

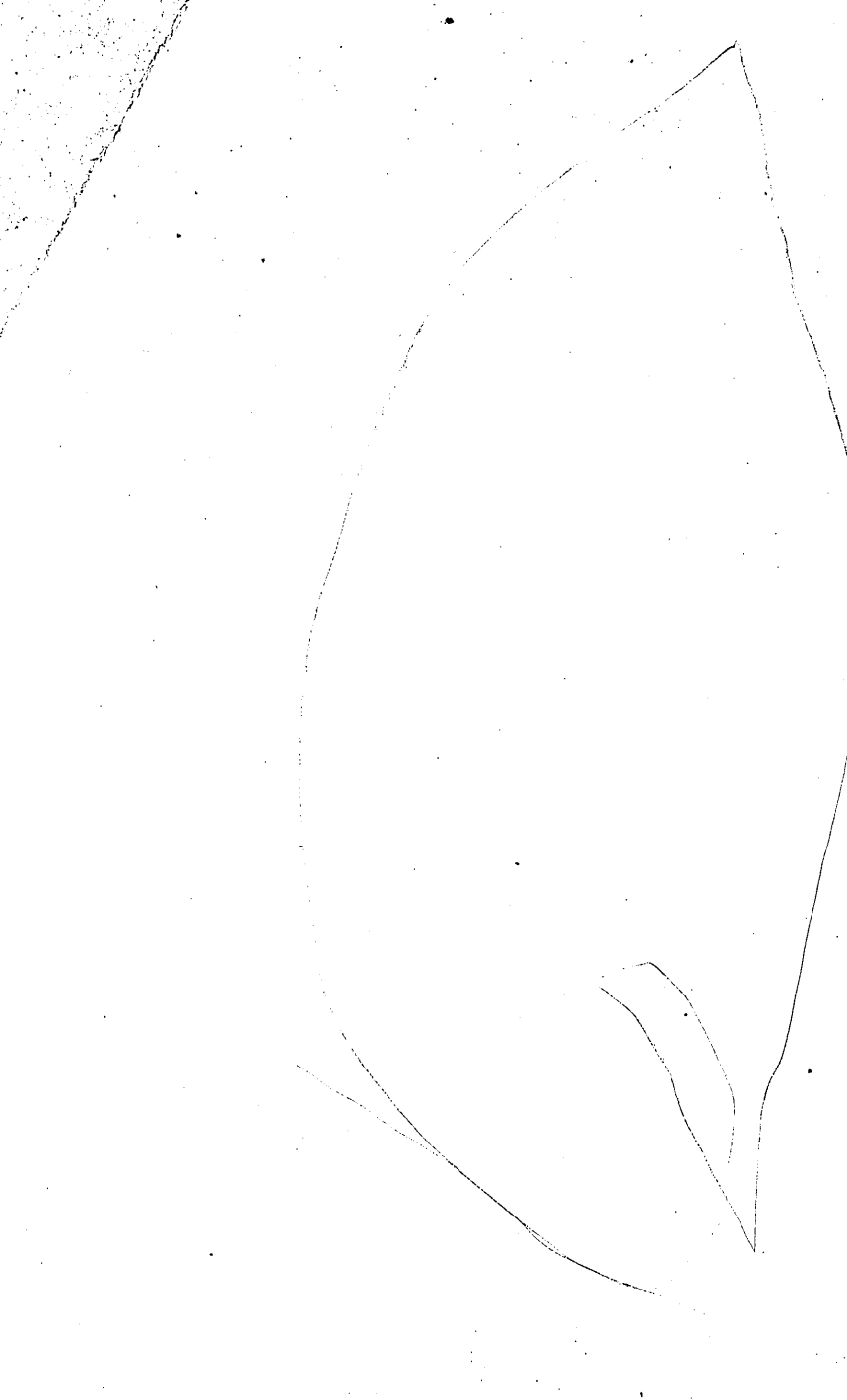
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THE LIFE

OF OUR

LORD AND SAVIOUR

JESUS CHRIST,

FROM HIS INCARNATION TO HIS ASCENSION
INTO HEAVEN.

By REV. JOHN FLEETWOOD, D.D.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED THE

LIVES OF THE HOLY APOSTLES AND EVANGELISTS, A
HISTORY OF THE JEWS AND AN ESSAY ON THE
EVIDENCES OF THE BIBLE.

THE WHOLE CAREFULLY REVISED WITH ADDITIONS,

By Joseph Beecher, D. D.

HONORARY MEMBER OF THE HISTORICAL SOCIETIES OF PENNSYLVANIA AND WISCONSIN;
AUTHOR OF "THE RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES," ETC.,
EDITOR OF THE COMPLETE WORKS OF ANDREW FULLER," ETC., ETC.

PHILADELPHIA:

JOHN E. POTTER, No. 617 Sansom Street.

1859.

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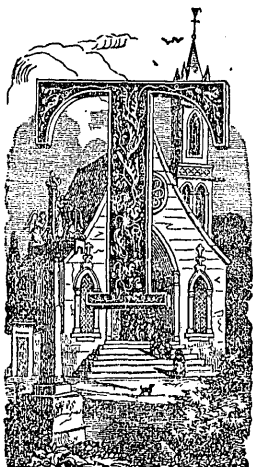
JOHN E. POTTER,

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P R E F A C E .



O write a history," says the distinguished Dr. Neander, "of the greatest life that has been manifested upon earth—that life in which the divine glory irradiated earthly existence—is indeed the greatest of human tasks. Yet the attempt is not presumptuous if it be made upon the Gospel basis; every age witnesses new attempts of the kind. It is part of the means by which we are to appropriate to ourselves

this highest life; to become more and more intimate with it; to bring it nearer and nearer to ourselves." Notwithstanding the infidelity which is too prevalent in Germany, not a few others of its writers have strongly felt the importance of the subject now before us. One of them says, "I write the life of Christ—*I?*—Never. The Evangelists have written it as it can and ought to be written. Let *us*, however, not write it, but *become* it." "Who indeed," says another, "could venture after John, to write the life of Christ?" "Such an attempt," says Anna Maria Von Schurman, "is to paint the sun with charcoal. The life of the Christian is the best picture of the Life of Christ."

While all this is correct, alike in fact and in feeling, we may say with the learned Dr. Stebbing, of London, in an able introductory essay to an edition of this work a few years ago:—"With the most devout feeling of the infinite value of the original narrative, and of the importance of leading men to contemplate it in its length and breadth, pious divines have, from time to time, employed themselves in arranging the facts and discourses set forth in the four Gospels, and so showing their sequence and connection, that the life of Christ, as far as it can be made the subject of history, might be exhibited to the mind without any appearance of complexity.

"It is evident that the greatest care is required in a work of this kind, that nothing human may obtrude itself under the character of divine. This is to be observed, not merely in regard to facts, but in respect also to comments and reflections, the near association of the comment with the text having often been the cause of giving undue authority to the former, while the latter was allowed to retain but a titular claim to the homage of the reader.

"We may hence conclude that nothing but the most reverential feeling of the sacredness of the subject can secure a writer of the Life of Christ from falling into dangers not to be lightly regarded. But with this caution, such a work may be rendered eminently edifying and interesting. The course of our Lord's ministry is one glorious track of light; but it is broader and of a deeper splendor in some places than in others; and by its heavenly and mysterious nature it must often be invisible to the understanding not practiced in spiritual meditation. A mind long familiarized to the language of the Saviour, and experienced in the interpretation of those signs and parables which are employed in the Gospel, as a peculiar medium of the profoundest truth, will speak of these things to others, so as to open their meaning, and conduct the thoughts, step by step, along the paths of divine mystery, till the object of the whole is more clearly seen and the

heart itself is prepared to embrace the history in its entire compass.

“An attentive perusal of the present volume will afford many illustrations of these remarks. Knowing that the substance of the narrative is drawn from sources of indisputable authority, the reader can have no anxiety respecting the truth of the facts recorded. He will, therefore, be able to resign himself altogether to the gracious influence which such a history is calculated to exercise on the mind. Brought to contemplate his Lord from the moment when it was announced, ‘Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord,’ to that when he pronounced those awful words, ‘It is finished,’ he learns what it is to tremble and rejoice at the recital of the method employed for his salvation. Nor resting here, the narrative leads him on from the scene of conflict, where Christ triumphed over the grave, to those wonderful manifestations of the power which had wrought in his resurrection, and which exhibited itself, at last, in the fulness of its strength and splendor, when Jesus visibly ascended into heaven, leading captivity captive.

“The assistance which the reader will derive from a well-arranged narrative of these sublime events, will be found of importance, not only as exciting attention to facts, otherwise less noticed, but as habituating him, in perusing the divine originals, to arrange and classify the several portions of the history for himself. When this ability is acquired, the mind will have a readier command over the materials of reflection, and the several arguments on which the proof of heavenly truth is founded will be seen with greater distinctness, and appreciated with a more practical feeling of their strength and value.”

A very few sentences in reference to the present edition of this work shall bring this preface to a close. When its publisher applied to me to select the copy from which he should print, and to give a general superintendence as it passed through the press, I readily undertook what I

expected would prove a light task; but as soon as I began to examine the several editions now in the market, I was struck with the fact that even the most expensive, as well as those most largely circulated, were exceedingly *imperfect*. I found paragraphs—whole pages—not unfrequently, indeed, several pages in succession, altogether omitted. Nor was it seldom the fact that these omissions, made solely to reduce the number of pages in the volume, were the most important to meet the objections of infidelity, and to silence the enemies of Christ. I found the publisher equally unwilling as myself to circulate a garbled and imperfect edition of so valuable and popular a work, and therefore, having obtained copies from England and Scotland, as well as those furnished by this country, I have carefully collated the whole, restored the omitted passages, and corrected the manifold mistakes which successive printers had introduced. *The reader has now before him the most correct edition in existence of this important work.* The introductory essays on the truth of the Bible, and the History of that most important of all nations—the Jews—are also new, and I will venture to assert, are almost infinitely more correct than any which have preceded them. The printing, engraving, paper, and binding of the volume need no remarks from me. May the whole happily tend to the edification of the reader.

J. B.

Philadelphia, August, 1855.

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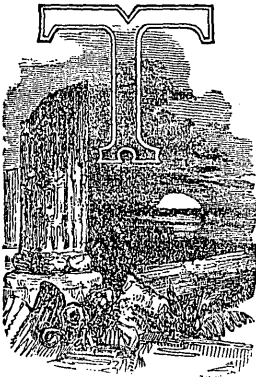
INTRODUCTORY ESSAYS.

ESSAY I.

THE TRUTH OF THE BIBLE.

BY THE REV. EDWARD USHER.

THERE IS A GOD.



THE word GOD is from the Saxon, and signifies good. It is used in our English tongue to express the self-existent and the infinitely glorious Being from whom we derive our life, possessing every excellence and absolute dominion. It is not necessary to employ argument, to establish what is so very axiomatic, namely, that there is a God. For it is plain and obvious to every man's sense and understanding, that there must be some First Cause, some Eternal Being, otherwise nothing could ever have been. The existence of things, universally,

certainly proves the being of God. For, can anything exist, or come to pass, without a cause? And if not, then, we are led up, through a chain of subordinate causes, to one First Cause. Lucretius, an eminent Latin poet and philosopher, truly said, "The world cannot be eternal, because there is nothing to be met with, in any credible story, among either the Grecians or Romans, about any persons that lived, or any action that was done, much before the

Trojan wars." No chance could shake creation into its beautiful order. We might as well suppose, that the combinations of alphabetical chance would produce the Iliad of Homer. "I had rather," says Lord Bacon, "believe all the fables in the Legend, and the Talmud, and the Alcoran, than that this universal frame is without a mind." Contrivance incontestably proves a Contriver, prior to, and out of itself. "If every house is builded by some man," how much more must "he that built all things be God?"

"God hath a being, and that ye may see,
 In the fold of the flower, the leaf of the tree;
 In the sun of the noonday, the star of the night,
 In the storm-cloud of darkness, the rainbow of light;
 In the wave of the ocean, the furrow of land,
 In the mountain of granite, the atom of sand:
 Turn where ye may, from the sky to the sod,
 Where can ye gaze that ye see not a God?"

The meanest insect we can see, or the most contemptible weed we can tread upon, is sufficient to confound Atheism, and baffle all its pretensions. They must be infatuated, insane, and depraved indeed, who can say, "There is no God." For such a saying is contrary to the clearest light and reason; and in direct opposition to the common sentiments of all the wiser and more sober part of mankind. On review of the whole, whatever Atheists may say, the necessary fact is a Deity—an eternal, self-existent, spiritual, and intelligent Being. The marks of design—from everything both within and without us—are too strong to be got over; design must have had a designer; that designer must have been a person; that person is God. Galen, a celebrated physician, who was no great admirer of religion, in viewing the construction of the human body, could not but acknowledge the hand of a Deity. And the existence of God, is the basis of religion—the pillar and ground of all natural and moral truth.

GOD IS A BEING OF INFINITE PERFECTIONS.

Whatever exists is called a being; infinite, is unlimited, unbounded, measureless; and perfections, are several representations of that one perfection which is God. God is so one, that there is not, there cannot be another God. "The proof of this is," argues Paley, "the uniformity of plan observable in the universe." We see no counter working—no hand of more deities than one. God is a Spirit. By this is meant, that he is without a body; that he is not material, or

composed of parts; that he is invisible, in every place, pure, holy. And such a Being as God, must needs be a Being of infinite perfections. His perfections are usually considered as natural and moral. His natural perfections are absolute and incommunicable; and his moral perfections are relative and communicable. The natural perfections of God are:—Eternity—excluding both beginning and ending; Immutability—not subject to any change; Omnipotence—ability to do whatever he pleases; Omniscience—knowledge of all things; and Omnipresence—filling all space, and absent from no place. And the moral perfections of the Divine Nature are:—Holiness—freedom from evil; Justice—giving to every one his due; Goodness—benignity or bounty; Truth—speaking according to the real state of things; and Faithfulness—always fulfilling covenants and promises. Simonides, a celebrated poet and philosopher, being requested to describe God, he asked a week to think of it, after that a month, and then a year,—but being still unprepared, he declined the task, declaring that the more he thought of so great a Being, the less he was able to describe him. Thales, one of the seven wise men of Greece, affirmed, that “God comprehends all things, and that he is of all things the most ancient, because he never had any beginning.” And Cicero says, “It is impossible for us to conceive of God but as being eternal.” Plato believed and declared, that “God was immutable.” Homer plainly asserts, that “God is omnipotent.” Thales said, “That men should have this opinion of God, that he seeth all things.” The Greeks expressed him by a word which signifies “to see.” And the Egyptians represented him by an “eye upon the top of a sceptre; implying that he is all eye.” And touching the Divine Omnipresence, Virgil said, “No place can be imagined that is destitute of the presence of God.” Plutarch called holiness “the beauty of the Divine Essence.” Plato said, that “God is not in any wise unjust, but most just.” Seneca says, “That the first thing in our worship, is to believe the being of God; and then to ascribe unto him majesty and goodness, without which there can be no majesty.” And it was a saying of Porphyry, a celebrated Plotinian philosopher, “That truth is so great a perfection of the Divine Nature, that if God should render himself visible unto men, he would choose light for his body, and truth for his soul.” It is only necessary to add, that the perfections of God clearly appear in all his works of creation and providence. His eternity, etc., arrested the attention, and called forth the observations, of the most celebrated Heathen writers; and are they not inferrible from the frame and con-

stitution of all things? "That which may be known of God is manifest in them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead."

GOD COULD REVEAL HIS WILL TO MAN.

Reveal, from *revelo*, is to unveil or uncover. Revelation is now used for the discovery which God has made to the world by the mouths of his prophets, and other inspired men, of weighty points of faith and duty, which they could not learn from natural reason. That God could make such a revelation as is here defined, is a conclusion fairly deducible from the preceding propositions. For, if an infidel admit the existence of God, and that he is a Being of infinite perfections, he cannot rationally deny that that Being may reveal his will to the human race. Surely the Supreme Being who is infinitely powerful, wise, and intelligent, who has formed, and therefore can have access to every human mind, and who has given to us a power of communicating our ideas to each other, cannot, without contradiction, be supposed incapable of making a revelation; and unless it has been revealed to the infidel that a revelation is impossible, he cannot know that it is so. And hence, paradoxical as it may seem, he cannot warrantably deny the possibility of a divine revelation without admitting its actual existence.

A DIVINE REVELATION WAS NOT ONLY POSSIBLE, BUT
PROBABLE AND NECESSARY.

The probability of a revelation may be drawn from the goodness of God—he is essentially, originally, immutably, perfectly, communicatively, infinitely, and incomprehensibly good or benevolent;—from his acquaintance with man's necessities—he knew the dark, bewildered, and erring condition of mortals;—from his competent resources—he had the power to speak, to inspire, and to make it apparent to his creatures that it was he who spake to them;—and from the end of man's creation—man was made to know, love, imitate, and obey God, and enjoy him forever. Further proofs of the probability of a revelation may be drawn from the universality of religious observances—no nation or tribe, no matter how isolated, barbarous, or brutalized, has yet been discovered, who possessed no religious notions, and did not in some sense practice religious rites;—from the extensive diffusion of traditions which coincide with the statements of the Bible—there is among heathen nations an universal

tradition of the deluge; and this, in their systems of mythology, is accompanied by traditions respecting the antediluvian race, the primeval condition or golden age of man, and the leading phenomena of the work of creation. Remarkable coincidences with the commencement of the Bible history occur in the Phenician, the Chinese, the Hindoo, the Gothic, the Etruscan, the Greek, and the American cosmogonies; and from the heathen practices respecting oracles.—all mythologies assume communications to men to have been made by the objects of worship. Now, how came the universality of religious observances? Did men create the notion of a Deity? Is the Bible, as it purposes to be, a revelation from God; or is it one of many consentaneous streams which flow from a revelation more remote? And was the practice of consulting oracles founded on the belief that an accredited revelation had been given, or that the Deity could make a revelation to inquiring mortals? Corollary.—A divine revelation is a probable thing.

THE NECESSITY OF A REVELATION APPEARS FROM VARIOUS CONSIDERATIONS.

