
“ filled up the space to the cieling. There were rooms
“ for retirement, rooms of state, and long galleries,

“ all gilt and furnished in the most superb taste.—
“ The services of plate for the king’s table were of
“ pure gold. To describe this whole mass of build-
“ ing, the courts, chambers, vaults, turrets, and other
“ offices, would be an endless task. In fact, the edi-
“ fice was a composition of gold, silver, marble, ce-
“ dar, with valuable stones dispersed on the walls and
“ ceilings, as the temple had been adorned. A large
“ throne was erected, and most superbly carved and
“ decorated. It was ascended by six steps, at both
“ ends of each of which was a lion, and there were
“ two at the top. On this throne were two arms, as
“ if to support the king when he sat on it; and be-
“ neath him was the figure of a bullock; and the whole
“ was a composition of pure gold.

“ The temple and palace took near twenty years in
“ compleating, towards the construction of which,
“ Hiram, king of Tyre, sent vast treasures of gold
“ and silver, and large quantities of cedar and cyprus
“ wood; in return for which Solomon remitted him,
“ annually, great plenty of corn, wine, and oil. He
“ likewise offered to his acceptance twenty cities si-
“ tuated near Tyre, on the borders of Galilee: but
“ Hiram having taken a view of them, did not like
“ them, and therefore declined the present, with
“ many acknowledgments of Solomon’s polite offer:
“ wherefore that district of country was named Cha-
“ balon, which, in the Phœnician language, signifies,
“ ‘ It doth not please me.’

We shall now proceed to relate the several revolu-
tions which the city and temple of Jerusalem suffered,
from the time of the consecration of the sacred edifice
by Solomon, to that of its final destruction by the Ro-
man army under Titus.

Ahaz, king of Judah, having called to his assistance Tiglath-Pilneser, king of Assyria, against the kings of Israel and Damascus, with whom he was engaged in an obstinate war, they jointly invaded Jerusalem, and despoiled the temple of the Lord of its riches. Ahaz gave the sacred treasures plundered from the temple to his ally, as a compensation for his assistance in the war. Ahaz profaned the holy place, by taking away the brazen altar provided by Solomon, and erecting another in its room, similar to one he had seen in Damascus. He also removed the brazen sea from off the brazen oxen, by which it was supported, and the brazen basons from their pedestals, and he also displaced the king's throne or oratory. This prince carried his impiety to such excess, as to offer sacrifices to false gods, and to erect profane altars at the corners of all the streets of Jerusalem; and, after destroying the vessels and utensils dedicated to religious purposes, he even shut up the house of the Lord. Ahaz began these profanations in the year of the world 3264, and continued them till 3278, when he died.

The gates of the temple were opened and repaired by Hezekiah, the son and successor of the impious Ahaz. This prince supplied the temple with new vessels in the room of those which his father had demolished, and restored the sacrifices, and all the other ceremonials of the temple worship. But in the fourteenth year of his reign, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, made an irruption into the land of Judah, and to purchase a peace of this invader, Hezekiah was under the necessity of despoiling the temple of its riches: but upon the departure of Sennacherib, he restored the holy building to its former splendor.

The iniquitous successor of the pious Hezekiah was his son Manasseh, who, upon ascending the

throne, profaned the temple by erecting altars "to all the hosts of heaven," even in the two courts of the house of the Lord. To punish him for these idolatrous practices, it was the pleasure of the Almighty to surrender him into the hands of the king of Babylon, who loaded him with chains, and carried him beyond the Euphrates. During his captivity, Manasseh was struck with a sense of his abominable sins, for which he endeavored to make retribution by sincere repentance. His contrition proving acceptable to the Almighty, Manasseh was restored to his kingdom, immediately after which he atoned for his profanations of the temple, by demolishing the idolatrous altars, and restoring the house of God to its former state of purity. The restoration of Manasseh to the throne of Judah, happened about the year of the world 3328, being six hundred and seventy-two years, previous to the birth of Christ, and six hundred and seventy-six before the vulgar æra. "Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the Heathen, whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel. And the Lord spake to Manasseh, and to his people; but they would not hearken. Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him: and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem, into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God."

Josiah, king of Judah, the grandson of Manasseh, repaired the temple with great care and expence, and he issued a strict command to the priests and Levites,

that they should replace the ark of the Lord in the sanctuary, and that it should not be moved from place to place as had been customary in the days of his wicked predecessors.

The temple was despoiled of a part of the vessels and utensils sacred to the worship of the Lord, by Nebuchadnezzar, who placed them in the temple of his idol in Babylon. This profanation was committed during the reign of Jehoiakim; and, during the sovereignty of Jeconiah, a second depredation upon the vessels dedicated to the service of God, was perpetrated by Nebuchadnezzar; who in the eleventh year of the reign of Zedekiah, subdued Jerusalem, and entirely destroyed the temple.

On the seventh day of the fifth month, about a month after the city had surrendered, Nebuzaradan, captain of the guards to the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem; and having despoiled the temple of the Lord of its sacred utensils, and collected all the riches that could be found in the king's palace, and the houses of the most considerable inhabitants of the city, on the tenth day of the same month, in obedience to the command of his master, he set fire both to the temple and the city, which were entirely consumed; and he likewise caused the walls and fortresses to be levelled with the ground.

For the space of fifty-two years, the city remained in a state of utter desolation; but upon the expiration of that period, Cyrus, king of Persia, issued a decree for rebuilding Jerusalem, and the house of the Lord. He also published an edict at the same time, enjoining that all the sacred vessels taken from the temple should be restored. After the conflagration of the temple built by Solomon, Nebuchadnezzar placed them in the temple dedicated to his idol called Bell;

from whence, in consequence of the decree of Cyrus, a considerable part of them, amounting to the number of four thousand five hundred, were delivered to Zerubbabel, who conveyed them back to Jerusalem; and many years after, the remainder of the vessels were brought back by Ezra, in the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus.

The beginning of the seventy years of captivity, was in the year of the world 3398, when Jerusalem was first taken by Nebuchadnezzar, and eighteen years before that prince destroyed the temple and city. According to the book of Ezra, it was in the first year of Cyrus that he published the decree in favor of the Jews. “ Now in the first year of Cyrus king
“ of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth
“ of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up
“ the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, that he made a
“ proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put
“ it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of
“ Persia, the Lord God of heaven hath given me all
“ the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged
“ me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is
“ in Judah.”

It must be observed that, as in the cases of Augustus and Tiberius, emperors of Rome, there were more beginnings than one assigned to the reign of Cyrus; which being computed from his first coming out of Persia at the head of his army to assist Cyaxarus, to to the time of his decease, appears to have been thirty years; from the conquest of Babylon, nine years; and from his being sole monarch of the whole empire, after the demise of Cyaxares and Cambyses, seven years. Tully adopts the first mode of computation, Ptolemy the second, and Xenophon the third. The first of the seven years, during which he was sole monarch, is that first year of Cyrus mentioned

in the first verse of the book of Ezra, quoted above, wherein a conclusion was put to the captivity of Judah, and a licence published for permitting the Jews to return to their own country.

Upon their arrival, they dispersed themselves, according to their respective tribes, and the families of their fathers, into the several divisions of the city, and employed themselves in rebuilding the habitations, and cultivating the lands, formerly occupied by the different branches of their respective families.

In compliance with the Mosaical institution, the Jews ought to have left their lands fallow every seventh year: but this was among the number of the divine commands which they had disobeyed; and therefore it pleased the Almighty to occasion the land to lie in an uncultivated and desolate state, till it had enjoyed the full number of the sabbaths of which it had been deprived. “And the Lord spake unto Moses in mount Sinai, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When you come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a sabbath unto the Lord. Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof: but in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the Lord: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard.” Lev. xxv. i, &c.

The people who had returned to Jerusalem, exerted their utmost endeavors for promoting the restoration of the temple, and the worship of God therein. Sixty-one thousand drachms of gold, and five thousand minas of silver, equal in value to about seventy-five thousand pounds sterling, were voluntarily presented for the service of the temple, exclusive of an

hundred vestments for the priests, each person contributing in proportion to his circumstances.

The first business of the people was to restore the altar for burnt-offerings, which had been destroyed by the Babylonians at the burning of the temple. This altar stood in the middle of the inner court, exactly opposite the porch leading into the holy place; and hereon were daily made the offerings of the morning and the evening service, and all other oblations to God by means of fire.

Having employed the first year in preparing materials, and engaging carpenters, masons, and other artificers, in the second month of the second year, the foundations of the sacred structure were laid with great solemnity. This work was twenty years in completing; for that space of time elapsed from the second year of Cyrus, when it was begun, to the seventh of Darius, wherein it was finished. There is great reason to be believe, that the hundred and forty-sixth, and the two following psalms were sung upon the dedication of the temple; for in the Septuagint version they are entitled the psalms of Haggai and Zechariah; and they appear to have been composed purposely on this occasion. This title they doubtless derived from some ancient tradition: but it is not prefixed to them in the original Hebrew, wherein, however, they have no appellation to contradict the supposition above advanced.

The dimensions of the second temple corresponded with those of the first, it being raised on the same foundations. The grandeur of Solomon's temple did not consist in the extent of the building, but in the exquisite workmanship of the ornamental parts, and the immense riches dispersed through the several apartments. The overlayings only of the holy of

holies, which was thirty feet square, and the same measure in height, amounted to six hundred talents of gold, about equal to four million, three hundred and twenty thousand pounds sterling, a sum greatly surpassing the whole wealth of the people who built the second temple. The temple of Solomon was built with stone hewn with peculiar care and nicety : but the other was principally composed of stones dug out of the ruins of the former building. The original structure was surrounded with cloisters and other superb buildings ; but the new edifice was for many years environed with a confused heap of ruins. However, in process of time, the out-buildings were restored, and such improvements were made by Herod, that the second temple was in many respects deemed not inferior to that of Solomon. But before Herod had improved the temple to this state of grandeur and magnificence, the Almighty informed the prophet Haggai, that this, comparatively with the former building, was very inconsiderable. “ Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory ? “ And how do you see it now ? Is it not in your eyes “ in comparison of it as nothing ? ” The Jews consider the second to have been inferior to the first temple in the five particulars following : the ark of the covenant and mercy seat ; the Shechinah ; the Urim and Thummim ; the holy fire upon the altar ; and the spirit of prophecy.

Though this ark of the covenant was of the same dimensions, and made to resemble the original ark, it had not the distinguished honors and prerogatives which were annexed to the other ; for there were neither the tables of the law, the rod of Aaron, the pot of manna, nor the divine Glory, or Shechinah, visible in the form of a cloud between the cherubims ; nor were divine oracles pronounced here.

Although the method of asking counsel of God by Urim and Thummim was frequently practised during the tabernacle, and doubtless continued till the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, yet we have no instance in scripture of recourse being had to this mode of application during the first temple; and it is beyond dispute, that this prerogative was not conferred upon the second. It was a saying common among the Jews, that the Holy Spirit spake to the children of Israel during the tabernacle by Urim and Thummim, under the first temple by the prophets, and under the second by Bath-Kol*. In short, it is a matter of uncertainty, whether the Urim and Thummim subsisted after the destruction of the holy city by the Chaldeans.

The second temple had not the advantage of the holy fire, which descended from heaven upon the altar of the tabernacle, at the consecration of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood, and which descended anew upon the altar of the temple of Solomon, upon the consecration of that building. The priests constantly supplied materials for the preservation of the holy flame, with which all the offerings by fire were made to the Lord. For making use of other fire in their oblations, Nadab and Abihu were consumed by the fire of heaven. Some of the Jewish writers say, that this fire was extinguished in the days Manasseh; but the more general opinion among them is, that it was not discontinued till the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans.

The spirit of prophecy, indeed, was not wholly suppressed during the time of the second temple, when Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, delivered predictions by the inspiration of God. But after the

* By this expression they meant, a voice from the clouds.

demise of these prophets (all of whom the Rabbins assert to have died in one year) the prophetic spirit was not revived.

In the year of the world 3489, before the nativity of Christ 511, and before the vulgar æra 515, and on the third day of the twelfth month, answering to part of our February and part of March, the dedication of the second temple was solemnized by the priests and Levites, and an immense concourse of the people of Israel, who manifested the strongest expressions of joy on this happy occasion.

In the year of the world 3837, the temple was profaned by order of Antiochus Epiphanes, who being in Egypt, was informed, that in order to recover his station as high priest, Jason had fomented an insurrection, and committed a great number of shocking barbarities in Jerusalem, thither he led his army in order to suppress the rebellion. Upon his arrival he was informed that the Jews had made great rejoicings, in consequence of a report being circulated that he was dead; this so exasperated him that he laid siege to the city, which he subdued, and in the space of three days he put forty thousand of the inhabitants to death; and having taken about the same number of captives, he sold them as slaves to the neighboring nations.

But notwithstanding these barbarities, his desire of vengeance was not yet satisfied; and therefore he forced into the temple, and the most sacred recesses thereof, impiously polluting by his presence both the holy of holies, and the holy place. That he might offer the highest indignity to the place consecrated to the worship of God, he caused a sow to be sacrificed upon the altar of burnt-offerings, and the building to be sprinkled with the liquor in which, at his command,

part of the flesh of the animal had been boiled. After this sacrilege, he plundered the temple, taking from thence the altar of incense, the table of shew-bread, the candlestick of seven branches, and a great number of other golden vessels and utensils, and donations of deceased kings, to the value of eighteen hundred talents of gold. He now returned to Antioch, with the spoils both of Judea and Egypt, amounting together to an immense treasure.

Though the Jews had given him no reasonable ground of offence, he harbored a most implacable enmity towards those people; and in about two years after the profanations above-mentioned, he detached a body of twenty-two thousand men from his army, under the command of Apollonius, the comptroller of the tribute, to destroy the city of Jerusalem.

Upon the arrival of Apollonius, he carefully concealed his hostile designs till the sabbath-day. When the people were assembled in the synagogues, and seriously employed in the discharge of their religious duties, he resolved to give full scope to his savage fury, and therefore commanded his troops to attack the people by surprise, to put the men to death, and make captives of the women and children, who he intended to sell for slaves. These orders were executed with unrelenting cruelty, all the men that could be found being put to instant death, and a vast number of women and children being made prisoners.

After this horrid massacre, they plundered the city, and then set fire to it in different places, and pulled down the buildings to which the flames had not communicated. With materials collected from the ruins of the city, they built a strong fortress upon the summit of the eminence in the city of David. This fortress was opposite the temple, of which it com-

manded a full view. In this place he stationed a strong garrison, and deposited there a vast quantity of arms, to be used, if occasion should require against the Jewish nation. The fortress being higher than the temple, the soldiers stationed in garrison, suffered no opportunity to escape them of attacking the people who came to pay their religious devotions in the sacred building. They shed the blood of the people in every part of the sanctuary, and defiled the whole building with every species of the most abominable pollution.

In consequence of these profanations, the daily sacrifices were of necessity neglected, and the temple was entirely deserted by the servants of the Almighty. Upon the return of Antiochus to Antioch, he published a decree, enjoining all the inhabitants of his dominions to adopt the Heathen mode of worship; and the soldiery were ordered to put such persons to death as should presume to disobey this command. The house of God was now distinguished by the name of the temple of Olympius, and the image of that deity, was placed upon a part of the altar of holocaust, and on the other part was erected a smaller altar whereon they sacrificed to this idol. The heathen worship was in the same manner established in the Samaritan temple upon Mount Gerizim, which was consecrated to the same Grecian idol, by the name of Jupiter the protector of strangers.

Idolatrous chapels, altars, and groves were established in the different cities; and officers were appointed to enforce a rigid conformity to all the ceremonies of the Heathen worship. In the city of Modin, dwelt a venerable priest named Mattathias, who had five sons, distinguished by their valor, and strict adherence to the ordinances of God: these sons were Johanan called Kaddis, Simon called Thassi, Judas cal-

led Maccabæus, Eleazar called Avaran, and Jonathan, whose surname is Apphus. Appelles, one of the officers of Antiochus, endeavored to prevail upon the priest and his sons to comply with the king's commands, on condition of which, he promised that they should be promoted to honor and wealth. Hereupon Mattathias answered with an audible voice, declaring, that no considerations whatever would induce him, or any of his family, to disobey the commands of God. After having made this declaration, he observed, that one of the Jews presented himself to the Heathen altar, and in a transport of religious zeal he slew the apostate; upon which a tumult ensued, and being joined by his sons, they put the king's officer to death, together with all who attended him. Collecting his family, and exhorting all zealous observers of the law to follow him, Mattathias, accompanied by a vast number of people, retired into the deserts, to avoid the persecution of Antiochus.

This was the beginning of the deliverance of the Jews from the tyranny of the Syrians: for during his life, Mattathias himself, and afterwards his son Judas, resolutely opposed the tyrannical proceedings of Antiochus. Upon the decease of Mattathias, Judas Maccabæus put himself at the head of the Jews, and led them against the army of Antiochus, which was under the command of Lysias, whom he utterly defeated, and drove out of the country. After this victory, Judas declared his intention of going up to the temple, in order to rescue it from the Heathens, and dedicate it again to the service of the Almighty.

In this proposal the people joyfully concurred: but upon their arrival in Jerusalem, they were extremely shocked to find the city in a ruined state, the sanctuary desolated, the altar profaned, the gates of the temple burnt, the courts thereof encumbered with shrubs

and weeds, and the apartments of the priests destroyed.

Having selected a number of priests of irreproachable integrity, Judas appointed them to remove the profanations, preparatory to the temple being dedicated anew. This duty being performed, Judas caused the temple to be supplied with new vessels, and utensils of gold and silver, and all other articles of which it had been despoiled by Antiochus. The dedication of the temple was celebrated on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month called Cisleu, which answers to a part of November and a part of December in our calander. This was on the very day of the year on which Apollonius, three years before, had desolated the city and temple, and two years after Judas had assumed the chief command of the Jews, in consequence of the decease of his father, being in the year of the world 3840, previous to the nativity of Christ 160, and 164 before the vulgar æra.

In the year before Christ 59, and from the creation 3941, a war subsisted between Hyrcanus and Aristobulus for the crown of Judea, of which the latter had possession : and it was at length agreed, that the point in dispute should be submitted to the decision of Pompey the Great. But Aristobulus apprehending that the question would be decided in favor of his rival, made preparations for opposing the Roman arms. However, he deemed it prudent to propose terms of accommodation to the general of the Roman army, which had now entered Judea : but upon his violating his engagements, by refusing to pay the money he had offered, Pompey marched a powerful army towards Jerusalem, where he was received and assisted by the party adhering to Hyrcanus. Those who espoused the cause of Aristobulus retired into the tem-

ple, to which Pompey laid siege, directing his attacks to the north side, where it was most vulnerable.

Such was the superstition of the Jews, that, although, in consequence of the mischiefs resulting from the Maccabæan wars, it had been resolved, that the defence of life on the sabbath day did not come within the prohibition of the fourth commandment, yet they did not deem themselves justifiable in assaulting the enemy, or in attempting to destroy, obstruct, or in any manner render ineffectual, the works of the besiegers. Therefore, on the sabbath-days they acted entirely upon the defensive.

Notwithstanding this circumstance of imminent disadvantage, the temple resisted a vigorous siege for the space of three months: but a breach being effected, Cornelius Faustus entered, and was followed by the Roman army; and so dreadful a carnage ensued, that it was computed no less than twelve thousand of the Jews were slain: and upon this occasion, the Jews who adhered to the faction of Hyrcanus, committed innumerable barbarities upon their unfortunate brethren.

Amidst all the horrors of this scene of destruction, the priests who were in the temple, were not once known to neglect any part of the daily services: but, on the contrary, they were unanimous in determining to lose their lives, rather than neglect the established customs of their religion: and many of them fell victims to the swords of the enemy, their own blood being mingled with that of the sacrifices which they were offering to the Almighty. This fortitude was the subject of much admiration to the conqueror.

The Romans having thus made themselves masters of Jerusalem, Pompey, accompanied by several of the

principal officers of the army, approached the sacred building, and after viewing the outer courts, profanely entered the holy place, and even the holy of holies. Though Pompey was guilty of offering a gross indignity to the worship of God, and of profaning the sacred place where that religion was practised, yet he did not commit any depredation upon the sacred treasures of the temple. In this building he found money to the amount of two thousand talents, exclusive of a vast number of vessels and other utensils, both of gold and silver : but this treasure suffered no diminution through Pompey, who left every article to be applied to the purpose to which it had been consecrated.

The forbearance of the conqueror, however, was not sufficient to atone for his abominable profanation. Before this act of impiety, all his undertakings had been attended with the most signal success, and the fame of his conquests had rivalled that of the most celebrated of his predecessors ; but now that he had polluted the sacred house of God, he became an object of the divine displeasure, and in the future incidents of his life, experienced a melancholy reverse of fortune.

The next revolution of the temple was in the reign of Herod, who restored the sacred edifice to a state of great magnificence. After being rebuilt by Herod, it was still called the second temple ; for all that this sovereign did, though at an immense expence, was only by way of reparation, and not intended to be considered as forming a new structure after a total demolition, which was the case with respect to the temple rebuilt by Zerubbabel. The learned Jewish historian from whom we have already given some copious extracts, seems the best qualified to speak of this structure with accuracy ; for he was an actual

witness to the building he describes, and was present when it was destroyed by the army under Titus.

“ * Herod having now signalised himself by a great number of very distinguished actions, and completed many buildings of uncommon pomp and magnificence, conceived an idea, in the eighteenth year of his reign, of erecting a temple to the honor of God, which he proposed should be a much larger and more splendid building than the former. This work he intended should redound more to the credit of his own name, and tend more effectually to perpetuate his memory, than all he had ever done before ; which proved to be actually the case : but lest the people should conceive that he proposed a plan which would be too difficult in its execution, he caused them to be summoned together, to try what the force of reason would do towards the removing of that objection : and when they were met, he addressed them to the following purport :

“ Friends and countrymen ! It would be superfluous in me to attempt to lay before you the particulars of all my proceedings since I was elevated to the throne ; wherefore let me assure you that, on the whole, I have been abundantly more anxious for your advantage and security, than for the advancement of my own honor. You are no strangers to the care I have taken of you in the utmost extremities, evermore preferring your happiness to my emolument. I need not tell you that of the important works which, by the blessing and assistance of Almighty God, I have brought to perfection, the principal advantages have resulted to you :

* See the translation of Josephus, by Thompson and Price, Vol. i. p. 606, &c.

“ so that Judea is, at this time, in a better state than
“ it has been at any former period. For these reasons
“ it will be wholly unnecessary to recite the particu-
“ lars of all the cities, castles, palaces, and other pla-
“ ces, that I have either built, fortified, or repaired,
“ in Judea, or the provinces thereon dependent. My
“ present business with you, however, is of a differ-
“ ent kind : it relates to the promotion of the true
“ worship and religion, and the reputation of our
“ country is concerned in it. It may not be unwor-
“ thy your observation, that this temple, which our
“ ancestors erected on their return out of Babylon,
“ is sixty feet lower than that of Solomon : yet are
“ not our ancestors to be censured on account of this
“ circumstance ; for it was no fault of theirs, that it
“ was not built in proportion to the original : as it
“ was erected according to a particular model given
“ by Cyrus and Darius, the son of Hystaspes, under
“ whose government our forefathers then lived, as
“ they did afterwards under that of the Macedonians :
“ so that it was altogether out of their power to make
“ this modern instance of their piety and zeal of equal
“ extent with the original. But now, since the gra-
“ cious providence of Almighty God hath so directed
“ affairs, that the government hath fallen into my
“ hands, and at the same time supplied me with pro-
“ per means of carrying my plan into execution ;
“ such as peace, leisure, an ample supply of ready
“ cash, a large revenue, and what is more valuable
“ than all the rest, the sacred and inviolable friend-
“ ship of the Romans, who are the masters of the
“ world ; I will therefore be particularly careful to
“ supply those defects which our predecessors, in con-
“ sequence of the peculiar circumstances they labor-
“ ed under, were unable to prevent : and it shall be
“ my business to advance the glory of that God, of
“ whom we have hitherto taken too little notice : all
“ proper respect shall be paid to his holy name, and

“ we will shew our gratitude for the mercies he has
“ bestowed, by the obedience of our future lives.”

“ There was something in this address and decla-
“ ration so totally unexpected by the people, that they
“ were astonished at the hearing of it, and filled with
“ apprehension of what would be the consequence.
“ Exclusive of this, they were extremely afraid that
“ the old temple would be pulled down before they
“ were certain of having another to supply its place ;
“ nay, the having any other at all, was rather the ob-
“ ject of their hopes, than of their expectations : for
“ they thought it almost impossible that such a work
“ should be compleated. While they were revolving
“ this business in their minds, the king, finding what
“ it was that gave them uneasiness, desired that they
“ would not indulge their anxiety any longer, for they
“ might rest assured, that the old temple should re-
“ main altogether in its present situation, till the ma-
“ terials for the new one should be provided ; and
“ in this circumstance his performance kept pace
“ with his promise.

“ For the completion of this work, a hundred car-
“ riages were provided to remove stones and other
“ materials : of handicraftsmen of all sorts there were
“ ten thousand artists, and of these the best in each
“ kind that could possibly be procured ; and for the
“ superintendance of them, a thousand priests that
“ understood the business of masonry and carpentry ;
“ and these priests were supplied with robes and vest-
“ ments at the king’s expence. When the workmen
“ were engaged, and the stones, timber, and other
“ materials all provided, the first work they began
“ upon was to clear the old foundation, and lay a new
“ one in its stead : and on this they elevated a super-
“ structure of a temple, the length of which was a
“ hundred cubits, and the height one hundred and

“ twenty ; but as it afterwards happened that the odd
“ twenty cubits sunk, it fell so much short of the ori-
“ ginal design ; and our forefathers, in the time of
“ Nero, had an intention of supplying the defect.
“ The whole building was a composition of durable
“ white stone, each stone being eight cubits high,
“ twelve broad, and twenty-five in length.

“ The principal front of this extraordinary building
“ had very much the appearance of a palace, the cen-
“ ter part of which was much higher than the sides.
“ The prospect it afforded towards the fields was ex-
“ tremely agreeable, and this prospect extended into
“ the country several furlongs : nor was the view of
“ the building itself less pleasing to those who had
“ their residence opposite to it, or such as were tra-
“ velling towards it. The porch of the temple was
“ a curiosity no less singular than the rest of the build-
“ ing ; the upper part of it being adorned with an
“ abundance of the richest tapestry hanging, variety
“ of beautiful purple flowers, and pillars appearing to
“ be interwoven ; round the pillars a golden vine
“ crept and entwined itself, the branches of which
“ suspended clusters of grapes that descended in ele-
“ gant negligence from the cornices of the room ; the
“ whole exhibiting a piece of workmanship no less
“ valuable for the materials with which it was formed,
“ than the admirable skill with which it was exe-
“ cuted.

“ Large galleries extended round about the tem-
“ ple, which were equally superb and magnificent
“ with the rest of the work ; but, for the elegance and
“ beauty of their structure, greatly surpassing any
“ thing that had been seen before of that kind. Two
“ strong walls formed the support for two of these
“ galleries, and were of themselves deemed pieces of
“ work of a very remarkable degree of excellencè.

“ Near this city nature had placed a steep rocky
“ hillock, but on the eastward side of it the descent
“ was gently sloping. Now Solomon, in former ages,
“ had, by the particular command of God, surrounded
“ this hillock with a wall, and the lower extremity of
“ it was encompassed by another wall, under which,
“ towards the south was a deep valley. This was
“ composed of stones of immense size, cramped toge-
“ ther with irons round the whole work, and extend-
“ ing down to the bottom of the hill. This work was
“ built in a square form, and was deemed a most ex-
“ traordinary piece of architecture, allowance being
“ made for its depth and magnitude. The best opi-
“ nion could be formed of the size of the stones
“ wherewith it was built, by viewing it on the out-
“ side, since, on the inside, they were joined toge-
“ ther, one within another, to prevent the inclemency
“ of the weather from separating them.

“ When this wall was built up to its proper height,
“ the space between that and the hill was filled up
“ with earth, so as to bring the ground to a level with
“ the wall; and then were erected four galleries, each
“ gallery being deemed a furlong in extent. Within
“ the square, likewise, there was another stone wall,
“ which extended round the top of the hill, and was
“ ornamented with a double porch, on the east side,
“ which was opposite the portal of the temple which
“ stood in the middle. Several princes contributed
“ to adorn this portal by many tokens of their royal
“ bounty; and round about various parts of the temple
“ were hung the spoils and trophies which had been ac-
“ quired in battles with the Barbarians: these Herod
“ caused to be again dedicated, and added to them
“ many others of a later date, which in his battle with
“ the Arabians, he had brought off as proofs of his
“ own victories.