From the degenerate condition of mankind. How evidently fallen from their original high state! The whole heathen world lay, and still lies, in wickedness. How bewildered in their religious notions and practices! How ignorant respecting the existence and the attributes of God, the reality and the extent of providence, the nature and the immortality of the soul, the obligations and the rites of religious worship, and the sanctions, kinds, and relations of moral duties! The description of the ancient heathens given by St. Paul, in the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans, is supported by the evidence of their own historians and poets. The same may also be affirmed of modern pagans, as is evident from the statements of enlightened travelers, and christian missionaries. Nature's light has become darkness; through the grossness of their superstitions, men cannot even grope after God. The fact is, no person can have studied the philosophy of universal history, and the character of man, as delineated in its various annals, with proper attention, who is not convinced of the necessity of a revelation from heaven. Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato, seemed to have sighed after it. "Let their attainments be what they might, they never ascribed them to their own reason and sagacity—but always lamented the darkness of their intellect, the weakness of the human mind, the little satisfaction they met with in their most diligent search, and the want of a better

guide." This was their frequent language; and, in so far, they were honest and ingenuous: qualities in which our modern heathens are not very proficient. How necessary, considering the circumstances of mankind, was a revelation from God!

From the insufficiency of the light of nature. Our modern deists talk largely of the light of nature—talk of it as disclosing all that is necessary to be known of God. We envy neither the understanding, nor the felicity, of those who prefer the sombre moonshine to the glowing sun. It is true, that we may discover, by the light of nature, the existence of a Being who is possessed of all possible perfection. The works of God sufficiently display his goodness, wisdom, and power; but with respect to the application of these in any particular instance, they leave us entirely at a loss. Nature teaches nothing on the subject of man's recovery to the image of God—an image which he has lost. It exhibits no method of consistent mercy to the guilty. It is silent on the subjects of the resurrection of the body, and the immortality of the soul. It speaks not of another and a better world—the abode of peace and happiness. The canopy of heaven, spacious as it is, contains no records of salvation. Neither the earth, the sea, nor the air,—rich, and vocal, and flowing, and brilliant as they are—utters an accent of mercy, or breathes forth an intimation of heaven. Since the hour in which the spirit of evil first triumphed over our race, the unaided powers of man have been able to arrive at nothing more than a probable conjecture, faintly supported by reason and analogy, on these the highest and most interesting topics of human speculation. We know that a few scattered rays of truth, the relics of primeval and patriarchal tradition, long touched with a faint illumination the darkened understanding of man; but neither the light of nature, nor the remains of traditionary revelation, sufficed to maintain a clear and unclouded belief in the doctrine of immortality. Certain it is, that all the knowledge of God, and of divine things, possessed by any and every portion of the human race, in every age and nation, is, in some way or other, the consequence of divine revelation. A revelation, in some form or other, has never been totally wanting; and we argue the necessity of a further revelation from the deficiency of the former. "That Pythagoras drew his knowledge from the Hebrew Fountains, is what all writers, sacred and profane, do testify and aver: that Socrates and Plato took from him the principal part of that knowledge, touching God, the soul's immortality, and the conduct of life and manners, has been doubted by no person of fair

inquiry; and, that it went from him into the schools of Aristotle, and so derived and diffused almost into the whole world, is in like manner attested by all the learned." Dr. Jortin says, that, "The infidels educated in christian countries, owe what learning they have to Christianity; and act the part of those brutes, which when they have sucked the dam, turn about and strike her." Talk about "the sufficiency of the light of nature"—and impiously demand, "what necessity is there for the Bible?" Look from the state of ancient, to that of modern heathenism. Go among the inhabitants of Africa—say the Ashantees, and the aborigines of New Holland. There you see the unsophisticated religion of nature. And what a sight! O what awful ignorance of God! what idolatrous superstitions! what murderous rites! what waste of intellect! what depravation of affection! what gloom of mind! what tyranny of error! what ruin in the noblest work of God! How deeply necessary then is a revelation of the divine will! 1 Cor. i. 19–25.

From the uncertainty and the absurdities of heathen theology. That the Epicurean scheme was no other than atheism disguised, that the hypothesis of the Stoics was little different from the polytheism of the vulgar; and, that the faith of the Academics was, either none at all, or faint and fluctuating at the best, will not be disputed by those who have any knowledge of antiquity. Let Cicero's dialogues concerning the nature of the gods, stripped of rhetorical embellishments, and reduced to simple propositions, be put into the hands of some pious rustic, tolerably acquainted with his Bible, and he will be greatly astonished at the opinions of the ancients—the gross stupidity of the Epicureans, the frivolous superstition of the Stoics, and the presumptuous rashness of the Academics—and heartily thank God for bestowing on him the inestimable gift of the holy Scriptures. The Greeks and Romans, with all their civilization and philosophy, were worshipers of a multitude of gods. And in polite Athens, it was more easy, according to the proverb, to find a god than a man. "The great Aristotle," to use the language of Dr. Edgar, "before whose genius Europe bowed for centuries, believed in the eternity of the world, both in matter and form. The Ionic, Pythagoric, Platonic, and Stoic schools of philosophy, all agreed in asserting the eternity of matter: thus destroying the notion of a First Cause and of creation. And Plato, who has been styled the Moses of philosophers, believed in two eternal and independent causes of all things. The religion of Budhu is the most extensive in the world, claiming as its own, Tartary,

China, Japan, and all the countries between China and the Burrampooter; and yet over this vast domain of darkness, neither God, nor providence, nor a future state, in our sense of the terms, is acknowledged at all." Who can think of all this, and not perceive the need of a revelation from above, speaking with the authority of the Supreme to the hearts and consciences of men?

From the degraded morality taught by heathen sages, and legalized by the most enlightened heathen states. Socrates taught that Greeks should regard all mankind, except their own countrymen, as natural enemies; Aristotle and Cicero taught that the forgiveness of injuries is cowardly and mean; Zeno and Cato taught that there is no distinction of degree, aggravation, or heinousness in crimes; Plato taught that excessive drinking was allowable during the festival of Bacchus; Aristotle taught that deformed or infirm children ought to be destroyed; Cicero taught that fornication is in no instance wrong; Plato taught that a community of women would conduce to good, and that soldiers ought not to be restrained from even the grossest indulgence; Menander taught that a lie was better than a hurtful truth; and Zeno and Cato recommended suicide by their example,—while other philosophers inculcated it in precept. And Solon enacted that sensuality was irreproachable, except when practised by a slave; several states of Greece legalized unnatural lust, and encouraged it by public statutes; philosophers and legislators sanctioned the grossest indecency, drunkenness, and lewdness during the festivals of Bacchus, Cybele, and Ceres; and Rome was distinguished by licentious divorces, the procuring of abortions, the exposing of infants, the nuisance of public stews, the sports of gladiators, the maltreatment of slaves, etc., all of which were sanctioned or connived at by both sages and legislators. Such was the state of morals among the ancient heathen; and are the morals of modern heathenism superior? Read what is written by wise and good men, who have visited foreign lands. How necessary, then, is a revelation of the divine will!

From the inability of man to discover or invent a method of propitiating Deity. Mankind in all ages have felt a sense of guilt, a fear of death, and a dread of divine wrath; and hence they have had recourse to penances, pilgrimages, and sacrifices. But though desiring and seeking some plan of reconciliation with God, did they find any? Was the wrath of God averted, the fear of death destroyed, the sense of guilt removed? Were not their ideas of propitiation confused and unsatisfactory; and their rites for effecting it absurd

and cruel? They knew not "how to come before the Lord, and bow themselves before the high God." And how should they without a revelation of the divine will? The human mind, though possessed of amazing powers of intellect, unassisted by some kind of revelation, could never have come to the knowledge of God. The sun is seen only by his own light; and God is known only by his own revelation. This was felt and acknowledged by many of the wiser heathens. Jamblicus, speaking of the principles of divine worship, saith, "It is manifest that those things are to be done which are pleasing to God; but what they are, it is not easy to know, except a man were taught them by God himself, or by some person who had received them from God, or obtained the knowledge of them by some divine means." Socrates speaks to the same effect. "All true knowledge of the gods," as he expressed it, "is from the gods themselves." And the Scriptures confirm this view, 1 Cor. ii. 14; 2 Cor. iii. 18; and iv. 6. How necessary, then, is a revelation of the divine will!

From the equity of God's moral government. "The Lord is a God of judgment." He acts judiciously and rationally. "He is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works." "He shall judge the world in righteousness." And "shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Is not the whole of his administration founded in equity? And is not justice that perfection of his character, which leads him to do nothing that is opposed to what is right? Now would it have been right in the Divine Being to have left the human family destitute of the knowledge of himself, and of his will, as the supreme standard of moral actions? Man was made a moral agent, capable of performing moral actions, and, therefore, under a law or rule of conduct. But no law can be binding till made known, or at least rendered cognizable by those whom it is intended to govern. And therefore the Creator's will must have been made known to man, else he could not be justly punishable for disobedience. How necessary, then, is a revelation of the divine will! Corollary.—A divine revelation is a possible thing.

THERE IS SUCH A BOOK AS THE BIBLE.

Bible, from the Greek *biblos* or *biblion*, signifies a book. It is the name given to the sacred volume in which are contained the revelations of God. And the sacred volume, in which are contained the revelations of God, is called "the Bible," to denote its eminence and supreme excellence. That there is such a book as the Bible, it is

presumed, no man will attempt to deny. Many millions of copies are to be found in the world.

THE BIBLE MUST HAVE HAD AN AUTHOR.

No book was ever produced by chance. Every volume in the world is indebted for its existence to some being or beings. And the Bible, we are assured, could not but have had an intelligent author. But within the range of intelligence there exist only bad beings, good beings, and God. Hence, among these must be found whatever originates in intelligence, for this classification includes all beings that are intelligent. Now that bad beings—wicked men and infernal spirits—could not have originated a book so full of goodness, is a reasonable opinion; for it bears no resemblance to such an origin. It commands all duty, forbids all sin, and denounces the heaviest penalties against all unholy conduct; and as darkness cannot originate light, so neither can evil originate good. Nor would it help the matter to suppose that good beings—pious men and holy angels—were the contrivers of these well arranged records; for they neither could nor would write a book, ascribing their own inventions to divine inspiration; especially as such forgeries are most severely reprobated in every part of it. As therefore God is the only remaining being within the range of intelligence, to whom the Scriptures can be reasonably ascribed, they must, of necessity, have been written by him. And, indeed, the Bible is a work as much exceeding every effort of mere man, as the sun surpasses those scanty illuminations by which his splendor is imitated, or his absence supplied.

We are now conducted, by fair and consecutive reasoning, to our last general proposition, which is this:

GOD WAS THE AUTHOR OF THE BIBLE.

By the Bible we mean, of course, both the Old and New Testaments. "The two Testaments," says one, "may be likened to the double-doors of the Temple—the Old is the New infolded—the New is the Old unfolded." The New Testament distinctly recognizes the Old as a revelation from God; and, referring to the Canon as received by the Jews, declares the books of which it consists genuine and credible. And by God being the Author of the Bible we mean, that it was "given by inspiration of him." It may be necessary here to define certain terms which either have been, or may be, hereafter, employed in this essay. And these are:—Scripture; Testament; Inspiration; Gospel; Christianity; and Religion. Scripture,

from scriptura, signifies writing—applied by way of eminence to what is written in the Bible. Testament, from testamentum, a deed or will; but according to another rendering the appropriate name of the Bible is, the Old and New Covenants; namely, the Mosaic and the Christian. Inspiration, from spiro, signifies I breathe. “By the divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures,” says an able writer, “I mean, such an immediate and complete discovery, by the Holy Spirit to the minds of the sacred penmen, of those things which could not have been otherwise known, and such an effectual superintendency as to those matters of which they might be informed or by other means, as entirely to preserve them from all error, in every particular, which could in the least affect any of the doctrines or commandments contained in their writings.” Gospel, from god, good, and spell, a history, a narrative, or message; and which denotes good news, glad tidings, news from God—applied emphatically to the book which contains the recital of our Saviour’s life, miracles, death, and so on. Christianity, from christianitas, signifies the religion of christians. And Religion, from religare, signifies to tie or bind, because by true religion, the soul is tied or bound, as it were, to God and his service. These things being premised, we shall be justified in proceeding to establish our proposition; namely, that God was the Author of the Bible. And we hold this to be demonstrable:—

From its great antiquity. It is acknowledged to be the oldest book in the world. Its records embrace the creation of the world, the origin of man, the introduction of evil, the fall and recovery of our race; and it contains the only rational account ever given of these momentous matters. We can trace the Bible to the time of the Cæsars, beyond that to the translation of the Septuagint, and beyond that we can carry the proof up to the separation of the Jews and Samaritans; we can ascend up to the time, when we discover that the law must have been given by a person called Moses, to a people in the wilderness, at a time when idolatry was universal, and just as we have the facts recorded in the nineteenth and twentieth chapters of the book of Exodus. And if Moses did not get the law from God, the getting it at all—the having it then as it is—is just as great a miracle as its coming from God himself; and you may take your choice of the miracles—for the one is as great a miracle as the other. Tatian, one of the Greek fathers, tells us, that, “Though Homer was before all poets, philosophers, and historians, and was the most ancient of all profane writers, yet Moses was more ancient than Homer himself.” Tertullian, another celebrated writer

of the second century, speaks to the same effect. "The pagans themselves have not denied, that the books of Moses were extant many ages before the states and cities of Greece; before their temples and gods; and also before the beginning of Greek letters." He moreover adds, "Moses lived five hundred years before Homer's time; and the other prophets who came a long time after Moses, were yet more ancient than any of the wise men, lawgivers, and philosophers of Greece. And as the writings of Homer were a pattern to them, so in like manner, he followed the writings of the prophets, as they were then known and spread abroad in the world." And the excellent and learned Sir W. Jones, adverting to the same point, remarked, "The antiquity of these writings no man doubts."

From its uncorrupted preservation. Though it has been hated and held in utter detestation by thousands; yet it has been preserved amidst all the revolutions of time, and handed down from generation to generation, even until now. And that it is in all essential points, the same as it came originally from the hands of its authors, we have the most satisfactory evidence that can be required. "With regard to the Old Testament," says the late learned William Greenfield, "the original manuscripts were long preserved among the Jews, who were always remarkable for being most faithful guardians of their sacred books, which they transcribed repeatedly, and compared most carefully with the originals, of which they even numbered the words and letters. That the Jews have neither mutilated nor corrupted these writings, is fully proved by the silence of the prophets as well as of Christ and his apostles, who, though they bring many heavy charges against them, never once accuse them of corrupting one of their sacred writings; and also by the agreement, in every essential point, of all the versions and manuscripts, amounting to nearly 1,150, which are now extant, and which furnishes a clear proof of their uncorrupted preservation. In fact, the constant reading of the sacred books, which were at once the rule of their faith, and of their political constitution, in public and private; the numerous copies of the original, as well as of the Septuagint version, which was widely spread over the world; the various sects and parties into which the Jews were divided after their canon was closed; as well as their dispersion into every part of the globe, concurred to render any attempt at fabrication impossible before the time of Christ; and after that period, the same books being in the hands of the Christians, they would instantly have detected the fraud of the Jews, if they had endeavored to accomplish such a design; while the silence of the Jews,

who would not have failed to notice the attempt if it had been made, is a clear proof that they were not corrupted by the Christians.

“Equally satisfactory is the evidence for the integrity and uncorruptness of the New Testament. The multiplication of copies, both of the original, and of translations into a variety of foreign languages, which were read, not only in private, but publicly in the religious assemblies of the early Christians; the reverence of the Christians for these writings; the variety of sects and heresies which soon arose in the Christian Church, each of whom appealed to the Scriptures for the truth of their doctrines, rendered any material alteration in the sacred books utterly impossible; while the silence of their acutest enemies, who would most assuredly have charged them with the attempt if it had been made, and the agreement of all the manuscripts and versions extant, are positive proofs of the integrity and incorruptness of the New Testament; which are further attested by the agreement with it of all the quotations which occur in the writings of the Christians from the earliest age to the present time. In fact, so far from there having been any gross adulteration in the Sacred Volumes, the best and most able critics have proved that, even in lesser matters, the Holy Scriptures of the New Testament have suffered less from the injuries of time, and the errors of transcribers, than any other ancient writings whatever; and that the very worst manuscript extant would not pervert one article of our faith, nor destroy one moral precept.”

Add to this, the testimony of the British Critic, “Not one syllable penned by eight obscure authors of the Scriptures of the New Testament, received by the church as canonical at the death of John, has been lost in the course of eighteen centuries. Yet of the historical works of Tacitus, half at least are wanting; out of the one hundred and forty-four books of Livy, only thirty-five exist; the collections of Atticus have entirely perished; the orations of Hortensius are known only through the allusions of his rival; and the literary fame of the great dictator, survives but in two narratives, one of which has been sometimes doubted. ‘Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world?’ May it not be the power of God, which, amidst this wreck of eloquence and learning, has preserved unutilated, even to these latter days, the simple and unstudied compositions of the illiterate Galilæans,—the impassioned but rugged addresses of the tent-maker of Cilicia?” Dr. Adam Clarke, no mean judge, pronounced by the late Rev. Robert Hall to have been “an ocean of learning,” said, “I have

diligently examined the question—and I can conscientiously say, that we have the Sacred Oracles, at least in essential sum and substance, as they were delivered by God to Moses and the prophets; and to the Church of Christ, by Jesus, his evangelists and apostles; and that nothing in the various readings of the Hebrew and Greek MSS., can be found to strengthen any error in doctrine, or obliquity in moral practice. All is safe and sound,—all is pure and holy.” And the judicious Selden, whom Grotius calls “the glory of the English nation,” in his “Table Talk,” speaking of the Bible, says, “The English translation of the Bible is the best translation in the world, and renders the sense of the original best; taking in for the English translation the Bishop’s Bible as well as King James’s. The translators in King James’s time took an excellent way. That part of the Bible was given to him who was most excellent in such a tongue, and then they met together, and one read the translation, the rest holding in their hands some Bible, either of the learned tongues, or French, Spanish, or Italian, &c. If they found any fault, they spoke; if not, he read on.”*

From its important discoveries. It makes discoveries to man, on the most momentous subjects, which natural reason never could have made. One of the ancients said, “The Bible is the history of God.” It reveals all that is needful to be known of the existence, nature, perfections, relations, mind, and will of God. It discloses the whole history of man—opening with his creation, continuing with his present state, and closing with his eternal destiny. It lays open the amazing love of God to man, the plan of redemption, the means of salvation, and the cleansing nature of the blood of Christ. It furnishes answers to the most interesting and perplexing questions ever suggested to man by himself, or propounded to him by his fellow-beings; and thus supplies him with that information which no other volume can impart. It points out a second life, unveils eternity, and speaks of the resurrection of the body—the immortality of the soul—a judgment to come—a heaven, the gift of redeeming love—and a hell, the dire desert of sin. In one word, it is God’s heart opened to man—a map of heaven—an infallible rule of life—an immovable ground of hope—an everlasting spring of consolation—and the only sure guide to eternal life and happiness. A fine old writer beautifully remarks, “What is there not in the holy Scriptures? Are we poor? There is a treasury of riches. Are

* King James’s Bible is that now commonly used in this country and Great Britain.

we sick? There is a shop of soul-medicines. Are we fainting? There is a cabinet of cordials. Are we Christless? There is the star that leads to Christ. Are we Christians? There are the bands that keep in Christ. Are we afflicted? There is our solace. Are we persecuted? There is our protection. Are we deserted? There is our recovery. Are we tempted? There are our sword and victory. Are we young? There is our beauty. Are we old? There is our wisdom. While we live, here is the rule of our conversation; when we die, here is the hope of our glorification. So that I may say with Tertullian, 'I adore the fulness of the Scripture.' Oh blessed Scriptures! Who can know them and not love them? Who can love them, and not delight to meditate in them night and day? Who can meditate in them, and not desire to love them, love to desire them, and both desire and love to understand them? This is the Book of books, as David said of Goliath's sword, 'There's none like that.'" The Bible is, indeed, what that great philosopher, the Honorable Robert Boyle, called it, "that matchless book." I have often thought, that the sublime descriptions which it gives of God, the humbling and exalting doctrines which it reveals, and the high-toned morality which it inculcates, are, of themselves, proofs decisive of its divine authority. For, certainly, there is nothing like them in the most admired productions of the most celebrated authors, either in ancient or modern times.