“ A strong and well fortified building stood on one
“ of the angles of the north side, which had been
“ erected by some of the line of the Asmonæans, a
“ family that had executed the joint authority of
“ prince and high-priest, for a long succession of
“ years. To this place they gave the name of Baris,
“ or the Tower ; and herein they deposited the pon-
“ tifical habits, which, agreeable to ancient custom,
“ were never to be brought forth but when the high-
“ priest wanted them for his immediate use, in the
“ exercise of his office. To this purpose Herod like-
“ wise destined the building ; but on his decease it
“ fell into the hands of the Romans, with whom it
“ remained till the time of Tiberius ; and during his
“ reign the government of Syria was given to Vitelli-
“ us. Now this Vitellius, on going to take possession
“ of his government, was received in so distinguished
“ a manner at Jerusalem, that in grateful return for
“ the respect and esteem shewn him by the Jews, he
“ solicited that Cæsar would submit to their earnest
“ entreaties, that they themselves might take posses-
“ sion, and have the keeping of the sacred vestments.
“ Now Cæsar having graciously complied with their
“ request, these valuable effects remained in their
“ custody till king Agrippa had paid the debt of
“ nature : but, upon his decease, Cassius Longinus,
“ the governor of Syria, and Cuspius Fadus, the lieu-
“ tenant of Judea, issued immediate orders that these
“ sacred vestments should be deposited in the fort
“ Antonia, assigning for a reason, that as they had
“ formerly been in the keeping of the Romans, they
“ ought to be restored to their custody again.

“ Upon this proceeding, the Jews immediately dis-
“ patched away messengers to Claudius Cæsar, to
“ entreat his authority on their behalf. The young
“ king Agrippa, who had succeeded his father, being
“ casually at Rome at this time, solicited the favor of

“ Cæsar that these vestments might be committed to
“ his care ; which Cæsar complied with, and sent or-
“ ders that Vitellius should deliver up the charge of
“ them. In former times these holy robes were kept
“ under the seal of the high-priest, and the treasurer
“ of the temple : and on the day preceding any so-
“ lemn festival, these officers used to apply themselves
“ to the person who held the chief command of the
“ Roman fort, producing their seal, and taking out
“ the vestments : and when the sacred services of the
“ day were ended, they used to carry them back to
“ the place from whence they had taken them, and
“ there leave them, having first sealed them up, in the
“ the presence of the governor. It would not have
“ been necessary for me to have been so particular in
“ the description of this ceremony, but that there
“ have been many alterations from time to time in the
“ mode of proceeding. The fort above-mentioned
“ was already a place of no small degree of strength,
“ but very considerable additions were made to its
“ fortifications by Herod, who while he was engaged
“ in this work, likewise fortified the temple, on which
“ he afterwards bestowed the name of Antonia, in tes-
“ timony of respect to Anthony, heretofore emperor
“ of the Romans, who had honored him with very
“ distinguished marks of his friendship.

“ The following is a description of the temple,
“ which was called the first enclosure. There were
“ four gates on the west side of the wall, one of which
“ led across a valley to the court that lay on the op-
“ posite side. Another of these gates led to the city,
“ and two to the suburbs : from each gate was a
“ large flight of steps down into the valley, and there
“ was an equal number by which to ascend on the
“ opposite side. There was another gate in the mid-
“ dle of the square, precisely at an equal distance
“ from the two angles : a magnificent triple gallery

“ extended from the east side of the gallery to the
“ west, which was the greatest extent of length that
“ the place would admit. It is impossible to conceive
“ an idea of any thing more astonishing than this view
“ afforded: for so very great was the depth of the
“ valley, and so great the height of the building, that
“ was erected immediately on the borders of it, that
“ it was almost impossible for a person to look from
“ the top to the bottom, without his head swimming,
“ so that he would imagine his brain was turned.—
“ The galleries were supported by four rows of pillars,
“ equally distant each from the other; and between
“ those of the fourth rank a stone wall was built up.
“ The pillars themselves were built on a double base,
“ were twenty-seven feet in length, and so large that
“ three men could but just encompass them. The
“ whole number of these pillars was no less than one
“ hundred and sixty-two, the chapiters of which were
“ beautiful and elegant beyond description; and the
“ carved work was of the Corinthian order. There
“ were three galleries between these four rows of pil-
“ lars, two of which bore an exact resemblance to
“ each other, being each of them thirty feet wide,
“ above fifty in height, and in length no less than a fur-
“ long; but the middle gallery was double the height
“ of the other two, and forty-five feet in width. An
“ abundant variety of curious figures were wrought in
“ the wainscotting. A piece of stone-work so ad-
“ mirably formed, cemented, and compacted together,
“ as to have the appearance of one entire stone, sup-
“ ported the roof of the middle gallery.

“ Having said thus much by way of describing the
“ first enclosure, we must now remark, that not far
“ from it was another, formed by the erection of a
“ stone wall, towards which the ascent was by two
“ steps; and there was a partition of stone, on which
“ was an inscription, intimating, that if any strangers

“ presumed to enter there, they would be punished
“ with death : this division formed an inward enclo-
“ sure, to which were three gates, towards the north
“ and south, at equal distances each from the other.—
“ To the eastward there was another gate, considera-
“ bly larger than the former, at which such men as
“ had been purified were permitted to enter, if they
“ came in company with their wives ; but it was not
“ lawful for the woman to proceed any farther.

“ Between the two enclosures above-mentioned
“ there was a third place, where it was lawful only
“ for the priests to enter ; and this was called the mid-
“ dle enclosure. In this place the temple was erect-
“ ed, before which was placed the altar where the
“ priests offered up their sacrifices. This place was so
“ sacred, that even Herod himself durst not enter into
“ it, since the law prohibited him from so doing, as he
“ was not a priest. For this reason Herod commit-
“ ted the care of this part of the sacred work to the
“ priests, and they completed it in the space of eigh-
“ teen months ; whereas Herod himself, in superin-
“ tending the completion of the rest, employed no
“ less a time than eight years.

“ The finishing of the sacred part of the work in so
“ short a time, afforded matter of such extreme joy
“ to the people, that they united in returning thanks
“ to the Almighty for the blessing he had bestowed
“ on their endeavors, and likewise spoke in the high-
“ est terms of the king, for the laudable zeal he had
“ shewn in the promotion of the worship of God.

“ The temple being thus restored, the circumstance
“ was celebrated by every demonstration of the sin-
“ cerest joy. On this occasion three hundred oxen
“ were sacrificed for the king’s account, and a propor-
“ tionable number for persons of all ranks and de-

“ grees ; so that the whole of the sacrifices exceeded
“ in number what could possibly be imagined.—
“ There was a very great degree of solemnity in this
“ dedication of the temple, beyond, indeed, what any
“ person could have formed an idea of ; and this so-
“ lemny was doubled by its happening on the very
“ day of Herod’s accession to the throne.

“ While we are reciting an account of Herod’s
“ building these works, it may not be improper to
“ take notice of a vault which he constructed under
“ ground, from the fort of Antonia to that gate of the
“ temple which led to the east, near which gate he
“ caused another fort to be erected : this vault was
“ built with a view, that in case of any treasonable
“ proceeding against the government, himself or his
“ successors might have an opportunity of making a
“ secure and private retreat. A tradition is preva-
“ lent amongst us, that during the whole time of the
“ building the above-mentioned temple, no rain fell
“ in the day, but only in the night ; which was deem-
“ ed to be owing to the peculiar interposition of Pro-
“ vidence, that the progress of the work might not be
“ impeded. Be this as it may, the story hath been
“ communicated among us from father to son ; and
“ we conceive that in instances where the worship of
“ God is concerned, such an interposition is by no
“ means inconsistent with the laws of divine Provi-
“ dence.”

While perusing the history of our redemption, an additional pleasure must be afforded to the mind, if we are enabled to trace over the several revolutions, which have occurred in the course of so many ages, and to take a view of the present state of those parts of the Holy Land, which were once so highly honored with the presence of the Son of God ; and therefore it

is presumed, that a concise description of the modern state of Jerusalem will not be unacceptable.

The church of the sepulchre is situated upon mount Calvary, a small eminence upon the greater mount of Moriah. This place was anciently appropriated to the execution of malefactors ; and therefore it was not included in the walls of the city, being considered as a polluted and detestable spot. But after being made the altar on which was offered up the precious and all sufficient sacrifice for the sins of mankind, the place was rescued from the reproach and infamy that had been so long annexed to it, and ever after held in the highest veneration ; and, in the process of time, buildings were made round the hill, which now stands in the middle of Jerusalem ; a great part of mount Sion being excluded, in order to make room for the admission of mount Calvary within the walls of the city.

Previous to laying the foundation of the church upon mount Calvary, it was found necessary to level the summit, by cutting away the rock in some places, and elevating the surface in others. In performing this work, however, particular care was taken, that none of those parts of the hill which were deemed to have been more immediately concerned in our blessed Saviour's passion, should suffer diminution, or any kind of alteration whatever. Thus the spot where it is recorded that Christ was lifted upon his cross, appears to have been left entire, being eighteen steps higher than the floor of the church ; and the holy sepulchre, which was originally a cave hewn in the rock under ground, now appears as a cave above the general level of the rock.

Though this church is not one hundred paces in length, and not more than sixty in width, it is so con-

trived as to contain twelve or thirteen sanctuaries, or places consecrated to particular veneration, on account of their being reputed to have been the very places where many remarkable events took place, relating to the death and resurrection of our blessed Redeemer. Some of the places thus held in pious veneration, are enumerated in the following manner; the spot where Christ was derided by the soldiers; where the soldiers divided his garments; where he was shut while his persecutors dug the hole to place the foot of the cross in, and made other other preparations for the crucifixion; where he was nailed to the cross; where the cross was erected; where stood the soldiers who pierced the side of our blessed Saviour; where his body was anointed, preparatory to its interment; where his body was deposited in the sepulchre; where the angels appeared to the woman after the resurrection of Christ; where Christ appeared to Mary Magdalen. The places where these and many other occurrences happened, relating to our blessed Lord, are supposed to be contained within the narrow limits of this church; and they are said to be respectively distinguished by altars and other marks of veneration.

In the galleries surrounding the church, and also in the small buildings annexed to it, are a number of apartments for the reception of friars and pilgrims: and in these places, almost every Christian nation anciently maintained a small society of monks. Violent contentions formerly prevailed among the several fraternities of Christians residing here, as to the command and appropriation of the holy sepulchre. For appeasing these impious dissensions, about the year 1685, the king of France addressed a letter to the Grand Vizier, requesting that he would issue an order for giving possession of the holy sepulchre to the Latins, agreeably to the capitulation made in the year 1673. In consequence of this and other applications

of the French king, the holy sepulchre was appropriated to the Latins : but this was not accomplished till the year 1690. Though Christians of all nations are permitted to go into the holy sepulchre for their private devotions, the Latins alone enjoy the privilege of publicly exercising the offices of religion.

There are constantly about ten or twelve of the Latins residing in the church, having a president, to whose directions they strictly conform. Every day they make a solemn procession, carrying tapers, crucifixes, and other religious implements, to the different sanctuaries, where they chant hymns applicable to each particular place.

At the distance of about a yard and an half from the place wherein the foot of the cross was fixed, is to be seen that memorable cleft in the rock, said to have been made by an earthquake which happened at the time of the crucifixion of our Saviour. The upper part of this cleft is about a span in width, and two in depth, when it appears to close, but it opens again below, as may be perceived from the chapel underneath. There is no other than traditional proof that this cavity was made at the time of our Saviour's passion : but that it is a natural breach, is beyond all possibility of doubt ; for it runs in intricate windings to an unknown depth in the earth, and as far as can be perceived, the sides of this interstice exactly correspond with each other, and could not have been reached by any instrument whatever.

A little without Damascus gate is a spacious grot, said to have been for some time the residence of Jeremiah. On the left side of the grot is a shelve on the rock, which is said to have been the bed of the prophet. It is about eight feet from the floor, and at a small distance from it is the place where he is said

to have written his Lamentations. This place is now a college of Dervises, and is held in high veneration by the Turks and Jews, as well as the Christians.

Near the above place are those celebrated grotts called the sepulchres of the kings; but whence they derived this name, cannot with certainty be ascertained. Neither the kings of Israel nor Judah were buried here; for the scriptures particularize other places, where they were interred. It may, however, be supposed, that Hezekiah, was buried here, and that these were the sepulchres of the sons of David. "And Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the chiefest of the sepulchres of the sons of David." 2 Chron. xxxii. 33. This place is approached through an entrance hewn in the solid rock, which leads to an open court about forty feet square, cut down into the rock. On the south side of the court is a portico, nine paces long and four broad, also hewn out of the natural rock. Running along the front of this, is a kind of architrave, ornamented with sculptures representing fruits and flowers, which though much defaced, are still plainly discernable. At the end of the portico, on the left hand, is the passage to the sepulchres, the entrance to which is exceedingly difficult, being encumbered with stones and rubbish: the first apartment is five or six yards square, being cut out of the natural rock; and the sides and cieling are made with such just angles, that a place more exactly square, could not be formed by the utmost architectural nicety. Hence you pass into six other apartments, which lead from one to another; and these are of equal dimensions with the first: but the two innermost are deeper than the rest, having a descent to them of about six or seven steps.

In each of the above rooms, except the first, are several coffins of stone, placed in niches hollowed in

the sides of the chambers. The lids of these coffins, which appear to have been ornamented with carved work, have been in a great measure destroyed by sacrilegious hands. The sides and ceiling of the room continually emit moisture, and to carry off this, a channel is cut in the floor of each chamber.

The ceremony of the function of the holy fire is extravagant and absurd beyond description. It is still preserved by the Greeks and Arminians, under a pretence, that on every Easter eve, a miraculous flame descends from heaven into the holy sepulchre, and kindles the lamps and candles there. On occasion of this ceremony, immense numbers of people assemble, and after employing some hours in making a most hideous clamor through all the streets, and performing innumerable ridiculous and antic tricks, not to be surpassed by the most gross idiotism, or insanity inflamed by intoxication, they repair to the church of the holy sepulchre, round which they thrice proceed in tumultuous procession, carrying streamers, standards, and crucifixes.

Through some chinks in the door of the sepulchre a light appears, which is pretended to be the holy fire; and the tumult now becomes excessive, through the impatience of the multitude to light their candles at the holy flame, which they suppose to come immediately from heaven. Two priests now come out of the sepulchre, carrying blazing torches in their hands, and the people throng about them with inexpressible ardor, each endeavoring to obtain a part of the first and purest flame. Thus the whole church becomes illuminated almost in an instant, and the ceremony concludes.

After this, the people who have lighted their candles at the holy fire, employ themselves in daubing

pieces of linen with the wicks and melting wax : and the linen thus daubed, is used for winding-sheets ; it being the opinion of these ignorant and superstitious people, that a shroud thus prepared, will effectually secure their eternal salvation.

Close by the church of the holy sepulchre is St. Peter's prison, from which he was delivered by the angel. " And behold the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison : and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals : and so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. And he went out, and followed him." Acts xii. 7, 8, 9. The place where Peter was confined, was made use of as a prison a few years since, and probably is at this time.

About a furlong from St. Peter's prison stands a church, said to have been built by Helena, on the spot where stood the house of Zebedee. This is in the possession of the Greeks, who say that Zebedee, being a fisherman, was accustomed to bring fish from Joppa to this place for sale. Near this spot is the place where people assert anciently stood the iron gate, which opened to Peter by a divine impulse. Here also is the small church built over the house of St. Mark, -towards which the apostles repaired after his miraculous delivery from prison. In this church is shewn a Syriac manuscript of the New-Testament, in folio, which the Syrians declare to be near nine hundred years old : and these people likewise shew a small stone font, which, they say, was used by the apostles in the ceremony of baptism. In the same street, and at about the distance of one hundred and fifty paces from the above church, is a house, said to be

that inhabited by St. Thomas ; this was formerly converted into a Christian church, but it is now a mosque.

A street crossing that where the above buildings stand, leads on the right to the spot where, it is said, our Saviour appeared to the martyrs, after his resurrection. On the left, the same street leads to the quarter where the Armenians have a spacious and delightful tract of ground, their convent and gardens occupying all that part of Mount Sion which is included within the walls of the city. Their church is built over the place, where they assert St. James the brother of John to have been beheaded ; and in a small chapel on the right hand of the church, they show a place where, they say, the decolation was performed. In this church are two splendid altars, ornamented with rich mitres, embroidered copes, crosses of gold and silver, crowns, chalices, and a vast number of other church utensils. In the middle of the church is a beautiful pulpit made of tortoise-shell and mother of pearl, having a rich canopy or cupola composed of the same materials. In a kind of anti-chapel in this church, are laid upon one side of the altar three large rough stones, which are held in high veneration, one of them being deemed the stone upon which Moses cast the two tables, when he broke them in indignation at the idolatry of the Jews ; one of the others being brought from the place of our Saviour's baptism, and the third from that of his transfiguration.

A little farther is a small church, also in the hands of the Armenians, founded, as it is supposed, on the spot where stood the house of Annas. Within this building, and near the door, is shewn a hole in the wall, denoting the place where one of the officers of the high-priest smote our blessed Redeemer. The man by whose impious hand that blow was given, the

friars insist to have been Malchus, whose ear our Saviour had healed. In the court before this church stood an olive-tree, to which, it is reported, Christ was chained for some time by the command of Annas, in order to secure him from escape.

Near Sion gate, without the city, is a building called the house of Caiaphas. Here is another small chapel, also in the possession of the Armenians, under the altar of which, the people assert, is deposited the very stone which was laid to secure the door of the sepulchre of our Saviour. This stone is two yards and a quarter long, and one yard in breadth. After being many ages preserved in the church of the sepulchre, it was by a stratagem conveyed to this place by the Armenians. It is covered with a kind of plaister, except in five or six places, which were left bare, that it may receive the immediate devotions of pilgrims. Here is a small cell, which is shewn as the place where our Saviour was confined till the morning when he was conducted before Pilate; and here is also shewn the place, where Peter was terrified into a denial of his master.

A little further, without the gate, is situated the church of Cænaculum, where, it is asserted, Christ instituted his last supper. This place is now converted into a mosque, where Christians are not permitted to enter. Adjacent to this place is seen a well, which is said to denote the place where the apostles separated, in order that each man might go upon his particular charge. Close to this well are the ruins of a house, wherein the blessed Virgin is supposed to have expired.

A little way down the hill, towards the east, is the spot where a Jew arrested the corps of the mother of God, as her sacred remains were carrying for in-

terment ; for which act of impiety, he was punished by the hand with which he had seized the bier instantly becoming useless. About the same space further down the hill, is shewn a grate wherein St. Peter is said to have deplored his inconstancy to Christ. Going out at Bethlehem gate, and turning on the left hand, and passing the castle of the Pisans, we come to the place called Bathsheba's pool, which is situated at the bottom of Mount Sion, and supposed by some to be the same wherein Bathsheba was bathing when David descried her from the terrace of his palace : but others imagine, that this circumstance happened while she was refreshing herself in a smaller pool, just within Bethlehem gate.

A little below commences the valley of Hinnon, on the west side of which is the place anciently called the Potter's Field, and afterwards the Field of Blood, in consequence of its being purchased with the pieces of silver which were the price of the blood of the blessed Jesus : but it is now called the Campo Sancto, or Holy Field, on account of the great veneration in which it is held by the Christians. It is a piece of ground about thirty yards long, and about half that measure in breadth. One half of this field is occupied by a square fabric twelve yards high, which was built for and is used as a charnel-house.

A little below the Campo Sancto, is an intricate cave or sepulchre, consisting of several apartments, one within another, wherein it is said, the apostles concealed themselves, when they deserted Jesus. A little beyond this cave, the valley of Hinnon terminates ; and then commences that of Jehoshaphat, which runs across the mouth of Hinnon. At the bottom of the valley of Hinnon runs the brook Cedron, which is often dried up in the summer months. In the valley of Jehoshaphat is the well of Nehemiah, so

called, in consequence of it being supposed to be the place from which that restorer of Israel recovered the fire of the altar, after the Babylonish captivity.

At some distance above the well of Nehemiah, on the left hand side, is the fountain of the blessed Virgin, so called, because, as it is reported, she was accustomed to resort thither for water, but at what times, or upon what occasions, is not known. Opposite this fountain is a village called Siloe, wherein Solomon is said to have kept his strange wives: and above this village is a hill called the Mountain of Offence, because there Solomon built the high places, in consequence of his wives having perverted him to idolatry in the decline of his life.

On the same side, and not far distant from Siloe, is shewn another Acaldama, or Field of Blood, so named, because it was upon this spot that Judas was put to death by the just judgment of the Almighty. A little farther, on the same side of the valley, are several Jewish monuments, among which are two noble antiquities, called the sepulchre of Zechariah, and the pillar of Absalom; and close to the latter is the sepulchre of Jehoshaphat, from which the name of the whole valley is derived.

In the bottom of the valley, towards the north, is a broad stone of a remarkable hard quality, whereon are several impressions, which the friars say are the prints made by the feet of our blessed Saviour, when he was hurried to the tribunal of his cruel persecutors: and a few paces from this stone is a place called the sepulchre of the blessed Virgin, to which there is a descent of forty-seven steps: as you descend, on the right hand you perceive the sepulchre of St. Anna, and, on the left, that of St. Joseph.

About two-thirds of the way up Mount Olivet, are several grotts or caves, which are called the sepulchres of the prophets: and a little above are twelve arched vaults, built in commemoration of the twelve apostles, who are said to have compiled their creed in this place. Sixty paces higher is the place where Christ is said to have pronounced his prophecy concerning the final destruction of Jerusalem: and a little to the right of this is the spot, where they say he a second time dictated the Pater Noster to his disciples. Further up the hill, is the cave of Pelagia, and above that a pillar denoting the spot where an angel gave the blessed Virgin notice of her death, three days before that event occurred.

At the top of the hill is the place of our Saviour's ascension. Anciently a church stood here, in honor of our Lord's glorious triumph; but all that remains is an octogonal cupola, measuring about eight yards in diameter, standing, as it is reported, immediately over where the footsteps of the Son of God last impressed the earth. Within the cupola is a large stone, which is said to bear the impression of one of our Saviour's feet. Here was formerly a stone with a similar impression: but some years ago, this was removed by the Turks into the great mosque upon Mount Moriah. This chapel of the ascension is in possession of the Turks, who apply it to the purposes of a mosque. The Turks have also the possession of many other holy places about Jerusalem, for which they pretend to have a veneration equal to that of the Christians: but this is only the pretence of zeal, adopted to extort money from those pious Christians, who resort to these holy places from principles of real devotion.

The summit of Mount Olivet is about two furlongs northward of the place last mentioned. Here stood an ancient tower, erected in commemoration of the

appearance of the two angels to the apostles, after the ascension of our Saviour. This monument remained till within the last century, when it was destroyed by a Turk who had purchased the field whereon it stood.

Descending by another road, about the midway, is the place where Christ beheld and wept over the city : and near the bottom of the hill is a large stone, upon which it is said that the blessed Virgin let fall her girdle after her assumption. There is a serpentine impression upon the stone, which the people insist to have been made by the girdle. Near this spot is a ledge of naked rocks, reported to be the place where the apostles Peter, James, and John, fell asleep during the agony of Christ ; and a few paces from hence is a grotto, where Christ is reputed to have endured that part of his passion, About eight paces from where the apostles slept, is a piece of ground twelve yards long, and one broad, which is supposed to be the very path wherein the traitor Judas walked up to Jesus, saying, " Hail master ! and kissed him."

An ordinary Turkish house is built upon the place where formerly stood the palace of Pilate. This building is near the gate of St. Stephen, and borders upon the area of the temple, on the north side. The terrace of this house commands a prospect of the whole ground whereon the temple stood. In the area of this once magnificent structure, innumerable marks of immense labor are still plainly discernible. In the middle stands a mosque, supposed to be built upon the very spot where stood the Sanctum Sanctorum. In this pretended house of Pilate is shewn a room where the people assert Christ was mocked with the ensigns of royalty, and buffeted by the soldiers. On the opposite side of the street, where anciently stood a stately palace, is shewn a room, where it is said our

Lord was scourged. This place was once converted into a stable by a Bassa of Jerusalem : but it is reported that soon after this profanation, a mortality ensued among the horses, in consequence of which the place was rescued from this sordid use.

The pool of Bethesda is one hundred and twenty paces long, forty broad, and at least eight in depth ; but it has no other water than that supplied by rain. At the west end are the remains of three arches, which the people insist to have been the places where afflicted persons sought shelter, while waiting to obtain relief by going into the water, after its being miraculously put in commotion on a certain day of each year. But this place does not correspond with the description given by the evangelist, who says there were five porches. “ Now there is at Jerusalem, by “ the sheep-market, a pool which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches : in “ these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of “ blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the “ water. For an angel went down at a certain season “ into the pool, and troubled the water : whosoever “ then first after the troubling of the water, stepped “ in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.” John v. 2, &c.

The church of St. Anna is a large building, but entirely neglected. In a grotto beneath the church is shewn a place where the blessed Virgin is said to have been born. Near this church is shewn the house of the Pharisee, where Mary Magdalen exhibited evidences of a sincere repentance, and a devout affection towards our Saviour.

About two furlongs westward of Bethlehem gate is mount Gihon, where there is a pool plentifully stored with water, being one hundred and six paces long,

and sixty-seven broad. Having particularly described Jerusalem and its adjacencies, we shall insert a computation of the circumference of the city, which, though measured by paces, is supposed very nearly to describe the true circuit of the walls.

	Paces.
From Bethlehem gate to the corner on the right hand	400
From that corner to Damascus gate	680
From Damascus gate to Herod's	380
From Herod's gate to Jeremiah's prison	150
From Jeremiah's prison to the corner next the valley of Jehoshaphat	225
From that corner to St. Stephen's gate	385
From St. Stephen's gate to the golden gate	240
From the golden gate to the corner of the wall	380
From that corner to the dung gate	470
From the dung gate to Sion gate	605
From Sion gate to the corner of the wall	215
From that corner to Bethlehem gate	500
Total,	4630

These paces being reduced to English measure, make four thousand one hundred and sixty-seven yards, which are just equal to two miles and a half.

The small city of Cana, belonging to the tribe of Zebulon, was situated between Sepphoris and Nazareth, being about six miles westward of the former. To distinguish it from other places of the same name, it was called Cana of Galilee. This city was rendered remarkable, by being the place where the miracles of our Saviour commenced. It contained no buildings of sufficient consequence to be here described: but though of small extent, it was a populous town, and

among the inhabitants were a great number of persons of exemplary piety, which, in all probability, induced our Lord to make this the frequent place of his residence, and to perform herein so great a number of miracles, in manifestation of the divinity of his mission. It is supposed that in this city resided Alphæus, otherwise named Cleophas, whose wife was Mary, either the sister or cousin german of the blessed Virgin; and at her habitation it is imagined the marriage feast was celebrated, at which our Saviour worked the miracle of changing water into wine.

But very little information can be collected respecting the town of Capernaum. It is not once mentioned in the Old Testament, either under this or any other name; and therefore it may be concluded, that it did not exist when that sacred work was written, and consequently that it was one of the towns built by the Jews, after their return from the Babylonish captivity, upon the coast of the sea of Gallilee. The city derived its name from the adjacent spring of Capernaum, which was celebrated for its crystalline waters. This was the place where our Saviour usually resided during the three years and a half of his public ministry, on which account our Lord himself declared it to be "exalted unto heaven." The severe sentence pronounced by our Saviour against Capernaum, when he said it should be "brought down to hell," was fully verified; for many years since it was so reduced from the state it enjoyed in the times of the New Testament, that all the habitations it contained were six miserable cottages, belonging to some fishermen.

When Christ remained at Jerusalem, after the departure of the holy Virgin, she anxiously sought him; but being grievously afflicted at not finding him, she sat down to refresh herself by a short repose in the

city of Beer, where stands a church built by the empress Helena, upon the very spot where, according to the tradition, she sat lamenting the absence of her beloved Son. The city of Beer is pleasantly situated on an easy declivity fronting the south; and at the bottom of the hill runs a brook, plentifully supplied with excellent water.

The summit of the hill whereupon Beer is situated, commands a prospect of a wide extent of country, composed of barren rocks and mountains: but it is evident, that these naked rocks and precipices were in ancient days covered with earth, and cultivated for the maintenance of the inhabitants. The soil of Palestine is remarkably prolific, and the mode of husbandry on the mountains was by gathering up the stones, and placing them in several lines along the sides of the hills; and by the borders thus formed, the mould was prevented from falling, or being washed down by the rain. That this method of culture was anciently practised, is clear from innumerable evidences. Though improper for cattle, except goats, the precipices yielded a large supply of grain and all kinds of vegetables, by being formed into beds as we have described. Vegetable food was the principal sustenance of the inhabitants during a very considerable part of the year; and there were level tracts of rich soil, more than sufficient for the support of all the cattle they had occasion for.

The extensive level plain adjacent to the Dead Sea, though on account of the saline quality of the soil, unfit for the maintenance of cattle, and the cultivation of corn, olives and vines, was admirably adapted to the nourishment of bees. Speaking of this country, Josephus says, “ * It abounds in thick groves, and a

* Vide Josephus, by Thompson and Price, Vol. II. p. 423.

“ variety of gardens ; and there are, on the banks of
“ its rivulets, a number of palm trees, different from
“ each other in name, flavor, and quality. From
“ some of these, the inhabitants extract large quanti-
“ ties of honey, not much inferior to the other honey
“ of the country, of which they have great abun-
“ dance †. They have likewise a great plenty of bal-
“ sam, which is deemed the most choice of their pro-
“ ductions ; nor is cyprus and myrobalanus in less
“ abundance. A country which produces the most
“ rare fruits of the earth, and those the largest and
“ best of their kinds, may be deemed signalized by
“ heaven with its peculiar favors. This country is
“ likewise equally famous with the most prolific of
“ others, for the production, cultivation, and variety
“ of other fruits. I imagine that this circumstance
“ may be, in a great degree, owing to the particular
“ salubrity of the air, and the singular nature of the
“ water : the former being fitly adapted to the dis-
“ closing of leaves, flowers, and such other vege-
“ tables as are under its influence ; and the latter
“ by increasing the sap, to bind and fortify the roots
“ so as to be proof against the raging heats of the
“ sun, which are so powerful in this country, as al-
“ most to repel vegetation, if without such assist-
“ ance. But notwithstanding the violence of these
“ heats, there are such refreshing breezes every morn-
“ ing, that the water is perfectly agreeable before the
“ rising of the sun. In winter it is extremely agree-
“ able to bathe in this water, which is then warm.
“ In fact, such is the happy temperature of this cli-
“ mate, that when frost and snow prevail in other
“ parts of Judea, the natives of this place dress only

† The constitution of their bodies, and the nature of their climate, inclined the people to an abstemious manner of living : vegetables, milk, and honey, being the principal means of their support.

“ in slight linen. It is situated sixty stadia from
“ the river Jordan, and one hundred and fifty from
“ Jerusalem ; and the whole country is a mere rock
“ and desert between that and Jerusalem.”

CHAP. XXVII.

The transfiguration of our blessed Saviour. He converses with Moses and Elias. A voice heard from the heavens. Our Saviour descends from the mountain, and discourses to his apostles concerning Elias. He restores a youth possessed with an evil spirit. Our Lord repairs to Galilee, and addresses his apostles on the subject of his sufferings and resurrection. Jesus goes to Capernaum, and empowers Peter to work a miracle, in order to pay the tribute-money. He reproveth his apostles, enforcing to them the doctrine of humility, by proposing to them the example of a little child. He discourses on the subject of offences, and the necessity of a rigid adherence to the truth. He compares his disciples to salt. Christ prescribes to his apostles rules for the regulation of their conduct, and rehearses the parable of the lost sheep. Our Lord inculcates the duty of forgiveness, and mentions the example of a king and one of his subjects.

ABOUT six days after pronouncing the discourses contained in the preceding chapter, our blessed Redeemer commanded Peter, James, and John, to follow him to the summit of an exceeding high * mountain, that their devotions might not be interrupted by the multitude.

While his apostles slept, Jesus addressed himself in fervent prayer to his heavenly Father; and his countenance underwent a sudden and surprising alteration, being suffused with a heavenly brilliancy more

* Supposed to be Mount Tabor.

glorious than the meridian sun ; and the color of his garments at the same time changed to a degree of whiteness, pure and refulgent as the very light †. Moses, the great lawgiver of Israel, and Elias the zealous defender of the laws of God, now descended from heaven in all the glories of immortality, and conversed with Jesus, on the subject of the indignities, sufferings, and death that he was to sustain at Jerusalem. The three apostles now awaking, they became witnesses of this august and solemn scene, and heard a part of the conversation that passed between the two great prophets and the only Son of God.

For some time the apostles stood in silent astonishment : but when they perceived the heavenly visitants preparing to take leave of Jesus, Peter, being desirous of detaining them, said, “ Master, it is good “ for us to be here : and let us make three tabernacles ; “ one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.” Mark. ix. 5. But, “ while he yet spake, behold a “ bright cloud overshadowed them ; and behold a “ voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my be- “ loved Son, in whom I am well pleased : hear ye him.” Matt. xvii. 5. The descent of the cloud from heaven, whereby they were all encompassed, and the voice of the Almighty heard from the middle of that cloud, so astonished and terrified the apostles, that they fell with their faces to the ground, and in that posture remained, till Jesus commanded them to rise, and dispel their fears. In obedience to the command of Jesus, they arose ; and upon looking round, perceived that their master had recovered his usual semblance of mortality, and that the cloud and the heavenly visitants of Jesus had disappeared while they remained prostrate on the earth. Early on the following morning, Jesus, with his three apostles, re-

† Matt. xvii. 1, &c. Mark ix. 2, &c. Luke ix. 28, &c.

turned to the plain ; and on the way, he enjoined them not to disclose the miracle of his transfiguration till after his death and resurrection. This prohibition arose from a knowledge, that the people in general, and even his own disciples, were not yet able to comprehend the design of his transfiguration.

The doctrine of the resurrection was a matter of which the apostles were unable to form a proper idea ; for they imagined that Christ alluded to the day of judgment, and were amazed that he should command them to conceal the circumstance till that day. They were also surprised at the sudden departure of Elias, could not conceive what the Jewish doctors meant by teaching that Elias was to appear, and make preparations for the establishment of the kingdom of the Messiah ; and therefore, they requested that Christ would satisfy their doubts on this head. Hereupon our Lord informed them, that, according to the prediction of Malachi, Elias was to precede the Messiah, and “ restore all things ;” but, at the same time, he told them that Elias had already appeared upon earth, and that the Jews had rejected the doctrines he had preached, recommending the necessity of repentance and reformation ; thus intimating to them, that he alluded to John the Baptist. “ But I say unto you, that Elias “ is come already, and they knew him not, but have “ done unto him whatsoever they listed : likewise “ shall also the Son of man suffer of them. Then “ the disciples understood that he spake unto them “ of John the Baptist.” Matt. xxvii. 12, 13.

Having descended from the mountain with the three apostles, a vast multitude of people resorted to Jesus, who, as he approached, observed them surrounding the nine apostles who had remained on the plain.— These nine hastened to Jesus, and saluted him in a most affectionate and dutiful manner ; after which our

Lord asked the doctors of the law, what was the subject of their discourse with his apostles. Hereupon one of the multitude said, "Master, I have brought
" unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit : and
" wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him ; and he
" foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth
" away : and I spake to thy disciples, that they should
" cast him out, and they could not." Mark ix. 17, 18. It is probable, that the apostles having unsuccessfully attempted to cure the youth, afforded the scribes occasion to boast, that a demon was at length found, which neither the apostles nor their master were able to conquer ; and this indeed seems to be indicated, in our Lord's address to these arrogant rulers of Jerusalem. " O, ye perverse and degenerate people,
" how long shall I bear with your iniquities ! Not-
" withstanding the repeated evidences I have afforded
" you of the divine power and goodness, still you per-
" sist in the most criminal incredulity." Then turning to the father of the youth, he commanded him to be brought into his presence ; and the evil spirit immediately assailed him with redoubled fury, occasioning him to distort his features, fall on the ground, foam at the mouth, and evince other marks of the most excessive agony. " The spirit tore him, and he
" fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming." Mark ix. 20.

Jesus permitted this assault, in order that the multitude might be impressed with a more lively idea of the sufferings of the youth, and form a more adequate opinion of the extent of the divine goodness, by which he was to be rescued from so distressing a situation : and for the same reason enquired how long he had been afflicted. Hereupon the father answered, " Of a child. And oft times it hath cast him into
" the fire, and into the waters to destroy him : but
" if thou canst do any thing, have compassion upon

us, and help us." Mark ix. 21, 22. Christ now informed the afflicted parent, that if he could firmly believe that God had invested him with authority over evil spirits, his solicitation in favor of the youth should be complied with. Upon this, the father proclaimed with a loud voice, that he believed in the power and goodness of God, and besought Christ to rectify whatever defect there might be in his faith. The vehement manner in which he proclaimed his faith in God, occasioned the people to assemble from every quarter, being impatient to learn the result of the parent's application to Christ. In the presence of a vast concourse of spectators, "Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, saying, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him." Mark ix. 25. No sooner were these words pronounced, than the demon departed, howling by the voice of the young man, in the most dreadful manner, and at the same time exerting the last effort of his power, by violently throwing the youth upon the ground; where he remained, till Jesus taking him by the hand, commanded him to rise. He obeyed; and in the presence of the astonished multitude, our Lord presented the youth to his father perfectly restored.

The nine disciples, who had remained silently attentive during the above transaction, were apprehensive that Jesus had deprived them of the power of working miracles, in consequence of something reprehensible in their conduct: but they deemed it not prudent to ask their master the reason of his displeasure, in the presence of the people. But upon his arrival at the house where he proposed to lodge, they requested their master to inform them, why their efforts to cure the youth had proved ineffectual. Hereupon Jesus answered, "Because of your unbelief;" adding that, while they were endeavoring to work the miracle, neither themselves nor the relations of the

young man reposed a necessary degree of confidence in the power and goodness of God. But to prove the efficacy of faith in God, he said, that if they firmly trusted in him, no miracle could be too great for them to perform ; by the virtue of this faith, he said, even the adjacent mountain should, at their command, start from its rocky basis, and be instantly transported to another place. “ If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove ; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.” Matt. xvii. 20.

Notwithstanding the repeated instances they had seen of the divine power of Jesus, the expulsion of the dumb spirit proved the subject of great surprize to his apostles ; and therefore, that he might moderate their high admiration of his works, he again informed them that he should be surrendered to the fury of the Jews, who would put him to death with circumstances of aggravated cruelty, but that he should rise again on the third day. But the doctrine of his resurrection was a mystery which they were unable to comprehend. That the Messiah, whose reign was to be eternal, and who came upon earth to deliver mankind from death, should himself submit to the power of the universal destroyer, they supposed was not intended to be understood by them in the literal sense. However, they supposed that Jesus meant to predict some signal calamity that was to befall him ; but declined asking for an explanation, lest he should reprove them on the score of inattention, whereby they were disqualified for penetrating into the meaning of his usual figurative mode of expression.

Having travelled in company of his apostles only, through the desert part of Galilee, that their devotions might not be interrupted, our Saviour again repaired

to Capernaum, the most usual place of his residence. Soon after our Lord's arrival, the officers appointed by the overseers of the temple to collect the tribute, applied to Peter, demanding, whether his master would pay the usual tax. The apostle answered in the affirmative, and went to Jesus to inform him of the demand that had been made; but he was prevented by our Lord's accosting him thus: "What thinkest thou, Simon? Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? Of their own children, or of strangers? Peter saith unto him, of strangers." Jesus saith unto him, then are the children free." Thus our Lord intimated, that he might plead exemption from the tribute, since it was his Father who was worshipped in the temple, and in whose name the tribute was collected. But the blessed Jesus, ever cautious of giving offence, and willing to comply with the established customs of the people among whom he resided, ordered Peter to go to the lake, adding that he should there take a fish with a piece of money in its mouth. "Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: * take that, and give unto them, for me and thee." Matt. xvii. 27.

This extraordinary method of paying the tribute, was adopted by our Saviour, because the miracle could not fail of clearly demonstrating that he was the Son of the great Father of the creation. In the manner of discharging this demand, he proved to Peter, that he was in reality exempted from the necessity of paying any tribute; and at the same time afford-

* Every Jew above the age of twenty years, was obliged to pay half a shekel annually to the temple, towards the expense of daily sacrifices: whence it follows, that the money found by Peter in the mouth of the fish, was a shekel.

ed a useful lesson to his followers, who from the conduct of their master in the above instance, were to understand, that it was more commendable to relinquish somewhat of their just rights, than to disturb the tranquillity of the public, or incur the enmity of private individuals, by insisting upon points that might be abandoned without essential injury or inconvenience.

Upon the return of our Saviour to the place of his habitation, he questioned his apostles as to the subject of a controversy in which they had been engaged on the way. Though Jesus was acquainted with what had passed among them, he proposed the question, that he might draw from them a confession, which would afford him an opportunity of further instructing them in several particulars of their moral and religious duty. Disconcerted at hearing our Lord's question, they all remained silent, being fearful of acknowledging that they had disputed as to which of them was entitled to the most distinguished honors and rewards of the kingdom of the Messiah. Jesus now seating himself, commanded the apostles to stand round him, and attentively hearken to what he should say. Our Lord now said, that the man who was ambitious of the honor of becoming the first person in his kingdom, must endeavor to attain to that dignity by exerting his utmost endeavors to perform offices of friendship to his fellow-creatures, and to prefer others in honor, rather than strive to exalt himself. "If any man desires to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all." Perceiving that they were discovered, the disciples now confessed the subject of the debate in which they had been engaged; requesting him at the same time to decide a point, which had been productive of frequent contentions among them. They then asked, "Who is the greatest man in the kingdom of heaven?" To check their ambition of attaining to

worldly honors, and to repress their improper emulation, our Saviour called to him a little child, and taking the infant in his arms, said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matt. xviii. 3. Thus our Lord intimated, that unless they suppressed all ambitious and vain expectations of worldly preferments, riches and honors, and became meek and humble in spirit, like the infant, so far from attaining to the first place, they should not be permitted to enter his kingdom; but that whoever obeyed the divine instructions, by not suffering worldly motives to detach his mind from his constant duty to God, should enjoy the greatest blessings of the kingdom of the Messiah. "Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Matt. xviii. 4.

Our blessed Saviour continued his discourse to his apostles, saying, that whoever treated his disciples with kindness, should be considered as offering service to God; and that those persons who moderated their desires, and controlled their passions, so as to be indifferent to worldly profit and honors, and who faithfully discharged all their religious obligations, should be entitled to the rewards of the kingdom of heaven. "Whosoever shall give you a cup of water in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily, I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward." Mark ix. 41. But our Lord denounced the utmost severity of punishment against those who should presume to intercept his disciples in their business of propagating the gospel, saying, "And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones* that believe in

* By the words *these little ones*, our Saviour seems to allude to those only who were weak in faith, and not to infants: for it cannot be supposed, that he would lay great stress on the faith of those who from their tender age could not comprehend the excellency of his gospel.

“ me, it is better for him that a mill-stone† were
 “ hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the
 “ sea.” Matt. ix. 42.

Our Saviour said, that mankind should be subject to innumerable calamities ; for the iniquities of some would detach others from their allegiance to the majesty of heaven. Occasions would necessarily occur, he said, to alienate the minds of men from the cause of virtue and religion ; and the Almighty had not deemed it proper to provide against this evil, by any other means than the promulgation of his divine laws.‡ But great shall be the punishment of such as thus pervert the plain rules of their indispensable duty to God. If, therefore, the progress of your piety is obstructed by any thing which you deem as useful to you, even as your eye or right hand, it behoves you to part with it cheerfully ; for it is prudent that you should deprive yourself of the comforts and conveniences of life, rather than forfeit your eternal salvation, by a criminal enjoyment of worldly blessings. “ If thy hand offend thee||, cut it off : it is better for
 “ thee to enter into life maimed, than having two
 “ hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall
 “ be quenched ; where their worm dieth not, and the
 “ fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut
 “ it off : it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than

† Persons guilty of sacrilege were thrown into the Dead Sea, or Lake of Sodom, with mill-stones fastened to their necks.

‡ The necessity which our Saviour here mentions of mankind being guilty of offences, is only conditional, and not founded on any acts ordained by God. It is founded on the supposition that the natural wickedness of man, if not corrected, and the malignity of Satan, must operate towards a degeneracy of human nature.

|| It is not to be hence inferred, that the hand should be literally severed from the body, &c. but that the cause of sin should be removed.

“ having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to go into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell-fire; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” Mark ix. 43, &c. As every meal-oblation, said our Lord, is sprinkled with salt, when laid upon the fire of the holy altar; so whoever shall disregard my doctrines, shall be made victims to the wrath of God, and be salted, as it were, in the flames of that place where torments are everlasting.

Our Saviour said, that since he had mentioned salt, he should take the opportunity of saying something in explanation of what he had told them on a former occasion. I informed you§, that if salt ashes should lose their saline quality, they would become entirely useless; so you who I have selected as my disciples, instructed in the principles of my gospel, and commissioned to proclaim the necessity of a reformation, if you once wander out of the path of righteousness, will find that no mortal has power to redeem you from a state of such deplorable degeneracy. Therefore be careful to discharge the duties of your office with constancy and fortitude, reposing a firm reliance on the unlimited power and goodness of God: and you are further instructed, that you take especial care that no disagreements prevail among yourselves; for if dissensions arise among you, who can you expect to mediate in your behalf? Our blessed Saviour represented pride as being in itself highly offensive to God, and as productive of innumerable other iniquities, and therefore he solemnly exhorted his disciples

§ In the admirable sermon which our Lord delivered upon the mount. Vide Matt. v. 13.

to avoid that vice ; observing to them, that notwithstanding the inferiority of pecuniary circumstances, and other situations in life, those in the most abject and mean conditions, were under the care and protection of divine Providence ; and saying, that God had given them in charge of his angels, and out of his abundant mercy to the human race, had sent his only Son upon earth to reclaim those who had deviated into the paths of perdition. To enforce these precepts, our Lord delivered the following parable : “ If
“ a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be
“ gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety-nine, and
“ goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which
“ hath gone astray ? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep,
“ than of the ninety-nine that went not astray : even
“ so, it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.”
Matt. xviii. 12, 13, 14. Thus our Saviour informed them, that his heavenly Father did not delight in the destruction of any of his creatures, however enormous their transgressions.

Our Lord now informed them, that it was not consistent with the duty of mankind, to return neglect and contempt for injury and insult, but recommended private expostulation in the first instance : after that, an endeavor to effect a compromise through the meditation of two or three witnesses ; and if these lenient measures produce not the desired effect, an appeal to the church. “ If thy brother trespass against
“ thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and
“ him alone ; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained
“ thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then
“ take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth
“ of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them,
“ tell it to the church : but if he neglect to hear the

“ church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man
“ and a publican.” Matt. xviii. 15, 16, 17.

Without exposing thy brother to public censure, exert thy utmost endeavors to reclaim him from his iniquities, and thine exhortation may probably be attended with the desired effect. But if this gentle method fail, confront him in company of two or more persons of integrity, that by their joining in rebuking him, he may be convinced of, and induced to make reparation for the impropriety of his conduct. But if he still perseveres in his obstinacy, report his offences to the church, by the decision of which it will be manifest that thou hast discharged thy duty, and that he has been the offending party. If the censure of the church proves not sufficient to reclaim him from his obduracy, thou art then to conduct thyself towards him, as the Pharisees behave towards the Heathens and Publicans ; considering him as an incorrigible sinner, whose conversation may tend to contaminate the rectitude of your own principles, and as one whose society it is the duty of all friends to virtue and religion to avoid. Our blessed Saviour now proceeded to invest the other apostles with the especial commission, which he had hitherto confined to Peter. “ Verily I say unto you, whosoever
“ ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven ;
“ and whosoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loos-
“ ed in heaven.” Matt. xviii. 18. Hereby our Lord informed them, that he invested them with the power of preaching the remission of sins through faith in the gospel ; and that such remission, though granted on earth, would be confirmed in heaven.

Our blessed Saviour further informed them, that if they earnestly persevered in their endeavors to reclaim sinners from their iniquities, and to supplicate assistance from the Almighty, their petitions would

ever be attended with the desired effect, provided they were consistent with the wise purposes of the divine providence. "Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Matt. xviii. 19, 20.

Peter had on former occasions heard his master recommend the doctrine of frequent forgiveness; and now that he had seriously attended to the discourse of Jesus, it occurred to his mind, that repeated pardons might operate to the disadvantage of mankind; and therefore he said, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" Hereupon our Lord said, that forgiveness was not to be limited to seven times, but to be extended even to seventy-times seven. You who embrace my doctrine, are to copy the example of my heavenly Father, whose benevolence and forgiveness of his creatures are so unbounded, that, however great their transgressions, they may obtain pardon by repentance, and a sincere resolution against the commission of future sins.

These admirable precepts our Saviour enforced by a similitude of two servants and a king. A certain king having entrusted one of his subjects with the management of his revenues, upon the arrival of the time when his accounts were to be balanced, it appeared that this officer was deficient in the sum of ten thousand talents; in consequence of which his effects were ordered to be confiscated, and himself, his wife and children, to be sold for slaves. The debtor prostrated himself before his sovereign, exhorting him to extend the period appointed for the execution of his sentence, and solemnly pledging,

that upon the expiration of the time for which he had requested indulgence, that he would make full restitution for the ten thousand talents. The distress of his servant excited the compassion of the king, who accepted his humiliation, and even extended his benevolence and generosity so far, as entirely to acquit him of the enormous debt. This was an obligation seemingly sufficient to soften the most obdurate and implacable heart with gratitude towards his master, and the tenderest sympathy towards his fellow creatures under circumstances of distress. But immediately after departing from the king's presence, this man met one of his fellow-officers, who was indebted to him in the small sum of a hundred pence; whereupon he violently seized him, insisting upon instant payment. This unfortunate debtor humbled himself, as the other had so lately done at the feet of his lord, and solicited indulgence, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." But insensible to the feelings of humanity, and forgetful of the danger from which he had himself been so lately delivered, the oppressive creditor caused his fellow-servant to be taken to prison, there to remain till he should discharge both principal and interest.

The rest of the king's officers being apprized of the conduct of this avaricious and merciless creditor, whose offence was aggravated by the circumstance of his having been himself so lately an object of clemency, repaired to their master, and with a generous indignation, communicated to him this heinous transaction, with all its circumstances of complicated cruelty. Hereupon the officer was summoned to appear in the royal presence, and the king expostulated to him to the following effect: thou detestable monster of cruelty and oppression! moved to clemency by thy distress and supplications, I remitted thee payment of the enormous sum of ten thousand talents, even after

having sentenced thee, and thy wife, and children, to slavery, and thy effects to confiscation: and yet thou hast been so abominably wicked as to oppress thy fellow-servant, for a sum so very inconsiderable comparatively with my demand. Should thou not have retained in thy recollection, that I, thy sovereign, had excused thee from the payment of so immense a demand, and have been moved by that consideration, though thy heart was callous to the common feelings of humanity, to have remitted the small debt due to thee from thy fellow-servant?

Having thus expostulated, the king gave way to his abhorrence and indignation, and ordered the offender to be detained in prison till he should pay the ten thousand talents, with the full interest arising therefrom. "And his lord was wroth, and delivered him
"to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due
"to him. So likewise, said the Son of God, shall
"my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from
"your hearts forgive not every one his brother their
"trespasses. *Matt. xviii. 34, 35.*

The doctrine of forgiveness is so strongly enforced in the above text, that he cannot reasonably hope to obtain the favor of God, who refuses to forgive any brother in Christ for an injury committed by him through inadvertancy or the other infirmities of human nature. From the circumstance mentioned by our blessed Redeemer of the king's revocation of the grace and clemency which he had extended to his wicked servant, we are instructed, that the pardon granted by the Almighty is not absolute, but conditional; and that it will either remain in force, or be cancelled, according as our future conduct shall be acceptable or offensive to God.

Our Saviour having concluded his discourse, John,

the son of Zebedee, informed him, that he and the rest of the apostles had seen a man cure persons possessed with evil spirits, merely by pronouncing his name; adding, that because he did not join himself to their society, they had enjoined him not to continue the use of that name for the purpose of working miracles. Hereupon our Lord gently reproved them for having given this prohibition, saying, that the man must have entertained an exalted idea of his person, or his pronouncing the name would not have been attended with the effect of which they had been witnesses. "Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me." Mark ix. 39.

We shall conclude this chapter with some observations explanatory of some of the facts herein recorded. Towards the concluding part of the preceding chapter, it will be found that after the confession of Peter, that Jesus was the Son of God, our Lord informed his disciples of the persecution and death that would be inflicted upon him at Jerusalem. And on occasion of his not comprehending the meaning of Christ, Peter was reproved. These melancholy predictions had such an effect on the minds of his disciples, that Christ judged it expedient to revive their courage, and afford additional ardor to their faith in him. Therefore, after the expiration of six days, he took with him three of his apostles (which were a competent number of witnesses, according to the law of Moses) to the summit of a mountain, and by his glorious transfiguration, and the voice of God from the cloud which overshadowed them, effectually prevented all further doubts of his divinity, and at the same time afforded a miraculous specimen of his future glory; whereby he dispersed those melancholy suggestions which had resulted to them, in conse-

quence of the predictions respecting his sufferings and death.

That our Lord should submit to the common lot of human nature, was confirmed in his discourse with Moses and Elias, the two great prophets of the Jews ; and that these appearances had their proper effect, by infusing into the minds of the disciples new courage and fortitude, evidently appears from the acknowledgment of Peter, and his subsequent request.—“ Lord it is good for us to be here : let us make here “ three tabernacles ; one for thee ; and one for Mo-
“ ses ; and one for Elias.” By requesting that they might be permitted to shelter their master and his heavenly visitants with boughs of trees, or such other materials as they could procure, it is evident that they had resumed new spirits in consequence of the miracle of the glorious transfiguration. To cheer the desponding spirits of the disciples was a principal motive to this miraculous assemblage, which also served to confirm the divinity of the ministry of Moses by a most incontestible and divine attestation ; and it was also emblematical of the glorious exaltation of our blessed Redeemer after his resurrection, and indeed of all true believers in his gospel after the day of judgment.

Mount Tabor, the supposed place of our blessed Saviour’s glorification, is an exceeding high and beautiful hill of a circular figure. It is situated in the plain of Galilee, at some distance from other hills. To reach the summit of this mountain, requires an hour’s excessive labor. On the top; is a level area, covered with rich earth, and abounding with herbs of various kinds, extending about a furlong in breadth, and two in length. This area is of an oval figure, and enclosed with trees, except towards the south. It was formerly environed with walls and other fortifi-

cations, of which, great part of the remains are to be seen at this time. In the area are several pools of good water : but those held in the highest devotion, are the three which are contiguous to each other, and supposed to denote the place where Peter proposed to erect the three tabernacles at the time of the transfiguration.

The summit of Mount Tabor affords one of the most delightful prospects that it is possible for the imagination of man to conceive. The north west commands a view of the Mediterranean, and from the other parts of the mountain are beheld the beautiful plains of Esdraelon and Galilee.

Near the foot of Mount Tabor towards the west, stands Daborah, a small village, which is supposed to derive its name from Deborah, the famous judge and deliverer of Israel ; and near this valley is the fountain of Kishon.

Due east is seen the sea of Tiberias, about the distance of a day's journey ; and adjacent to the sea is a steep mountain, from which the herd of swine are said to have precipitated themselves into the waters, where they perished.

A few leagues distant from Mount Tabor on the eastward, appears Mount Hermon, at the foot of which is situated the city of Nain, where our Saviour restored the widow's son to life ; and Endor is also seen, where dwelt the witch who was consulted by Saul. A little towards the south are seen the mountains of Gilboah, so fatal to Saul and his sons.

The mount of Beatitudes appears a few points towards the north. Here it was that our blessed Redeemer delivered his admirable sermon contained in

the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of St. Matthew. Near this small hill is seated the city of Saphat, supposed to be the ancient Bethulia. This city stands upon a remarkable high mountain, and commands a most delightful and extensive prospect.

Mount Tabor also commands a view of a place said to be Dothaim, where Joseph was sold by his brethren, and the spot where our Saviour miraculously fed the multitude. But whether it was at this place where he divided the five loaves and two fishes, amongst the five thousand, or the seven loaves amongst the four thousand, is a matter of uncertainty.

CHAP. XXVIII.

On occasion of the feast of tabernacles, Jesus repairs privately to Jerusalem. On his journey he is refused lodging and entertainment by the Samaritans. Our Saviour appoints seventy disciples, and after delivering to them instructions for the regulation of their conduct, he sends them to different parts to preach the gospel. He pronounces a malediction against several cities, and further discourses to his disciples. The Jews seek for Jesus, who appears in vindication of himself. Our Lord justifies himself with respect to a cure he had performed on the sabbath-day. Christ declares his mission from his Father. The rulers endeavor to apprehend Jesus, and he informs them that his time is not come. Christ invites the people to embrace his doctrines. Various opinions concerning Jesus, who becomes the subject of consultation in the Sanhedrim, or grand council of the Jewish nation. The judgment of Christ concerning a woman detected in adultery. He vindicates his own testimony concerning himself. Our Lord declares that the Jews are strangers both to him and his heavenly Father. He gives an intimation of his speedy departure, but they mistake his meaning. He reproveth the people, declaring them to be slaves, and that he alone has power of giving them liberty. He proposes for their imitation the example of Abraham; and declares that they cannot be imitators of God, because they do not repose faith in him. Our Lord defends himself against the slanderous imputations of the Jews. Proofs that Abraham foresaw the appearance of Christ. The Jews are offended at Christ. Jesus cures a man who had been born blind, and who being exa-

mined by the Sanhedrim, persists in ascribing his cure to Christ. Our Saviour effects the conversion of the man who had been born blind, and delivers instructions to the multitude. Different opinions of the Jews.

HAVING remained some considerable time within the confines of Galilee, employed in the great business of promoting the kingdom of heaven, our great Redeemer departed into Judea, passing through the country beyond Jordan, that the people of those remote parts might have an opportunity of witnessing his miracles, and of judging of the excellency of his doctrines. His residence in these parts, however, was of but short duration; for he was apprized that the Jews were continually waiting for opportunities of destroying him, supposing him to be a false prophet.

Upon the approach of the time for solemnizing the feast of the tabernacles, some people of Galilee, who were related to Mary, came to Jesus, and endeavored to persuade him to establish his residence in Judea, instead of living in an obscure part of Galilee; representing that the inhabitants of that metropolis and its adjacencies, and particularly such as were already his disciples, would derive the most essential benefits from his discourses and miracles; adding, that popular means would most effectually conduce towards the establishment of his authority among the people.