From its peculiar style. How remarkably simple and plain! No histories were ever so plainly related as those of the Bible: no precepts were ever more clear, or promises less ambiguous. How wonderfully grand and sublime! Wherever the matter requires it, the style is—

"Like the ladder in the Patriarch's dream,
Its foot on earth, its height beyond the skies."

Witness many of the Psalms; the book of Job; the prophets, especially, Isaiah xl. and xliii.; and the Apocalypse. And how astonishingly concise and expressive! The sacred writers never burden their subject with a load of words. They express themselves in words few, and well-chosen,—“in comely dress, without the paint of art.” Witness the Proverbs; 1 Cor. xiii., etc. “Let there be light,” is noticed by the great critic Longinus, as a truly lofty expression. “I am of opinion,” says Sir W. Jones, “that the holy Scriptures contain more sublimity and beauty,—and finer strains of poetry and eloquence, than can be collected from all other books in any age or

language." And the style of Scripture has awakened the attention even of infidels. Rousseau was struck with the majesty of the Scriptures. His eloquent eulogium on the Gospel and its Author is well known. Dr. Tillotson observes, "The descriptions which Virgil makes of the Elysian Fields and the Infernal Regions, fall infinitely short of the majesty of the holy Scriptures when describing heaven and hell, so that in comparison they are childish and trifling;" and yet, perhaps, he had the most regular and best governed imagination of any man, and observed the greatest decorum in his descriptions. "There are I know," said the elegant Joseph Addison, "men of heavy tempèr and without genius, who can read the words of Scripture with as much indifference as they do other papers; however, I will not despair to bring men of wit into a love and admiration of the sacred writings, and, old as I am, I promise myself to see the day when it shall be as much the fashion among men of politeness, to admire a rapture of St. Paul's, as a fine expression of Virgil or Homer; and to see a well-dressed young man produce an evangelist out of his pocket, and be no more out of countenance than if it were a classic printed by Elzevir."

From its internal harmony. Though written at different periods, by persons residing in different parts of the earth, and by persons whose natural abilities, education, habits, employments, etc., were exceedingly varied; yet where is there any real contradiction? The sacred writers exactly coincide in the exhibition they give us of God; of man; of sin and salvation; of this world and the next; and, in short, of all things connected with our duty, safety, interest, and comfort. They all were evidently of the same judgment, aimed to establish the same principles, and applied them to the same practical purposes. They could not write by concert—comparing notes, etc., for they lived in different times and places; and yet the exact coincidence that is perceived among them, by the diligent student, is most astonishing, and cannot be accounted for on any rational principles, without admitting that they "wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

"Whence, but from Heaven, should men, unskilled in arts,
 In different nations born, and different parts,
 Weave such agreeing truths; or how, or why
 Should all conspire to cheat us with a lie?
 Unasked their pains; ungrateful their advice;
 Starving their gains, and martyrdom their prize."

From its external accordance. The Bible accords, in a wonderful

manner, with universal history. There is nothing more common in history, than the recognition of a God. Sacred and profane history alike involve this principle. The fictions of the poets respecting the different ages of the world, coincide with Scripture facts. The first, or Golden age, is described as a paradisiacal state, feebly representing the bliss of the first pair in Eden, Gen. ii. And the second, or Iron age, described in the fiction of Pandora and her fatal box of evils, which overspread the earth, is in accordance with the history of the introduction of evil into the world, Gen. iii. The celebrated Vossius shows, with great ingenuity, the similitude there is between the history of Moses, and the fable of Bacchus. The cosmogony of the ancient Phenicians is evidently similar to the account of creation given by Moses; and a like assertion may be made respecting the ancient Greek philosophy. Travel north, south, east, and west, and you find the period employed in creation used as a measure of time: though no natural changes point it out as a measure, as is the case with the month and year. Consult the heathen classics, the records of our Scythian ancestors, the superstitions of Egypt, of the Indies, both East and West, and, indeed, of all the varied forms in which superstition has presented herself, and in one or in all you meet with evidences of a universal flood, of man's fall, of the serpent having been the instrument in it, of propitiatory sacrifices, of the expectation of a great deliverer. The long lives of men in the early ages of the world, are mentioned by Berossus, Manetho, Hieronymus, and Helanicus, as also by Hesiod, and many other writers quoted by Josephus, and afterwards by Servius, in his notes on Virgil. Pausanias, Philostratus, Pliny, and several other writers give us accounts of the remains of gigantic bodies which have been found in the earth, serving in some degree to confirm Moses's account of the antediluvian giants. Berossus, the Chaldean historian, quoted by Josephus, and Abidenus by Eusebius, Plutarch, Lucian, Molo, Nicholas Damascenus, as well as many of the Heathen poets, mention the deluge; and some traditions respecting it are to be found among the Americans and Chinese; not to mention what some modern travelers have fabulously related concerning some ruins of the ark, said to remain on Mount Ararat, and to have been seen there a few centuries ago. Alexander Polyhistor quotes Artapanus and Eupolemus, as mentioning the tower of Babel: and the former speaks of it as built by Belus. Strabo, Tacitus, Pliny, etc., give us an account of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighboring cities, in the main agreeable to that of Moses. Herodotus, Diodorus,

Strabo, etc., mention circumcision as a rite used by several of those nations into which, according to Moses, Abraham traveled, or which were descended from him. Berosus, and several others, make express and honorable mention of Abraham and some of his family. Eupolemus and Dios, as quoted by Eusebius and Grotius, mention many remarkable circumstances of David and Solomon, agreeing with the Old Testament story. As for the mention of Nebuchadnezzar, and some of the succeeding kings of Babylon, as well as of Cyrus and his successors, it is so common in ancient writers, as not to need a more particular notice of it. And very many passages of the Old Testament are mentioned by Celsus, and objections to Christianity formed upon them. Is not all this in favor of the credibility of the Old Testament? And with respect to the New Testament, we have the testimony of Tacitus and Suetonius to the existence of Jesus Christ, the Founder of the Christian religion, and to his crucifixion in the reign of Tiberius, and during the procuratorship of Pontius Pilate, the time in which the evangelists place that event. Porphyry also, though an inveterate enemy to Christianity, not only allowed that there was such a person as Christ, but honored him as a most wise and pious man, translated into heaven as being approved by the gods; and accordingly quotes some oracles, referring both to his sufferings and virtues, with their subsequent rewards. Celsus likewise, an Epicurean philosopher, full of enmity to the Christian religion, mentions numberless circumstances in the history of Christ, indeed so many, that an abstract of the Christian history might almost be taken from the very fragments of his book preserved by Origen, and never pretends to dispute his real existence, or the truth of the facts recorded of him. Hierocles, a man of learning and a Magistrate, who wrote against the Christians, speaks of Jesus as extolled by the Christians as a God; mentions Peter and Paul by name; and refers both to the Gospels, and to the Epistles. The Emperor Julian, in the fourth century, called "Apostate," writes of the birth of Jesus in the reign of Augustus; bears witness to the genuineness and authenticity of the Gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles; and allows that Jesus Christ wrought miracles. He aimed to overthrow the Christian religion, but has confirmed it. The slaughter of the infants at Bethlehem is attested by Macrobius; the darkness at the crucifixion is recorded by Phlegon, and quoted by Origen. The manners and worship of the primitive Christians are distinctly named by Pliny. The great dearth throughout the Roman world foretold by Agabus, in the reign of Claudius, Acts xi.

28, is attested by Suetonius, Dion, Josephus, and others. The expulsion of the Jews from Rome by Claudius, Acts xviii. 2, was occasioned, says Suetonius, by the insurrection they had made about Chrestus, which is his way of spelling Christ. It has been repeatedly proved, with laborious research, and profuse erudition, that vestiges of all the principal doctrines of the Christian religion are to be found in the monuments, writings, or mythologies of all nations and ages. And the principal facts contained in the Gospels are confirmed by monuments of great fame subsisting in every Christian country at this very day. For instance, baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the rite by which from the beginning men have been initiated into the Church of Christ, and the profession of Christianity. The Lord's Supper, celebrated in memory of the dying love of Christ. And the stated observation of the first day of the week, in honor of Christ's resurrection from the dead. Who can say, and prove, that this is not evidential of the truth and credibility of the New Testament? What but inspiration could have produced such internal harmony, and such external accordance?

From its striking impartiality. "The amanuenses or penmen of the Holy Ghost for the Scriptures, were not contemptible or ordinary, but incomparable and extraordinary persons. As Moses, 'the meekest man on earth,' the peculiar favorite of God, with whom God 'talked face to face;' the None-such of all the Prophets in Israel. Samuel, the mighty man in prayer. David the king, 'that man after God's own heart.' King Solomon, that 'wisest of all the kings,' whom God honored with the building of the Temple. Daniel, in whom was found 'an excellent spirit,' and great dexterity in 'expounding secrets and mysteries.' John, 'the disciple whom Jesus loved' above all the rest, who 'leaned on Jesus' breast.' 'Paul, who was caught up into the third heavens,' 'whose writings, saith Chrysostom, like a wall of adamant, compass about, or surround all the churches.' In a word, 'all of them holy men of God, moved by the Holy Ghost.'" The moral character of the sacred penmen is above suspicion: their greatest enemies have never attempted to throw the least stain upon their characters. Many of them were actually present at the scenes which they describe; eye-witnesses of the facts, and ear-witnesses of the discourses, which they describe. They could not, therefore, be deceived themselves: nor could they have the least inducement to deceive others. They honestly record their own mistakes and faults, as well as the other particulars of the story. Every candid person

must admit, that the Scriptures are remarkable for faithfulness of narrative, and that, contrary to the practice of other histories, they do not conceal the faults of the persons they describe. The faults of Abraham and Jacob are detailed, as well as their virtues; and the incredulity of Thomas, and the defection of Peter, are not concealed, but faithfully recorded. The Apostles, especially, seem every where to forget that they are writing of themselves, and appear not at all solicitous about their own reputation, but only that they might represent facts just as they were, whatever might be the consequence. Hence they readily confess, not only the meanness of their original employments, and the scandals of their former life, but their prejudices, follies, faults, unbelief, cowardice, ambition, rash zeal, foolish contentions, etc. How faithful is the pen of inspiration—here truth with impartial hand dips her pencil, now in brighter, now in darker colors, and thus draws her characters to the very life. Dr. Beattie justly says, “The style of the Gospel bears intrinsic evidence of its truth. We find there no appearance of artifice or party-spirit; no attempt to exaggerate on the one hand, or depreciate on the other; no remarks thrown in to anticipate objections, nothing of that caution which never fails to distinguish the testimony of those who are conscious of imposture; no endeavor to reconcile the reader’s mind to what may be extraordinary in the narrative; all is fair, candid, and simple.” And we number this among the proofs of the Divine authority of the Bible.

From its stupendous miracles. Miracle, from miraculum, a wonder, a prodigy. “A miracle,” says Horne, “is a sensible suspension or controlment of, or deviation from, the known laws of nature.” It is a signal act of Divine Omnipotence, that which no other being but God can do. Miracles flow from Divine power, and are the proper evidence of a Divine mission. The *reality* of the miracles recorded in Scripture, wrought by Christ, and by prophets and apostles, may be proved by the *number* and *variety*;—their being performed *publicly*, and not in a corner;—before *enemies* as well as friends;—*instantaneously*, and not by slow degrees;—and *independent* of all second causes;—were such as *all men could examine* and judge of;—and all served *an important end*, worthy of a Divine author: viz., to establish Divine truth. How superior the miracles wrought by Moses and Aaron, to those wrought by the wise men, and the sorcerers, and the magicians of Egypt! Witness the transformation of the rod, Exodus vii. 10–12;—the production of the annoying vermin—lice, Exodus viii. 16–19;—the plague of dark-

ness, Exodus x. 22-24;—the dividing of the Red Sea, Exodus xiv. 21-31. These bear all the characters of true miracles. And how far above the pretended supernatural doings of Mohammed, and the alleged Pagan and Romish miracles, were the wonderful deeds of Christ, and his Apostles! For example, our Saviour stilled the tempest, calmed the ruffled ocean, walked upon the sea, fed the famished multitude, opened the eyes of the blind, unstopped the ears of the deaf, healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, cast out devils, raised the dead, and restored himself to life; and his Apostles healed the lame, cast out a spirit of divination, gave the Holy Ghost, restored the dead to life, etc. Every ingenuous mind must see in these, all the characters of real miracles. Ponder Matt. xi. 2-6; and John xiv. 11. Nicodemus, a Pharisee and ruler among the Jews, was so struck with the extraordinary character of our Lord's miracles, that he came to him, saying, "Rabbi," excellent master, "we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." And miracles we think, with Nicodemus, show that a prophet or religious teacher comes from God, because God would not work a miracle in attestation of a falsehood, or to encourage a false teacher. When, therefore, a miracle is wrought in confirmation of anything, or as evidence of anything, we know that the thing is true, because God has given to it his testimony. Every real miracle is a work of God, done by his permission, and with his concurrence; it is therefore, emphatically, the testimony of God. And that greatest of miracles, the resurrection of our Lord himself from the dead, crowns the whole, and clearly attests the Divinity of the Bible, and the truth of the Christian religion.

From its wonderful prophecies. Prophecy is a declaration of something to come; a prediction of future events. It is the foretelling of such future things as were beyond the reach of human sagacity, and which therefore none but God could reveal. What mere man can foretell the events of the morrow? Who can say what shall transpire in ages to come? This is the sole prerogative of God, who alone knows the end from the beginning. Now the Bible abounds with predictions, which were uttered long before their actual fulfillment, and which no human sagacity or foresight could possibly conjecture or foretell. Take the first gospel promise given—the seed of the woman to bruise the serpent's head; and remember that this promise was delivered at least four thousand years before its fulfillment. The celebrated prediction of Jacob, Gen. xlix. 10, was uttered between sixteen and seventeen hundred years before it took place.

Moses declared the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans, etc., Deut. xxviii. 49, etc., fifteen centuries previously. In the first book of Kings, chap. xiii. 2, 3, there is a prophecy concerning Josiah by name, three hundred and thirty-one years; and in Isaiah xlv. 1, concerning Cyrus, one hundred years before either of them was born. According to the predictions of the prophets, Nineveh has been desolated, Nahum i. 1, 2, 3; Babylon swept with the besom of destruction, Isaiah xiii. 14; Tyre become a place for the spreading of nets, Ezekiel xxvi. 4, 5; Egypt the basest of the kingdoms, etc., Ezekiel xxix. 14, 15. Daniel distinctly predicted the overthrow, in succession, of the four great empires of antiquity,—the Babylonian, the Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman, all which has taken place. Not only are the leading features of the character of Christ delineated with the faithfulness of history hundreds of years before he appeared, but there is scarcely an incident in his life which prophecy has overlooked. And according to the predictions of the New Testament, we see Jerusalem in ruins; the Temple not rebuilt; the Jews scattered, but not destroyed; the conversion of the nations to Christianity; the many anti-christian corruptions of the Gospel; the idolatry, tyranny, and persecution of the Roman hierarchy, etc. What prescience does all this imply—prescience no where to be found but in God! “Let now the infidel, or the skeptical reader, meditate thoroughly and soberly on these predictions. The priority of the records to the events, admits of no question. The completion is obvious to every competent inquirer. Here then are facts. We are called upon to account for those facts on rational and adequate principles. Is human foresight equal to the task? Enthusiasm? Conjecture? Chance? Political contrivance? If none of these, neither any other principle that may be devised by man’s sagacity, can account for the facts; then true philosophy, as well as true religion, will ascribe them to the inspiration of the Almighty. Every effect must have a cause.” Prophecy is a species of perpetual miracle. And the prophecies of Scripture do not come short of the fullest demonstration which the case will admit of, that the books that contain them are the unerring word of God.