The relations of Jesus were induced to this conduct, because they did not repose entire confidence in the divinity of his mission, and that the matter might be investigated and decided at Jerusalem, in order that they might act in conformity with the determination of the principal people among the Jews. In re-

ply Jesus said, that they were at liberty to repair to Jerusalem early enough to be present at the commencement of the feast of tabernacles; but that it was not yet convenient for him to depart, nor did he mean to remain long in Judea. They might, our Lord said, safely go to Jerusalem, for they had in no manner offered offence to the Jews; whereas he had himself incurred the general hatred of that people, by detecting and reproving their iniquities.

Our Saviour was sensible of the near approach of the time of his death, and therefore resolved to go to Jerusalem, but not to remain there during the whole eight days of the feast, that the Jews might not have sufficient time to carry into execution the cruel designs they had formed against him, and therefore he determined to go privately through Samaria.

In the progress of his journey, our Saviour dispatched some persons who attended him, to go forward, and provide lodgings for him at some house of public reception. But as they understood our Saviour was going to celebrate the feast of tabernacles, the Samaritans refused to give him entertainment.— John and James, the apostles whom our Saviour had sent forward, informed their master of the inhospitable disposition of the Samaritans, and requested to be informed, whether he did not mean to revenge the affront that had been offered to him, by praying that the Almighty would in wrath pour down fire from heaven upon the infidels, as he had formerly done upon the officers sent to seize Elias. Hereupon Jesus informed them, that they were but little acquainted with that meekness of temper which the ministers of his gospel were required to preserve, since they were inclined to destroy those whom it was their duty to reclaim from their iniquities; for, said our Saviour, I am not come to effect the destruction of any, but to

offer terms of salvation to mankind in general. And they now directed their course towards another village.

On the road, a man applied to Jesus, proposing constantly to attend him in his journies : but knowing that the ultimate design of this man in desiring to become one of his retinue, was to procure the enjoyment of worldly conveniencies, our Lord gave him the same answer he had used on a former occasion, which was, in effect, that the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air nests, but that he had no place wherein to repose himself, or accommodate his friends. Jesus having commanded one of the people to follow him, and become one of his disciples, this man made the same reply that another had some time before given to a like command, requesting that he might be permitted to remain with his aged father till his decease ; and adding, that after his funeral he would gladly become one of his followers. Hereupon our Lord directed him to leave the management of the funeral to those who were not endued with spiritual life, and said, “ Go thou and preach the kingdom of “ God.” Another man proposed to become the follower of Christ, after he had taken leave of his family, and settled his domestic concerns. “ And Jesus “ said unto him, No man having put his hand to the “ plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of “ God.” By these words our Lord intimated, that those who had dedicated themselves to the holy ministry, must never abandon that vocation, by returning to the business of their former lives, whereby their minds would be detached from spiritual concerns.

During this journey, our Saviour appointed seventy disciples, and aftergiving them * instructions for

* The admonitions of our Saviour to the seventy disciples, are recorded by St. Luke, x. 2, &c.

the regulation of their conduct, similar to those he had delivered to the twelve apostles about twelve months before, ordered them to go by two and two into all the cities and towns through which he himself intended to direct his progress, with a commission to proclaim the happy tidings of the approaching reign of the Messiah.

After our Lord had appointed the seventy disciples, he reflected on the ingratitude he had experienced from the inhabitants of the cities situated on the lake of Gennesareth, in which he had principally resided for several years; and lamented their incurable obstinacy, in persevering to reject his gospel, although its divine precepts were so strongly confirmed by the great and many miracles he had performed. "Woe," exclaimed our Saviour, unto thee, Chorazin; woe unto thee, Bethsaida; for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, at the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shall be thrust down to hell." Luke x. 13, 14, 15.

Addressing himself to his newly-selected disciples, Christ admonished them to proceed with confidence and fortitude, in the execution of the functions of their holy ministry, saying, "He that heareth you, heareth me: and he that despiseth you, despiseth me: and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me." Luke x. 16.

This instance of heavenly regard, could not fail of affording peculiar satisfaction to the disciples, and of alleviating their concern on account of the ill-treatment they expected to receive in the course of their

mission. The preaching even of Christ himself had been frequently unsuccessful, and even received with contempt: and they could not reasonably hope for a more favorable reception than their Master had experienced. The seventy disciples now departed, in order to execute the commands of Jesus.

Upon the commencement of the feast of tabernacles, Jesus was anxiously enquired after by those who had been converted to his gospel, and his absence was the cause of universal surprize, since he had for some time been accustomed punctually to attend the solemnity. By many of the people he was revered as the most holy person in existence, but by the majority of the Jews he was calumniated as an artful impostor. Those who acknowledged the divinity of Christ, were fearful of publicly avowing their faith, lest they should subject themselves to the vengeance of the Sanhedrim, and the other principal people among the Jews, who were the most inveterate enemies to our blessed Redeemer.

We have already observed, that Jesus did not mean to be present at the beginning of the feast. He was acquainted with the rancorous and malignant prejudices which were entertained against him by the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and therefore deemed it not expedient to reside among them for a longer period, than was necessary for the great business he had to perform. They had concerted, and more than once attempted to carry into execution, designs against his life; and to avoid the effects of their malice, he declined a compliance with the solicitations of his relations, saying, "My time is not yet come: but your
" time is always ready. The world cannot hate you,
" but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the
" works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto this feast.
" I do not yet go up unto this feast, for my time is

“not yet fully come.” John vii. 6, 7, 8. Thus our Lord signified, that it was not expedient for him to be present at the beginning of the feast, though there was no reason for restraining them from going to the capital, since the Jews entertained no unfriendly dispositions towards them: but he was himself the object of their most implacable fury, which he had incurred by the freedom with which he had reprov'd their hypocrisy and other enormous crimes; and therefore it was not prudent for him to go so early to Jerusalem. There was also another reason to occasion his refusal of accompanying his relations to the feast. The roads would, of course, be greatly crowded, and therefore he could scarcely avoid being attended to the city by the multitude; in which case the malice of his enemies would have been further inflamed, and the effect of his preaching and miracles would, in a great measure, have been prevented. For these reasons he judg'd it proper to remain in Galilee, till the multitude had gone forward to Jerusalem; and, lest any tumult should arise amongst the populace, he declin'd both preaching and performing miracles during his journey.

In consequence of the precaution that our Saviour had taken, his arrival at Jerusalem was not attended with any disturbance. On the fourth day of the feast, Christ appear'd publicly in the temple, where he discours'd to the people in a manner that display'd such unbounded erudition, strength of argument, and elegance of expression, as excit'd the utmost astonishment in his auditors; and his very enemies could not refrain from expressing their admiration of his discourse, which they conceiv'd to be the more extraordinary, since they were sensible that he had not enjoy'd the advantages of a learned education.—
“Now about the middle of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. And the Jews mar-

“ velled, saying, how knoweth this man letters, having never learned ?” John vii. 14, 15.

Perceiving the astonishment of the people, our Lord said to them, that the doctrine he preached, was not the result of human wisdom, but derived immediately from heaven. “ My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.” John vii. 16. Our Saviour farther said, that no difficulty would attend the detection of a false prophet, who imposes upon his followers fictions of his own invention, calculated to promote his own interest, and gratify his pride and ambition : but that a true prophet ascribed all the glory to God, and therefore deserved credit from mankind. “ He that speaketh of himself, seeketh his own glory : but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.” John vii. 18.

Jesus told the people that they had sought opportunities of destroying him, and that their malice had become more implacable since the preceding passover, during which he had cured a man on the sabbath-day, whence they had unjustly accused him as a violator of the law. Among other commands, our Saviour said, that Moses had enjoined them to observe the rite of circumcision according to the manner in which it had been practised in the days of Abraham and the patriarchs, who circumcised the males on the eighth day after their birth ; and that if the day of circumcision happened on a sabbath, they made not the least scruple of disturbing the rest of the day by performing the ceremony. Since they considered themselves as justifiable in dispensing with the rigid observance of the sabbath, in order to conform to a ceremonial precept, it was unreasonable that they should censure him for having cured a man laboring under the most dreadful afflictions, by means in which far less bo-

dily labor was required, than in the performance of circumcision. He therefore exhorted them to divest themselves of their prejudices, and the superstitious opinions inculcated by the elders, and after an exact scrutiny, impartially to decide, whether they had not pronounced a rash judgment against him, in invidiously imputing to him an impious violation of the sabbath. "Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision, (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers) and ye on the sabbath-day circumcise a man. If a man on the sabbath-day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken, are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath-day? Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment." John vii. 22, 23, 24.

Upon hearing the discourse of Jesus, the people asked of each other, whether he was not the same whom the rulers had so often resolved to put to death. Being assured of this, they expressed themselves surprised, that he should venture to speak with such freedom in the temple, and could account for his boldness in this respect no otherwise, than by supposing that the leading people began, at length, to believe that he was in reality the Messiah. But though our Saviour gained many converts to his cause, the generality of the people denied his being the Messiah, urging that they knew his parents and relations, and that when Christ should appear, no man would be able to say from whence he came: and this objection was founded on the following words of the prophet: "Who shall declare his generation?" Isaiah liii. 8.— Hereupon, our blessed Saviour said, that their knowledge of his parents and other relations, afforded no reasonable argument to disprove the justice of his pretensions to the prophetic character of the Messiah; adding, that he was appointed to explain the will

of God in a more clear and explicit manner than any former messenger from heaven. But however powerful the arguments advanced by Jesus in defence of the divinity of his mission, they were not sufficient to disarm the Jews of their inveterate malice and stubborn incredulity.

But some of the lower classes of the people gave credit to the reasons advanced by our Saviour in support of his character, and had the courage publicly to declare in the temple, that he was the Messiah. “ And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than those which this man hath done ?” John vii. 31.

The attachment which the common people manifested towards Jesus, proved exceedingly provoking to the Scribes and Pharisees, who after a consultation with the chief priests, commanded the keepers of the temple to take him into custody : “ but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come.” Christ now said, that notwithstanding every artifice which his enemies could devise, he should remain some time longer upon earth, during which short interval he exhorted them attentively to hearken to his doctrines, by means of which they would be enabled to secure their eternal salvation ; adding, that after his departure they would anxiously, but in vain, wish for the return of the opportunity that was now offered them, of hearing the word of God. “ The Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him. Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me : and where I am, thither ye cannot come. Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him ? Will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gen-

“ tiles? What manner of saying is this that he said, “ Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me : and where “ I am, thither ye shall not come.” John vii. 30, &c. The Jews were entirely ignorant of the meaning of our blessed Saviour’s allusion to his own death and resurrection; but imagined that he intended to depart from Judea, in order to preach among the inhabitants of the Heathen nations: but taken in this sense, there appeared to them something irreconcilable in what our Lord had said; for wherever he meant to go, they imagined it would entirely depend upon themselves, whether or not they should follow him.

The water from Siloam was now brought into the temple, according to the appointment of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, part of which the people drank, and the rest was poured out as a drink-offering to the Almighty, to whom, during this ceremony, the people addressed themselves in devout prayer for rain to fall in its proper season; after which, the whole congregation joined in singing the following passage: “ With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of “ salvation.” Isaiah xii. 3. This ceremony was instituted in commemoration of the mercy shewn to the Jewish nation, who, when on the point of perishing by thirst, were relieved by a stream of water miraculously flowing from a rock. Our blessed Saviour never permitted any remarkable occurrence to pass without deducing therefrom such instructions as were calculated to promote the happiness of mankind; and, according to his usual custom, he availed himself of this opportunity of inviting, in the most persuasive and affectionate manner, all who were thirsty to come to him; assuring them that he would supply them with drink, alluding to the ceremony then performing. “ In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let “ him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth

“ on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive.” John vii. 37, 38, 39.

While Jesus was delivering this discourse, some officers dispatched from the Sanhedrim, came to apprehend him; but such were the powers of his eloquence, that they looked upon him with silent astonishment, without attempting to execute the orders of the council. Many of his auditors supposed him to be that prophet who was to be the forerunner of the Redeemer of Israel; others concluded him to be the Messiah; while a third party deemed this impossible, since, according to the scriptures, the Messiah was not to be born in Galilee, but in Bethlehem, the place of the nativity of David, from whose race he was to be descended. A contention now took place among the people, some of whom were desirous of seizing Jesus, and taking him before the Sanhedrim, but this measure was strongly opposed by others. However, the most implacable of the enemies of our Saviour did not presume to take him into custody. “ Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is a prophet. Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was? So there was a division among the people, because of him. And some of them would have taken him, but no man laid hands on him.” John vii. 40, &c.

Upon the return of the officers who had been dispatched to apprehend our Saviour, the members of the Sanhedrim enquired, why they had not brought Jesus of Nazareth. The officers said in reply, “ Never man spake like this man,” Enraged by this

answer, the members of the council reviled the officers for having presumed to speak favorably of one whom they had pronounced to be an impostor; and said, that since they were acquainted with the sentiments of the council, it was strange that they should permit themselves to be so grossly deluded by a person whose pretensions had received credit only among the ignorant and injudicious multitude. To these reproaches the officers made no reply: but Nicodemus, one of the members of the Sanhedrim, who, as we have related, visited Christ about two years before, arraigned the conduct of his associates in a just and poignant manner, saying, "Doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doth?" They had reprehended their officers for being ignorant of the law, and at the same time had themselves acted in direct contradiction to the fundamental principles thereof, by condemning a person of whose guilt they were in possession of no evidence. Incensed at the reprimand of Nicodemus, they insultingly asked him, if he was one of those who joined the ignorant rabble in supporting the impious deceptions of a Galilean; adding, that it was expressly declared in the Scriptures, that Bethlehem should be the place of the nativity of Christ. "Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee cometh no prophet." John vii. 52. Having thus censured Nicodemus, the council rose without forming any determination with respect to Jesus.

In the evening our Saviour retired to the Mount of Olives, that he might not be exposed to the effects of the malice of the Sanhedrim. But early on the following morning, he returned to the temple, and instructed the people in the principles of the laws of the kingdom of heaven, and the blessings that would result from a strict observance thereof. In the mean time, the Scribes and Pharisees resolved, if possible,

to surprize him into some action that should render him odious to the people, and inflame against him the enmity of the Roman governor. In pursuance of this design they brought before Jesus a woman who had been detected in the act of adultery, requesting his opinion as to the punishment that ought to be inflicted upon her, saying, "This woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be * stoned. But what sayest thou?" John viii. 4, 5.

The Romans had assumed to themselves the exclusive privilege of pronouncing judgment in capital cases; and therefore their intention was to represent him to the Romans as a contumacious opposer of their authority, had he given his opinion, that she ought to be stoned: and on the contrary, had he said that the law of Moses ought to be violated in favor of this woman, they meant to render him odious to the people by representing him as an enemy to the law. Knowing their malicious intentions, and being desirous of eluding the question, our blessed Saviour "Stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not." John viii. 6.

But the Scribes and Pharisees continued urging our Lord to give an answer; and at length, raising himself, he said, "He that is without sin among you let him first cast a stone at her." Thus our Lord intimated that they ought to allow her time to repent; for if God should instantly inflict the punishments due to the crimes of men, the world would be soon depopulated; and therefore they ought to be more

* The law required, that a married woman taken in adultery should be strangled; but being a woman only betrothed the law says, she "shall be stoned." Hence then it seems that this woman was not married, but only betrothed. Lev. xx. 10. Deut. xxii. 22, 23.

indulgent towards each other, and not to deal more severely towards their fellow-creatures than they would have God do by them. Having given this answer, our Lord stooped again, and wrote upon the ground; and, in the mean time, the accusers of the woman retired. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, "went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last." John viii. 9. Jesus now raised himself up, and seeing "none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." John viii. 10, 11.

After the departure of the woman, Jesus addressed the people, who came and surrounded him, saying, that he was a spiritual sun by which the clouds of ignorance and superstition should be dispelled, and that those who conformed to his instructions should enjoy the blessings of everlasting life. "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." John viii. 12. Hereupon, our Lord was interrupted by the Pharisees, who accused him of being an impostor, saying, that the testimony he had given in favor of himself was a proof only of his arrogance, vanity, and self-love. To this objection our blessed Redeemer replied, that the testimony he had borne in favor of himself deserved to be relied on, since it was not, as they had alledged, the result either of self-love or pride. He had called himself, "The light of the world," and to that appellation he was justly entitled: nor would they themselves refuse to acknowledge this truth, were they not ignorant as to the authority from which he derived his commission. Being strangers to his father who had sent him to teach mankind the way of salvation, and to whom he

must return after executing his office upon earth, our Saviour said, they formed their notions concerning him merely from his external appearance, and therefore censured his doctrines as not deserving credit : but the judgment that he himself made was the result of a strict investigation into the professions, actions, and affections of the minds of men. The law of Moses, he said, required that credit should be given to the concurring testimony of two witnesses ; and the testimony he had given concerning himself was confirmed by the miracles which his Father had enabled him to perform. “ The Pharisees therefore said “ unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself ; and thy “ record is not true. Jesus answered and said unto “ them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my re- “ cord is true ; for I know whence I came, and whi- “ ther I go ; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and “ whither I go. Ye judge after the flesh ; I judge no “ man. And yet if I judge, my judgment is true : “ for I am not alone ; but I and my Father that sent “ me. It is also written in your law, that the testi- “ mony of two men is true. I am one that bear wit- “ ness of myself, and the Father that sent me bear- “ eth witness of me. Then said they, Where is thy “ Father ? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor “ my Father : If ye had known me, ye should have “ known my Father also. These words spake Jesus “ in the * treasury, as he taught in the temple : and “ no man laid hands on him ; for his hour was not “ yet come. John viii. 13, &c.

After the above discourse, Jesus repeated to the people what he had said respecting their departure : “ I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die

* The treasury or court of the women, was the place where stood the chests for receiving the offerings of all who came to worship in the temple.

“in your sins : whither I go, ye cannot come.” John viii. 21. Thus our blessed Saviour intimated, that after his ascension into heaven, when the Roman arms should spread horror and desolation throughout Judea, they would anxiously wish for the appearance of the Messiah, that by his power they might be rescued from the oppression of their cruel enemies ; but that their hopes of succor from the Son of God should be disappointed ; that they should die without making atonement for their abominable sins, and be excluded from the regions of eternal bliss.

Still incapable of comprehending what our Saviour meant by his departure from among them, to a place whither it was impossible that they could follow him, the Jews were now of opinion that his design was to put a period to his existence, by some violent means ; for they imagined, that the gloomy mansions of death was the only retreat to which they could not pursue him. Perceiving their error, our blessed Redeemer expressed himself in a more explicit manner, at the same time reprimanding them with great severity. Your vile insinuation, said Christ, at once betrays the abominable depravity of your hearts, and the baseness of your origin. You are the sons of earth, and therefore addicted to all the vices and passions incidental to humanity ; but to these infirmities I am in no respect liable, since I derive my origin immediately from heaven. The degeneracy of your own hearts has suggested to you, that I am capable of committing the horrid crime of self-murder : but be assured that my mind is entirely free from those corruptions of human nature, which are the cause of sin. If you are desirous of being purified from the vile pollutions of your earthly origin, you must give credit to my testimony. But if you persevere in your obstinacy, you shall die in your sins,

and inevitably meet with that punishment which is denounced against the enemies of God.

The Jews now said to our Lord, Who art thou? And he replied, "Even the same that I said unto you 'from the beginning;' meaning that he was "the light of the world," as he had declared at the commencement of his discourse; and our Lord added, "I have many things to say, and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true: and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him." John viii. 26.

Our Saviour told the Jews, that the miracles which would attend the awful hour of his crucifixion, together with his resurrection from the dead, the effusion of the Holy Spirit upon his disciples, and the destruction of the Jewish nation, would abundantly prove that he was sent by the Father. "When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself, but as my Father hath taught me." John viii. 28. In pursuance of his discourse our Lord said, that though he should be accused by the Jews as a malefactor, and compelled to submit to crucifixion, yet neither that accusation, nor the consequent punishment would result to him because he was deserted by his Father, whose protection he should for ever enjoy, since he should execute all his commands with the most rigid punctuality.

So powerful was the eloquence of Christ, that many of the people now believed him to be the Messiah. By the words, "when ye have lifted up the Son of man," it is very probably that they supposed our Saviour alluded to his ascension to the throne of David, and not to his crucifixion; and that finding he entertained sentiments which they conceived to be so

worthy the Messiah, they were the more disposed to believe in the doctrine he had preached concerning his divine mission.

Our Lord informed the people, that if they constantly yielded a due obedience to his precepts, they should in truth become his disciples, and be distinguished by that honorable appellation; that they should be fully instructed in the precepts of his gospel, and be freed from the slavery of sin. “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” John viii. 31, 32. Upon hearing Jesus say that he would make them free, they said, they were the descendants of Abraham, and had never been in a state of *slavery; and therefore, they said, they were ignorant of what he meant by saying he would make them free. Hereupon Christ informed them, that the slavery to which he alluded, was of a spiritual nature; and that by the indulgence of vicious propensities, they became the slaves of their own inordinate and sinful appetites. “We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the son abideth for ever. If the son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” John viii. 33, &c.

However strongly assured of their master’s favor, slaves, said our Lord, must be in continual danger of

* Such was the pride of these people, that they denied having been in bondage, though all the Jewish writers acknowledge that their nation was enslaved by the Egyptians; and in the time of our Saviour, they were dependant on the Romans. Exclusive of the Egyptian bondage, they were reduced to slavery in Assyria and Babylon.

being dismissed from their master's family, since it will be in his power to sell or otherwise dispose of them at pleasure ; so the Almighty looked upon the Jews as servants rather than sons, and would discard them from his family, whenever he deemed it proper. But, on the contrary, if the Son of God should make them joint heirs with him, they would inherit the blessings of immortality : but our Lord observed, that preparatory to being admitted to this glorious privilege, they must be thoroughly purified from their abominable defilements.

With respect to their boasted descent from Abraham, Jesus said, that, in a natural sense, they were the offspring of that great and good man ; but, considered in a moral view, they appeared to be the progeny of satan ; for many of them were desirous of destroying him, only because he enjoined them to a more devout and holy life than they were willing to observe. “ I know that ye are Abraham's seed ; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father : and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. They answered, and said unto him, Abraham is our father.” John viii. 37, 38, 39.

Since they claimed an immediate descent from Abraham, who was justly stiled the father of the faithful, and the friend of God, our Lord exhorted them to prove their spiritual alliance to that patriarch, by adopting his examples of righteousness and sanctity. But such was the degeneracy of their hearts, that they maliciously sought his destruction, only because the precepts he inculcated did not correspond with their vicious habits : whereas Abraham, on the contrary, had sincerely believed, and strictly conformed to all the divine revelations. “ If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.

“ But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God : this did not Abraham.” John viii. 39, 40. Our Lord added, that their conduct sufficiently proved them to be the children of the great deceiver of mankind, who “ goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”

The Jews replied, that they were neither idolators themselves nor the descendants of parents addicted to idolatrous worship ; and that therefore with respect to aspiritual descent, they must doubtless be the children of God. “ We be not born in fornication : we have one father, even God.” John viii. 41.

Hereupon our Lord informed them, that a mere external appearance of religion would not operate towards their salvation ; and that they could not in reality become the children of God, unless they devoutly attended to his word, and continued to “ love it in deed and in truth.” Therefore, if they entertained a due veneration for religion, they must obey the precepts of him who was sent from heaven to instruct mankind in the duties required of them. “ If God were your father, ye would love me ; for I proceeded forth, and came from God : neither came I of myself, but he sent me.” John viii. 42.

But, continued our blessed Redeemer, ye inherit the vicious principles of your * father the devil, and will therefore persevere in gratifying those abominable lusts derived from him. From the beginning he was an enemy to mankind, to effect whose destruction, he constantly exerts his utmost power. Sometimes

* Intimating, that they resembled him in wickedness :...for, as he is the son of Abraham, who doth the works of Abraham ; so is he a child of satan, who doth the works of satan.

he endeavors to effect his wicked purposes by seducing mankind into sin by his detestable falsities, and sometimes by wickedly instigating them to destroy those whom God hath sent to work their reformation, by teaching them the necessity of repentance, and a life of holiness and sanctity. Having early abandoned truth and holiness, falsity and every other species of wickedness became habitual to, and congenial with his nature; and he is ever watchful for opportunities of employing his strength and cunning for the ruin of mankind. Being an enemy to truth, and the father of lies, when he speaketh a falsehood, he speaketh what is properly his own. Having yourselves the same disposition of mind, it is not wonderful that you should deny the veracity of what I deliver. But you cannot demonstrate, that I have not received my commission from the Almighty; and therefore you can have no reasonable pretext for disputing what I assert, especially since the justice of my pretensions has been so amply confirmed by my miracles. But “ye are of your father the devil, and the lust of your father ye will do: he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is not truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you truth, ye believe me not.” John viii. 44, 45.

Although you presume to deny the divinity of my mission, you are unable to produce any plausible argument to persuade the most weak and uninformed, that I do not derive my commission immediately from heaven; nor can you justly accuse me of any action tending to criminate me, or in any respect render me unworthy of belief. He said, they could not justly accuse him, either of inculcating false doctrines, of unjustly reproving their conduct, or of having himself been guilty of any action deserving reproach.—

Every true servant of God receives with thankfulness and humility, those revelations respecting himself and his divine will, which the Almighty is pleased to communicate to mankind by the agency of his messengers; and of these true servants, the principal study and delight consists in a punctual discharge of his holy commandments. But, still slaves to your obstinate incredulity, you reject the revelations and religious precepts of the Almighty, which are delivered by me, who am purposely descended from heaven, that mankind may be instructed in the certain means of securing their eternal salvation. "He that is of God, heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." John viii. 47.

Provoked by the severity of our Lord's reproof, the Jews said, that by calling the descendants of Abraham the children of satan, he had afforded sufficient evidence that he was either a man of a profligate and wicked disposition, or possessed with an evil spirit, by the power of which he was instigated to revile the people of God. Jesus informed them, that he was not actuated by any of the corruptions incidental to human nature, and that neither was he instigated by the power of an evil spirit. But, on the contrary, he fulfilled the commands of his heavenly Father, by preaching the doctrines of truth, their aversion to which had caused them to dishonor him by the most opprobrious and unprovoked calumnies.—Our Saviour added, that he was not influenced by the vain desire of rendering himself the object of popular applause; for that he was equally indifferent as to whether he should excite their commendations, or incur their reproaches; his great motive being, to discharge with fidelity the important commission with which he was invested by his heavenly Father. But he said there was one who would fully vindicate, and

severely punish those who should dare to affront the dignity of his character.

Having asserted his mighty and divine power, our Saviour expatiated on the happy effects of faith in, and obedience to, the precepts of his gospel. “ Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.” John viii. 51. Upon this declaration, the Jews exclaimed, that they were convinced Jesus was possessed with an evil spirit: urging, that although Abraham, the prophets, and other men of the most irreproachable sanctity of manners, were now consigned to the gloomy mansions of death, yet Jesus had the folly and confidence to assert, that whoever conformed to his precepts, should never die. After this, they insultingly asked our Lord, whether he meant vainly to boast of a more distinguished place in the favor of the Almighty, than was bestowed upon Abraham and the prophets; who, notwithstanding the great privileges they enjoyed, could not attain to an exemption from the common fate of humanity; and therefore they said, it was not probable that their successors should be secured from the irresistible stroke of death: but his assertion respecting his exemption from the common lot of humanity, afforded a strong confirmation to their belief of his being possessed with an evil spirit. “ Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? whom makest thou thyself?”

In reply, Jesus said, that were he to speak in commendation of himself, they would accuse him of vanity, and like the Pharisees, say, “ Thou bearest record of thyself: thy record is not true.” Instead, therefore, of insisting upon the dignity of his charac-

ter, he should simply observe, that his Father had borne honorable testimony in his favor, by enabling him to perform the great miracles of which they had been witnesses. These, he said, were surely sufficient to convince them of his power of performing what he had promised to his disciples; especially after they were informed, that his Father was no other than the Almighty God of Jacob, who was the object of the worship of all the descendants of Abraham.— Though they effected to worship his Father, they were ignorant, our Lord said, of the adoration that was acceptable to him. Even Abraham himself, said Jesus, whom you boast of as the founder of your nation, anxiously desired to behold the time when I, at the command of my heavenly Father, should assume the appearance and nature of humanity, and declare his holy will to mankind, that they might be rescued from the tyranny of sin, and the true worship of God be established throughout the world.— This wish Abraham enjoyed; he was favored with the ravishing prospect of this happy period, then concealed in the womb of futurity. “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and “was glad.” John viii. 56.

These unskilful and malignant Jews were ignorant of the spiritual meaning of our Saviour, who intimated, that by the power of God, Abraham had been favored with a knowledge of the blessing that would ensue from the reign of the great Messiah; and they ignorantly supposed, that he meant to represent himself as having been the contemporary of Abraham. Though he had so frequently declared to them, that he was the Son of God, they were still utter strangers to his divine nature, and had no conception that he had existed with the Father before the creation of the world. This gross stupidity and obstinacy, induced our Saviour to assert the dignity of his cha-

racter in more explicit terms. “ Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am.” John viii. 58. It being manifested from the appearance of Christ, that he was not fifty years of age, the Jews were highly incensed against him, in consequence of his having asserted a priority of claim to Abraham, in point of existence; and therefore they took up stones, in order to cast them at him: but our blessed Redeemer, rendering himself invisible, passed through the multitude unhurt, and retiring from the temple, avoided the fury of his enemies.

After the departure of Jesus from the temple, his apostles observed a blind man in the road; and they enquired of their master, whether the blindness had been inflicted upon him as a punishment of his own sins, or those of his parents. To this Jesus replied, that his affliction was not the result of his own sins, or those of his parents; but added, that God had permitted him to be born blind, in order that the power of his only Son might be manifested, in the event of miraculously bestowing upon him the power of sight. “ And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.” John ix. 1, 2, 3.

The disciples had frequently heard their master declare, that bodily afflictions were often the punishments of particular sins; and the law of Moses had taught them to believe, that sin was the fruitful source of evil, and also that God punished the iniquities of the father upon the children; and therefore they were induced to propose the question to our Lord, respecting the cause of the man’s blindness.

Having assigned the cause of the man's infirmity, our Saviour said, "I must work the work of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work." John ix. 4. By these words our Lord implied, that since the period of his departure from amongst the sons of men was nearly approaching, it was expedient that he should frequently exert his power of working miracles. As the approach of night inspires men with additional avidity to complete the appointed labor of the day, so it was expedient, that he should avail himself of every opportunity of bearing testimony to the power of God, by the miracles he had enabled him to perform.— Thus he signified, that, with unwearied attention, he labored incessantly to promote the kingdom of his almighty Father; to this great and important work he dedicated himself, during his sojournment in the flesh, with the most earnest solicitude; and that he might accomplish the beneficent work of enabling mankind to secure their eternal salvation, he quitted the heavenly courts of ineffable bliss, and wandered about the earth, continually employed in promoting the happiness of man; to which benevolent pursuit he so assiduously applied himself, that he was often entirely destitute of the common refreshments and necessaries of life.

It was on the sabbath-day, when, as he was passing through the streets in his way from the temple, he perceived the man who had been born blind. In performing the miracle of his cure, it was necessary that our Lord should descend to some small degree of servile employment; and therefore, he cautioned his disciples against expressing astonishment at what they should see him do; adding, that he should not commit any action which he could not fully justify, and which would not prove highly acceptable to his heavenly Father. Though they might imagine, that,

without any inconvenience, he might postpone working the miracle till after the day of rest, he observed, that the time appointed for his existence upon earth was drawn so nearly to a conclusion, that it was proper for him to embrace every opportunity that occurred, in order to give the most indisputable confirmation to his doctrines.

Our Lord chose to perform this miracle on the sabbath-day, that he might expose the violent superstition of the Pharisees, who he supposed would enquire into the particulars of the cure, whereby the miracle would become more universally known.

Being on the point of conferring the faculty of sight upon a person afflicted with blindness from his birth, our Saviour took occasion to speak of himself as one appointed to illuminate the minds of mankind, which were involved in the darkness of ignorance. "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." John ix. 5.

Having said, that he should enlighten the minds of mankind by his doctrines, as effectually as he should bestow the power of seeing upon the blind man, our benevolent Redeemer "spit on the ground, and made clay of the spittle; and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, sent) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing." John ix. 6, 7.

According to the indisputable evidence of former examples, it is evident that our Saviour possessed the power of working this miracle without the assistance of any external operation. The composition used on this occasion, indeed, seems to have been such, as, if administered by other hands, would have proved an

impediment to the wonderful and happy effects it wrought : and therefore by the cure being effected by such extraordinary means, a most striking illustration was afforded of the divine power of the blessed Jesus. We cannot, then, but conclude, that the particular manner of this operation, was intended to lead our attention to more signal mysteries, and to convince mankind, that the great Author of our being, who originally created man out of the dust, has power to redeem his creatures from a state of degeneracy, and give spiritual sight to those eyes, which the iniquities of human nature have rendered utterly blind to the enchanting prospect of the regions of ineffable bliss.

The man seems to have known the character of his heavenly physician, whose fame was established in every quarter of Judea. Indeed, we cannot account for the ready and implicit acquiescence of the blind man, otherwise than by supposing, that he had heard of the great power of our blessed Redeemer. The miraculous cure of this man, was the cause of equal curiosity and surprize ; and the people enquired, whether he was not the person who had been accustomed to beg alms in the street. This was acknowledged by some, but denied by a much greater number, who, however, allowed that he greatly resembled the man. To satisfy the curiosity of the people, the patient avowed himself to be the man who had been used to solicit charity in the street, and that till a miracle had been wrought in his favor, he had been an absolute and entire stranger to the blessing of sight. Upon being questioned as to the means by which he had attained the faculty of seeing, he declared that he had been cured by Jesus, but that he could not satisfy their enquiries as to where his benefactor was gone ; for, at his command, he went to the pool of Siloam and washed.

In a transport of gratitude and joy, the man exclaimed, I am the very person who you so lately beheld in a state of total blindness, which deplorable affliction I derived from my mother's womb: but by the peculiar favor and mercy of God, you now behold me in the perfect enjoyment of the inestimable blessing of sight; but I have not had the happiness to behold and pay my most grateful acknowledgments to my benefactor. "The neighbors therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he. Others said, He is like him. But he said, I am he. Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened? He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash. And I went and washed, and I received sight." John ix. 8, &c.

That an opportunity might be afforded for persecuting Jesus for violating the sanctity of the sabbath-day, the people compelled the man to go immediately to the Sanhedrim, that a punishment might be inflicted upon Jesus proportioned to his supposed offence. Being conducted before the council, the Pharisees demanded of him, what was the nature of his late infirmity, and by what means he had obtained a cure. Though he had been violently hurried before this awful and vindictive assembly, the man with undaunted resolution declared, that Jesus had miraculously conferred upon him the power of seeing, and expressed a high sense of gratitude towards his benefactor, who he pronounced to be invested with divine authority.

Some of those who composed the council, insisted that Jesus was an impostor; urging, that had he been invested with a divine commission, he would not

have presumed to violate the sabbath : but others, who were more unprejudiced and candid in their sentiments argued, that he could not be a deceiver, since the cure he had performed was of too extraordinary and beneficial a nature to have been wrought by an enemy to God, since a man of that description could possess neither the inclination nor power to effect so miraculous a cure.

In consequence of this disagreement among the members of the Sanhedrim, the man was asked, what opinion he entertained concerning the person who had relieved him ; and he plainly answered, that he understood him to be a prophet. Notwithstanding this clear and decisive testimony in behalf of Jesus, the Pharisees still hoped, that by means of some stratagem they should obtain a pretext for rendering our blessed Saviour a victim to their implacable malice ; and therefore they endeavored to detract from the fame of Jesus, by asserting, that the man had not been born blind. Hereupon his parents were sent for ; and upon being questioned with respect to their son, they declared that he had been born blind, and remained under that dreadful affliction till the time of his late wonderful cure : but they pusillanimously declined mentioning their own private sentiments, or the particulars they had learnt concerning the miracle, knowing that the rulers had determined to * expel any person the synagogue who should presume to acknowledge Christ as the Messiah. “ They brought “ to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind. And “ it was the sabbath-day when Jesus made the clay, “ and opened his eyes. Then again the Pharisees

* Persons against whom the sentence of excommunication was pronounced, were to separate themselves four cubits from the society of others : but at that distance, they were permitted to expound traditions, and hear them expounded : but it is supposed, they were not allowed to join the congregation in prayer.

“ also asked him, how he had received his sight?
“ He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes,
“ and I washed, and do see. Therefore said some
“ of the Pharisees, this man is not of God, because
“ he keepeth not the sabbath-day. Others said, How
“ can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And
“ there was a division among them. They say unto
“ the blind man again, What sayest thou of him,
“ that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a
“ prophet. But the Jews did not believe concerning
“ him that he had been blind, and received his sight,
“ until they called the parents of him that had received
“ his sight. And they asked them, saying, Is this
“ your son, who ye say was born blind? How then
“ doth he now see? His parents answered them and
“ said, We know that this is our son, and that he was
“ born blind: but by what means he now seeth we
“ know not; or who hath opened his eyes we know
“ not; he is of age, ask him: he shall speak for him-
“ self. These words spake his parents, because they
“ feared the Jews; for the Jews had agreed already,
“ that, if any man did confess that he was Christ, he
“ should be put out of the synagogue.” John ix.
13, &c.

The man whom our Lord had so miraculously cured being again called into the council, the Pharisees, despairing of being able to disprove the miracle of Jesus, had recourse to their usual practice of slandering his reputation. Therefore they said to the man, “ Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner.” To this he gave a plain and simple answer. “ Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that whereas I was born blind, now I see.” John ix. 23.

Notwithstanding the precision and consistency which the man had observed throughout his exami-

nation, and the indisputable confirmation which his narrative had received by the concurring testimony of several persons who had seen the miracle performed, the Pharisees still hoped, that by persevering in the arts of sophistry, and by endeavoring to confound him by repeated questions, they should at length be able to extort some reply, which they could interpret into the foundation of a criminal charge against our blessed Saviour. "Then said they to him again, "What did he to thee? How opened he thine eyes?" Thus by endeavoring to procure a repetition of the acknowledgment that Christ had employed himself in a servile office, in order to perform the cure, they meant to expose him to the enmity of the people, by representing him to them as a violator to the sabbath, and consequently as an impostor, and an enemy of God. By stratagems of this nature, the superstitious and envious rulers of Israel hoped to prevail on the man who had so lately received the invaluable blessing of sight, to unite with them in exhibiting an accusation equally unmerited, cruel and malicious, against the very person to whom he was indebted in the most sacred obligations of unbounded gratitude and affection. But such was his abhorrence of their inveterate perseverance in opposition to a palpable fact, confirmed and established by the most incontestible evidence, that he resolutely exclaimed, "I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? Will ye also be his disciples?" John ix. 28, 29. Exasperated by this reproof, the Pharisees discharged both against our blessed Saviour, and the man whom he had so miraculously cured, the most violent and acrimonious reproaches. They said, the man might be absurd and impious enough to avow himself the disciple of Jesus: but that they themselves acknowledged no other master than Moses, who they were perfectly convinced was sent by God: but with respect to Jesus, they

said they knew him not, nor by what authority he acted. Hereupon the man observed, that it was very extraordinary, they should persist in refusing to yield due credit to a person who most assuredly acted under the authority of a commission from the Almighty, of which he had afforded the most ample and incontestible evidence in the astonishing miracles he had wrought. He further said, that God never conferred the power of working miracles upon impostors: that Jesus was certainly a true prophet, because he had afforded the most signal proofs of the divinity of his mission; which he could not possibly have confirmed in so strong and incontestible a manner, unless his power had been delegated to him immediately from heaven; and having observed, that the cure he had himself experienced, was the only instance that had occurred of a person receiving sight who had been born blind, he concluded with saying, that, unless commissioned by the Almighty, Jesus could not have performed the cure he had lately received, or any other miracle. “The man answered, and said unto them, Why, herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is; and yet he hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and does his will, him he heareth. Since the world began, was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.” John ix. 30, &c.

The Pharisees acknowledged, that “God heareth not sinners;” and they were perfectly sensible that the Almighty had heard Christ, and deemed him worthy of the divine favor, or he could not have so miraculously cured the blind man; and it was thence evident that Christ could not be a sinner, but that he was peculiarly favored with the gifts of heaven. So

entirely conclusive and irresistible were the arguments of this plain, but honest man, that the Pharisees made not the least attempt to refute what he had advanced. They however insulted him in the most indecent and illiberal language, reflecting upon him as an ignorant, insensible creature, whose mind was no more enlightened than his body had formerly been; and reproached him for having insolently dared to dispute with men, who were distinguished above the rest of the human race by the superiority of their understanding, their knowledge of the law, and those other eminent advantages annexed to their characters; which enabled them to decide with accuracy, on those intricate points which infinitely surpassed the limits of his capacity. Having thus reviled him, the Pharisees ordered the man to be turned out of the temple. "They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sin, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out." John ix. 34.

The sentence of excommunication, was the most severe that the Sanhedrim had in this case power to inflict: but though they separated him from the Jewish society, he was united to those whose religious precepts were more happily adapted to secure their eternal salvation.

From the arrogance and presumption of the Pharisees, we may learn, that it is absolutely necessary for us boldly to resist all the subtle artifices, and the more open and presumptuous efforts of unbelievers, to intercept our progress towards the glories of eternity, by impairing our faith in the gospel of the blessed Redeemer.

Soon after the Sanhedrim had pronounced the sentence of excommunication against the man, he was accidentally met by his heavenly benefactor, who ask-

ed him whether he had faith in the Messiah? He declared that he reposed an entire confidence in his divinity, and that he entertained a most earnest desire to learn where he was, that he might hasten to him, and pay him those grateful acknowledgments to which he had a claim, on account of the miraculous cure he had wrought, and that adoration which was due to his sacred character. Upon this, our blessed Saviour acknowledged himself to be the Messiah; and upon hearing these words, the man prostrated himself at the feet of Christ, and worshipped him with the utmost fervor of devotion. “Jesus heard that they
“ had cast him out: and when he had found him, he
“ said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of
“ God? He answered and said, Who is he? Lord,
“ that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto
“ him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that
“ talketh to thee. And he said, Lord, I believe.
“ And he worshipped him. And Jesus said, For
“ judgment I am come into this world; that they
“ which see not, might see, and that they which see,
“ might be made blind.” John ix. 35. By these words our Lord intimated, that the men whose minds were as much darkened by the clouds of ignorance and superstition with respect to a knowledge of the scriptures, as the man he had cured had been with regard to corporeal light, should now be enlightened by the effulgency of his gospel; and that, on the contrary, those who were famous for their learning, and their intimate acquaintance with the writings of the prophets, should soon be accused of blindness and ignorance, as the means of securing their salvation. Amongst the numerous auditors who were present on this occasion, were several of the Pharisees, who imagining that in what Jesus had said, he meant to reflect upon them, asked, whether he supposed them to be blind. Jesus answered, that if they were really blind, they would be less deserving of censure;

but being so capable of distinguishing truth from falsehood, their obstinacy was wholly inexcusable. "And some of the Pharisees which were with him, heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, we see, therefore your sin remaineth." John ix. 40, 41.

Having reproved the obstinacy of the Pharisees, who had rejected the most evident tokens of the divinity of his mission, our Saviour pursued his discourse, in which he introduced an allegorical description of the characters of a true and a false teacher of the people. He was accustomed to draw his similitudes from the objects immediately present; and being now in the outer court of temple, near the spot where sheep were exposed to sale for sacrifices, he described the teachers among the Jews as shepherds, and the people as sheep; a similitude frequently used by the ancient prophets.

Of bad shepherds, or false teachers, our Lord said there were two classes. The first were those who, instead of going into the field at the public gate, in order to lead the flocks to the finest pastures, clandestinely entered by some other way, with a view only to kill and steal the sheep. The other bad shepherds, he said, were those, who though they entered by the gate, yet when the wolf appears, they abandon their sheep to destruction, having no regard but for themselves. To illustrate this allusion, it is necessary to observe, that the sheep which were brought to the temple, to be sold for sacrifices, were confined in little folds, placed in the outer court of the temple; and therefore the shepherd himself could not enter, till the porter had opened the door. - Hence then, there will appear no intricacy in the following parabolical text of the evangelist: "Verily, verily, I say unto

“you, He that entereth not by the door, into the
 “sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same
 “is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in
 “by the door, is the shepherd of the sheep. To
 “him the porter openeth, and the sheep hear his
 “voice : and he calleth his own sheep by name, and
 “leadeth them out : and when he putteth forth his
 “own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep
 “follow him, for they know his voice. And a stran-
 “ger will they not follow, but will flee from him ;
 “for they know not the voice of strangers.” John x.
 1, &c. Thus our Lord instructed the people, that
 pious and good men strictly conformed to the direc-
 tions of true and faithful teachers, who, on every oc-
 casion, explain to them the principles of their duty,
 without concealing such matters as they suppose will
 prove disagreeable to the inclinations of their follow-
 ers. The true worshippers of God will not listen to
 impostors, but avoid the seductions of false teachers,
 as the sheep flee from the voice of strangers ; for
 without difficulty they can distinguish the true mes-
 sengers of God from impostors, by the difference of
 their religious precepts and their moral conduct.

By these similitudes did our Saviour instruct the
 Pharisees, in the difference between true and false
 teachers : but finding them unable to comprehend the
 meaning of his parabolical discourse, he proceeded
 in the following manner, by way of explication :
 “Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the
 “sheep. All that ever came before me, are thieves
 “and robbers : but the sheep did not hear them. I
 “am the door : by me if any man enter in, he shall
 “be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pas-
 “ture. The thief cometh not, but to steal and to
 “kill, and to destroy : I am come that they might
 “have life, and that they might have it more abun-
 “dantly.” John x. 7, &c.

Thus our blessed Saviour represented himself under the similitude, not only of the door by which the shepherds were to enter, but also under that of the door of the sheep. By the above words Jesus implied, that it was through his mediation that mankind would be enabled to enter into the spiritual inclosure of the church; that every man who believed on him, should become a true member of the church of God, and should receive such instructions, as would qualify him for the enjoyment of the blessings of immortality. It might, our Lord intimated, be with great ease decided, that he was not a thief, or robber, since his intention was neither to steal, to kill, or to destroy the flock: but, on the contrary, his business was to give life to mankind, and that in a more abundant degree than it had been bestowed by Moses, in the dispensation of the law.

Our Saviour farther said, he was not an hireling shepherd, appointed by the owner to watch the sheep: but he was "the good shepherd," whose appearance had been predicted by the prophets. He was the actual proprietor of the flock, which was sufficiently evident, from his willingness to forfeit his life for the benefit of the sheep. But the hireling, whose views are directed towards their own private interest alone, upon the appearance of the wolf, abandons the sheep, rather than expose his person to danger; so that the the wolf, without resistance, tears some of the flock to pieces, and disperses the rest. "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth, and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep." John x. 11, 12, 13.

Since, said our Lord, I am the good shepherd, and am so unremittingly careful of the sheep, I know each particular one, and wherever he may be, I am able to claim him as belonging to my flock. I am also acquainted with their respective wants, and of the most minute circumstances concerning them. Their obedience to the precepts of my gospel is acceptable to me; and their acquiescence, in my commands, induces me to love them with the tenderest affection. They are sensible that I am their shepherd and Saviour sent from the Almighty, and that I have power to inspire them with divine knowledge, redeem them from the punishment annexed to a sinful life, and procure them an habitation in the blissful regions of the kingdom of heaven. "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so I know the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep." John x. 14, 15.

Our Lord also said, that he had other sheep than the descendants of Abraham, many of his flock being dispersed among the Gentiles. But these, he said, he meant to reclaim to his church, and he knew they would cheerfully comply with the precepts of his gospel. My sheep shall all be collected into one sheep-fold, and be under the care of one shepherd, whose voice they shall distinguish from that of a stranger, although the flock will consist promiscuously of Jews and Gentiles. I will cheerfully resign my life for the salvation of mankind, and therefore I am beloved of my heavenly Father: but the life I shall surrender for the purpose of rescuing mankind from the tyranny of satan, it is not possible for men to deprive me of, without my consent. The power is conferred upon me of re-assuming the existence which I am ready to resign for the benefit of mankind; and therefore, after I shall have been consigned for a short

time to the mansions of death, I shall revive, and ascend into the glorious kingdom of my heavenly Father. “ And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold ; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice : and there shall be one fold and one shepherd. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.” John x. 16, 17, 18.

These discourses operated very differently upon the minds of the Jews ; some of whom accused him of being a lunatic, and others insisted that he was possessed with an evil spirit ; but there was a third party, who were persuaded that Christ was possessed of a divine power. “ There was a division therefore again, among the Jews, for these sayings. And many of them said, he hath a devil, and is mad : why hear ye him ? Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil : can a devil open the eyes of the blind ? John x. 19, 20, 21.

CHAP. XXIX.

The return of the seventy disciples, with whom our Lord discourses concerning the extent of their power. Jesus gives thanks to his heavenly Father, for the success that had attended the ministry of his seventy disciples. Our Saviour's reply to a lawyer, who enquired by what means he could obtain happiness. The parable of the good Samaritan. Our Lord applies the parable to the question proposed by the lawyer. Jesus repairs to Bethany: he reproves Martha, and commends Mary. The instructions of Jesus concerning prayer. In order to encourage his disciples, he delivers to them several similitudes. Jesus exhorts his auditors against treating his gospel with indifference. Our Saviour refuses to shew the Jews a miracle. He discourses of inward defilement, at the house of a Pharisee. Our Lord censures the Scribes and Pharisees, who are enraged against him. He exhorts the people to avoid the practice of hypocrisy, and delivers an encouraging discourse to his apostles. Of adhering to the gospel, and concerning the sin against the Holy Ghost. Our Saviour refuses to pronounce judgment on a controversy relating to private property. Parable of a rich man. Exhortations against the vice of avarice. Of treasure in heaven. The duty of watchfulness. A similitude concerning a nobleman and one of his domestics. Jesus mentions what will prove the effects of his gospel. His discourse to the people. That worldly calamities attack some men, though there are others more wicked. The parable of the fig-tree. Our Lord restores a woman to health, who had been long possessed with an evil spirit. Similitudes concerning the kingdom of heaven. That the bles-

sings of the kingdom of God shall not be confined to the Jews alone. Jesus is warned to depart, in order to avoid the rage of Herod. Our Saviour's reply concerning Herod, and his lamentations over the city of Jerusalem.

UPON the conclusion of the feast of tabernacles, our Saviour departed from Jerusalem; and the seventy disciples, whom as we have observed, he had dispatched to divers places, to proclaim the near approach of the kingdom of the Messiah, now returned and reported to their heavenly Master the success that had attended their mission. Previous to their departure, our Lord had invested them with the power of working miracles: but they appear not to have been acquainted with the extent of the authority, thus delegated to them by the Son of God; for, upon approaching him they rapturously exclaimed, "Lord, even the devils are subject to us, through thy name." Upon this, Christ said, "I beheld satan as lightning fall from heaven." Be not astonished that the devils are subject to the power which I have conferred upon you, for the chief of those wicked spirits is not able to resist my divine authority. When I first assumed the similitude of human nature, for the purpose of destroying satan and his works, I perceived him with the swiftness of lightning precipitated from that eminence of power, to which he had been exalted by the iniquities of mankind.

To encourage his disciples to proceed in their ministry with constancy and fortitude, our blessed Saviour said, he would extend their authority. "Behold*, I give unto you power to tread on serpents

* By these words a new deputation appears to have been given to the seventy, not confined, like their former commission, to the cities of Israel, but extending to all nations. The power given in these

“ and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy :
 “ and nothing shall by any means hurt you.” Luke
 x. 19. But, to moderate the excess of joy which
 they felt on occasion of having this additional honor
 and authority conferred upon them, our Saviour di-
 rected their attention to an object of more important
 concern, saying, “ Notwithstanding, in this rejoice
 “ not, that the spirits are subject unto you ; but ra-
 “ ther rejoice, because your names are written in hea-
 “ ven.” Luke x. 20.

The beneficent Redeemer of mankind, could not reflect on the happy effects that were to result from the promulgation of his gospel, and on the infinite wisdom and goodness of his Almighty Father, which were so strongly manifested in his divine dispensations to sinful men, without feeling his benevolent heart powerfully impressed by the sentiments of the most lively gratitude and affection towards the great Creator of the universe, to whom he addressed himself in terms to the following effect : O God, thou supreme Lord of heaven and earth, vouchsafe to accept my sincerest acknowledgments for thy unbounded wisdom and goodness, so eminently displayed on all occasions. I thank thee, O Father, for the means thou hast adopted for the propagation of the holy gospel among the Jews : the great truths of which are concealed from those obdurate and incredulous people, who vainly boast of an extraordinary degree of learning and sagacity, although they are clearly evident to others of more humble pretensions, but of far greater purity of heart. “ I thank thee, O Father, Lord of
 “ heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things
 “ from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them

words has a manifest allusion to Psalm xci. 13. where a similar authority is given to a pious man. “ Thou shalt tread upon the lion
 “ and adder : the young lion and dragon shalt thou trample under
 “ feet.”

“unto babes: even so Father, for so it seemeth good
“in thy sight.” Luke x. 21.

Addressing himself to the multitude, our Saviour said, that the instructions he delivered to them, he received from his heavenly Father, who alone was acquainted with the great purposes of his mission; so the pleasure of the Father was only known by the Son, and by those to whom the will of God was revealed by his only Son. “And all things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.” Luke x. 22.

Our Lord then addressing himself to his apostles, told them privately that they were highly blessed by having heard his doctrines, and seen his miracles; adding, that great numbers of pious princes, as well as the prophets, had anxiously wished to behold those times when his gospel would be proclaimed throughout the world, and when a great part of mankind would be reclaimed from their iniquities by his miracles. “And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: for I tell you, that many prophets and 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.” Luke x. 23, 24.

In order to learn, whether Christ would speak in contradiction to the law, one of the Scribes now asked him, what means would be the most effectual for attaining everlasting happiness. Hereupon our Lord directed the weapons of this subtle lawyer against himself, by asking him, what was written in the law of which he professed himself to be a teacher, con-

cerning the subject of his question. At the request of Jesus, the Scribe quoted the following passage of the law, which, if understood according to the liberal construction of the gospel, and not according to the limited interpretation of the Jews, comprehends a summary of the whole duty of man: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself." Luke x. 27. Jesus then said to the Scribe, "Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live." The lawyer being conscious of the defects of his moral and religious conduct, and that it therefore was not possible for him to obtain eternal life on the conditions prescribed by the law, was, according to the evangelist, desirous of "justifying himself;" wishing also to suppress the suggestions of his own conscience, and at the same time to make a parade of his devotion, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" There was nothing extraordinary in this question being proposed by a bigotted Jew, whose contracted ideas induced him to hold all those whose religious principles did not correspond with his own, and who were not the descendants of Abraham, in the utmost contempt.

To detach the minds of the people from their obstinate adherence to the principles of the Jewish religion, to liberalize their hearts, enoble their sentiments, and convince them of the only foundation of true love, and of the reciprocal obligations of men towards each other, our blessed Redeemer delivered a most forcible lesson of morality, under the following beautiful parable.

In the course of his journey from Jerusalem to Jericho, a Jew was so unfortunate as to be attacked by some robbers, who after despoiling him of his money and clothes, furiously assaulted him with their wea-

pons, and having exercised their unrelenting barbarity till they imagined they had deprived him of life, they departed.

While in this miserable situation, he was observed, first by a priest, and then by a Levite ; but they pursued their journey, without offering him either assistance or consolation under his truly deplorable misfortunes. After their departure, a Samaritan approached ; but the conduct of this man, had no resemblance to that of the unfeeling Jew and the Levite. These were the teachers of religion, and therefore they could not suffer any opportunity to escape of performing offices of tenderness and compassion, without a manifest degradation of their sacred characters. The miserable sufferer was a descendant of Abraham, and a professor of the same religion with themselves ; and therefore no argument can be advanced in palliation of their inhumanity towards a brother Israelite, lying naked in the public road, and languishing under the excruciating torture of many wounds.

No sooner did the Samaritan perceive this miserable object, groaning under his complicated distress, than he hastened to his relief ; nor was his benevolence restrained by those ancient prejudices, which, from his earliest infancy, had been instilled into him against people professing the Jewish religion : but the tender sensations of pity prevailed over every objection, arising from a disagreement in religious sentiments.

It was the custom in the Eastern countries, for travellers to take with them such provisions as they should have occasion for during their journies ; and therefore, the compassionate Samaritan was enabled to supply the wounded Jew with some wine to recruit his

spirits. He also poured wine and oil into his wounds, which having bound up with the utmost care and tenderness, he placed the unfortunate Jew upon his own beast, himself walking by the side, carefully supporting him, lest he should fall from the back of the animal. Thus he conducted the Jew to an inn, where, during the whole night, he assiduously employed himself in administering to his patient every service that could contribute towards his recovery. In the morning, when his business required his departure, the Samaritan recommended the Jew to the care of the master of the inn, to whom he delivered what money he could spare, assuring him, that whatever expence might be incurred by the Jew, upon his return he would himself fully discharge. “ And Jesus answering, said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion on him; and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow, when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.” Luke x. 30, &c.

Having delivered this parable, our Saviour, turning to the Scribe, said, “ Which now of those three thinkest thou was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves?” Without hesitation, the lawyer repli-

ed, "He that shewed mercy on him." Hereupon Jesus said, "Go, and do thou likewise." Thus our Lord instructed his auditors, that they were to consider all men as their neighbors, of whatever country, or religion; that they were bound by the common obligations of humanity to support a mutual intercourse of kindness and friendship, and not to permit national prejudices, or a difference of religious sentiments, to prescribe limits to charity and benevolence, which should be extended to every part of the animal creation, but be more particularly directed towards their own species.

Upon considering this parable, it will appear admirably calculated for effecting the purpose for which it was designed. Though strongly inclined to decide that the people of his own religion were alone to be considered as his neighbors, he was, on this occasion, under the absolute necessity of acknowledging, that the most severe reproach was due to the priest and the Levite, and that the superior virtue of the Samaritan challenged the highest commendation; and consequently that it was the duty of men to act towards each other as neighbors and friends, without regard to country, affinity of blood, or the difference of language or religion.