From its holy tendency. It came immediately from God, and leads immediately to him. It bears on it the stamp and impression of Deity; and is, emphatically and really, “the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth.” It contains the most excellent precepts—the most weighty exhortations—and the most precious promises. The Bible teaches us the best way of living; the noblest

way of suffering; and the most comfortable way of dying. The word of God, accompanied by his Spirit, conveys strength to the weak, wisdom to the simple, comfort to the sorrowful, light to those who are in darkness, and life to the dead. It introduces the infinite God as speaking in a manner worthy of himself; with simplicity, majesty, and authority. *It places before us the most important doctrines:* For example, the doctrine of the Trinity of persons or subsistences in the Unity of the Godhead;—the proper, supreme, and eternal divinity of Christ;—the personality, divinity, and offices of the Holy Spirit;—the great works of creation and providence;—the fall of man from the moral image of God;—the necessity, nature, and extent of redemption;—repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ—justification through the blood of the cross;—the witness of the Spirit in the souls of believers;—regeneration by the Spirit of God—holiness in heart and life;—the resurrection of the dead;—the general judgment;—and the eternity of future rewards and punishments. *It inculcates the highest morality:*—the love of God, and the love of our neighbor;—the doing to others as we would they should do to us;—the forgiving of our enemies;—the living “soberly”—in the use of food, apparel, and all things relating to ourselves, “righteously”—in the performance of all duties towards our neighbors, and “godly”—worshiping God in a right manner;—the checking of all impurity of thought and desire;—the rendering honor to whom honor, and tribute to whom tribute, is due;—the cultivation of humility, meekness, gentleness, placability, disinterestedness, truth, justice, beneficence, charity, and other virtues;—and the avoidance of pride, discontent, despair, revenge, cruelty, oppression, contention, adultery, suicide, and other vices and crimes which injure mankind. *It preserves from all error:*—it is an infallible rule of judgment and of practice, and clearly teaches what we ought to believe and what we ought to do;—it enlightens the mind, informs the judgment, instructs the heart, and saves from those “faults in the life,” which “breed errors in the brain.” All error—false judgment of things, or assent unto falsehood—springs from ignorance of the Scriptures, Mark xii. 24; John vii. 17; 2 Tim. iii. 13–17. *It promotes holiness and peace here, as well as leads to happiness and heaven hereafter.* “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?” Psalm cxix. 9, 103–105. “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul,” Psalm xix. 7–11. What an eulogy is this on the perfection of the sacred writings! the perfection of their utility—their certainty—their

purity—their rectitude—their value—their comforts—their peace—and their sweetness. And this eulogy was pronounced by a prophet, a poet, and a king—no common assemblage. *It secures to the lover of it, in a rich degree, the Divine favor.* “Thus saith the Lord, the heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.” “Such a heart,” says Matthew Henry, “is a living temple for God; he dwells there, and it is the place of his rest; it is like heaven and earth, his throne and his footstool.” *And it furnishes the most powerful motives to the practice of its precepts;*—for its rewards are such as “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard;” and its threats are eminently calculated to terrify offenders. The Bible everywhere abounds with an intensesness of zeal for the Divine glory, and with a depth of self-renunciation on the part of the writers. And what a contrast does it, in this respect, exhibit to all other productions of authorship! In Scripture, God is all in all: in other writings, man is always a prominent, and generally the sole claimant of praise and admiration. And no man can attentively peruse the sacred volume without being awe-struck. For O how solemn and inspiring! and how admirably calculated to restrain from sin, and to sublimate the views and feelings! We say, therefore, that no man can diligently read the Scriptures without becoming a wiser and a better man. The celebrated John Locke, whose pure philosophy taught him to adore its source, said, with his dying lips, when tendering his advice to a young nobleman, “Study the Holy Scriptures, especially the New Testament; for therein are contained the words of eternal life: it hath God for its author—salvation for its end—and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter.”

“It sweetly cheers our drooping hearts,
In this dark vale of tears.”

It does more—

“It sheds a lustre all abroad,
And points the path to bliss and heaven.”

“’Tis for our light and guidance given.” And O what a source of light, and strength, and peace! How it clears the understanding, and fills the soul with sweet delight! How it quickens our inactive powers, and sets all our wandering footsteps right! And how its promises rejoice our hearts, and its precepts direct our lives!

“ A glory gilds the sacred page,
Majestic like the sun ;
It gives a light to every age,
It gives, but borrows none.”

Ah! there are no records comparable to the Scriptures. None containing doctrines so useful—commands so reasonable—arguments so powerful. The lines of Scripture are richer than the mines of gold. How evidently suited to a sinful, sinning race! and how delightfully framed for the perfection of human happiness! What proofs of a Divine original! Show, if you can, in all this world, any one book of all that ever was produced in any age or nation, like the Bible. Ay, the Bible came from God; and it bears a moral resemblance to him from whom it came. God is holy, just, and good; and the Bible is also holy in its nature, just in its requirements, and good in its provisions and tendency.

From its beneficial effects. It has wrought wonders in all ages, in all places, on all persons, and in all the possible varieties of human life. Christianity—the religion of the Bible—has taught the great lessons of devotion, self-government, and benevolence. It has diffused and preserved literature;—abated illiberal prejudices;—produced humility, forgiveness of injuries, regard to truth, justice, and honesty, firmness under persecution, patience under worldly afflictions, and calmness and resignation at the approach of death;—discouraged fornication, polygamy, adultery, divorces, suicide, and duels;—checked infanticide, cruel sports, the violence of war, the vices of kings and the assaults of princes;—and rendered its sincere professors true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. It has improved the condition of females—reclaimed dissolute men—abolished human sacrifices—prevented assassinations of princes, and revolutions in states—encouraged hospitality to strangers—founded charitable institutions—emancipated slaves—abated the rigors of servitude—redeemed captives—relieved prisoners—protected widows and orphans—softened into tenderness and tears the hearts of despots—and given stability to thrones, wisdom to human laws, and protection to the people. Has it not done more for the honor of the prince and the weal of the subject than any other system? *It has been a blessing to every country into which it has been introduced.* It has been a blessing to Britain. It has enwrapped in graceful robes the once naked inhabitants of this isle: it has plucked the sacrificial knife from the hands of the sanguinary Druid: it has built cities, cultivated forests, reared our temples, regulated our

institutions, and rendered the country both powerful and happy. Europe owes to it her arts and her arms, her science and her sway. America has found in it her freedom and her peace. The wrongs of Africa have been mitigated, and will be removed by its justice and generosity. Asia, and the isles of the sea, are waiting for its light and healing. In every pagan country where it has prevailed, it has abolished idolatry, with its sanguinary and polluted rites; raised the standard of morality, and thus improved the manners of the people; and diffused far and wide the choicest blessings of heaven,—freedom to the captive, light to the blind, comfort to the distressed, hope to the despairing, and life to the dying. Ask the people of New Zealand, of Taheita, of Tonga, cannibals, infanticides, murderers of whole islands, what it has done for the salvation of their souls. It is at once the desire of all nations, and the glory of all lands. *And it has produced the most happy effects on multitudes of men.* It has enlightened the most ignorant; softened the most hardened; reclaimed the most profligate; converted the most estranged; purified the most polluted; exalted the most degraded; and plucked the most endangered from hell to heaven. What was it that transformed the persecuting and blaspheming Saul into a kind and devoted man? It was religion. What was it which brought the woman who was a sinner to bathe the feet of Jesus with her tears, and to wipe them with the hairs of her head? It was religion. What was it which produced the faith of Abraham, the meekness of Moses, the patience of Job, the wisdom of Solomon, the placability of Joseph, the penitence and the zeal of David, the gentleness of Stephen, the boldness of the prophets, the undaunted zeal of Paul, the heroism of Peter, and the sweet temper of “the beloved disciple?” It was religion. What was it which produced such purity of life, and gave such majesty in death, in the cases of Grotius, Selden, Salmasius, Hale, Paschal, Boyle, Locke, Newton, Boerhave, Addison, Maclaurin, Lyttleton, and a thousand others? It was religion.

“Soft peace she brings, wherever she arrives;
 She builds her quiet as she forms our lives;
 Lays the rough paths of peevish nature even,
 And opens in each breast a little heaven.”

Nothing is wanting to improve the state of the world, and fit men for the worship and felicity of heaven, but that they should believe and obey the Scriptures. Christianity may make the challenge of

Archimedes: Give it but where it may set its foot; allow but a sober, serious, submissive attention to its proposals, and it will move the whole world. It has been ably argued, that the effects of Mohammedanism prove the excellent tendency of Christianity. "For Mohammedanism," says the author referred to, "may be reduced to the following heads; namely, a spirit of revenge, hatred of other sects, the despotism of rulers, the ignorance and servitude of subjects, the depopulation of countries by war and pestilence, and the inconveniences to individuals, and the public from pilgrimages to Mecca. These evils are the natural offspring of the doctrines and practices of the preachers and professors of Mohammedanism; and furnish a strong argument of the excellence of the Christian code, by the observance of whose precepts all those evils would vanish and disappear." Christianity, that messenger of heaven, rising in triumph over all its rivals, countenances no crime, patronizes no error, engenders no violences, originates no calamity; but, on the contrary, suppresses revenge, forbids strife, censures war, teaches meekness and mercy, and inspires peace and happiness. She is the friend of order and the fountain of bliss. And what Milton so beautifully states of Eve, may, with still greater propriety, be applied to her,—

"Grace is in all her steps, heaven in her eye,
In every gesture dignity and love."

Even men who labored to erase out of the mind all respect for religion, have acknowledged the importance and expediency of it. Bayle admits religion to be useful if men acted agreeably to its principles; and Voltaire says, expressly, that religion is necessary in every fixed community; the laws are a curb upon open crimes, and religion on those that are private. "No religion," says Bolingbroke, "ever appeared in the world whose natural tendency was so much directed to promote the peace and happiness of mankind as the Christian. The system of religion recorded by the evangelists, is a complete system to all the purposes of true religion, natural or revealed. The Gospel of Christ is one continued lesson of the strictest morality, justice, benevolence, and universal charity... Supposing Christianity to have been purely an human invention, it had been the most amiable, and the most useful invention that was ever imposed on mankind for their good." Hume acknowledges, that, "the disbelief in futurity loosens, in a great measure, the ties of morality, and may be supposed, for that reason, pernicious to

the peace of civil society." Rousseau acknowledges, that, "if all were perfect christians, individuals would do their duty, the people would be obedient to the laws, the chiefs just, the magistrates incorrupt, the soldiers would despise death, and there would be neither vanity nor luxury in such a state." Gibbon admits, that the gospel, or the church, discouraged suicide, advanced erudition, checked oppression, promoted the manumission of slaves, and softened the ferocity of barbarous nations; that fierce nations received at the same time the lessons of faith and humanity, and that, in the most corrupt state of Christianity, the barbarians might learn justice from the law, and mercy from the gospel. "To impute crimes to Christianity," says the celebrated King of Prussia, "is the act of a novice." His word may fairly be taken for such an assertion. And yet these unbelievers have been so vile and perverse as to decry a system which they acknowledge to be useful. How ungrateful! How reprehensible! Collect now the thoughts scattered under this branch of the subject, and be honest—heartily believe, and openly acknowledge, that God was the author of the Bible. What but a superhuman, a truly divine influence breathing in the Scriptures, can account for the energy and beneficence of their moral tendencies?

From its general reception. Vast numbers of wise and good men, through many generations and in different countries, have agreed in receiving the Bible as a revelation from God. Many of them have been noted for seriousness, erudition, penetration, and impartiality in judging of men and things. We might refer to Alfred, "replete with soul—the light of a benighted age,"—to Charles the Fifth, Emperor of Germany,—to Gustavus Adolphus, the renowned king of Sweden; to Selden, the learned and laborious lawyer and antiquary,—to Bacon, "the bright morning star of science,"—to Usher, the well-known archbishop of Armagh,—to Newton, "the sun whose beams have irradiated the world,"—to Boyle, celebrated for genius and erudition,—to Milton, the prince of poets,—to Locke, the man of profound thought,—to Jones, one of the brightest geniuses and most distinguished scholars of the eighteenth century,—and to many other deathless names. And if the evidence of the truth of the Bible satisfied men of such high intellectual capacity, ought it not to satisfy us? We do not wish to insinuate, that we ought to believe in the Divinity of the Scriptures, merely because they believed it. But we do mean to say, that we ought not rashly to conclude against that which they received. They are acknowledged authorities in other

cases; then why not in this? If we can place reliance upon them in their philosophical inquiries,—why not in their religious ones? Surely the infidels of the present day, so far inferior to the believers of the former days, ought to express themselves with more modesty upon this important subject, and to hesitate before they openly profess their opposition to that book of religion and morals, which has received the countenance of such honorable names as those which have been mentioned.

On the subject of the propagation of Christianity, it has been eloquently said: “In spite of violent and accumulated opposition, it diffused its blessings among the cities of Asia and the islands of Greece; over the deserts of Arabia and the European continent! From the hill of Calvary it speedily found its way to imperial Rome, gathering fresh laurels as it progressed, until it entered the palace, and waved its banner over the proud dwelling of Cæsar! With all the influence of priests and kings against it, and all the terrors of the gibbet or the flames, it rapidly overspread the extensive Roman empire, and reached Britain, the little isle of the sea. With a power divine, it achieved a triumph over mental and moral obliquity, surpassing all that the philosophy of Greece or Rome could boast; and still will it conquer, until the sun in the heavens shall not look down on a single human being destitute of the knowledge of Jesus Christ.” And the Rev. Robert Hall, whom to mention is to praise, remarked: “We see Christianity as yet but in its infancy. It has not already reached the great ends it is intended to answer, and to which it is constantly advancing. At present, it is but a grain of mustard seed, and seems to bring forth a tender and weakly crop; but be assured it is of God’s own right hand planting, and he will never suffer it to perish. It will soon stretch its branches to the river, and its shade to the ends of the earth. The weary will repose themselves under it, the hungry will partake of its fruits, and its leaves will be for the healing of the nations. Those who profess the name of Jesus, will delight in contemplating the increase and grandeur of his kingdom. ‘He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet.’ The religion of Jesus is not the religion of one age, or of one nation. It is a train of light first put in motion by God, and which will continue to move, and to spread, till it has filled the whole earth with its glory. Its blessings will descend, and its influence will be felt to the latest generations. Uninterrupted in its course, and boundless in its extent, it will not be limited by time, or space. The earth is too narrow for the display of its effects, and the accomplishment of

its purposes. It points forward to an eternity. The great Redeemer will again appear upon the earth, as the judge and ruler of it; will send forth his angels, and gather his elect from the four winds; will abolish sin and death; will place the righteous forever in the presence of his God, and their God, of his Father, and their Father."

"As the waters the depth of the blue ocean cover,
So fully shall God among mortals be known;
His word, like the sunbeams, shall range the world over,
The globe his vast temple, and mercy his throne."

Christianity, though not persecuting, has been bitterly persecuted; yet it has triumphed—and triumphed too in spite of all its foes. Like Moses' bush, it was unconsumable by fire; and rose up amid the flames and prospered. And like the eagle—the imperial bird of storms—it will continue securely to soar, amid every tempest. All attempts to impede its progress will be as powerless and vain, as attempts to drive back the flowing tide with the point of a needle. When infidels can grasp the winds in their fists, hush the voice of the thunder by the breath of their mouth, suspend the succession of the seasons by their nod, and extinguish the light of the sun by a veil, then, and not till then, can they arrest the progress of truth, or invalidate the verities of the Bible. Unwise and unhappy men! they are but ploughing the air—striking with a straw—writing on the surface of the water—and seeking figs where only brambles grow.

And compare not the propagation of Mohammedanism with the propagation of Christianity; for it is useless, if not absurd. Suffice it to say, that the former was propagated by fanaticism, falsehood, pandering to the passions, promising a voluptuous paradise, and the frequent use of the sword; but the latter by sanity, truth, restraining the passions, promising a pure and holy heaven, and the use of no other sword but the sword of the Spirit, that is, the word of God. Christianity came—saw—and conquered. And all her victories have been bloodless—of untold advantage to the vanquished themselves. They have desolated no country—produced no tears but to wipe them away—and broken no hearts but to heal them. Now to what is all this to be attributed? Can we reasonably ascribe the general reception of the Bible, and the consequent spread of Christianity, to anything short of divine power? Is it not unprecedented? "Could any books," says an able writer, "have undergone so fearful and prolonged an ordeal, and achieved

so spotless and perfect a triumph, unless they had been given and watched over by the Deity?"

From its innumerable martyrs. "If a person," says Dr. Jortin, "lays down his life for the name of Christ, or for what he takes to be the religion of Christ, when he might prolong his days by renouncing his faith, he must stand for a martyr in every reasonable man's calendar, though he may have been much mistaken in some of his opinions." It has been calculated that since Christianity arose, not less than fifty millions of martyrs have laid down their lives for its sake. Some were venerable for years; others, were in the bloom of life; and not a few were of the weaker sex. They were, for the most part, well-instructed persons. Many were learned and respectable men; neither factious in their principles nor violent in their passions. They were neither wild in their notions, nor foolishly prodigal of their lives. This may safely be affirmed of such men as Polycarp and Ignatius, Jerome and Huss, Latimer and Cranmer, Ridley and Hooper, Philpot and Bradford, Lambert and Saunders, and many others. Yet these so valued the Bible, that, rather than renounce it, and relinquish the hopes it inspired, they yielded their bodies to be burnt, or otherwise tormented, and "rejoiced and clapped their hands in flames," or the like. "All that a man hath will he give for his life." All account life sweet and precious. No man of sense and understanding will sacrifice his life, when he can preserve it, but from some deeply-rooted conviction of truth or duty. In this view, christian martyrs are entitled to our respect and esteem. For, they gave the strongest proof of the sincerity of their faith: and no suspicion of fraud can reasonably be entertained against them. "We conclude," says Dr. Jortin, "that they were assisted by God, who alleviated their pain, and gave them not only resignation and patience, but exultation and joy. And this wonderful behavior of the former Christians may justly be accounted a proof of the truth of the Bible, and our holy religion, and we should deserve to be blamed and despised if we parted with it, and gave it up tamely upon account of a few objections." "No man," observes Dr. Beattie, "ever laid down his life for the honor of Jupiter, Neptune, or Apollo; but how many thousands have sealed their Christian testimony with their blood!" What a moral victory! And whence but from heaven such a religion, having such attestation?

Other arguments might be added tending to demonstrate the truth of our proposition; but surely, enough have been produced to

establish the authority of the Bible on an immovable basis. "Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven. I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way." "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; but the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you."

"The proudest works of Genius shall decay,
And Reason's brightest lustre fade away;
The Sophist's art, the Poët's boldest flight,
Shall sink in darkness, and conclude in night;
But Faith triumphant over Time shall stand,
Shall grasp the Sacred Volume in her hand;
Back to its source the heavenly gift convey,
Then in the flood of Glory melt away."

ESSAY II.

THE JEWS.

THEIR HISTORY—THEIR PECULIARITIES—AND THE PROPHECIES
RELATING TO THEM.



THE word Jew is well understood, as relating to the nation to which the knowledge of the true God was at one period confined. This name, properly speaking, as being derived from Judah, was not used in this connexion till after the Babylonish captivity, before which period they were called HEBREWS. They are now interchangeably called by both names, and will be so throughout this essay. We propose briefly to sketch in

SECTION I.