Upon his return to Galilee, our blessed Saviour directed his course towards Bethany, a village about two miles from Jerusalem, where resided Martha and Mary, who were women of singular piety, and the sisters of Lazarus. These women being known to Jesus, attended by several of his disciples, he repaired to their habitation towards the evening, and having seated himself, according to his usual custom discoursed on the unbounded love of the Almighty to the children of men, and on the gracious conditions that

his heavenly Father had proposed for securing their eternal salvation. Mary seated herself at the feet of Jesus, and her mind was entirely occupied in attending to the divine doctrines of the great Saviour of the world. Considering herself highly honored by this visit, Martha industriously employed herself in making preparations for the entertainment of Jesus and his disciples; and being much fatigued by the exercise of the domestic offices of the family, she requested that Jesus would command Mary to assist in providing for the entertainment of their guests; to afford whom, a proper reception in their humble habitation, their united endeavors, she said, could not but prove extremely inadequate. "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me." Luke x. 40. But Martha, by confining her intention to domestic employments, incurred the censure of our Saviour, who said, that while she had unnecessarily concerned herself in worldly affairs, her sister had seriously attended to the more important business of receiving instructions for obtaining everlasting happiness.— "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful. And Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Luke x. 41, 42.

After his departure from the house of Mary and Martha, our Saviour retired with his disciples, and fervently addressed himself in prayer to his Almighty Father. Upon the conclusion of his prayer, one of his disciples, who was not present when he prescribed that form of prayer which we have given in a preceding part of this work, observed to him, that John the Baptist had instructed his followers in the proper manner of offering supplications to the Almighty, and therefore requested that Christ would instruct him and

his associates in the proper manner of making appeals to God. In compliance with this request, our blessed Saviour repeated what he had said on the former occasion, adding several most admirable reflections on the efficacy and necessity of prayer.

Supposing, said Jesus, a friend should come to you at midnight, soliciting you to lend him three loaves, that he may be enabled to entertain an unexpected guest, it is probable that you may endeavor to excuse yourself from complying with his request, on account of the unseasonableness of the hour, urging, that the doors of your house are secured, and that your family is retired to rest: but if he perseveres in his importunity, he will at length, extort by solicitation, what was refused him on the score of friendship. So in your supplications to God, you are not to despair, though your petitions be not immediately complied with.— Whatever is requisite for your welfare, in your pursuit of a religious course of life, pray that the Almighty will bestow it upon you, and you shall not be disappointed. Knock at the gate which excludes you from any thing that is necessary or convenient for you to have, and it shall be opened to you; for whosoever piously supplicates the Almighty for any thing that it is expedient he should have, most assuredly shall not be disappointed. When you pour forth your petitions to God, do not distrust his bounty, nor suppose him unwilling to grant all such requests as will operate towards your benefit; for if a son ask for a loaf, or a fish, who amongst you would, instead thereof, give him a stone or a serpent? If then you, who are contaminated with so many and such abominable sins, are accustomed to distribute things profitable and agreeable amongst your children, how much more will your heavenly Father be disposed to bestow upon you that happy disposition of mind, which leads to the practice of those virtues whereby your eternal

salvation will be secured. “ And he said unto them,
 “ which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto
 “ him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend
 “ me three loaves ; for a friend of mine in his journey
 “ is come to me, and I have nothing to set before
 “ him : and he from within shall answer and say,
 “ Trouble me not ; the door is now shut, and my
 “ children are with me in bed : I cannot rise, and
 “ give thee. I say unto you, though he will not rise
 “ and give him because he is his friend, yet, because
 “ of his importunity, he will rise and give him as ma-
 “ ny as he needeth. And I say unto you, ask, and
 “ it shall be given you : seek, and you shall find ;
 “ knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every
 “ one that asketh receiveth ; and he that seeketh find-
 “ eth ; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.
 “ If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father,
 “ will he give him a stone ? Or if he ask for a fish,
 “ will he for a fish give him a serpent ? Or if he shall
 “ ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion ? If ye then,
 “ being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your
 “ children, how much more shall your heavenly Fa-
 “ ther give the holy Spirit to them that ask him ?”
 Luke xi. 5, &c.

Soon after our blessed Redeemer had expressed himself to his disciples in the manner above recorded, a man was brought to him, who by the power of an evil spirit, was deprived of the use of his speech.— Jesus enjoined the demon to depart from the body of the man ; and no sooner was this divine command pronounced, than the man recovered the power of his voice, to the astonishment of a great concourse of spectators. But some of the people were such inveterate enemies to Jesus, that they ascribed the cure of the demoniac to the power of Beelzebub, the chief of the evil spirits. “ And he was casting out a devil,
 “ and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the

“ devil was gone out, the dumb spake, and the people
“ wondered. But some of them said, He casteth out
“ devils through Beelzebub, the chief of the devils.”
Luke xi. 14, 15.

However weak and absurd this accusation against the Son of God, it had a considerable effect upon the ignorant part of the multitude ; and particularly upon such as had before cherished prejudices injurious to the divinity of our blessed Redeemer.

The Pharisees pretended, that Jesus had, with unremitting solicitude, opposed those traditions which the teachers of the people considered as the essential and fundamental parts of religion, and the principal branches of piety : and therefore they contended, that he must be a wicked impostor.

They also imagined, that false prophets had power to work miracles ; and thence concluded, that Christ acted under the influence, and by the assistance of evil spirits, with a design of seducing the people from the worship of the true God. These obstinate people advanced another pretext, for ascribing the miracles of Christ to the power of Beelzebub ; urging, that after their expulsion from the bodies of men, the demons paid homage to him under his fictitious character of the Messiah. These futile and absurd suggestions, though so evidently founded in falshood, contributed very materially to promote the infidelity of the Jews ; notwithstanding the divinity of the mission of Christ was so amply confirmed by his many cures on the blind, the deaf, the dumb, the maimed, the lame ; on paralytics, lunatics, demoniacs, and every other description of miserable objects, exclusive of his uncontrolled authority over the elements, and his power of reviving the dead.

Some of the people desired our Saviour to perform a miracle in their presence, in order to prove the justice of his pretensions to the character of the Messiah : but knowing that their request was not the effect of a virtuous zeal to obtain a knowledge of the divine truths essentially necessary to salvation, but, on the contrary, to prove the extent of his power ; and that they might represent his actions in a manner that would render him odious to the multitude, he refused to comply with their request.

Addressing himself to those who had pretended that he derived his power of casting out evil spirits from Beelzebub, our Saviour refuted the calumny, by the same means he had used on occasion of a former accusation of a similar nature. “ But he knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself, is brought to desolation ; and a house divided against a house falleth. If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand ? Because ye say, that I cast out devils through Beelzebub. And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out ? Therefore shall they be your judges. But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you. When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace. But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divideth his his spoils. He that is not with me, is against me : and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth.— When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest ; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other unclean spirits, more

“wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.” Luke xi. 17, &c. Thus our Lord intimated, that if, as they pretended, he cast out demons by the assistance of satan, that prince of the devils would be acting in opposition to himself, and therefore his dominion could not be of long continuance; but, on the contrary, his power must of necessity defeat itself. But though the doctrines which he recommended, consisted only of such rules as were calculated to promote the happiness of mankind, he was falsely accused of effecting the expulsion of demons by the arts of magic, by means of which, they themselves endeavored to produce the same consequences: and if he was thus accused, our Saviour asked what judgment they would pass upon their own countrymen. But, since it was not by magical operations, but by means of that power which he derived immediately from God, that he was enabled to effect the expulsion of evil spirits, it must follow as a natural consequence, that his veracity remained without impeachment, with respect to the information he had communicated to them on the subject of the near approach of the kingdom of the Messiah. As a powerful and resolute man, provided with the weapons of defence, is able to protect himself against the attacks of his enemies, till he is opposed by an assailant of superior strength, who may disarm him, and despoil him of his property; so do I subdue evil spirits, and expel them from the bodies of men which they have seized upon, as it were, for their dwelling-places; and hence it follows, that I act by a superior, and consequently by a divine power.

With respect to those who had pretended that they were not averse to the doctrines of Christ, but yet had demanded that he would perform a miracle in confirmation of his divine mission, he spoke to the fol-

lowing effect. Whoever believes not in me, I shall account my enemy; and whoever does not increase the number of my disciples, I shall consider as endeavoring to seduce them from their obedience to me. "He that is not with me, is against me: and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth." Do not therefore imagine that you discharge your duty towards me, because you do not openly oppose my doctrines, or profess yourselves to be my enemies.

Learn, said our Lord, what will be the condition of those, upon whom my preaching and my miracles have made no impression. The evil spirit being cast out of the human body, he endeavors to find some other place of habitation: but upon being disappointed, he resolves to attempt obtaining re-admission to the body from which he had been expelled. After being rescued from the power of the demon, if the man be not induced to reform his life, the evil spirit, finding his body better fitted for his reception, will again enter his former habitation, taking with him other spirits more wicked than himself, so that the latter affliction of the man becomes by far more deplorable than the torment he had formerly endured. So you who have enjoyed the advantage of observing my miracles, of being instructed in the certain means of attaining everlasting happiness, if instead of observing a greater purity of life, you relapse into your former state of iniquity, be assured that God will abandon you to the punishment due to your vices, and that your situation will become more miserable than before.

Our Lord having spoken as above related, a woman who had seriously attended to his discourse, exclaimed, "Blessed is the woman that bare thee, and brought thee up." Upon which Jesus said, "Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it." Thus our Saviour intimated that

they were blessed, who obeyed the dictates of the gospel; but that without such obedience, their alliance to him would not operate towards their salvation.

Our Saviour being surrounded by a great concourse of people, who anxiously expected that he would perform a miracle, he reprov'd them for requiring a further demonstration of his divine power, since they had already beheld him perform so many miracles. "This is an evil generation: they seek a sign, and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation. The * queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them; for she came from the utmost parts of the earth, to hear the wisdom of Solomon: and behold, a greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and behold, a greater than Jonas is here." Luke xi. 31, &c.

Notwithstanding your stubborn obstinacy, said our blessed Saviour, I shall continue to persevere in my endeavors to effect your reclamation, for which purpose I came into the world, and invested my disciples with that authority which they will faithfully exercise for the attainment of the same glorious event. "No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it into

* Some writers imagine the queen of Sheba to have been an Ethiopian; and the Ethiopians to this day assert, that the descendants of this princess reigned over them for a long series of years; and that the eunuch of queen Candace, who was converted and baptized by Philip, was an officer to one of this line of royalty. But others are as strongly of opinion, that the queen of Sheba was an Arabian; and the people of Arabia have a tradition, mentioning the journey of queen Balkis from the city of Sheba, otherwise Marib, or Mareb, in the country of Yemen, to visit king Solomon.

“ a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they who come in may see the light.” By these words our Lord implied, that a man inspired by the spirit of righteousness, would not conceal the glorious doctrines of salvation, but would disseminate the divine light of the gospel upon the souls of men, as the flames of a lamp, suspended in the middle of an apartment, shed a lustre upon all the surrounding objects. “ The light of the body is the eye : therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light ; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.” Luke xi. 34, 35, 36. Thus Jesus intimated, that it was necessary mankind should so gloriously illuminate their souls by the spirit of righteousness, that the emanations of the divinity might not be interrupted or obscured by the evil passions and abominable corruptions of human nature ; and that all the faculties of the soul might be illuminated and vivified, as the corporeal members are rendered conspicuous by the effulgency emitted from a burning lamp.

Having thus asserted the divinity of his mission, and recommended an exact obedience to the precepts of his gospel, our Saviour concluded his discourse. One of the Pharisees requested, that Jesus would accompany him home to dinner. This invitation was accepted, and our Lord seated himself in order to partake of the meal, but omitted previously to wash, which ceremony all the rest of the company observed. This omission surprised the Pharisee, to whom our Saviour addressed himself to the following effect.

The people of your persuasion affect to be extremely careful with regard to the cleanliness of their provisions, lest their bodies should be polluted by what they eat or drink ; but they are at the same time wholly regardless, as to preserving their minds in a state of purity. Can you imagine that the Almighty, who requires purity of body, because it is the work of his hands, does not demand of you a more exact attention towards a purity of mind ? Your concern for an external cleanliness cannot tend to obtain the favor of the Almighty, since you wholly neglect to purge your minds from their abominable defilements and pollutions. Instead of your rigid observance of the ceremony of washing your hands before meals, you will render yourselves more acceptable to God, if you sanctify by charity what is bestowed upon you by the bounty of providence. Reflect on the guilt you incur by your disregard to the dictates of true piety and righteousness, for which your observance of the smaller duties, as paying tithe of mint and rue, and other herbs, cannot make atonement. But if you adhere to the commands of God in more important points, an attention to the less considerable obligations, will contribute towards securing your eternal happiness. By an affectation of humility, virtue, and moderation, when you are insatiably ambitious of popular honors and applause, and uncharitable, proud, arrogant, and unjust towards your fellow-creatures, you provoke the indignation of heaven, which cannot be appeased by so inadequate an atonement as your observance of the ceremonial part of the law.

“ Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the
“ cup and the platter : but your inward part is full of
“ ravening and wretchedness, Ye fools, did not he
“ that made that which is without, make that which
“ is within also ? But rather give alms of such things
“ as you have : and behold, all things are clean unto
“ you. Woe unto you, Pharisees, for ye tithe mint

“ and rue, and all manner of herbs, and pass over
 “ judgment and the love of God : those ought ye to
 “ have done, and not to leave the other undone. Woe
 “ unto you, Pharisees, for ye love the uppermost seats
 “ in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets.
 “ Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites :
 “ for ye are as graves, which appear not, and the men
 “ that walk over them, are not aware of them.”
 Luke xi. 39, &c.

A lawyer, who was one of the guests of the Phari-
 see, expressed himself to be much offended at the
 general censure contained in the words of Jesus.—
 Hereupon our Saviour said, “ Woe unto you, also,
 “ ye lawyers ; for ye lade men with burdens, griev-
 “ ous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the
 “ burden with one of your fingers.” Luke xi. 46.
 Ye pretended interpreters of the law, you enjoin the
 people to adhere to those rites and ceremonies,
 which you yourselves entirely neglect.

Christ severely reprov'd them for having repaired
 the sepulchres of the prophets, whom their ancestors
 had barbarously murdered ; for by their care to per-
 petuate the memory of those cruelties, it was evi-
 dent that they approved the conduct of their fore-fa-
 thers. “ Woe unto you ; for ye build the sepulchres
 “ of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Tru-
 “ ly ye bear witness, that ye allow the deeds of your
 “ fathers ; for they indeed killed them, and ye build
 “ their sepulchres. Therefore also, said the wisdom
 “ of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and
 “ some of them they shall slay and persecute ; that
 “ the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from
 “ the foundation of the world, may be required of this
 “ generation ; from the blood of Abel unto the blood
 “ of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and
 “ the temple : verily I say unto you, it shall be re-

“quired of this generation.” Luke xi. 47, &c. A just and severe punishment shall be inflicted upon you, who by your actions have plainly evinced your approbation of the barbarities perpetrated by your ancestors.

Our blessed Saviour also reprov'd the lawyers with great severity, for inspiring the minds of the people with pernicious opinions, founded on a false interpretation of the sacred writings. “Woe unto you, lawyers, for ye have taken away the key of knowledge : ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in, ye hindered.” Luke xi. 52.

These severe but just reproofs, inflamed the rage of the Pharisee and his guests ; and therefore they, being conscious of the guilt imputed to them, but unwilling that their crimes should be expos'd to the public, endeavored to cause our blessed Redeemer to continue his discourse, hoping that he might introduce such expressions as they should be able to interpret to his disadvantage, and by that means either draw upon him the vengeance of the government, or the enmity of the multitude. “And as he said these things unto them, the Scribes and the Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things ; laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.” Luke xi. 53, 54.

An amazing number of people being assembled to hear the discourses of Jesus, he exhorted them to be careful, lest they should be seduced by the hypocrisy of the Pharisees ; and also to be guilty of no action that would prove offensive to God. “Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered, that shall not be re-

“vealed; neither hid that shall not be known.—
“Therefore, whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness,
“shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have
“spoken in the ear in closets, shall be proclaimed
“upon the house-tops.” Luke xii. 1, 2, 3. Be care-
ful, lest your conduct be corrupted by the hypocrisy
and other iniquities of the Pharisees, whose sins, how-
ever artfully concealed, cannot escape the all-search-
ing eye of God. Whatever you say, even in the most
retired and secret manner, shall one day be pro-
claimed abroad; and therefore do nothing in private,
which you cannot perfectly justify to your own con-
science, and which you cannot without shame or dis-
grace publicly avow.

Our Lord exhorted his auditors to discharge all
their religious and moral obligations with punctuality
and cheerfulness, and not to be discouraged by the
persecutions of men, who, though they might exer-
cise cruelty upon the body, had no authority or power
over the soul, which would triumph over the impotent
efforts of their malice and rage. He recommended an
humble obedience and holy veneration to the Almight-
y, who had power, not only to destroy the body, but
also to consign the soul to a place of unremitting and
perpetual torment. Be assured, said Christ, that no
event whatever can occur without the knowledge and
permission of God, who will be peculiarly attentive
to the welfare of his faithful servants, since he amply
provides for the most insignificant animals that exist;
and since he numbers the very hairs of your head, not
one of which you can be deprived of without his per-
mission. In whatever condition of life, let his all-
gracious providence be your consolation; and amidst
all your misfortunes, be assured that without his
knowledge and permission, your circumstances can-
not suffer the smallest alteration. “And I say unto
“you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the

“ body, and after that, have no more that they can do.
“ But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear : Fear
“ him which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast
“ into hell : yea, I say unto you, fear him. Are not
“ five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of
“ them is forgotten of God ? But even the very hairs
“ of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore,
“ ye are of more value than many sparrows.” Luke
xii. 4, &c.

To animate his disciples to persevere in the discharge of the functions of their holy ministry, our Lord admonished them to reflect on the great and solemn day, when he should preside on the throne of his heavenly Father, to pronounce the irrevocable judgment of mankind, who would then be doomed to rewards and punishments proportioned to their respective deserts.

Whoever, said our blessed Saviour shall avow himself to be my disciple, and, in despite of whatever difficulties and dangers may surround him, shall persevere in that acknowledgment, I will own in the presence of Almighty God and his holy angels. But, on the contrary, he who shall not have sufficient courage and fortitude to avow himself as my disciple in the presence of men, shall be disclaimed by me in the presence of the angels of God. If any one, being ignorant of the miracles I have wrought, shall defame my character, upon confession of his crime, and seriously resolving not to be guilty of a similar offence, he shall obtain forgiveness : but woe unto them that attribute to the power of the demons, those miracles which I perform in confirmation of the divinity of my gospel : the perpetrators of this abominable blasphemy, are too wicked to admit of the possibility of their reclamation, and therefore they shall never obtain pardon of God. “ Also I say unto you, Whoever shall con-

“fess me before man, him shall the Son of man also
“confess before the angels of God. But he that de-
“nieth me before men, shall be denied before the an-
“gels of God. And whosoever shall speak a word
“against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him :
“but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy
“Ghost, it shall not be forgiven.” Luke xii. 8, &c.

Our Lord now informed his disciples, that in consequence of accusations exhibited against them, they would be conducted before the officers of justice, and be under the necessity of pleading in defence of their liberties and lives. But while thus circumstanced, he cautioned them against being perplexed as to what they should say to avert the vengeance of the rulers of the people ; for by the inspiration of the divine Spirit of God, they should be enabled to say all that would be necessary to confute the calumnies of their malicious adversaries. “And when they bring you
“unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates and pow-
“ers, take ye no thought how, or what things ye
“shall answer, or what ye shall say ; for the Holy
“Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye
“ought to say.” Luke xii. 11, 12.

While our Saviour was delivering these instructions to his disciples, he was interrupted by one of the multitude, who requested that he would interpose his authority, in order to compel his brother to make an equal division of the patrimonial inheritance to which they were jointly entitled. Hereupon Jesus said, that it was not consistent with the great purposes of his mission, to execute the office of a judge in temporal cases ; and therefore he declined pronouncing any decision, as to the partition of the inheritance. Our Lord, however, embraced this opportunity, of solemnly exhorting his auditors against the vice of avarice ; informing them, that the happiness of life could nei-

ther be promoted, nor secured by worldly possessions, however extensive. "Take heed, and beware of covetousness, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the good things that he possesseth." Luke xii. 15.

To detach the minds of his hearers from an anxiety to obtain worldly possessions, our Lord exhibited to them a striking example of the mischievous effects of riches, illustrated in the case of a rich glutton. The grounds of this man yielded such an extraordinary abundance of grain, that his barns were not sufficient to contain the produce, and therefore he determined to erect several other repositories, pleasing himself in the vain expectation, that he should be able to indulge for a long series of years, in an inexhaustible fund of sensual enjoyments. But amidst these flattering projects, in the fate of this man was exhibited a remarkable instance of the folly of amassing wealth, without yielding a due respect and obedience to the commands of God. While his mind was entirely engaged in the contemplation of future enjoyments, a divine admonition put a period to all his expectations of gratifying his sensual appetites; for he was warned by the Almighty that he would die before morning. "And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room to bestow my fruits? And he said, this will I do: I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee: then whose shall these things be which thou hast provided? So

“ is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not
“ rich towards God.” Luke xii. 16, &c.

How terrible an example of the complicated guilt of avarice, luxury, and unrighteousness, is presented to us in the above parable ! While the man lay on his bed, revolving in his mind those imaginary scenes of sensual gratification, which he expected he should be able to realize by the means of his wealth, all his fond and flattering hopes were in one moment blasted, and his soul was overwhelmed with all those terrors which could arise from the awful summons ; signifying, that he must that very night yield to the inexorable king of terrors, and be hurried by him before the dreadful tribunal of offended omnipotence, whence by a just and irrevocable sentence, he would be condemned to endure eternal torments.

And this, said our blessed Saviour, will be the fate of those who are careful to amass worldly riches, but neglect to lay up treasures in heaven. Thus shall they be disappointed of all the gratifications their souls desire ; thus shall they be torn from all their temporal prospects of pleasure. Their wealth, however extensive, shall not procure them any alleviation of, nor respite from their sufferings. Without having, by a constant discharge of all the duties of religion and morality, ensured to ourselves the assistance of the divine Disposer of all events, all our projects for attaining happiness will be rendered abortive. When we imagine ourselves secure from all interruptions to our enjoyments, the summons shall arrive to compel our appearance before the great Judge of mankind, who will decide according to our deserts, and from whose knowledge it is not possible for us to conceal even the slightest instance of our disobedience to his divine commands.

Our Saviour now proceeded to caution his disciples, against harboring a too earnest solicitude concerning the necessaries and conveniencies of this life; reminding them, that the providence of his heavenly Father extended to every part of the creation; and adding, that since he had already bestowed much more considerable benefits upon them, he would not leave them destitute of whatever it should be necessary for them to possess, provided they conducted themselves in perfect obedience to his divine will. “The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. Consider the ravens; for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have store-house nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than fowls? And which of you, with taking thought, can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not: and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass which is to-day in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be of ye doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” Luke xii. 23, &c.

Thus our blessed Saviour intimated, that since it was not possible for them to preserve their lives but for a single moment after the time limited by the Almighty, it behoved them to be in a constant state of preparation to appear before his awful tribunal; for

since their most earnest solicitude would have no effect as to extending the period of their existence, they had no reason to perplex themselves concerning matters of inferior importance, so as to neglect the duties of their sacred ministry. Consider the regular vegetation of the various flowers which embellish the vallies, and that the utmost splendor of regal magnificence cannot rival their beautiful and rich foliage. If then the providence of God is so much concerned in providing for the pleasure of man by giving vegetation to these plants, which are of but a few days duration, how much more will he be disposed to supply you with all that your necessities can require, provided you strictly conform to the precepts of my gospel.— O ye of little faith! how inadequate are your sentiments to the extent of the beneficence of Almighty God! Therefore neglect not the smallest part of your duty, from a concern to provide yourselves either with food or raiment. The practice of the world, it is true, opposes the doctrine I now recommend: but you to whom your heavenly Father has been graciously pleased to reveal himself, are enjoined to rest perfectly satisfied, that you are constantly under the protection of his divine providence. Let the principal concern of your lives be to proclaim to mankind the happy tidings of the speedy approach of the kingdom of the Messiah, and to extend its limits, by converting unbelievers to an obedience to the injunctions of my gospel: but with respect to all temporal necessities, they shall be amply supplied, in addition to the bounties you have already received. Because you are, in point of numbers, but very inconsiderable, comparatively with the rest of the inhabitants of the earth, do not therefore be alarmed for your personal safety; for it is the pleasure of God, that you shall be the inhabitants of his kingdom, the honor of which, it shall be your business successfully to defend against the attacks of his most inveterate enemies.

Pursuing his discourse, our Saviour said, let those who abound in worldly possessions, liberally contribute towards relieving the necessities of the poor. By this conduct, you will insure to yourselves a real and invaluable treasure, not confined in purses or bags, which are liable to decay, and to be stolen, together with the property they contain: but by obeying my directions, you will deposit your treasures in the stores of heaven, where they will neither be liable to decay, nor to be stolen, and where neither moth nor rust can consume your bags, nor diminish your wealth.—
“ Sell that ye have, and give alms: provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Luke xii. 33, 34.

Having in the above forcible manner recommended them to disengage their affections from the concerns of this world, our blessed Saviour exhorted them to labor with unremitting industry, to purify their hearts by the effects of divine knowledge and grace. “ Let your loins be * girded about, and your lights burning. And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.” Luke xii. 35, 36. By these words, our Lord alluded to the customs of the east, where anciently great entertainments were made in the evening; and on these occasions, it was

* When the servant was to administer to his master, he girded his clothes about him, that they might not interrupt him in the exercise of his business. “ Gird thyself, and serve me.” Luke xvii. 8. When Christ ministereth to his apostles, “ He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments, and took a towel, and girded himself.” John xiii. 4. And when the master of a family was from home after dark, a lamp was kept burning, that his servants might the more readily admit him.

usual for the servants to prove their diligence and attention, by watching, and keeping their loins girded, or, in other words, their garments confined closely about their bodies, and their lamps burning, that they might receive their employers without interruption. Nor was it unusual for the master to reward the diligence of his servant by ordering him some refreshment, or even by presenting it to him with his own hand. In allusion to this custom, Jesus said, “Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching. Verily, I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth, and serve them.” Luke xii. 37. Thus our Saviour recommended constant watchfulness, and habitual preparation to his disciples. As the master of every family, said Jesus, if apprized that a robber intends to break into his house, will secure himself from the threatened danger; so it is your indispensable duty to provide for your eternal salvation, by a constant observance of the precepts of my gospel. Thus he explained to his hearers the necessity they were under of being in a continual state of preparation to appear before the awful tribunal of Omnipotence. “And this know, that, if the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also, for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.” Luke xii. 39, 40.

Hereupon Peter asked Jesus, whether the similitude respected his apostles in particular, or his disciples in general. By another similitude, Christ represented, that what he had said, respected the whole number of his disciples, though it had a more especial regard to his apostles. The master will select that man from amongst his servants whose prudence, fide-

lity, and diligence, he has already experienced, to inspect and regulate the conduct of his other domestics during his absence from home. But if this man shall not expect the speedy return of his master, and on that presumption, shall behave in an imperious and tyrannical manner towards his fellow-servants, and at the same time indulge his intemperate passions, the master will surprize him in a moment, when he least expects his return, and execute an exemplary punishment upon him for his breach of confidence : he shall be loaded with chains, and reserved to suffer that vengeance which is denounced against servants who betray their trust. * That man who is acquainted with the care and diligence that his master expects from him, and yet neglects to perform his duty, shall be punished with greater severity than he who is unacquainted with what is expected from him. “ Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speaketh thou “ this parable unto us, or even to all ? And the Lord “ said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, “ whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, “ to give them their portion of meat in due season ? “ Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he “ cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth, I say unto “ you, that he will make him ruler over all that he “ hath. But, and if that servant say in his heart, “ My Lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to “ beat the men-servants and maidens, and to eat and “ drink, and to be drunken ; the lord of that servant “ will come in a day when he looketh not for him, “ and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut “ him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion “ with the unbelievers. And that servant which “ knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with

* This seems to be particularly levelled against those pastors of the church, who do not lead exemplary lives.

“ many stripes. But he that knew not, and did com-
 “ mit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with
 “ few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given,
 “ of him shall be much required: and to whom men
 “ have committed much, of him they will ask the
 “ more.” Luke xii. 41, &c.

Our Saviour now addressed his auditors upon another subject. Notwithstanding, said Jesus, my gospel recommends mutual charity and forbearance, yet such is the shocking depravity of human nature, that it shall be productive of the most violent animosities. The enemies of my gospel will exercise their unprovoked cruelties upon me, although my business upon earth is only to provide for the happiness of mankind. Since I am, as it were, to be consecrated by the baptism of my blood, it cannot but be supposed that I must be sensible of some of those pangs which are incidental to humanity, the semblance and nature of which I have assumed, in obedience to the will of my heavenly Father. Although I shall procure a reconciliation between God and those of his sinful creatures who shall believe in my gospel, yet be assured, that the majority of mankind will be so far from abating of their contentions and discords, that they will even make the religion which I inculcate a pretext for continuing their animosities. They shall even separate themselves into parties and factions, and persecute each other with such inveterate malice, that to inflame the minds of men with discord, and create a general confusion in the world, will seem to be the events which my appearance among the sons of men was intended to produce. In consequence of the promulgation of my gospel, parents and their children shall oppose each other with the most vehement and implacable resentment, and discord and confusion shall prevail throughout the land. “ I am come to
 “ send fire on the earth, and what will I, if it be al-

“ ready kindled ? But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished ! Suppose ye, that I am come to give peace on earth ? I tell ye nay ; but rather division. For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father ; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother ; the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.” Luke xii. 49, &c.

By signs, said our blessed Saviour, you are enabled to form a judgment respecting the weather : and why therefore are you not convinced that the time of the Messiah is arrived, since such extraordinary signs have preceded his appearance ? “ When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say there cometh a shower ; and so it is. And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, there will be heat ; and it cometh to pass. Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky, and of the earth, but how is it that ye do not discern this time ? ” Luke xii. 54, 55.

The prediction of the Messiah coming to punish the infidelity and rebellion of the Jews, delivered under the similitude of a robber coming unexpectedly to plunder a house, - was a forcible admonition to national repentance. More deeply to impress this admonition upon the minds of his auditors, our Saviour informed them, that but a small degree of reflection would be sufficient to point out to them the means by which they might avert the impending and dreadful judgments of God ; illustrating what he had said by the example of a man, who refuses to make restitution to the party whom he has injured. If your cre-

ditors enforce the laws against you, in order to obtain compensation for the sums in which you are indebted to them, do ye not endeavor to effect a compromise, rather than abide the decision of the court; which, unless you discharge the demand, you are sensible will consign you to imprisonment. Why therefore do you neglect to make your peace with God, who, provided you do not repent of your sins, will most assuredly condemn you to the place of torments, from which there will be no possibility of redemption? "When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence, that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite." Luke xii. 58, 59.

In order to give confirmation to this doctrine, by what they conceived to be an instance applicable thereto, some of his auditors observed to Jesus, that Pilate, the Roman governor, had murdered certain Galileans, while they were performing sacrifice, and that their blood was mingled with that of the beasts. Thus they signified, that in their opinion, the providence of God had permitted these Galileans to be murdered at the altar, on account of the uncommon enormity of their crimes. But our Lord explained to them, that their opinion on this case, and consequently the inference deduced therefrom, were erroneous. It is true, said he, that these men were sinners, but their guilt was not of greater magnitude than that of their countrymen. The calamities they endured, were intended as an example, to teach mankind the necessity of appeasing the anger of the Almighty by repentance and reformation; adding, that such instances of affliction should incite them to reform their lives; and assuring them, that, if they neglected to

make atonement for their sins, they would inevitably be subjected to the most dreadful punishments. "There were present at this season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering, said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell ye, Nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Luke xiii. 1, 2, 3.

Our Lord illustrated this doctrine, by reminding his congregation of the eighteen persons who were killed by the fall of the tower of Siloam. By this instance, our Saviour explained to them the folly of interpreting the dispensations of providence in the manner they had done; saying, that though this calamity appeared to be the immediate result of the pleasure of God, the eighteen persons were not involved therein, because they were the most wicked among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but the Almighty permitted their destruction, that the rest of mankind might be instructed in the necessity of timely repentance. "Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye, that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell ye, nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Luke xiii. 4, 5.

To awaken the attention of the people, and to inspire them with a desire of obtaining the Spirit and grace of God, our blessed Saviour delivered to them the following parable. The fig-tree of a rich man having yielded no fruit for three successive seasons, he ordered the servant who had the care of his vineyard to cut the tree down, that it might no longer incumber a piece of ground which might be profitably employed. The man requested, that the tree

might be spared another year, saying, that he would endeavor to render it fruitful, by manuring the earth about it, and by pursuing other proper measures : and that if he did not succeed in his endeavors, he would willingly obey the orders of his master. “ A
 “ certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard,
 “ and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found
 “ none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vine-
 “ yard, Behold these three years I come seeking fruit
 “ on this fig-tree, and find none : cut it down, why
 “ cumbereth it the ground ? And he answering, said
 “ unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I
 “ shall dig about it, and dung it ; and if it bear fruit,
 “ well : and if not, then after that thou shall cut it
 “ down.” Luke xiii. 6, &c.

By the above similitude, our blessed Saviour represented the goodness of the Almighty towards the Jews, in chusing them as his people, giving them the outward dispensation of the law, and informing them of the improvements he expected they would make of the honors and advantages he had conferred upon them. This parable also represented the unbounded mercies of God, manifested in his forbearance to punish the iniquities of mankind at the intercession of his Son, and allowing them a longer period of probation, and bestowing upon them still greater advantages by the preaching of the blessed Jesus and his apostles ; and in the concluding part of the similitude, our Lord intimated, that if they neglected the opportunity that was then afforded them of making atonement for their sins, they would be consigned to everlasting punishment.

While the great Preacher of Israel was discoursing to the people in one of the synagogues of Galilee on the sabbath-day, he observed among the congregation a woman who had been so terribly afflicted for the

space of eighteen years, as to be unable to stand upright. This miserable object our Lord beheld with the tenderest compassion, and removed her affliction so entirely, that she returned from the synagogue to her place of habitation, without feeling any symptom of her former complaints. “ And he was teaching in
“ one of the synagogues on the sabbath. And be-
“ hold, there was a woman which had a spirit of in-
“ firmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and
“ could in no wise lift up herself. And when Jesus
“ saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her,
“ Woman thou art loosed from thine infirmity ; and
“ he laid his hands on her : immediately she was
“ made strait, and glorified God.” Luke xiii. 10, 11,
12, 13.

This instance of the power and goodness of the Son of God, instead of exciting the approbation and gratitude of the ruler of Israel, proved highly offensive to him : and this morose Pharisee severely censured the people, representing them as violators of the sabbath, because they resorted to Jesus in order to be healed on the day of rest. In reply to this hypocritical and superstitious ruler of the synagogue, our Saviour observed, that the people of his own persuasion did not scruple to lead their cattle to water on the sabbath-day ; and that, in doing this, they did not act in contradiction to the pleasure of the Almighty ; for, by the benevolence and necessity of this act, they were fully justified in performing it on the sabbath. Then most assuredly, said our blessed Redeemer, there can be no guilt in my having, by means only of pronouncing a few words, rescued a daughter of Abraham from a grievous affliction, under which she had labored for the space of eighteen years. “ The ruler of the sy-
“ nagogue answered with indignation, because that
“ Jesus had healed on the sabbath-day, and said unto
“ the people, There are six days in which men ought

“ to work : in them therefore come, and be healed,
 “ and not on the sabbath-day. The Lord then an-
 “ swered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not
 “ every one of you on the sabbath-day loose his ox
 “ or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to wa-
 “ tering ? And ought not this woman, being a daugh-
 “ ter of Abraham, whom satan hath bound, lo, these
 “ eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the
 “ sabbath-day ?” Luke xiii. 14, 15, 16. Thus our
 Saviour confuted the objections advanced by his ad-
 versary, and afforded the people an opportunity of re-
 flecting upon the pernicious consequences of supersti-
 tion, which is capable of extinguishing all sympathy
 in, and generous commiseration of, the distresses
 of our fellow-creatures ; and of eradicating those sen-
 timents of charity and benevolence, which render men
 worthy to enjoy the blessings of heaven.

The miracle they had seen Jesus perform, induced
 many of the people to glorify the name of God : and,
 reflecting on the efficacious operation of the gospel up-
 on the minds of the children of men, and its rapid pro-
 gress through the world, our blessed Saviour repeated
 the parables of the grain of mustard-seed and the leaven.
 “ And when he said these things, all his adversaries
 “ were ashamed ; and all the people rejoiced, for all
 “ the glorious things that were done by him. Then
 “ said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like ?
 “ and whereunto shall I resemble it ? It is like a
 “ grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and cast
 “ into his garden ; and it grew and waxed a great
 “ tree, and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches
 “ of it. And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken
 “ the kingdom of God ? It is like leaven, which
 “ a woman took and hid in three measures of meal,
 “ till the whole was leavened.” Luke xiii. 18, &c.
 Thus Christ intimated, that his gospel, the limits of
 which were so confined, should be spread throughout

the universe, and an immense multitude be added to those who were already true believers.

Our blessed Saviour now crossed the Jordan, and by easy journies proceeded towards Jerusalem, in order to be present at the feast of dedication ; and in the several towns and villages through which he passed, he instructed the people in the principles of his gospel, and proclaimed the happy tidings of the establishment of the kingdom of the Messiah.

While our Lord was thus employed in providing for the salvation of mankind, one of his auditors asked him, whether many people would be allowed to partake of the blessings of his kingdom. It is probable, that the man who proposed this question, was among the number of those who had heard our Saviour represent the rapid progress of his gospel under the similitudes of the mustard-seed and the leaven ; and that, his notions of the kingdom of the Messiah being similar to those entertained by the majority of the Jews, he imagined Jesus only alluded to a temporal salvation. But, to convince the man that it was not his design to erect a secular kingdom, our Lord replied to him in a spiritual stile ; informing him, that but an inconsiderable number, comparatively with the whole Jewish nation, would be saved ; and at the same time, exhorting the multitude to avail themselves of the opportunity that was afforded them for securing their eternal salvation ; adding, that after the expiration of the period appointed for their probation, their fate would be irreversibly determined, when those who persisted in rejecting the gracious conditions which were then offered to them, would ineffectually repent of their obstinacy. “ And he went through
“ the cities and villages teaching, and journeying
“ towards Jerusalem. Then said one unto him, Lord,
“ are there few that be saved ? And he said unto them,

“ Strive to enter in at the strait gate ; for many, I say
 “ unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.
 “ When once the master of the house is risen up,
 “ and hath shut the door, and ye begin to stand with-
 “ out, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord,
 “ open unto us, and he shall answer and say unto
 “ you, I know not whence ye are.” Luke xiii. 24,
 25.

On this occasion our blessed Saviour also repeated what he had said in his celebrated sermon on the mount, and what he had observed in commemoration of the exemplary faith of the centurion.—
 “ Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and
 “ drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in
 “ our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know
 “ not whence you are : depart from me, all ye work-
 “ ers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnash-
 “ ing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac,
 “ and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of
 “ God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they
 “ shall come from the east, and from the west, and
 “ from the north, and from the south, and shall sit
 “ down in the kingdom of God. And behold there
 “ are last which shall be first ; and there are first
 “ which shall be last.” Luke xiii. 26, &c. By these
 words it was implied, that great multitudes of the inhabitants of all the quarters of the earth, should enjoy with their ancestors the blessings of the kingdom of God. Some who had been last impressed by, and had appeared to be most obstinately averse to, the divine truths of the gospel, should obtain the most distinguished situations in the regions of ineffable bliss : but, on the contrary, those who first were instructed in the doctrines of Jesus, should be less exalted, on account of the inferiority of their deserts.

On the day when Jesus delivered the above dis-

courses to the multitude, some of the Pharisees advised him to avail himself of the first opportunity of privately retiring from that part of the country, saying, that Herod the tetrarch of Galilee, meant to seize the first favorable occasion that should offer for sacrificing his life ; reminding him at the same time, of the cruel death he had inflicted upon John the Baptist. But this caution was not given him from any real concern for his safety ; their only motive being to intimidate him, and thereby induce him to quit the country, and retire to Judea, where they hoped the chief priests and rulers of the people would contrive means for putting him to death. And it is probable, that Herod himself was not unacquainted with the means that were pursued to induce Jesus to quit his territories ; since it is certain, that he was envious of the great influence he had obtained over the people, although the pangs he had suffered on account of the cruel murder of John the Baptist, would not permit him to exercise coercive measures towards our blessed Redeemer. That this was really the case, appears from the answer which Jesus made to the Pharisees. “ Go ye, and tell that * fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Nevertheless, I must walk to-day and to-morrow, and the day following ; for it cannot be, that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.” Luke xiii. 32, 33.

Having thus replied to the Pharisees, our Lord recalled to his recollection the cruelties which the inhabitants of Jerusalem had inflicted upon the pro-

* By giving this ignominious, but justly-applied epithet to Herod, no violation was offered to that command ; purporting, that it is not justifiable to “ speak evil of dignities ;” it being consistent with the office of a prophet, not to refrain from reproving the offences even of kings. Many passages in the Old Testament may be produced to vindicate the truth of this observation.

phets, and pathetically lamented their obstinacy, and the dreadful punishments they were shortly to experience. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee: how often would I have gathered her children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not? and verily, I say unto you, ye shall not see me, until the time come, when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Luke xiii. 34, 35.

CHAP. XXX.

Our blessed Saviour is invited to dine with one of the Pharisees. On his way to the house of the Pharisee, he cures a man afflicted with the dropsy. Our Lord justifies his conduct in having performed this cure on the sabbath-day. He reproveth the persons present at the entertainment, on account of their contending for the uppermost place. The parable of the feast, where those who had been invited did not attend. The profession of the gospel to be preferred to all worldly considerations. Similitudes respecting those who profess the gospel of Christ. Parables of the sheep, and of the money that were lost. Parable of the prodigal son. Our Saviour rebukes the Pharisees for their avarice and hypocrisy. The sanctity of the gospel superior to the law.— The parable of the rich man and Lazarus, delivered as a caution against the abuse of riches. Concerning offences, and the forgiveness of them. Of the increase of faith, and of unprofitable servants. In his way to Jerusalem, our Saviour cures ten lepers. Of the establishment of the kingdom of heaven, and the judgment of God upon the Jews. The parable of the unjust judge, and the importunate widow. The parable of the Pharisee and the publican, who prayed at the same time in the temple. Our Saviour arrives at Jerusalem at the time of the feast of dedication, and discourses to the multitude. The Jews endeavor to stone Jesus; but he disappoints their malice.

HAVING accepted an invitation to dine at the house of one of the members of the Sanhedrim, as our blessed Saviour was walking thither, a man terribly af-

flicted with the dropsy was placed before him ; and this miserable object, earnestly supplicated that Christ would relieve him from his sufferings. Among the multitude were many of the Scribes and Pharisees, whom our Saviour knew to be extremely desirous of detecting him in some action, which would afford them a pretext of accusing him as a violator of the law. Addressing himself to the Pharisees and doctors of the law, our Saviour asked if there was any criminality in restoring the afflicted to health upon the sabbath-day. But remembering how clearly the objections of their brethren had been confuted by Jesus on divers occasions, they made no reply. Having waited some time, and observing that his adversaries remained silent, our benevolent Redeemer laid his hand upon the dropsical patient, and his body was immediately reduced to its former dimensions, and his usual health, spirits and vigor were perfectly restored. “ And it came to pass, as he went into the “ house of one of the Pharisees to eat bread on the “ sabbath-day, that they watched him. And behold, “ there was a certain man before him which had the “ dropsy. And Jesus answering, spake unto the “ lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal “ on the sabbath-day ? And they held their peace. “ And he took him, and healed him, and let him “ go.” Luke xiv. 1, &c.

This miracle was surely a sufficient evidence of the divine power of Christ : but instead of acknowledging that he derived his authority immediately from heaven, and that his most earnest endeavors were exerted for the benefit of mankind, the Pharisees and doctors of the law employed themselves in devising means for representing this miracle in a manner injurious to the character of Jesus. But knowing the sentiments of his adversaries, our Lord disconcerted their projects, and proved that in the cure he had per-

formed, he had done nothing repugnant to the law.—
 “And he answered them, saying, Which of you shall
 “have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not
 “straitway pull him out on the sabbath-day! And
 “they could not answer him again to these things.”
 Luke xiv. 5, 6. If an accident happens to one of your
 beasts, you deem yourselves justifiable in affording
 the creature relief on the sabbath-day: hence then it
 follows, that, according to your own avowed mode of
 practice, I am not deserving your reproaches, for hav-
 ing rescued a descendant of Abraham from the heavy
 pressure of affliction on the day of rest.

When our Saviour had entered the room of enter-
 tainment, he observed the great anxiety which the
 guests expressed for obtaining the most honorable
 place at the table; and he reprov'd their pride and am-
 bition, by delivering the following parable; “When
 “thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not
 “down in the highest room, lest a more honorable man
 “than thou be bidden of him; and he that bade thee
 “and him, come and say to thee, Give this man place,
 “and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room.
 “But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the
 “lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh,
 “he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher. Then
 “shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that
 “sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth him-
 “self, shall be abased; and he that humbleth him-
 “self, shall be exalted.” Luke xiv. 8, &c.

Having addressed the guests in general, in the man-
 ner above related, he directed his discourse to the
 master of the house, saying, “When thou makest a
 “dinner or a supper, * call not thy friends nor thy

* It is evident, that Christ did not mean absolutely to prohibit men
 from inviting their friends and relations, but to restrict them from giv-
 ing entertainments with a view to future compensation.

“brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors, lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.” Luke xiv. 12, &c. Do not confine your invitations to your relations and neighbors, who are in a situation of life to discharge the obligation by similar acts of kindness: but rather prove your generosity by entertaining those, who, being poor and afflicted, have stronger claims upon your beneficence, although they are unable to make any return to your bounty. Thus shall your liberality insure to you the blessing of heaven; for though the miserable objects of your generosity are incapable of making compensation, God himself shall amply reward you, on the great day of resurrection, when all who have strictly conformed to his divine commands, shall be admitted into the regions of perpetual bliss.

The discourses of Jesus had so powerful an effect upon one of the company, as to reclaim him from his infidelity; and this man rapturously exclaimed, “Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.” Hereupon our blessed Saviour took occasion to reprove the obstinacy of the Jews in the following parable. A certain man invited a number of his friends and acquaintance to an entertainment, but none of them attended. Vexed at being disappointed by those for whose entertainment he had made great preparations, he ordered his servants to go into the streets, and invite all the lame, the blind, and all the beggars he could meet with, to the banquet.—These orders were obeyed; but still there was room for more persons than came. Upon being informed of this, the master of the feast commanded his servant to go out a second time, and to repair to the

most frequented places in search of guests ; and he was ordered to use the most pressing intreaties, for prevailing upon the poor to partake of his magnificent banquet. For, said he, those to whom I have given invitations have proved themselves unworthy of my favor ; and I mean that all my provisions shall be exhausted, that, if those who have made excuses to me should come, they may be disappointed. “ Then
“ said he unto him, A certain man made a great
“ supper, and bade many : and sent his servant at
“ supper-time, to say to them that were bidden, Come,
“ for all things are ready. And they all with one
“ consent began to make excuse. The first said unto
“ him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must
“ needs go and see it : I pray thee have me excused.
“ And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen,
“ and I go to prove them : I pray thee have me ex-
“ cused. And another said, I have married a wife,
“ and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came,
“ and shewed his lord these things. Then the mas-
“ ter of the house being angry, said to his servant,
“ Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the
“ city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed,
“ and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said,
“ Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet
“ there is room. And the lord said unto the servant,
“ Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel
“ them to come in, that my house may be filled. For
“ I say unto you, that none of those men that were
“ bidden shall taste of my supper.” Luke xiv. 16,
&c.

By the invitation of the guests, our Lord represented the doctrine of the gospel, and the beneficent invitations it exhibited to the feast of heavenly bliss ; foretelling at the same time, that although it promised such an abundance of spiritual happiness, it would be rejected by the Jews, who would prefer the plea-

asures of a temporal existence to a state of perpetual happiness ; while the Gentiles would embrace the beneficent offer, and thereby qualify themselves to partake with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, of that perfect and uninterrupted state of happiness, which was only to be enjoyed in the kingdom of heaven.

Upon the departure of Jesus from the house of the Pharisee, he was followed by a great concourse of people, who were desirous of hearing his doctrines ; the principles of which, they, however, greatly misunderstood ; for they imagined that the throne of the Messiah was to be erected in the city of Jerusalem, and that he would render all the nations of the earth tributary to his power. But the benevolent Jesus availed himself of the first opportunity of undeceiving the people, by explaining to them, that his sovereignty was not to consist of the powers and dignities attendant on an earthly monarch ; and consequently, that those who became his followers from a desire of obtaining temporal advantages, would be miserably disappointed : for his disciples must expect to incur the hatred of, and to be cruelly persecuted by a great part of mankind. But our Lord said, that those who became truly his disciples, would cheerfully discharge all their religious and moral duties, though at the expence of riches, grandeur, and all the pleasures and conveniences of life. “ If any man come to me, and
“ hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and chil-
“ dren, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life
“ also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth
“ not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be
“ my disciple.” Luke xiv. 26, 27.

That the above doctrine might have its proper influence upon the minds of his auditors, our blessed Saviour elucidated what he had said, by mentioning the instances of an inconsiderate builder, and that of

a rash warrior. The thoughtless architect, said Christ, will be under the necessity of leaving his building in an incomplete state, provided he does not lay the foundation proportionably to the sum to which he is limited for completing the edifice; and he will become the object of ridicule, for having adopted a plan which he had not ability to carry into execution. A prince, against whom a neighboring power has declared war, will be exceedingly imprudent, unless he seriously deliberates on the state of his own army, comparatively with that of the invader, in order that in case his power is not sufficient to maintain a successful opposition against the adverse army, he may dispatch an embassy to endeavor to effect a compromise. So you who would become my disciples, must determine to relinquish * every thing that is most dear and convenient to you in this life; to renounce all intercourse with those, to whom you are attached by the strongest bonds of blood and friendship; and cheerfully to surrender your estates and other possessions, rather than be guilty of any action inconsistent with that unblemished purity of manners, which is required from those who attain to the honor of being numbered among my disciples. Our Lord now repeated the similitude of the salt ashes used for manuring land, which, if deprived of their saline quality, become entirely useless, and serve for no other purpose than to incumber the land. “Which of you intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it, begin to mock him, saying, this man began to build, and and was not able to finish. Or, what king going

* Christ does not require that we should actually renounce the necessities of this life, for that would be to renounce life itself: but he exhorts us against employing our attention upon worldly affairs, so as to detach us from our religious duties.

“ to make war against another king; sitteth not down
 “ first, and consulteth whether he be able, with ten
 “ thousand, to meet him that cometh against him
 “ with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is
 “ yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and
 “ desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoe-
 “ ver he be of you, that forsaketh not all that he hath,
 “ he cannot be my disciple. Salt is good: but if
 “ the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be
 “ seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for
 “ the dunghill: but men cast it out.” Luke xiv. 28.
 &c.

The pathetic and persuasive discourses of Jesus awakened the attention of the publicans and sinners, many of whom were reclaimed from their iniquities. Observing the happy effects of his doctrines upon these people, our benevolent Redeemer improved every opportunity of explaining to them, the means by which they would be enabled to secure their eternal salvation; and that the doctrines which he enforced in his public preaching might be the more deeply impressed upon their minds, he condescended to visit and instruct them at their respective habitations. The humility of Jesus in associating with the publicans and sinners, and in condescending to sit at table and eat with them, proved exceedingly provoking to the haughty Pharisees, who reflected upon him with great severity, for pursuing a line of conduct wholly inconsistent with the dignity of the prophetic character, to which, these insolent rulers said, his vanity and ambition had urged him to aspire.

But to prove how unjustly his enemies had reproached him, our Lord delivered the following similitudes. If any one of you has a flock consisting of an hundred sheep, and you lose one of that number, you will leave the remaining ninety-nine in the wil-

derness, and hasten in search of the one that has gone astray. Having found the sheep, you will restore it to the flock, and expect the congratulations of your friends and neighbors, on occasion of your good fortune, in which you will exceedingly rejoice. Thus do the angels in heaven rejoice more at the repentance of one sinner, than when ninety and nine persons pursue a regular course of virtue. If from her small stock of money, consisting but of ten pieces, a woman shall lose one in the night, she will immediately light a candle, and search after that single piece with greater anxiety than she had expressed for securing the possession of the other nine. Having recovered the piece of money, she will communicate the happy event to her neighbors, and expect that they will testify gladness on account of her success, although she discovered no unusual joy when she was in secure possession of the entire sum. Thus do the angels in heaven rejoice, when they observe the reclamation of but one man from the paths of iniquity. “ Then drew
“ near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to
“ hear him. And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and
“ eateth with them. And he spake this parable unto
“ them, saying, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave
“ the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after
“ that which is lost, until he find it? And when he
“ hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them,
“ Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which
“ was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be
“ in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more
“ than over ninety and nine just persons, which need
“ no repentance. Either what woman having ten
“ pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light
“ a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently

“till she find it? And when she hath found it, she
“callest her friends and neighbors, saying, Rejoice
“with me, for I have found the piece which I lost.
“Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the pre-
“sence of the angels of God over one sinner that
“repenteth.” Luke xv. 1, &c.

To illustrate the above doctrine, and to convince his auditors of the unbounded goodness of the Almighty, and of his willingness to admit into his grace and favor the most enormous sinner, who shall seriously repent of his iniquities, and fervently implore forgiveness, our blessed Saviour delivered the justly celebrated and truly expressive parable of the prodigal son.

A certain man having two sons, the younger of them, being of a restless and volatile disposition, became exceedingly desirous of being relieved from the restrictions of parental authority; and that he might yield full gratification to the turbulency of his sensual appetites, he urged his father to assign to his use such a portion of his estate, as would have devolved to him in the course of a few years. The indulgent parent yielded, at length, to the repeated solicitations of the young man; who had no sooner obtained this point, than he procured an equipage and servants, and travelled into a foreign country; pretending at the time of his departure from the habitation of his indulgent father, that his design was to improve his fortune by trafficking in various kinds of merchandize.

By a continual indulgence of voluptuousness, and intemperate gratifications of every description, the imprudent youth in a short time entirely exhausted his portion. To add to his misery, a terrible famine prevailed throughout the country; and being thus re-

duced by his abominable lusts to a state of the most deplorable contempt and beggary, he had no means of preserving his wretched existence, but by engaging himself in the capacity of a menial servant. His master employed him in the vile drudgery of feeding and tending his swine; and he was limited to so scanty a supply of provisions, that he would most gladly have appeased the cravings of his hunger, by eating the very husks on which he fed the swine: but he was not permitted even to taste of this coarse food. Thus miserably circumstanced, he reflected on his imprudent conduct, and determined to return to his father, and make every possible atonement for his past offences. “And he said, A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father give me the portion of goods which falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want.— And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine: and he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants?” Luke xv. 11, &c.

In pursuance of this resolution, he hastened towards the habitation of his parent; and while he was yet at a distance, his fond father, who had been ap-

prized of his misfortunes, beheld him, and yielding to the impulse of paternal fondness, ran towards him, and clasping his arms about his unhappy child, embraced him with the most ardent affection. Shame and remorse had combined to depress the spirits of the unfortunate youth : but being encouraged by this kind reception, he returned his father's embrace with equal ardor ; and prostrating himself at his feet, acknowledged his indiscretion, and supplicated forgiveness. "And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son," Luke xv. 21; Here he was interrupted by his indulgent parent, who would not permit him to proceed in the confession of his unworthiness, but commanded his servants to provide him with apparel, and to make preparations for celebrating the return of his beloved child. "The father said unto his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him ; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it ; and let us eat, and be merry. For this my son was dead, and is alive again ; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry." Luke xv. 22, 23, 24.

During the above pathetic scene, the elder son was abroad ; but as he approached the house upon his return, he heard music and dancing, and enquired the reason thereof. Being informed that the rejoicings were to celebrate the return of his brother, he was exceedingly displeased, and refused to go into the house. Upon this, the father came to him, earnestly intreating him to enter, and congratulate his brother on occasion of his return. But, instead, of complying, he upbraided his father with unkindness towards him ; saying, that though he had constantly resided with him, and had punctually obeyed his commands, he had not experienced such kindness as was mani-

fested on account of his younger brother, who was unworthy the favor shewn to him, since he had deserted the interests of his father, and dissipated the portion assigned to him in riotous excesses. To this, the father, with a most amiable tenderness replied, that being heir to his whole estate, he was blamable in envying that share of his affection which his younger son had regained by his repentance of his past indiscretions; adding, that it behoved him to rejoice at the return of his brother, who had been supposed to be irrevocably lost. “Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked, what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come: and thy Father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore his father came out and intreated him. And he answering, said unto his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment, and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad; for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.”— Luke xv. 25, &c.

Three expositions are given of this instructive parable; for it is to be remembered, that the parables and doctrines of our blessed Saviour, are by no means to be limited to one particular point of view. They frequently have a manifest relation to different subjects, as in the case of the similitude now under con-

sideration ; whereby the principal doctrine meant to be inculcated is, that, by sincere repentance, sinners would insure the forgiveness of the Almighty.

Many of the ancients expound the above parable in the following manner. Adam was formed after the image of God, and blessed with many excellent endowments, which he might have used to his own advantage, had he been so prudent as to remain in his father's house, or to conform to the divine precepts : but, like the prodigal son, he became impatient of controul and restriction, and, by the instigation of Satan, affected a wretched independency ; in violation of the divine command, presumed to taste the forbidden fruit ; and, by this act of disobedience, forfeited, both with regard to himself and his posterity, the stock of happiness which had been put into his possession : but through the divine benevolence of the Almighty, means are provided, by which mankind may obtain a re-instatement in the grace and favor of God. But this grace and favor not being extended to the higher orders of the intellectual creatures, the fallen spirits murmured both against God and men ; and to this the reply of the elder brother in the parable, seems to bear an allusion ; for it is the opinion of many learned men, that the grace originally proposed for man, in case of his fall, through the mediation of Jesus Christ, was the principal occasion of the rebellion of the apostate angels.