THEIR HISTORY.

In doing which we shall be almost entirely indebted to the Rev. Dr. Eadie.

The derivation of Hebrews is either from Heber, one of the ancestors of Abraham, or from the Hebrew word Eber, which signifies *from the other side*. Abraham was named *Abraham haibri*, Abraham the passenger, or Abraham the emigrant, as he had emigrated from Mesopotamia. The people who are known by the name Hebrews, came "from the other side," as we say of a foreigner, that he is from beyond sea; and hence the Canaanites might very naturally call them Hebrews, or people from the other side. They were not called JEWS until a much later period of their history; and

this name was derived from Judah. Jew is a corruption of *Judahite*,—one of the tribes of Judah. Hebrew was the ordinary or political name, Israel was the internal or religious designation.

A man of wealth, wisdom, and integrity, was selected by God to be the father and founder of the Hebrew nation; and was favored with many visions and revelations, promises, and covenants, all tending to show him the greatness and glory of his posterity. Among other things, he was told that his descendants should be very numerous, be taken into peculiar relation by God to himself, and should subdue and possess a most fertile and beautiful country.

About two hundred years after Abraham was appointed to this distinction, we find Joseph, his great-grandson, holding one of the principal offices in the government of Egypt; and by a train of remarkable providences, his father Jacob, together with his eleven brethren, also became inhabitants of that country.

The great increase of their number and wealth soon provoked the jealousy of the government, and led to a royal decree that all their male children should be destroyed at the birth. While this decree was enforced, (B. C. 1571,) Moses was born; and being concealed by his mother, he escaped the general slaughter of male infants, and was preserved to be the leader and deliverer of the people. Being instructed particularly in the religion and expectation of his forefathers, he early became interested in their oppressed condition; and happening to see an Egyptian ill-treat an Israelite, he took part with the latter, and slew the former. Fearing the vengeance of the king, he escaped to a distant land, where he remained forty years. He was there divinely directed to return to Egypt; and God was pleased to accomplish, by his instrumentality, the deliverance of Israel from their bondage, and to lead them, by a journey of forty years through the wilderness, into the rich and fertile land of Canaan.

Up to this period they had lived under a patriarchal form of government, some traces of which remained through succeeding ages; but in the progress of this eventful journey, God established a government for them,—the elements or grand principles of which are found in the law of the ten commandments, promulgated from Mount Sinai. This most perfect and admirable constitution or code, embracing as it did all that pertains to the civil as well as the religious rights and obligations of the people, was formed by God himself, and by him administered, as emphatically lawgiver, and judge, and king of Israel; and hence it is called a *theocracy*.

This theocratic form of government, under various modifications, existed even to the coming of the Messiah. The Jewish kings were mere viceroys, bound to govern by certain laws, and fearfully punished for disobedience. They were raised up and displaced by the immediate and frequently visible direction of God; Hos. xiii. 11: they were subject to his authority; Deut. xvii. 14-20; and the prophets in their long and glorious succession were appointed to maintain the intercourse between God and his peculiar people, and to reprove and rebuke the kings of Judah and Israel for all their rebellion against Him. Hence it is justly inferred that the shocks and revolutions in the Jewish government, however it might interrupt or modify, never destroyed the theocratic relation subsisting between God and the seed of Abraham, until the light of the glorious gospel arose, and salvation for all, Jews and Gentiles, was proclaimed through the blood of Christ.

In due time they entered the land of Canaan, and after a series of severe contests, in which God displayed his power in their behalf, they expelled the original possessors of the soil, and under a long succession of judges and kings, occupied the country as their promised inheritance. During their earlier occupancy of the country, the land was much subdivided; each family had its own allotted portion of the soil and territory. There were probably fifteen millions of acres in Canaan, and every Israelite able to carry arms might have about twenty acres set apart to him as his own possession. *Quatuor jugera*, or four acres, was the Roman phrase for a rural competence in the best days of the commonwealth, and at an earlier period only two acres were given to the soldier. But the Hebrew yeomanry had a more ample patrimony than the boasted liberality of Rome could afford.

It was evidently the design of God, that the Hebrews should be entirely separated and distinguished from all other nations; and to this end their religion and laws were most wisely adapted; and, besides this, the rites and ceremonies which they were required to observe were of the most significant import, and perfectly fitted to engage the attention of such a people. There was a body of men set apart, to whom was committed all matters relating to religion and law, which, under this singular government, was one and the same thing. To these persons, who officiated as priests, judges, advocates, etc., was allowed one-tenth of all the produce of the land. The Levites, which were a subdivision of the first, had a portion of the lands assigned them; and thus formed a connecting link between

the priests and the cultivators of the soil. Commerce was necessarily very limited; as, by the very nature of their institutions, all connection with other nations and societies was in a great measure made impracticable. And yet the feasts and festivals, which were periodically celebrated,—and upon the most important of which the whole nation was required to attend in a body, effectually preserved their social character and habits. This constitution and these laws were given chiefly at or near Mount Sinai. And thus, in the wastes of Arabia, and long before any lawgiver arose, of which the world has now any knowledge, a system of laws and a form of government were prescribed for the children of Israel, which have been the wonder of succeeding ages, and have exerted a boundless influence on the minds and institutions of all succeeding generations of mankind.

After forty years' continuance in the wilderness, during which time every individual but two of the race that left Egypt had died, and given place to their children, they were brought into the land of Canaan.

After the death of Joshua, the administration of the government was committed to a body of men called judges. This was a species of aristocracy; but it would seem that these judges were appointed only for extraordinary occasions and for specific purposes. Judg. iii. 8–10, 14, 15; vi. 33, 36. Their power was very great, however. Judg. viii. Of these judges there were in all fifteen from Othniel to Samuel, in whose time the government was changed. When the Hebrews had fallen into idolatrous practices, God suffered their enemies to prevail against them; and as they came to be involved in wars with the neighboring nations, they felt the necessity of a military leader, or some more efficient government; and they asked for a king. Saul was given to them in this relation; but, though victorious in many battles, he displeased God, and David, the son of Jesse, was appointed to the throne in his place. Under his reign, Jerusalem was adorned and fortified, and made the seat of government; the empire was greatly extended, and the prospects of the nation were never more glorious. He was succeeded by his son Solomon, whose reign forms the most splendid period of the Jewish history, and was distinguished by the erection of the Temple at Jerusalem. His costly palace and magnificent court could not be maintained without heavy contributions from the people; and upon his death, and the succession of his son Rehoboam, they demanded some relief from these heavy burdens. This being refused in a very offensive manner, ten of the twelve tribes revolted under Jeroboam,

and were called the "kingdom of Israel." Judah and Benjamin adhered to Rehoboam, and were called the "kingdom of Judah." The subjects of the kingdom of Judah were probably called Jews from this time till the kingdom of Israel, as such, was destroyed; and then the word Jews became the common name for all the descendants of Jacob. After a series of wars between Judah and Israel, and between them and other nations, for a period of two hundred and fifty years, the kingdom of Israel was at length subverted, the territory fell into the hands of strangers, and the people of the ten revolted tribes which composed it were carried captive into Assyria, never to return. 2 Kings xvii. The kingdom of Judah, too, soon after met a similar fate, her people being carried into Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar.

Seventy long years of bondage passed away before any relief came to them; but Cyrus, king of Persia, subdued Babylon, and permitted the Jews, then in captivity, to return to their country; but they went back with the foreign and idolatrous customs and endless dogmas with which they had become familiar in the time of their exile. The lofty aspiration, the simple piety, and pure morality of their better days, were not with them; the subtle and self-righteous Pharisee, and worldly-minded Sadducee, and a variety of other sects, sprang up; and error, corruption, and superstition prevailed in every form. Our information concerning this period of Jewish history is derived chiefly from Josephus and the books of the Maccabees.

The kingdom of Israel never reached its former glory. While Nehemiah lived, the nation continued to prosper; but soon after his death the country ceased to be considered a distinct portion of the Persian empire, and was joined to the province of Syria. The direct management of civil affairs was committed to the priests; but these were appointed to their high office by the Syrian governors. This was diametrically opposed to the ordinances of the Jewish state, and was most pernicious in its results. The people, indeed, remained faithful to the Persian government till the close of its existence, and were on this account permitted to live at peace with their neighbors. But the office of the high priesthood, being at the disposal of the Syrian viceroys, now became the object of worldly ambition, and was sought after chiefly by those means which are most efficacious with worldly rulers. Four high priests—Jeshua, Joachim, Eliashib, and Joiada—had held and been removed by death from the sacred office, since the return from Babylon.

Johanán now succeeded his father Joiada in the pontificate. But Joshua, another son of Joiada, had received the appointment from Bagoses, governor of Syria; and hence he demanded the office from his brother. Johanán refused, and slew Joshua in the inner court of the temple, where he had made the offensive demand. For this insult to his authority, Bagoses censured the Jews severely, upbraided them with polluting the temple by an act of murder, and imposed a tax upon all the lambs offered in sacrifice, which was exacted till the recall of Bagoses, about seven years afterwards.

Jaddua, son of Johanán, the next high priest, did much to advance and maintain the moral and social improvement of the people. In his time, the Samaritans, who had long been denied access to the temple of Jerusalem, built a temple for themselves on Mount Gerizim. This increased the enmity which already existed between the Jews and Samaritans, and led to that entire alienation which was afterwards displayed. Soon after this the Persian government was overturned by Alexander the Great, and Israel was brought under the sway of the Macedonians. The Jewish high priest won the favor of Alexander by showing him the prophecies of Daniel concerning his rapid and extensive victories, Dan. viii. 7; xi. 3, and hence the people of Judea were permitted to enjoy their peculiar national privileges, and were freed from taxes every seventh year. But the Samaritans were compelled to retire to Shechem, between Mounts Ebal and Gerizim, and Samaria was recolonized by a colony of Macedonians.

After Alexander's death, his dominions being divided among his four generals, the province of Syria, embracing Palestine, fell to the lot of Laomedon. Judea, soon after this, fell into the hands of Ptolemy Lagus, king of Egypt, and many of the people were sent thither as colonists; which accounts for the number of Jews which afterwards abounded in Alexandria, Lybia, Cyrene, and other places. Jaddua, the high priest, was succeeded by Onias, and he by Simon the just, during the reign of Ptolemy. Simon repaired and fortified the city and temple of Jerusalem; and also completed the Old Testament canon by adding the writings of Ezra and Nehemiah, the books of Chronicles and Esther, and the prophecies of Malachi. Under the Egyptian kings the Jews enjoyed prosperity for a considerable time. It was first interrupted by Antiochus the Great, king of Syria, and was not completely restored till the eastern monarch took Palestine from Ptolemy Epiphanes. This Antiochus

treated the Jews with many marks of peculiar favor, after their subjection to his authority.

The days of Antiochus IV. are remarkable as a period of dreadful calamities to the Jewish people. Having taken offence at their conduct in the dispute between Jason and his brother Menelaus, about the priesthood, he came upon them with tremendous violence. For three days the city of Jerusalem was given up to the rage of a brutal soldiery. Four thousand of the people were slain, and as many more sold into slavery. Menelaus led the impious king into the temple, whence he carried off one thousand eight hundred talents of silver and gold. And, to crown all, the religious feelings of Israel were outraged, and the God of all the earth insulted by the sacrifice of a large swine upon the altar of burnt-offering. Leaving Menelaus in the pontificate, Antiochus *Epiphanes*, the *illustrious*, returned to Antioch.

About a year after this he was compelled by the Romans to desist from another attack upon Egypt, and took the opportunity as he returned of venting his rage on the defenceless Jews. Jerusalem was assaulted by Apollonius, the leader of the Syrian army, on Sabbath, while the inhabitants were engaged in divine worship. Multitudes were slain; 10,000 were sent into captivity, and the city was plundered, set on fire, and its walls destroyed. The services of the temple were discontinued, the daily sacrifices ceased, and the city of Jerusalem was nearly left desolate. (B. C. 168.) Subsequently the statue of Jupiter Xenius was received by the Samaritans into the temple on Mount Gerizim; and the "holy and beautiful house" of Jehovah, on Mount Moriah, was dedicated to Jupiter Olympus, and the sacred courts defiled by the images and offerings of heathen idolatry. The very reading of the law of God was prohibited, and every copy of the sacred volume demanded from the devoted servants of the Most High. This edict was disobeyed; and recourse was had, by Antiochus himself, to the most cruel tortures and agonizing deaths to which men could be subjected. But even in these circumstances there were men of faith who defied the monster and his cruelties, and died triumphantly, in the assurance that God would revenge his people, and that speedily.

Nor was it long till deliverance was brought to the suffering Hebrews, by the hands of Mattathias and his sons, generally styled the Maccabees. They were descendants of Aaron, by his son Eleazar, and were at this time a family of some note and influence in their city, Modin. Mattathias refused to apostatize at the mandate

of the king's commissioner; and in a burst of virtuous indignation, slew one of his countrymen who was about to obey the idolatrous command. This was the turning point of Jewish misery. The standard of resistance was raised; John, Simon, Judas, Eleazar, and Jonathan, the sons of Mattathias, and many of the people, gathered round it, slew the commissioner and his attendants on the spot, organized themselves and numbers who daily joined them into a regular army, and ceased not their noble, patriotic exertions till Judea had been freed from the tyrant of Syria, and their civil and religious liberties to a great extent restored. At the end of the first year of the revolt, Mattathias died, and the command devolved upon Judas, surnamed Maccabeus. The young leader, with his small but resolute army, routed the forces of Antiochus in several engagements, slew thousands of the Syrians, gained possession of the city and temple of Jerusalem, purified them from every vestige of heathenism, and restored the daily sacrifice and the services of the temple, after they had been interrupted for a period of three years. About this time, Antiochus died in Persia, confessing that he was smitten by the hand of God for his cruelties to the chosen people.

Judas Maccabeus was then recognized as governor of Judea in the year 163 B. C. The reign of the Asmonean princes was by no means one of peace. The infidelity of some of their own countrymen, the ambitious intrigues of the Syrians, and the interference of neighboring powers, kept the nation in almost perpetual turmoil. After Judas, the most distinguished of these princes were Jonathan and Simon, the brothers of Judas, who completed "the freedom of Jerusalem," and did much to strengthen and improve the kingdom; John Hyrcanus, son of Simon, who, by a series of successful wars with the Syrians, Samaritans, and Idumeans, so enriched the nation and confirmed his government, that the kingdom reached a degree of prosperity unknown since the return from Babylon; Alexander Jannæus, against whom the nation revolted, and kept up hostilities for nine years, in which conflict 50,000 persons perished; and Aristobulus, under whom, after various vicissitudes of misfortune, Jerusalem was taken by Pompey, and the Jews made tributary to Rome. Thus ended the Asmonean dynasty, after a subsistence of one hundred and twenty-six years, when it made way for the Idumean princes.

Herod the Great, son of Antipater of Idumea, now acquired the kingdom through the influence of Mark Antony, and was the first

Gentile who filled the Jewish throne. The sceptre was now about to depart from Judah. The birth of Messiah was at hand. Herod was *great* in ambition, and, as the result of this, in jealousy, cruelty, and prodigality. Every one who could possibly be suspected of aspiring to the throne was put to death. He rebuilt and adorned the temple at immense labor and expense, and undertook and completed many other public works. When the power of Antony declined in Rome, he sought and found favor with Octavius, the first Cæsar Augustus, and by his assistance enlarged the bounds of his kingdom, till the whole country from Dan to Beer-Sheba, and much beyond Jordan, was added to his dominions. *

But the advent of a greater than Herod was at hand. In the thirty-second year of his reign was born John the Baptist, the forerunner of Messiah, who had been long expected by the pious Hebrews, and was needed by the entire world; and six months afterwards the Saviour appeared in Bethlehem of Judea.

The reign of Herod terminated in the first year of our Saviour's life, and he divided his kingdom, by will, among his three sons, Archelaus, Antipas, and Philip. In a little more than forty years, however, this dynasty came to an end; Judea sunk to a minor province, and thenceforward governors were sent from Rome until the destruction of their once holy and beautiful city, Jerusalem. After this mournful event, the Jews remained subject to the Roman government until Adrian became emperor of Rome, A. D. 76, when they rebelled, and were entirely dispersed, and so remain to this day.

The inspired literature of the Jews is found in the Old Testament, and no nation can boast of so sacred a treasure. Take it as mere literature, it has no equal in the simplicity of its prose and sublimity of its poetry, the freshness of its descriptions, the raciness of its annals, and the ardor of its devotion. It has claims far surpassing that of civilized antiquity. It is the composition of many writers of many ages and countries. Some sections of it were composed in Arabia, and others in the dungeons of Rome. Some portions of it were written in the times of the Pharaohs, and others in the era of the Cæsars. It tells of expeditions prior to those of Jason and the Argonauts. It describes national adventures long before Achilles and Troy. Its ethical system precedes Thales and Pythagoras. Its muse was vocal before Orpheus or Hesiod. Above all, it is the accredited revelation of the true and merciful Jehovah, able to make "wise unto salvation by faith that is in Christ Jesus." There

is nothing about the Bible which is not hallowed. Its structure, its style, the life of its authors,—the contents of its history, the figures and allusions of its poetry, the gorgeous scenes and visions of its prophecies,—the examples it records, and the acts of glowing devotion which it has narrated,—its gradual formation into one canonical book, its wonderful preservation in manuscripts, its early versions and modern translations, its various editions and its first printed copies,—the remarks of good men on its religion, and of learned men on its literature, its reception among barbarous tribes, and the effect which it has produced,—all that has been written about it and upon it, collated texts, biblical grammars, dictionaries, and concordances, erudite comments, practical remarks, pious reflections—all is sacred, all is venerated by the sanctified scholar—for it refines the heart as well as delights the imagination.

The Hebrew language, too, has a freshness, simplicity, and energy about it, which belong to few modern tongues. It is all nature and fire—pure in Moses, refined in David, but somewhat tainted in the period of Malachi. In antiquity, it is the tongue of Adam—in sanctity, the tongue of God.

The literature of the Hebrews, not contained in Scripture, is of a very different character. Some of it is learned, but much of it is only laborious trifling. Many of the rabbis, such as the Masorets, busied themselves with the text of Scripture; others in the Middle Ages wrote grammars, lexicons and commentaries. The principal schools of learning were at Tiberias and Babylon. The great repository of Jewish learning is the Talmud. This consists of two parts, the Mishna and the Gemara,—the one is the text, and the other the comment upon it. The Mishna;—which word means *repetition*, contains the oral law, or traditions of the Jews, and was compiled by Rabbi Judah the holy, about the middle of the second century.