Others expound this parable, by representing it as having allusion to the Jews and Gentiles. While they remained in the house of their common Father, or continued members of the true church, they had an ample supply of spiritual food. The latter are represented by the younger brother ; and these people deserting the kingdom of God, abused the knowledge he had bestowed upon them, pursued an idolatrous

mode of worship, and indulged themselves in riotous excesses. A famine then prevailed; the worship of the true God was deserted. In this terrible dearth, they united themselves to Satan, and worked all "uncleanness with greediness." But these prodigal people, after being long estranged from their indulgent parent, at length confessed their sins, and, upon their sincere repentance, were re-admitted to the privileges of the gospel. But the Jewish church, represented by the elder brother, observing that the Gentiles were received into the covenant of the gospel, murmured at the gracious and benevolent acts of the Almighty. But in his unbounded compassion towards the children of men, God pleaded pathetically in behalf of the elder brother; offering to him the means of eternal salvation, and declaring, that he had relieved the Jewish nation from the heavy yoke of the ceremonial law.

Thus the parable has a very clear and elegant exposition. But, both from the context and the occasion of delivering the similitude, it derives additional force and importance from the third mode of interpretation.

The publicans and sinners approached Jesus, in order to listen to his discourses, and this occasioned the Pharisees to murmur. To convince them that, if they were desirous of resembling God and the celestial hosts, our Lord instructed them, that they should rejoice when they perceived that sinners were willing to embrace the doctrines of the gospel; because "joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance."

Having justified his reception of penitent sinners, in order to their being saved through his mediation,

our Saviour addressed himself to his disciples, and in the hearing of the Scribes and Pharisees, delivered the parable of the crafty steward ; wherein he explained to his congregation, that the true and proper use of riches, consisted in applying them to the relief of the necessities of the poor. “ There was a certain rich man which had a steward, and the same was accused unto him that he has wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee ? Give account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward.” Luke xvi. 1, 2. This reproof, and the consciousness that the accusation was justly founded, induced him to reflect on the dishonesty of his conduct, and to resolve upon devising the means of procuring a future subsistence. “ Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do ? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship : I cannot dig, to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me in their houses. So he called every one of his lord’s debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord ? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou ? And he said, an hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore*.” Luke xvi. 3. &c.

In order to ingratiate the favor of his lord’s tenants, he adopted the above dishonorable means of binding them to him under a strong obligation. Upon this procedure being communicated to the master, he

* To afford some illustration to this parable, it is necessary to mention, that the trade and wealth of the Jews originally consisted in the produce of their flocks, their herds, and the fruits of the earth.

commended the steward; not however, because he had pursued a justifiable line of conduct, but on account of the art and address he had displayed in securing the means of future subsistence. “ And the lord
“ commended the unjust steward, because he had
“ done wisely: for the children of this world, are in
“ their generation wiser than the children of light.
“ And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of
“ the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye
“ fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitati-
“ ons.” Luke xvi. 8, &c. Men are more anxious to obtain worldly riches than the blessing of heaven. But the best use we can make of riches, is to employ them in promoting the salvation of our fellow-creatures; for by exerting our best endeavors to reclaim sinners, and applying our wealth to that beneficent purpose, we shall render ourselves acceptable to God, and secure our admission into the regions of eternal felicity.

Our blessed Redeemer further said, that by a faithful discharge of the temporal trust reposed in us, we should prove ourselves worthy of being promoted to heavenly employments: but, on the contrary, if we do not apply our wealth to the service of our heavenly Father, by rendering it subservient to the good of mankind, we shall not be rewarded by the blessings of heaven; for if we betray a small trust committed to us during our state of probation upon earth, we shall render ourselves unworthy and incapable of inheriting those honors which are reserved for the righteous in the blessed mansions of eternity. “ He that
“ is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in
“ much: and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust
“ also in much. If, therefore, ye have not been faith-
“ ful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit
“ to your trusts the true riches? And if ye have not
“ been faithful in that which is another man’s, who

“ shall give you that which is your own?” Luke xvi. 10, &c.

If, said Jesus, while you are the stewards and servants of the Almighty, you permit your minds to be corrupted by the lust of riches, you must expect that your conduct will be investigated, and your delinquency punished; for avarice is wholly inconsistent with the precepts of my gospel. “ No servant can
“ serve two masters; for either he will hate the one,
“ and love the other; or else he will hold to the one,
“ and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and
“ mammon.” Luke xvi. 13.

It is evident, that the above parable is calculated to incite us to exert our most zealous endeavors, to secure our salvation through the divine grace and favor of the Almighty, and the mediation of his only Son. By obeying the dictates of the ineffable love of Jesus towards the children of sinful man, we shall entitle ourselves to receive from the great Judge of mankind, a glorious testimony of our faith and righteousness. “ Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom
“ prepared for you, from the beginning of the world;
“ for I was an hungry, and ye gave me meat; I was
“ thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger,
“ and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I
“ was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and
“ ye came unto me.”

The discourses of Jesus contained sentiments utterly repugnant to the principles of the Pharisees, who treated with contempt and derision the instructions he had delivered with respect to the proper application of riches, and the impossibility that men could at the same time serve God and mammon; and they represented him as an artful impostor, and a projector of visionary schemes, who affected to despise the

pleasures of life, only because they were not in his power. But our Lord severely rebuked the pride and insolence of these people, saying, that, notwithstanding their affectation of a rigid sanctity of manners, they were accustomed privately to associate themselves with the publicans, and other people of abandoned morals, and to join in their iniquitous practices. But, said our Saviour, though your hypocrisy may conceal from the world your abominable crimes, be assured, that your wickedness is exposed to the all-penetrating eye of omnipotence in all its shocking deformity.

It is true, that I associate with publicans and sinners, but I am in no respect liable to be contaminated by their example ; and my motive in frequenting their company is, to effect their conversion. The precepts of the law and the prophets, which concern the pollution of the body, and make a distinction between the opposite classes of men, were superseded when John the Baptist preached the doctrines of the gospel, according to the dispensations of which, salvation will be extended to all repentant sinners. Therefore the publicans and sinners, by a reformation of their lives, may entitle themselves to enjoy the blessings of heaven, although they do not conform to the Mosaic dispensations. But it is not to be hence inferred, that you can violate those parts of the law which enjoin the practice of virtue, without incurring the divine vengeance ; for these obligations are to remain to eternity. Imagine not that I mean to abrogate the law ; for, on the contrary, it is my design to fulfil its precepts : and as an instance of this, I mention the case of divorce, which is not prohibited by the law ; but I declare to you, that whoever repudiates his wife, and, during her life, marries another woman, is guilty of adultery ; and that the man also is an adulterer, who marries a wife thus divorced.

“ And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard
 “ these things, and they derided him. And he said
 “ unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves be-
 “ fore men, but God knoweth your hearts; for that
 “ which is highly esteemed among men, is abomina-
 “ ble in the sight of God. The law and the pro-
 “ phets were until John: since that time the king-
 “ dom of God is preached, and every man presseth
 “ into it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to
 “ pass, than one tittle of the law to fail. Whosoe-
 “ ver putteth away his wife, and marrieth another,
 “ committeth adultery; and whosoever marrieth her
 “ that is put away from her husband, committeth
 “ adultery.” Luke xvi. 14, &c.

Having reprov'd the Pharisees, our Saviour return-
 ed to his discourse on the true use of riches; and to
 enforce his doctrine, he spake the following * parable,
 which will serve as an effectual consolation amidst
 the greatest calamities which human nature is sub-
 ject. “ There was a certain rich man which was
 “ clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptu-
 “ ously every day. And there was a certain beggar
 “ named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate full of
 “ sores. And desiring to be fed with the crumbs
 “ which fell from the rich man’s table: moreover the
 “ dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to
 “ pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the
 “ angels into Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also

* We do not agree with those writers who conceive this to be a real history, but believe it to have been related merely as a parable. Our opinion appears to be supported by several of the circumstances contain-
 ed in the narrative; of these, we shall particularize the rich man’s lifting
 up his eyes in hell, and seeing Lazarus in Abraham’s bosom, or sitting
 next him and leaning on his bosom, as St. John did on that of our Sa-
 viour; his discourse with Abraham, and his request that Lazarus
 might be sent to cool his tongue. Such of the ancients as believed this
 to be a real history, were of opinion, that the soul had a corporeal sub-
 stance, and the resemblance of man after death.

“ died and was buried : and in hell he lifted up his
“ eyes being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar
“ off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried,
“ and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and
“ send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger
“ in water, and cool my tongue, for I am tormented
“ in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember,
“ that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things,
“ and likewise Lazarus evil things ; but now he is
“ comforted, and thou art tormented. And besides all
“ this, between us and you, there is a great gulph
“ fixed ; so that they which would pass from hence to
“ you, cannot ; neither can they pass to us that would
“ come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee there-
“ fore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my
“ father’s house. For I have five brethren ; that he
“ may testify unto them, lest they also come into this
“ place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They
“ have Moses and the prophets ; let them hear them.
“ And he said, Nay, father Abraham : but if one
“ went unto them from the dead, they will repent.
“ And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and
“ the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though
“ one rose from the dead.” Luke xvi. 19, &c.

The scriptures do not contain a parable more expressive, or better calculated to impress our minds with a just idea of the difference between our present state and futurity, than that above recited. So enormous had been the crimes of the rich man, that all his solicitations for mercy proved ineffectual ; while the pious Lazarus was exalted, infinitely above the summit of terrestrial enjoyments. The petition of the sinner in behalf of his miserable relations could not be granted ; for since they had rejected the admonition of Moses and the prophets, their obstinacy was so excessive, that they would not give credit to the testimony even of a messenger from the dead.

Many of the auditors of our blessed Saviour, not being present while he delivered some of his former discourses, he now repeated what he had said on the subject of affronts and injuries ; describing their evil nature and tendency, and mentioning the punishments to which they would expose mankind. Such, said the blessed Jesus, is the corrupt and abominable nature of mankind, that some men will labor to pervert others from a due obedience to the divine will of the Almighty ; and many will succeed in this iniquitous occupation. The children of God must expect to be reviled and persecuted by the enemies to my gospel ; but woe unto those who shall offend in this respect ; they shall become the objects of the divine vengeance, and suffer punishments infinitely more dreadful than it is possible for the utmost power of man to inflict. “ Then said he unto his disciples, it is impossible but
 “ that offences will come : but woe unto him through
 “ whom they come. It were better for him, that a
 “ mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and he cast
 “ into the sea, than that he should offend one of these
 “ little ones.” Luke xvii. 1, 2.

Our Lord recommended his disciples to cherish a forgiving temper : exhorting them, to be careful lest they should yield to the influence of sudden and vindictive passions. “ Take heed to yourselves : if thy bro-
 “ ther trespass against thee, rebuke him ; and if he re-
 “ pent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee
 “ seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn
 “ unto thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him.” Luke xvii. 3, 4.

The above discourse in recommendation of forgiveness, was delivered almost immediately after Jesus had received a gross affront from the Pharisees, who applied to him the opprobrious epithet of a false teacher. By the doctrine he advanced, the benevolent Je-

sus manifested with what a perfect sincerity he pardoned them for those injuries they had offered to him. In short, the truly amiable example of our blessed Redeemer, should operate as a powerful recommendation to the practice of the virtue of forgiveness.

The disciples of Jesus could not comprehend, that it was possible for mankind to attain to that degree of clemency which he had recommended. "And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith." Hereupon our Saviour observed, that had they not been destitute of true faith, they would have believed it possible to resist the most powerful temptation to evil practices, even such as appeared to be as difficult to be surmounted, as rooting up trees from the earth and planting them in the ocean. "And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye might say unto this sycamine-tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea, and it shall obey you." Luke xvii. 6.

Which of you, said our Lord, having a man employed in the business of husbandry, or in feeding cattle, will call him out of the field, and order him to sit down to his meal, before you have yourself received refreshment? You will rather command him to wait upon you at table: and having finished your meal, you will then deem it early enough for your attendant to satisfy his appetite; so in the service of God, his commands are to be obeyed in preference to all worldly considerations. No master considers himself as being under obligations to that servant who has only obeyed his lawful commands; so when you have fulfilled the commands of the Almighty, do not claim any extraordinary merit on that account; but acknowledge that you have only complied with an injunction, which you could not have violated without being guilty of sin. "Which of you having a

‘ servant plowing, or feeding cattle, will say unto
 ‘ him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go,
 ‘ and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto
 ‘ him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird
 ‘ thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken;
 ‘ and afterwards thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he
 ‘ thank his servant because he did the things that
 ‘ were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise
 ‘ ye, when ye have done all those things which are
 ‘ commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants;
 ‘ we have done that which was our duty to do.”
 Luke xvii. 7, &c.

Pursuing his journey towards Jerusalem, our Lord
 passed through Samaria and Galilee; and upon his
 arrival at a small village, ten persons dreadfully af-
 flicted with the leprosy, stood at some * distance from
 him, and earnestly supplicated that he would com-
 passionate their miserable situation, and administer
 to them that relief which they had no hopes of ob-
 taining, but through his tenderness. Our Lord, ever
 disposed to relieve the distresses of mankind, ordered
 the afflicted supplicants to present themselves before
 the priests; assuring them at the same time, that by
 complying with his command, they would procure a
 renewal of health.

They departed, and in a short time afterwards,
 found themselves perfectly cleansed from their loath-
 some disease. Of these men, nine were Jews, and
 the other was a native of Samaria. The Jews pur-
 sued their journey: but the impulse of gratitude was
 too powerful, to permit the Samaritan to accompany
 them. He returned, glorifying the name of God, and

* Patients afflicted with the leprosy, were prohibited from approach-
 ing within an appointed space of people in health, lest the disease should
 be communicated to them.

giving thanks for the mercy he had experienced. Being convinced that he was perfectly cleansed, he prostrated himself at the feet of our blessed Redeemer, and expressed his sense of the obligation conferred upon him, in the warmest terms of gratitude and affection. To intimate that, those who were enlightened with the knowledge of truth, had failed in the duties of piety and gratitude, to which they were more peculiarly enjoined than the ignorant part of mankind; our Lord enquired after the nine Jews, observing, that though ten lepers had been restored to health, only one of them, and he an heathen, entertained sentiments worthy the great benefits received. Our Lord then commanded the Samaritan to rise, saying, that his faith had procured his recovery.—“ And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: and they lifted up their voices and said, Jesus, master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering, said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned, to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole.” Luke xvii. 11, &c.

At a time when our blessed Saviour was surrounded by a great concourse of people, some of the Pharisees requested that he would inform them when the kingdom of the Messiah, which had so frequently been

the subject of his discourses, would be established. In reply to this question, Jesus said, they were deceived if they imagined that the throne of the Messiah would be erected by the power of war, or that his reign would consist in the magnificence and power of a terrestrial monarch. Their anxiety to learn the country where the throne of the Messiah would be erected, the blessed Jesus told them, was a proof of the erroneous opinions in which they obstinately persisted; adding, that the prince, concerning whom they had enquired, would not manifest his power by the terror and desolation of war; but he would subdue the minds of men by a new dispensation of religion, by a strict adherence to which they would render themselves acceptable to God. Though so little known and regarded, the blessed Jesus said, the kingdom of God was already * within them; and that of the truth of this assertion, the various miracles which he and his apostles had wrought, afforded a sufficient confirmation. “The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say, Lo, here, or lo, there; for behold, the kingdom of God is within you.” Luke xvii. 20, 21.

Having thus replied to the Pharisees, our Lord addressed himself to his disciples, and, in the hearing of the multitude, predicted the destruction of the Jewish state, the constitution of which, both with respect to civil and religious concerns, was the most considerable obstruction to the establishment of his kingdom. Agreeable to that tender and affectionate disposition which he had on every occasion shewn to-

* By the words, “The kingdom of God is within you,” our Saviour meant that, it was amongst them by virtue of his gospel; for he could not speak with reference to the power he had obtained over the minds of the Jews, nor in allusion to the Pharisees, to whom he particularly addressed himself; for but a small number of that sect, considered him in his true character.

wards the children of men, our Saviour predicted the destruction of the Jewish state, in a manner that was calculated to reclaim his auditors from their iniquitous courses. As a prelude to the dreadful catastrophe, he said, the Jewish nation would be involved in circumstances of great and universal calamity; and that, amidst their distresses, they would anxiously, but in vain, wish for the presence of the Messiah, that they might supplicate him for relief. "The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it." Luke xvii. 22.

Our Lord then proceeded to caution his auditors, against suffering themselves to be deluded by those impostors, who would pretend to direct them in the proper mode of ingratiating themselves into the favor of the Messiah; who, he said, would appear at a time when he was least expected, and, by the efforts of his own strength, surmount every obstacle, and establish his religion with a degree of rapidity, equal to that of the lightning's flash; adding, however, that, before the demonstration of his sovereignty, he must sustain many indignities from, and be disavowed by, the Jewish nation. "And they shall say unto you, See here, or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them. For as the lightning that lighteth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day. But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation." Luke xvii. 23. &c.

Our Lord further informed these unbelieving and obdurate people, that notwithstanding they were so fully apprized of the dreadful calamities and the final destruction that would overwhelm the Jewish nation, they would still persevere in their infidelity, and re-

main as unconcerned with respect to their approaching ruin, as were the inhabitants of the old world at the time of the deluge; or the people of Sodom, when their iniquities provoked the divine displeasure to effect the destruction of their city. “And as it
“ was in the days of Noah, so shall it also be in the
“ days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank,
“ they married wives, they were given in marriage,
“ until the day that Noah entered into the ark; and
“ the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise
“ also, as it was in the days of Lot, they did eat, they
“ drank, they sold, they planted, they builded: but
“ the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained
“ fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them
“ all. Even thus shall it be when the Son of man
“ is revealed. In that day, he which shall be upon
“ the house-top, and his stuff in the house, let him
“ not come down to take it away; and he that is in
“ the field, let him likewise not return back. Re-
“ member Lot’s wife. Whosoever shall seek to save
“ his life, shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his
“ life, shall preserve it. I tell you, in that night there
“ shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be ta-
“ ken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall
“ be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and
“ the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the
“ one shall be taken, and the other left. And they
“ answered, and said unto him, Where, Lord? And
“ he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is,
“ thither will the eagles be gathered together.”—
Luke xvii. 26, &c.

Thus our Saviour predicted the destruction of Jerusalem, exhorting the people not to rely for security on the fortifications of the city, which could not afford them protection; and informing them, that the defenceless towns and villages would yield them shelter. Of the persons who were in the same houses,

or beds, or employed together in the fields, or elsewhere, some would be saved, and others involved in ruin, according to the places to which they should hasten for shelter. In reply to the question proposed by the Pharisees, as to the part of Judea wherein the greatest danger would prevail, our Lord said, "Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together;" signifying, that wheresoever the rebellious Jews should resort, thither would they be pursued by the Roman army; who would put all those to the sword, whom they should find in arms.

The great preacher of Israel now delivered the following parable, the design of which was, to exhort his disciples to a frequent perseverance in prayer to the Almighty; and to convince them, that although their petitions were not immediately granted, yet by continuing fervently to appeal to the great Father of the creation, every thing that the divine wisdom should deem it expedient for them to possess, would be bestowed upon them.

A certain judge of an irreligious disposition, and whose attention was wholly employed in forming projects for amassing riches, was applied to by a woman, who requested that he would exert his authority to procure her redress for some injury she had received. Though the injustice this friendless widow had sustained was of the most heinous nature, the judge refused to listen to her complaints, or to interfere in her behalf. But notwithstanding the morose and turbulent manner in which he had repeatedly dismissed her, in order to discourage her application for redress, she still determined to persevere. She continued incessantly to importune him to exercise his authority in her behalf; and being vexed that his favorite pursuits were perpetually interrupted by the solicitations of this supplicant, he at length determined to do her jus-

tice : but this resolution was not the result of any virtuous principal, but merely the effect of a desire to relieve himself from further importunity. “ And he
 “ spake a parable unto them, to this end, that men
 “ ought always to pray, and not to faint ; saying,
 “ There was in a city a judge, which feared not God,
 “ neither regarded man. And there was a widow in
 “ that city, and she came unto him, saying, Avenge
 “ me of mine adversary. And he would not for a
 “ while : but afterwards he said within himself, Though
 “ I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this wi-
 “ dow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her
 “ continual coming she weary me.” Luke xviii. 1,
 &c.

By the above parable we are instructed, that the repeated complaints of the afflicted will, at length, impress the hearts of the most obdurate and wicked men ; and that, therefore, the benevolent Father of the universe will listen to the petitions of his faithful servants, and reward their righteousness with the choisest blessings of heaven.

Our blessed Saviour further said, that as the unjust magistrate was by perpetual solicitation induced to execute justice upon the adversary of the injured widow, so would the abominable sins of mankind, at length provoke the wrath of Almighty God. “ And
 “ shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry
 “ day and night unto him, though he bear long with
 “ them ? I tell you, that he will avenge them speedi-
 “ ly. Luke xviii. 7, 8.

Having inforced the duty of prayer in the above expressive parable, our Saviour said, “ Neverthe-
 “ less, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith
 “ on earth ?” Notwithstanding the miracles he had performed, and the doctrines he had preached, when

he should appear to pronounce the judgment of mankind, would not the majority of the Jews have rejected that faith which he had recommended to them as the means of salvation ?

Our blessed Redeemer now proceeded to rebuke the pride, authority, and affected sanctity of the Pharisees. He contrasted the character of those arrogant people, with that of sincere and humble penitents; describing the different manner in which the Almighty received the applications of the two classes of people, by delivering the parable of the Pharisee and the publican.

Two men, said Jesus, repaired at the same time to the temple, to offer up their devotions to God. One of these was a Pharisee, who pretended to be a man of the most unblemished righteousness; and the other was a publican, who had pursued a vicious course of life. The former proceeded far into the temple, and appealing to heaven in a confident and assuming manner, endeavored to exalt his own character, by placing it in opposition to that of the publican. Conscious of his feelings, the publican neither presumed to approach the sanctuary, nor even to raise his eyes towards heaven; but with an humble demeanor he acknowledged his crimes, and supplicated forgiveness. “ And he spake this parable unto
“ certain which trusted in themselves that they were
“ righteous, and despised others. Two men went
“ up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and
“ the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and pray-
“ ed thus with himself, God I thank thee, that I am
“ not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adul-
“ terers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the
“ week; I give tithes of all that I possess. And the
“ publican standing afar off, would not lift up so much
“ as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast,

“ saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you,
“ this man went down to his house justified rather than
“ the other ; for every one that exalteth himself shall
“ be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be ex-
“ alted.” Luke xviii. 9. &c.

Departing from the town of Ephraim, where he had delivered the above parables, our Lord proceeded to Jerusalem, to celebrate the * feast of dedication, which happened in the nones of December. Jesus walked in the porch of Solomon, and was followed by a great concourse of people, some of whom upbraided him for having kept them in suspense ; asking him, if he was really the Messiah, why he did not plainly demonstrate his right to assume that appellation. Hereupon our Lord said, that the miracles he had performed by the authority delegated to him by his heavenly Father, were incontestible evidences of the divinity of his commission. As he had informed them at the feast of tabernacles, they did not repose faith in him, because they were not sheep belonging to his flock : but such as were disposed to obey the doctrines of truth, were able immediately to distinguish his voice from that of an impostor ; or, to perceive that his doctrine was delivered to him by his heavenly Father. I know, said Jesus, every particular sheep belonging to my flock ; I observe with what degree of punctuality they obey my instructions, and I will reward them with eternal life in my sheep-fold, where they will be securely protected from the power of their enemies. My Father is all-powerful ; and it is not

* The feast of dedication here mentioned, respects not the dedication of the temple constructed by Solomon, and repaired by Zerubbabel, but the dedication of the altar and temple celebrated by Judas Maccabeus, as mentioned in Scripture. Vide 1 Macc. iv. 56. In the former dedications, no annual feasts were appointed.

possible for man to deprive the sheep of my flock of his divine protection. My Father and I † are one; and it is no more possible for you to divest my followers of his protection, than of mine.

As they had done at the former feast, the Jews now took up stones in order to cast them at Jesus; who said, they were unable justly to accuse him of any crime, and desired to be informed, for which of his good deeds it was that they were preparing to stone him. They said, they meant to punish him, because he had been guilty of blasphemy in calling himself the Son of God. In reply to this accusation, our Lord observed, that in the books of the law, magistrates and other persons in power, whose authority was derived originally from heaven, were called Gods. He then urged, that he had not committed the crime imputed to him, being justified in stiling himself the Son of God; since he had been consecrated by the Almighty, and appointed by him to proclaim to mankind the means by which they might secure their eternal salvation. He reminded them of the miracles he had wrought, saying, they incontestibly proved that he was the messenger of God. Since, said the blessed Jesus, you will not rely on my assurance, give due credit to those works of God my Father, which through his means are performed by me, and which prove that the Father is in me, and I in him.

The Jews now attempted to seize Jesus, in order to conduct him before the Sanhedrim; but rendering himself invisible, he eluded the fury of his enemies. “ Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified and
“ sent into the world, thou blasphemest; because I
“ said, I am the Son of God? If I do not the works

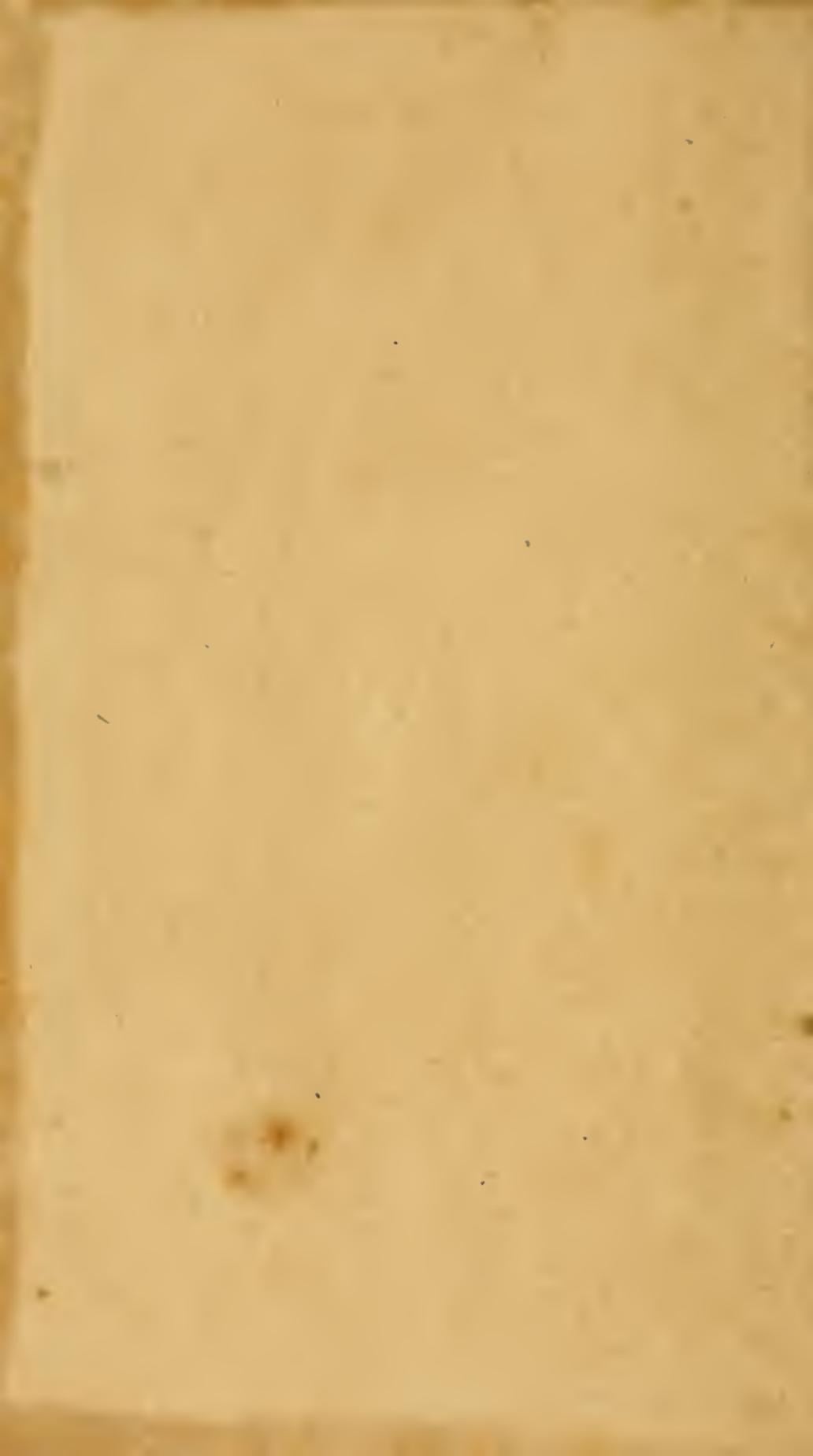
† Our Saviour here speaks, not only of an unity of will and concord, but of an unity of nature.

“ of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though
“ ye believe not me, believe the works ; that ye may
“ know and believe that the Father is in me, and I
“ in him. Therefore they sought again to take him,
“ but he escaped out of their hands.” John x. 36, &c.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.









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