1. The first part is entitled Zeraim,—of seeds,—and treats of agriculture and the laws relating to it.

2. The second is called Moed,—of festivals,—and treats of the observance of the Sabbath and other holidays.

3. The third is called Nashim,—of women,—and treats of the ceremonies of marriage and divorce, and of other matters relative to the intercourse between the sexes.

4. The fourth is called Nezikin,—of damages,—and treats of the laws regulating the conduct of men in civilized communities, and of the punishment due to their infraction.

5. The fifth is called Kodashim,—of things holy,—and treats of offerings.

6. The sixth is called Tahoroth,—of purifications,—and treats of the mode in which persons and things become unclean, and of the ceremonies to be observed in their purifications.

The reasons for this order, as laid down by Maimonides in his preface to the Talmud, are as follows. The work commences with the laws respecting agriculture, because on this depends the very existence of man, who without food would not be able to serve the Lord. These are succeeded by the laws relative to festivals, because that is the order observed in the Bible. Lev. xxv. 5, 6. For the same reason the part which treats of the rights of women is made to precede the laws concerning damages. Ex. xxi. 7, 12. The four first Sedarim are thus made to include those subjects which are chiefly treated of in the book of Exodus, and the remaining two are occupied with the matter discussed in Leviticus. The six parts of the Mishna are each divided into treatises or books, these again into chapters, and the latter into single decisions. Into what subtleties and vanities the Jewish mind fell when it forsook the written oracles and worshiped its own traditions! It has been sadly benighted, and it yet gropes in darkness at midday. Let us pray that the veil may be taken off their heart.

To the eye of mere philosophy nothing can appear more striking than the effects produced upon the world at large by the opinions and events which originated among the Jewish people. A pastoral family, neither so numerous, so warlike, nor so well instructed in the arts of civilized life, as many others in the same quarter of the globe, gradually increased into a powerful community, became distinguished by a system of doctrines and usages different from those of all the surrounding tribes; retaining it, too, amid the numerous changes of fortune to which they were subjected, and finally impressing its leading principles upon the most enlightened nations of Asia and of Europe. At a remote era Abraham crosses the Euphrates, a solitary traveler, not knowing whither he went, but obeying a divine voice, which called him from among idolaters to become the father of a new people and of a purer faith, at a distance from his native country. His grandson Jacob, a "Syrian ready to perish," goes down into Egypt with a few individuals, where his descendants, although evil entreated and afflicted, became a "nation, great, mighty, and populous," and whence they were delivered by the special interposition of heaven. In prosperity and adversity they are

still the objects of the same vigilant providence which reserved them for a great purpose to be accomplished in the latter days; while the Israelites themselves, as if conscious that their election was to be crowned with momentous results, still kept their thoughts fixed on Palestine, as the theatre of their glory, not less than as the possession of their tribes.

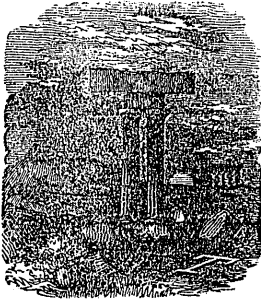
We accordingly see them at one period in bondage, the victims of a relentless tyranny, and menaced with complete extirpation—but the hope of enjoying the land promised to their fathers never ceased to animate their hearts; for they trusted that God would surely visit them in the house of their affliction, and, in his appointed time, carry them into the inheritance of peace and rest. At a later epoch we behold them swept away as captives by the hands of idolaters, who used all the motives which spring from fear and from interest to secure their compliance with a foreign worship; but rejecting all such inducements, they still continued a separate people, steadily resisting the operation of those causes which, in almost every other instance, have been found sufficient to melt down a vanquished horde into the population and habits of their masters. At length they appear as the instruments of a dispensation which embraces the dearest interests of all the sons of Adam; and which in happier circumstances than ever fell to their own lot, has already modified and greatly exalted the character, the institutions, and the prospects of the most improved portion of mankind, in both hemispheres of the globe.

Connected with Christianity, indeed, the history of the Hebrews rises before the reflecting mind in a very singular point of view; for, in opposition to their own wishes, they laid the foundation of a religion which has not only superseded their peculiar rites, but is rapidly advancing towards that universal acceptance which they were wont to anticipate in favor of their own ancient law. In spite of themselves, they have been as the little leaven which was destined to leaven the whole lump; and in performing this office, they have proceeded with nearly the same absence of intention and consciousness as the latent principle of fermentation to which the metaphor quoted, bears allusion—they aimed at one thing, and have accomplished another; but while we compare the means with the ends, whether in their physical or moral relations, it must be admitted that we therein examine one of the most remarkable events recorded in the annals of the human race.

SECTION II.

PECULIARITIES OF THE JEWS.

THE PECULIARITIES OF THE JEWS IN CONNECTION WITH HEATHENISM.



IN all respects the Jews are a singular people. Their national character and history must be admitted to be most extraordinary. At the time of their greatest prosperity, they were comparatively a small nation; and their territory, even in the reigns of David and Solomon, was of very limited extent; yet no such authentic and complete record has been preserved of any people, as of the descendants of Israel. Their origin can be most satisfactorily traced; the early portion of their history is as accurately, and even more minutely narrated, than the later period; and the whole extends through a space of more than two thousand years; nor is there any one people whose history is so intermingled with that of the world at large. The Egyptians and the Phenicians, the Assyrians and the Babylonians, the Medes and the Persians, the Greeks and the Romans, are all intimately connected with the Jews. And more, there is no history, however fabulous, which presents us with narratives so remarkable as here come to us, evidently wearing the authority of truth.

The religious system of the Jews is of divine origin; and, consequently, as no two systems can at the same time possess divine authority, it was entitled to exclusive regard, during the period appointed for its prevalence. This is a point which deserves the most careful investigation; for if the claims of Judaism can be fairly set aside, we have no divine revelation at all. The Old Testament Scriptures necessarily stand or fall with the system they unfold, and Christianity itself would be divested of its authority if the religion of the Jews were proved to be only "of men."

Now, it is either true that Judaism was only one of the many systems which prevailed during the period of its existence, or that

it was separate and distinguished from them all, by its divine origin and character. If then it can be shown, that it was unspeakably and immeasurably superior to all the systems with which it was contemporary, as well as to those which arose after it, and which, consequently, had the benefit of borrowing from its institutions; its claims will be thereby greatly justified.

Before we proceed to the comparison of Judaism with other systems, it is important to make a few preliminary observations, explanatory of some of its leading peculiarities.

The nation was composed of twelve distinct tribes, who to the period of their union in one commonwealth, seem to have had their separate "heads," or chiefs, or princes. When they became one people, *they were placed under the immediate authority of God himself, as their ruler.* On this account their national polity has been called a theocracy. Their laws were given to them by God, through the ministry of Moses, and were of perpetual force and obligation. The judges who administered the laws are represented as holy persons, and as sitting in the place of God. Mark the instruction given them. "Ye shall not respect persons in judgment: but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man: for the judgment is God's." Deut. i. 17. It is commanded: "If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong; then both the men between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the Lord, before the priests and the judges." Deut. xix. 16, 17. In cases of special difficulty, an appeal was to be made directly to God himself, by *urim* and *thummim*; and it was further promised that his will should be intimated, from time to time, by the ministry of the prophets. Nay, more, God bound himself by promises and threatenings to reward them with prosperity, victory, and plenty, if they kept the law of Moses, and to punish them with defeat, and other public calamities, if they disregarded it. The history of the Jews is, in this respect, altogether peculiar. God has often punished national sins, and rewarded national integrity; but there is no other case in which the vicissitudes of defeat and victory, elevation and depression, have been visibly and evidently connected with obedience and with transgression. The covenant into which God entered with them is thus recorded: "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation." Exod. xix. 5, 6. In unison with all this, the de-

termination of the Jews, in the days of Samuel, to have a king, is declared to amount to a virtual rejection of Jehovah as their supreme Ruler and Head; and this notwithstanding the special provision which the law itself had made for this case; and the prohibition to the king to rule, except according to the law of God. "They have not rejected thee," said God to Samuel, "but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them." The very constitution therefore of the Jewish polity, is peculiar to itself, and necessarily gives, in our view, somewhat of strangeness to the entire history of the people.

The special design of their national organization was also peculiar; to maintain, and perpetuate the knowledge of the one true God, in opposition to all systems of polytheism and idolatry. The case was thus stated to them by Moses: "Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God; that thou shouldst enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath, which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day; that he may establish thee to-day for a people unto himself, and that he may be unto thee a God, as he hath said unto thee, and as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob: for ye know how we have dwelt in the land of Egypt; and how we came through the nations which he passed by; and ye have seen their abominations, and their idols, wood and stone, silver and gold, which were among them; lest there should be among you man or woman, or family or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the Lord our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations," etc. Deut. xxix. 10, 12, 13, 16-18.

In this single circumstance, we have an explanation of much that is peculiar in the system of the Jewish religion. One great end was to be gained, and to this every thing is made subservient. Along with the fullest declaration of the divine spirituality, we have a chosen seat of worship; a temple constructed according to a divine pattern; an order of priests; a pompous ritual, and many costly services; in fine, everything adapted to neutralize the temptations to idolatry, by which a people so situated, and so characterized as the Jews, were peculiarly liable to be ensnared. Their religious system was so interwoven with their entire polity, that it could not be separated without endangering their national existence. Every day had its religious service; and every month its solemn festival. The ceremonial law followed them into every relation, and guided them under all circumstances. They could not lie down, nor rise up;

they could not tarry at home, nor walk abroad; they could not plough their lands, nor reap their harvest, without being reminded of the exclusive claims of Jehovah. Besides these general mementos of his supremacy, there were three annual festivals which required the assembling of their whole male population in one place, for special services of worship; and there was everything in these festivals to keep alive, and even to increase the impression of the divine glory. The same end was kept in view in the various prohibitory clauses of the Mosaic law. Many, we might say, all of them which involve no direct moral principle, relate to certain superstitions of the heathen nations; being designed to preserve the holy separation of the Jews, from idolatrous customs and practices. Such, for example, is the prohibition to plant groves; and the command, "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk." In the same great design of Judaism, we have the reason why idolatry was made a capital crime, to be always punished with death. It was a direct infraction of the national covenant, and tended to defeat the whole design of their national existence; it was nothing less than a denial of Jehovah, and high treason against him before all the nations of the earth. He had so separated them to himself, "by mighty signs and wonders," as to fix on them the eyes of all mankind; he had so proved to them his great power and love, as to supply them with the strongest inducements to trust in him, and serve him; and, therefore, the guilt of their idolatrous apostasy was most aggravated.

Further: *the institutions of Judaism were adapted to the peculiar circumstances of the people.* This should be borne in mind when we form our opinion of the system. It was not designed for the world, but for one nation. It was not meant for a nation raised to the highest pitch of civilization and refinement, but for a people just escaped from a state of degrading captivity. It was not intended for a commercial population, but for an agricultural peasantry. It was not constructed for Britain, but for Palestine; and regard is had in the entire disposition of its parts, to its precise object as a whole. Let us briefly notice some of the circumstances to which the Mosaic law has reference. *Climate* is regarded. This shall be considered in noticing the prohibition of lighting a fire on the Sabbath day. *The fertility of the soil* is calculated upon. "The Israelites had to give three-tenths of their produce to the public service; one to the Levites, another to the sacrifice-feasts, and a third (which, however, only took place in later times) to the king." *The character of the*

country and its geographical position, are also taken into account. Commerce was a thing unknown to the children of Jacob; but the fertility of the land, and general salubriousness of the climate, rendered it eminently favorable to agricultural prosperity. Its central position made it accessible to all nations. In such a mountainous country cavalry was not necessary for a defence: it was expressly prohibited. Respect is had to *the mode of life*. "A commercial nation could not subsist under a law prohibiting the interest of money, as did the law of Moses; but to a nation of husbandmen, such a law was not unsuitable." *Prevalent notions of honor, and forms of crime*, were not overlooked. On the contrary, special regulations are made in regard to them, which are scarcely applicable, even in their spirit, under other circumstances. *The semi-barbarous habits* of the people are met by minute directions, and prohibitions against cruelty, which must have become obsolete, long before the Jewish polity ceased to exist. *Peculiar diseases*, to which the people were subject, originated other parts of the Mosaic law. Such laws, as those respecting the leprosy, would be altogether useless in this country; they were highly important in Judea. Other points of illustration might be adduced: these are sufficient to show that it is not on mere abstract and general principles, that the character of Judaism can be satisfactorily explained.

Again: *the restrictive character of Judaism* ought always to be remembered, when we proceed to investigate its claims. It was the religion of one people, designed but for one country, and intended for temporary duration. Its prominent services were solemn commemorations of certain great facts of national history; and implied in all who engaged in them, an equal degree of interest in these facts. The Passover was a highly suitable service for the Jews, but it could never have been so for devout Egyptians, if there were any such.

The religion of the Jews demanded an equal measure of pecuniary support from all the people. The equal partition of the land rendered this equitable, but it prevented the extension of the system to other nations. Equal opportunity to attend to its services, was also implied; and the limits of the Holy Land rendered it possible to repair from all parts of Jerusalem, three times in a year; but by no possible means could this be rendered universally practicable in other countries. Further: Solemn responsibilities were devolved upon the people. "To them were committed the oracles of God;" and on them it was incumbent to sustain their separated character, and to endure the jealousies and contempt of all nations for the

truth's sake. They had an adequate motive to this, in the promise of the Messiah, who was to be raised up from among them; and it had the effect of keeping them together as a people, notwithstanding all their internal dissensions. But this motive could not have operated beyond the national boundary.

From this it is evident, that Judaism in its very nature was a *temporary system; preparatory to another, which should fulfill its pending anticipations, and consummate its partially dissolved designs.* In its very nature, the religion of Moses could not continue. It was the "shadow of good things to come." In the Messiah of which it spake, all its arrangements ultimately centred. Moses, in the law, spake of Him, and avowed that when he should come, it would be to introduce another system, which would demand universal reception. Accordingly we find some of the laws of Moses altered by himself; and new regulations introduced for Canaan in place of others which were given in the wilderness: for instance, the permission to kill and eat flesh in all their gates. Deut. xii. 15, 16, comp. Lev. xvii. 1-4. At a later period, David arranged the priests and Levites in courses, for the better discharge of their duties; and Solomon gave a degree of splendor to the worship of the temple, which never was contemplated in the tabernacle. And, not to advert to other considerations, the ministry of the prophets was employed to increase the stores of divine revelation, and give a higher tone to the entire spirit of the Jewish religion. Especially did their ministry keep alive the great hope of the nation, and prepare the way for the incarnation of the Son of God.

Let these general considerations then be borne in mind, as we proceed to investigate the divine claims of Judaism. They will, at least, furnish a key to some difficulties, and aid the general inquiry. If in looking at them, we are impressed with the supremacy of Jehovah, whose "way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters;" and are ready to inquire, why a system so carnal, and a process so apparently circuitous, were adopted, to bless the world with a knowledge of his mercy; we must be, at least, equally impressed with the proofs of his wisdom and grace, which meet us on every hand, in the character and arrangement of the system itself. The propensity is a strange one, which leads us to suppose, that the ways of God in his government of mankind should be free from all difficulties, whilst in the most obvious of the works of nature, his glory rises far above our utmost conception. Nor should it be forgotten, that the revelation of his grace had been twice slighted and

corrupted, perverted and despised, when he separated the family of Abraham unto himself. It was not a question, whether mankind at large would retain the knowledge of God; they had proved that they would not. Justice might have abandoned the world to the ignorance and folly it had chosen; it was mercy that interposed, by other means, to save it from its righteous desert. In any other case, infidelity itself would admire the wisdom and grace of the whole procedure.

In comparing the religion of the Jews with other and contemporary systems, it is impossible not to observe, that there are some points in which they somewhat resemble each other. There are some general truths of a religious nature, which may be more or less clearly traced in all systems. Such, for instance, is the *existence of one Supreme Being*. The Mosaic economy declares the essential and unchanging glory of Jehovah, as the only true God; discards as altogether unreasonable, and denounces as in the highest degree sinful, the doctrine of a plurality of gods; and avows its chief design to be, the maintenance of His claims, to whom supremacy of existence and authority belongs. This doctrine, although grievously corrupted, still retained a place in all pagan systems. Particular countries had their own presiding divinities; but where many gods were worshiped, the supremacy of *one* was acknowledged. In the less popular theology of the heathen, that of the philosophers and the schools, this truth was even more clearly avowed. Cicero says, "That we ought, above all things, to be convinced that there is a Supreme Being who presides over all the events of the world, and disposes everything as sovereign Lord and Arbiter; that it is to him mankind are indebted for all the good they enjoy; that he penetrates into, and is conscious of whatever passes in the most secret recesses of our hearts: that he treats the just and the impious according to their respective merits: that the true means of acquiring his favor, and of being pleasing in his sight, is not by employing riches and magnificence in the worship that is paid to him, but by presenting him with a heart pure and blameless, and by adoring him with an unfeigned, profound veneration."

In the religion of all nations, prior to the introduction of Christianity, *the offering of sacrifices* was an act of solemn worship. Some animal, or some production of the earth, was offered upon an altar, by some person whose proper duty it was to make the offering, as an act of religious service. Sometimes this was done as an ex-

pression of gratitude for mercies received, or deliverances wrought, or victories obtained; sometimes to deprecate judgments which were feared or threatened, and so to propitiate the Deity; and sometimes as a part of the regular service of the temple. They were also resorted to in solemn confirmation of covenants between contracting parties. Everywhere we meet with altars, on which the offering was laid, and the victim sacrificed; with priests, or men separated to the special services of religion; and with places, either groves or trees, or buildings erected for the purpose, where these services were performed. The kinds of offerings differed in different countries; and the modes and forms were very various; but the practice itself was general. Judaism, and Paganism in its several forms, thus far resembled each other.

Similar points of agreement may be traced in the ceremonies connected with these several systems: as, for instance, in the distinction of clean and unclean meats, and of clean and unclean beasts for sacrifice; the rites of personal purification; tithes and offerings for the support of the officiating priesthood; festivals, or seasons of public rejoicing, accompanied with an increased number of religious services; vows of special service, on particular occasions; and, to some extent, circumcision.

If, from this circumstance, that there is a considerable and even striking resemblance, in some points, between the religion of the Jews and the various systems of the heathen, it would be concluded that Judaism has no higher claims than they possess, such an inference would be altogether hasty and unjust. In the first place, many of the pagan systems with which Judaism is thus compared, we might say most of them, and these the most generally prevalent, were of more recent date than Judaism; it is, therefore, rather to be concluded, that they borrowed their rites and ceremonies from it, than that they actually originated them. And, secondly, such conclusions would be difficult, nay, impossible, to reconcile with the early facts of human history, and the essential principles of human character.

As the Mosaic dispensation did not claim to be the first divine institution of doctrine and worship, so neither is it presented to us as in every respect new. On the contrary, it claims to be regarded as one in a series of dispensations, by which God has successively directed the religious services of mankind; and many parts of it were adopted from the previous dispensation: it was, in fact, the extension of that principle of vicarious expiation which was recog-

nized from the fall itself, in the appointment of animal sacrifices; with the adaptation of it to the peculiar circumstances of the Jewish people, and the special designs of their separation from all other nations. Almost everything which is peculiar to the religion of the Jews as distinguished from that of the patriarchs, consists either in prohibitions of conformity to the heathen, or regulations which were essential to preserve their distinct national character. The declaration of the divine will is more explicit, and the revelation of his glory is more complete in the law of Moses, than in the more ancient dispensations; and the whole, both in obligation and privilege, is especially restricted to one section of the human family; but the doctrines are those which had been known from the beginning, and the ritual is a modification of that which had been observed for two thousand five hundred and fifteen years; or, according to the computation of Dr. Hales, for three thousand seven hundred and sixty-five years. We are thus cast back upon a period, when mankind were "of one language and of one speech;" when they dwelt together as one family; and when the institutions of God were as familiar to them all, as their modes of life were similar, and their mutual intercourse uninterrupted. Such circumstances were favorable for the preservation of the divine institutions from general corruption. The dispersion of mankind by the confusion of tongues, supplies a rational and every way satisfactory solution of the fact, that there is a general similarity between the prominent outlines of Judaism, and the various pagan systems which were contemporary with it; and this is the only solution of which the fact really admits. If the Mosaic record, concerning the time and circumstances of the dispersion, be discarded as unworthy of credit, this fact remains the same. There was a time, whether Moses has accurately fixed it or not, when mankind began to range themselves in separate communities, and to assume a distinct national existence. Previously to this time—whether in "the plains of Shinar," or elsewhere, affects not the question before us—they lived together. In the very remotest periods of their separate localities, we find them distinguished by similar articles of religious belief, and similar forms of religious worship. Who will venture to deny the common origin of these? Such denial comes at least with an ill grace from those who admit their similar dialects of speech to have sprung from a common stock.

It may, therefore, be assumed that the points of resemblance between the religion of Moses, and the systems of the heathen, are satisfactorily accounted for. Judaism is avowedly of the same origin

with the religion of the first ages, and the corresponding peculiarities of other systems must be referred to the same source. Of the religion of the patriarchs, the books of Genesis and Job supply interesting information, and the simplicity, purity, and fulness of the system which these writings portray, give to it a decided superiority over all others, even at the time when they were least corrupted; and prove, that its claim to be the true source of whatever is good in the rest, is well founded. If any man, with impartial mind, will compare, for example, the theology of the patriarchs as delineated in the books above named, with that of the ancient Egyptians, as it may be gathered from Herodotus, Plutarch, and other heathen writers, he must confess the truth of our statements. The character of God, as drawn in these portions of the Holy Scriptures, commends itself to our confidence and esteem. He is made known to us as the Creator and Governor of all things; as everlasting, omniscient, almighty, holy, just, and true; as a Being of supreme authority, and boundless benevolence; kind to all, long-suffering even to sinners, and faithful to those who fear him, even though he sometimes tries them. His glory is emphatically his own; he is one, and besides him there is no other; all good is referred to him, and nothing evil originates from him. There is no similitude, no likeness, no resemblance; everything shows us that he is a pure and spiritual Being. But the gods of the Egyptians were beasts of the most idle and contemptible kinds, as crocodiles, serpents, cats, etc. "It is astonishing," says Rollin, "to see a nation which boasted its superiority above all others with regard to wisdom and learning, thus blindly abandon itself to the most gross and ridiculous superstitions, and to read of animals and vile insects, honored with religious worship, placed in temples, and maintained with great care, and at an extravagant expense." Diodorus affirms, that in his time the expense amounted to no less than 100,000 crowns, or 22,500*l.* sterling. "To read, that those who murdered them were punished with death, and that those animals were embalmed and solemnly deposited in tombs assigned them by the public; to hear that this extravagance was carried to such lengths, as that leeks and onions were acknowledged as deities; were invoked in necessity, and depended upon for succor and protection—are absurdities which we at this distance of time can scarcely believe; and yet they have the evidence of all antiquity." The great deities of the Egyptians were Osiris and Isis; and the bull Apis. Speaking of this last mentioned, the same eloquent historian says: "Magnificent temples were erected to him;

extraordinary honors were paid him while he lived, and still greater after his death. Egypt then went into a general mourning. His obsequies were solemnized with such pomp as is hardly credible. In the reign of Ptolemy Lagus, the bull Apis dying of old age, the funeral pomp, besides the ordinary expenses, amounted to upwards of 50,000 French crowns, or above 11,250*l.* sterling. After the last honors had been paid to the deceased god, the next care was to provide him a successor, and all Egypt was sought through for that purpose. He was to be known by certain signs, which distinguished him from all other animals of that species; upon his forehead was to be a white spot, in form of a crescent; on his back, the figure of an eagle; upon his tongue, that of a beetle. As soon as he was found, mourning gave place to joy; and nothing was heard, in all parts of Egypt, but festivals and rejoicing. The new god was brought to Memphis, to take possession of his dignity, and then installed with a great number of ceremonies."

Philosophers, not satisfied with reasons which were too trifling to account for such strange absurdities as dishonored the heathen systems, and at which they themselves secretly blushed, have, since the establishment of Christianity, supposed another reason for the worship which the Egyptians paid to animals; and declared, that it was not offered to the animals themselves, but to the gods of whom they are symbols. Plutarch, in his treatise, when he examines professedly the pretensions of Isis and Osiris, the two most famous deities of the Egyptians, says as follows: "Philosophers honor the image of God wherever they find it, even in inanimate beings, and consequently more in those which have life. We are therefore to approve, not the worshipers of these animals, but those who, by their means, ascend to the Deity; they are to be considered as so many mirrors, which nature holds forth, and in which the Supreme Being displays himself in a wonderful manner: or, as so many instruments, which he makes use of to manifest outwardly his incomprehensible wisdom. Should men, therefore, for the embellishing of statues, amass together all the gold and precious stones in the world, the worship must not be referred to the statues; for the Deity does not exist in colors artfully disposed, nor in frail matter destitute of sense and motion." Plutarch says in the same treatise, "That as the sun and moon, heaven, earth, and the sea, are common to all men, but have different names according to the difference of nations and languages; in like manner, though there is but one Deity, and one Providence which governs the universe, and which has several subaltern minis-

ters under it, men give to this Deity, which is the same, different names, and pay it different honors, according to the laws and customs of every country."

Every one must perceive, however, that these reflections, had they even universally prevailed, are by no means sufficient to excuse the absurdity of the Egyptian idolatry. But they did not universally prevail, nor even to any considerable extent; and they are themselves the result of that clearer light which the later portions of Holy Scripture had served to diffuse. The present views of the heathen respecting their senseless idols, furnish a true representation of the heathen mind in all ages.

Take this comparison in another particular. "The Egyptians believed that, at the death of men, their souls transmigrated into other human bodies; and that, if they had been vicious, they were imprisoned in the bodies of unclean or ill-conditioned beasts, to expiate in them their past transgressions, and that, after the revolution of some centuries, they again animated other human bodies." But what saith Job? "Man dieth, and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up; so man lieth down, and riseth not. Till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep." "If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee; thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands." "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me."

The more fully the religion of the patriarchs is compared with that of the heathen nations, the more evident will be the fact of its decided superiority. Traces of the truth may be everywhere met with, which, like rays of light, point to the sun from which they emanated, and thus serve to establish our general position.

Most of the pagan systems, however, of which we have any knowledge, are of a more recent date than Judaism itself; and it may be questioned whether we can rightly view any one of them, except as under great obligations to the religion of Moses. The residence of the Israelites in Egypt could not but contribute to perpetuate, and even extend the outlines of divine truth, or at least to check the onward progress of error and idolatry; and the events connected

with their departure were too striking not to leave a powerful impression of the greatness of Jehovah, who executed vengeance upon the gods of Egypt. Nor could the attention of the surrounding nations fail to be arrested to the "peculiar people," who received the law on Mount Sinai, and obtained the land of promise by the mighty hand of their God who was with them. Indeed, the entire history of the Jews, from the moment when they came out of Egypt a distinct nation, to the final dissolution of their polity, A. D. 70, was so ordered by the providence of Jehovah, as to keep the eyes of the world upon them, and upon that religious system for the sake of which they enjoyed their separate national existence.

We proceed now to contrast the religion of the Jews with the systems of heathen nations, and especially with those of Greece and Rome. Admitting all that can fairly be established by the general resemblance in some leading circumstances, the superiority of Judaism is very striking. For the sake of perspicuity and order, we shall arrange our remarks under distinct heads.

Theological Creed.—The fundamental principle of Judaism is the unity of God. This is every where asserted and maintained; and to this every part of the system is subordinated. Every conceivable perfection is ascribed to him, and the supremacy and universality of his providence are perpetually appealed to. National prosperity is promised to obedience to God; and disobedience, or the neglect of his exclusive claims, and revealed will, is threatened with desolation and ruin. This doctrine of the unity and consequent supremacy of Jehovah pervades the entire Jewish system. The form of civil government; the laws of intercourse with other nations; the very ceremonies of social life, in meats, drinks, etc.; and the regulations concerning property, life, purity, truth; all assume and recognize this doctrine, equally with the ritual of worship itself. Take away this doctrine from the religion of the Jews, and the whole system falls to the ground.

In this respect, the character of Judaism was altogether diverse from every other system, and inconceivably superior. Among every other people, polytheism not only prevailed, but was the very essence and spirit of every contemporary system. The deist himself may be left to say, if the superiority claimed for Judaism does not justly belong to it. And when it is recollected to how great an extent idolatry prevailed in the world, at the time when this system was introduced, and what was the character of the people to whom

this revelation of the divine glory was committed, it is clear that nothing short of a fully convincing proof of its divine origin, could ever have gained for it a moment's attention.

Moral Injunctions.—The decalogue, or *ten commandments*, is such a summary of morality as it is in vain to look for any where else. It is complete in itself; nothing can be added to it, nor can any thing be taken away from it. Its claims concerning God and his worship are as peculiar as they are natural and reasonable, and those concerning ourselves and our fellow-men, are as superior to all others, as they are comprehensive and benevolent. These injunctions relate not to overt acts only; but also to words, and even to the motives and desires of the heart. And when we examine the minor precepts of the Jewish law, the same spirit of purity, righteousness, and truth, is every where apparent.

In looking at other systems we are again held back from comparison; the contrast is too striking to admit of question. Even the boasted Athenian law permitted theft, and punished only the detection; whilst Moses says, "Thou shalt not covet." Could a system so hostile to all the depraved propensities of our fallen nature have gained an establishment, if it had not been supported by the most extraordinary, not to say, by supernatural sanctions?

Rites of Worship.—There is a simplicity about these which is as truly remarkable as their splendor and variety. The *passover* may be taken as a specimen of the whole. Every circumstance was beautifully significant, at once of the deliverance wrought for Israel in Egypt, and of the spiritual deliverance effected for sinners, by the death of the Messiah. No language can so well describe it as that of the institution itself:—

"Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: and if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year; ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: and ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side-posts and on the upper door-posts of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast

with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning: and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire. And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste; it is the LORD'S passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast: and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations: ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever. Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread: even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel. And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you: no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you. And ye shall observe the feast of unleavened bread; for in this self-same day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations by an ordinance for ever." Ex. xii. 3-17.

Whoever will contrast the simplicity of this service with the rites of pagan festivals, must confess the vast superiority of the ritual of Moses.

In point of purity, also, how striking is this contrast! The heathen mysteries were mysteries of iniquity; whilst the most solemn services of the Jews were transacted in open day: and the very dresses of the priests and the form of the altar were directed to the maintenance of purity. Ex. xxviii. 42; xx. 26.

Ceremonial Observances.—The design of God to keep the Jews a separate people, was kept in view in all these; their ceremonies were in direct opposition to those of the heathen. To this point, the learned John Edwards thus speaks: "We must know then that the eastern nations, as Assyrians, and Egyptians, and others that were neighbors to the Jews, used these following ceremonies: Cut-

ting their flesh, rounding the corners of their heads, sowing the ground with divers seeds. It was usual for women to wear the garments of men, and men those of women; they accustomed themselves to eating of the blood of animals, looking towards the east when they worshiped, and adoring the rising sun; and some things likewise relating to sacrifices and oblations might be mentioned. These and many more were constantly practised by the Zabians and other neighboring people who were given to idolatry, and they were used by them in a superstitious and idolatrous manner. This you will find proved by the excellent Selden, Hollinger, and other learned writers, out of Maimonides. And from him the learned Dr. Spencer and others show, that even all the rites and ceremonies used at the paschal feast, were in direct opposition to the idolatrous customs among the Gentiles. The paschal lamb was to be a male of the first year, that is, a young ram, in defiance of the idolatrous Egyptians, who counted a ram the most sacred animal: this, therefore, God bids them kill and sacrifice. They must not eat it raw, because the heathens ate their sacrifices raw. It was to be eaten in the house, to avoid the procession used by the Gentiles. A bone was not to be broken, because the heathens tore their sacrifices in pieces. The head with the legs and purtenance were to be eaten, to oppose the pagans, who ate the entrails only. Nothing was to remain till the morning, in opposition to the heathens, who used the relics of sacrifices superstitiously. It was not to be sodden in water, but to be roasted, to oppose the custom of the Egyptians, who boiled their sacrifices."

Besides their opposition to heathenism, the Jewish ceremonies were significant of spiritual things. This was a known principle in the whole system. Every thing reminded them that they were separated from all other nations, to be a peculiar people unto Jehovah; and their numerous purifications, and the extreme caution which was hourly necessary to preserve their ceremonial holiness, most impressively taught them the necessity of purity of heart, and spirituality of character. All the enactments proclaimed the strict justice of God, and illustrated the sanction given to his claims: "The Lord thy God is a jealous God." They all served to promote the spirit of obedience, and to enforce the claims of Jehovah on their reverential awe, and supreme attachment. They clearly showed the impossibility of any thing unholy meeting the eye of God with acceptance. As all the sacrifices proclaimed, that "without shedding of blood there is no remission," and were types of Christ, so all the

ceremonies taught that the worshipers must be pure; that faith and holiness are inseparable in the service of God. The priests could not enter on their functions without being reminded of "the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." At least, this truth was significantly placed before them in the services which were required of them; and priests and people were alike guilty if they failed to learn the impressive lessons of purity which their system taught.

Political Regulations.—Instead of the arbitrary despotism of some heathen governments, and the legalized injustice of others, the Jewish law proceeds on great principles of righteousness. The power of rulers is accurately defined, and the rights of the subjects are fully asserted. Property is secured to every family on the same common terms; and arrangement is made for even military service, that it might not prove an occasion of injury or loss. The minutest occasions of disagreement are provided against, and the punishment of the smallest offences is definitely fixed. And if there be less of refinement about their civil code than accords with our notions of civilized life, it was strikingly adapted to their circumstances at the time when it was given; and the very particulars in which it might be objected to by moderns who had not duly considered the subject, there are similar regulations in the most refined and civilized ancient states, not excepting even Athens itself. Many, also, of the more minute enactments of the Mosaic law, were designed to operate most favorably on the public health, and on general morals; and had a direct tendency to maintain the original institutions of nature, which heathenism, in its highest state of refinement, openly violated. In the laws of Moses there was a further peculiarity, which distinguished them from those of all other nations; they made a direct appeal to individual conscience; whereby the fact of sin, in many cases, and the degree of it in others, could be made known only by the individual himself. This placed the people perpetually under the eye of God, and inspired a principle of action vastly more powerful than every other, and to which none but a divinely-inspired legislator would ever have ventured to appeal.

Benevolent Aspect.—In this respect, also, it is worthy of its divine author. *It cared for the poor.* "When ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor. Thou shalt open thy

hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land." Lev. xix. 9, 10; Deut. xv. 7-11.

It provided for the stranger and the destitute. "Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in anywise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; and my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless." Exod. xxii. 21-24. "If a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself." Lev. xix. 33, 34.

It enjoined respect to the aged. "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the LORD." Lev. xix. 32.

It mitigated the severities of Slavery. Such of the Canaanites as were preserved alive were indeed doomed to perpetual bondage, but this was a merciful mitigation of the exterminating decree of destruction; whilst the general principle of the system is that of hired service for a limited period. "If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve; and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing. If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself; if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master have given him a wife, and she have born him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself. And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free; then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door-post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for ever." Ex. xxi. 2-6. And besides the benevolence of the general principle, it is necessary to notice the more minute regulations of the system. Thus, then, spake the divine lawgiver: "If a man smite the eye of his servant, or the eye of his maid, that it perish: he shall let him go free for his eye's sake. And if he smite out his man-servant's tooth, or his maid-servant's tooth; he shall let him go free for his tooth's sake." Ex. xxi. 26, 27.

It restricted the stripes of punishment. "If the wicked man be worthy to be beaten, that the judge shall cause him to lie down, and to be beaten before his face, according to his fault, by a certain number. Forty stripes he may give him, and not exceed; lest, if

he should exceed, and beat him above these with many stripes, then thy brother should seem vile unto thee." Deut. xxv. 2, 3.

It looked to the safety of human life, and provided against ordinary exposure to danger. "When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thy house, if any man fall from thence." Deut. xxii. 8.

It even legislated for animals, to save them from cruelty and oppression. "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn." Deut. xxv. 4. "If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way in any tree, or on the ground, whether they be young ones or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young: but thou shalt in anywise let the dam go, and take the young to thee; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days." Deut. xxii. 6, 7. "If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring him back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him." Ex. xxiii. 4, 5.

It is unnecessary to multiply instances of the benevolent aspect of the Jewish code: there is, however, one very important point which must be distinctly noticed. *It required supreme love to God, and the love of our neighbor as ourselves.* This can be said of no other system; yet the reasonableness of the claim, and the tendency of obedience to promote happiness, are at once apparent. If there be a Great First Cause, he is necessarily a Being of infinite perfection; and is consequently worthy of the highest esteem, and the most unbounded confidence. "To love him with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the mind, and with all the strength, is better than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices." This is the great principle of obedience, and no service can be acceptable without it. Yet all pagan systems wholly overlook this. Their master-principle was fear; how vastly superior is the spirit of Judaism! In like manner, a due regard to the claims of our fellow-men in their several spheres, and various relations, is an unfailing bond of unity and of peace. "Whence come wars and fightings? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" How could they arise if every man loved his neighbor as himself? This, however, is the requirement of the law of Moses. Let the infidel himself say, what there is in paganism to compare with it! The system might be imperfectly developed in the history of the nation; but this affects not its principles, changes not its character. Our simple

question is, Does any other system present a similar character of benevolence? The only reply which can be given is—No!

In pursuing the inquiry into the superiority of Judaism to pagan systems, we mention as another point of contrast,

Its devotional spirit.—Let any one read through the classic pages of antiquity, where shall he look for the breathings of devotion? Acts of superstitious worship he will everywhere find; and, in a few rare instances, something like the language of prayer may be met with. But in the writings of the Old Testament, and in the lives of Jewish believers, examples of the most pure and elevated devotion meet us in almost every page. Moses could draw nigh unto God, and adore his infinite perfection with a holy familiarity which at once delights and surprises us; and the Psalms of David are characterized by a purity and spirituality, a fervor and a comprehensiveness, a strength of faith and an animation of hope, which, whilst they compel us to feel that we are in the presence of the great Eternal, encourage us to seek his face and expect his blessing. We appeal further to its

Historic narratives.—We are not insensible to the beauties of classical literature, nor to the importance of pagan history; but we cannot conceal our conviction of the decided superiority of the Jewish Scriptures. The writers relate much that is marvelous, and this has been placed on a level with the confessedly fabulous stories of Grecian and Roman antiquity; but with great impropriety. The fables of pagan historians do not carry with them a single pretension to truth; whilst the miracles of Moses are so interwoven with the record of daily occurrences, and with the experience of the whole nation, that deception was altogether impossible. If here be deception, it is a deception practised upon six hundred thousand adults, besides children; and which bound on them a yoke of service by no means easy to bear.

The simplicity with which the most astonishing facts are recorded in the Jewish Scriptures is a very remarkable circumstance. Events which, in all ordinary writings, would have been introduced with a preparatory note of attention, and commented upon with admiration, are stated with naked simplicity, as things perfectly familiar. Nothing like proof is ever attempted; the writers plainly feel that their statements cannot be controverted, and they calmly abide the issue.

Nor must we fail to notice the strict and impartial fidelity which

these writers display. Moses relates as fully as any other fact of his history, his employment as a shepherd in Midian; the deep degradation of his people as slaves in Egypt; his own infirmities and sins, with their corresponding punishment; the failings of Aaron his brother, and of Miriam his sister; and the disgrace of the nation in their repeated acts of rebellion in the wilderness. No secret is made, by a later writer, of the sin of David; on the contrary, it stands out in strong contrast and in close connection with the record of his piety; and the readers are left to reconcile the apparent anomalies of his character on general principles as they shall be able.

Upon this single peculiarity of the Jewish Scriptures, we should not hesitate to rest the entire proof of their claims to a superior origin. Every reader knows that these are not the characteristic properties of any other writings.

Its holy examples also deserve notice. True, the most illustrious of men have their failings; and many things were allowed to Old Testament believers, which tended to lower the tone of their spirituality and heavenly-mindedness, and which are expressly forbidden by Christianity. The dispensation itself was adapted, as has been shown, to the habits and circumstances of a people just emerging from barbarism; and was besides designed to be only "a figure for the time then present;" "a shadow of good things to come." But when all due allowance is made for these facts; nay, when the characters of the men are taken as they actually present themselves, they display the most marked and decided superiority to the most illustrious pagans. What Grecian lawgiver shall we compare Moses with? What Roman emperor shall we compare David with? What pagan priest shall we compare Ezra with?

The general influence of the system upon national prosperity demands the attention of all who would rightly estimate the claims of Judaism. At the period of the exodus, the people were "six hundred thousand that were men, besides children." This was in the year B. C. 1491. When they were numbered by David, towards the close of his reign, (B. C. 1017,) "there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men, that drew the sword; and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand men." When we remember how perpetually the people were diminished by the harassing wars of the judges, this increase shows that the system of civil and ecclesiastical polity under which they were placed, was adapted to promote national prosperity.

Another view may be taken of this point, illustrative at once of the fertility of the land, and the prosperous state of the people "Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand measures of wheat for food to his household, and twenty measures of pure oil: thus gave Solomon to Hiram year by year." 1 Kings v. 11. "And Solomon's provision for one day was thirty measures of fine flour, and three score measures of meal, ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the pastures, and an hundred sheep, besides harts and roe-bucks, and fallow deer, and fatted fowl. For he had dominion over all the region on this side the river, from Tiphseh even unto Azzah, over all the kings on this side the river; and he had peace on all sides round about him. And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig-tree, from Dan even unto Beersheba, all the days of Solomon. And Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen. And these officers provided victuals for king Solomon, and for all that came unto king Solomon's table, every man in his month: they lacked nothing." 1 Kings iv. 22-27. "The weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred three score and six talents of gold, besides that he had of the merchantmen, and of the traffic of the spice-merchants, and of all the kings of Arabia, and of the governors of the country. And king Solomon made two hundred targets of beaten gold: six hundred shekels of gold went to one target. And he made three hundred shields of beaten gold: three pounds of gold went to one shield: and the king put them in the house of the forest of Lebanon. Moreover, the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the best gold. The throne had six steps, and the top of the throne was round behind: and there were stays on either side on the place of the seat, and two lions stood beside the stays. And twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other upon the six steps: there was not the like made in any kingdom. And all king Solomon's drinking-vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold; none were of silver: it was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon. For the king had at sea a navy of Tarshish, with the navy of Hiram: once in three years came the navy of Tarshish, bringing gold and silver, ivory and apes, and peacocks. So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom. And all the earth sought to Solomon to hear his wisdom which God had put in his heart. And they brought every man his present, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold,

and garments, and armor, and spices, horses, and mules, a rate year by year. And Solomon gathered together chariots and horsemen; and he had a thousand and four hundred chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen, whom he bestowed in the cities for chariots, and with the king at Jerusalem. And the king made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars made he to be as the sycamore-trees, that are in the vale, for abundance. And Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt, and linen yarn the king's merchants received the linen yarn at a price. And a chariot came up and went out of Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and an horse for an hundred and fifty: and so for all the kings of the Hittites, and for the kings of Syria, did they bring them out by their means." 1 Kings x. 14-29.

If it should be said here, this was peculiar to the reign of Solomon, it is frankly admitted that to a great extent this is true. But it must always be borne in mind, that the blessing of God was especially promised to their national obedience; and that the whole system proceeds on the assumption of their special relation to God, as *His* nation, and their immediate subjection to *Him* as their ruler. And if only in Solomon's reign the blessing was fully realized, it was because in his reign alone the obedience was consistently rendered. It is proof sufficient for our purpose, that when the principle of the system was fairly tried, it insured all the prosperity to the nation which had been promised them.

Omitting all other points of illustration, we advert, lastly, to the *typical character* of the Mosaic dispensation. It was not only designed to prepare the way for the clearer revelations of Christianity, but to furnish an instructive symbolical representation of the truth. "It was a figure for the time then present." This mode of divine instruction was adopted at the beginning. The institution of animal sacrifices was declarative of the doctrine that "without shedding of blood there is no remission;" and this institution is the very basis of Judaism. Not the Israelites alone, but all the scattered tribes of mankind, were familiar with this principle, and accustomed to this mode of instruction. Judaism cannot be rightly viewed, except in this connection; its various enactments are wholly unintelligible, except on this principle. This gave to it chief importance, and in this one respect it stands distinguished from all other systems. Let any one be at the pains to trace out the typical reference, as its principles are unfolded, and its particulars exhibited; in the Epistle to the Hebrews; and if he preserve a calm and unbiassed state of

mind, he cannot fail to discover the extent and importance of the correspondence. Pagan systems, indeed, had their sacrifices and altars, their ritual and priesthood. It has already been shown that this general coincidence may be traced to the influence of the patriarchal dispensation, which has been spread over all lands; and when we descend to the more minute particulars, paganism is altogether at fault. The grossest impurities are found mingled with their most solemn services; and the most abominable cruelties are associated with their most solemn engagements. Or if, in some instances, a more minute resemblance can be traced, it is easy to understand how this originated from an imitation of the Jewish system, or an actual transfer of its ceremonial in such particulars to other systems.

The decided superiority of Judaism is now abundantly apparent; and the question naturally suggests itself, Whence did this superiority arise? The religion of Moses, whence was it? Of Heaven, or of men? This point deserves investigation. If it were of human origin, how is it that Moses so far excelled all other lawgivers? Where did he obtain his knowledge? How did he secure his influence? Survey the foregoing particulars, and try if any of the ordinary principles of human nature can account for their peculiarities. The *theological creed*; how did it happen that the unity and supremacy of Jehovah should be the leading doctrine of this one system, whilst all others denied it even in theory? The *moral injunctions*; how did it happen that there should be in these an elevation of purity so completely above those of every other nation? The *rites of worship*; how did it happen that these should be so much more spiritual and holy than those of every other people? The *ceremonial observances*; how did it happen that these should, in so many points, be directly opposed to the superstitions and practices of all other lands? The *political regulations*; how did it happen that these should so far excel the political economy of other kingdoms; that they should be so much more honest and benevolent; that they should directly appeal to individual principles and conscience? The *benevolent aspect*; how did it happen that this system alone should breathe the spirit of love, and display the law of kindness; whilst all the rest breathe nothing but cruelty, injustice, and oppression? The *devotional spirit*; how did it happen that we can find nothing which deserves the name of prayer, except in connection with Judaism? The *historic narratives*; how did it happen that these are so simple and unvarnished? so faithful and minute? so

open and undisguised? The *holy examples*; how did it happen that there are no men to compare with the pious Jews, in point of spirituality and righteousness? The *general influence*; how did it happen that obedience to God always insured the national prosperity of the Jews? The *typical character*; how did it happen that Judaism alone should find its antitype in Christ, and in Christianity?

Let any objector point us to a principle which shall show even a ground of probability, that all this superiority and peculiarity of Judaism is of mere human origin, and we will argue with him. Till then, we must express our conviction, that in all these circumstances the system bears the impress of divine authority. For any one to say that it did so happen, and yet offer no ground of explanation, is only to show his folly, and confess his defeat. This kind of defence may serve to harden the unbeliever in his sin; but it has no bearing upon the question at issue, and can yield no satisfaction to an inquiring mind. Admit that Moses was taught of God, and the peculiarities of Judaism may be explained, but not otherwise.

Before we pass from this part of our subject, it is our duty to present a condensed view of the argument in favor of the divine authority of Judaism. This argument includes the authenticity and credibility of the five books of Moses. Brevity requires us to confine our attention to two or three leading particulars of proof, from which it may appear that the writings of Moses are what they are said to be.

We mention first, *the reception of the system by the Jews*. Unless we reject the authority of all history, the ceremonial and moral laws contained in the last four books of Moses, were observed by the Israelites from the time of their departure out of Egypt, till their dispersion, at the taking of Jerusalem by the Romans. Bishop Marsh has so forcibly stated this argument, that we quote his language: "These laws, therefore, are as ancient as the conquest of Palestine. It is also an undeniable historical fact, that the Jews in every age believed that their ancestors had received them from the hand of Moses, and that these laws were the basis of their political and religious institutions, as long as they continued to be a people. Things of private concern may easily be counterfeited, but not the laws and constitution of a whole country. It would, indeed, have been impossible to forge the civil and religious code of the Jews without detection; for their civil and religious polity are so blended and interwoven together, that the one cannot be separated from the

other. They must, therefore, have been established at the same time, and derived from the same original; and both together evince more clearly than either of them could singly, the impossibility of any forgery. The religion and government of a people cannot be new-modeled. Further, many of the institutions, contained in the ceremonial and moral laws given to the Jews by Moses, were so burdensome, and some of them (humanly speaking) were so hazardous, or rather certainly ruinous to any nation, not secured by an extraordinary providence corresponding to them; especially those relating to the sabbatical year, the resort of all the males to Jerusalem annually at the three great festivals, and the prohibition of cavalry—that forged books, containing such precepts, would have been rejected with the utmost abhorrence. As the whole Jewish people were made the depositaries and keepers of these laws, it is impossible to conceive that any nation, with such motives to reject, and such opportunities of detecting the forgery of the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, should yet receive them and submit to the heavy yoke imposed by the laws contained in them. That they should often throw it off in part, and for a time rebel against the divine authority of their law, though sufficiently evidenced, is easily to be accounted for, from what we see and feel in ourselves and others every day; but that they should return and repent, and submit to it, unless it were really delivered by Moses, and had the sanction of divine authority, is utterly incredible.” “We are therefore reduced to this dilemma, to acknowledge either that these laws were actually delivered by Moses, or that a whole nation during fifteen hundred years groaned under the weight of an imposture, without once detecting or even suspecting the fraud. The Athenians believed that the system of laws by which they were governed was composed by Solon; and the Spartans attributed their code to Lycurgus, without ever being suspected of a mistake in their belief. Why, then, should it be doubted, that the rules prescribed in the Pentateuch were given by Moses? To deny it, is to assert that an effect may exist without a cause, or that a great and important revolution may take place without an agent. We have, therefore, an argument little short of mathematical demonstration, that the substance of the Pentateuch was given by Moses; and that the very *words* were written by him, though not so mathematically demonstrated as the former, is at least a moral certainty. The Jews, whose evidence alone can decide in the present instance, have believed it from the

earliest to the present age: no other person ever aspired to be thought the author, and we may venture to affirm, that no other person could have been the author. For it is wholly incredible, that the Jews, though weak and superstitious, would have received, in a later age, a set of writings as the genuine works of Moses, if no history and no tradition had preserved the remembrance of his having been the author."

The historical testimony both of Jews and Gentiles, confirms the fact that "the law was given by Moses." The Jews declare universally that this is the case. We believe the Athenians, the Lacedemonians, and the Romans, concerning Solon, Lycurgus and Numa; why should we not believe the Jews concerning Moses? All the writings of the Old Testament refer to the Pentateuch; and the proof of its existence can be thus traced up from the times of the Saviour, to those of Ezra, Jehoshaphat, Josiah, Solomon, Samuel, and even Joshua himself, who was the immediate successor of Moses. Besides Jewish, we have also Gentile testimony: "Manetho, Eupolemus, Artapanus, Tacitus, Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, Justin, the abbreviator of Trogus, and Juvenal, besides many other ancient writers, all testify that Moses was the leader of the Jews, and the founder of their laws." Even Porphyry and Julian, admitted the genuineness of the Pentateuch.

The character of Moses forbids the notion that he was an impostor. If he were an impostor, "could he have given to men a law so perfect and holy as he did, which not only does not allow of the smallest sins, but also condemns every evil thought and every criminal desire?" It is plainly impossible that he should have imposed upon the Israelites as true, such things as he has recorded, if they had been false. The whole nation knew whether the miracles and plagues of Egypt, and the wilderness, took place or not; and would they have submitted to his authority, if the events had not taken place? But what end could he have in view if he invented these things? He does not appear to have sought glory or riches; he did not aggrandize his family, or even conceal his own failings and sins. Dr. Graves, in his Lectures on the Pentateuch, vol. i. pp. 54-57, well says: "More particularly, with respect to Moses, whom we find mentioned by ancient writers with very high encomiums, we do not see him taking any advantage of his situation or talents, or placing them in the most advantageous point of view. On the contrary, he takes very particular notice of his own infirmities, as his want of eloquence, and being slow of speech, Exod. iv.

10; of his impatience, Numb. xi. 10; his unbelief, Numb. xx. 12; his rebelling against the commandment of God, for which he was excluded from entering the promised land, Numb. xxvii. 14; of his great anger, Exod. xi. 8; and of his being very wroth, Numb. xvi. 15. He takes notice of his repeated declining of the measures to which he was called, Exod. iii., iv., and ascribes the new-modeling of the government to Jethro's advice, and not to his own wisdom and policy. In short, he neither spares himself, nor his people, nor their ancestors the patriarchs, nor his own family or relatives.

“Of the patriarchs, he speaks in such a way as not only did not gratify the vanity of his countrymen, but such as must most severely wound their national pride: he ranks some of their ancestors very high indeed, as worshipers of the true God, and observers of his will, in the midst of a world rapidly degenerating into idolatry; yet there is not one of them (Joseph, perhaps, excepted) of whom he does not recount many weaknesses, which a zealous partisan would have been careful to suppress, and to many he imputes great crimes, which he never attempts to palliate or disguise. In this point, the advocates of infidelity may be appealed to as judges, for they dwell upon the weaknesses and crimes of the patriarchs with great triumph. Let them not deny, then, that the Scripture account of them is impartial and true in all its points, good as well as bad, and we fear not but it will be easily proved, that notwithstanding their weaknesses, and even crimes, they were, upon the whole, and considering the moral and religious state of the human mind in that age, fit instruments for the introduction of the divine dispensations. Of the Jewish nation in general, the author of the Pentateuch speaks, it may be said, not only impartially, but even severely. He does not conceal the weakness and obscurity of their first origin, that ‘a Syrian ready to perish was their father;’ nor their long and degrading slavery in Egypt; their frequent murmurings and criminal distrust of God, notwithstanding his many interpositions in their favor; their criminal apostasy, rebellion, and resolution to return to Egypt, first, when they erected the golden calf at Mount Sinai, and next, on the return of the spies from the land of Canaan, when they were so afraid of the inhabitants that they durst not attack them. He repeatedly reproaches the people with their crimes, and loads them with the epithets of stiff-necked, rebellious, and idolatrous; he inculcates upon them, most emphatically, that it was not for their own righteousness that God gave them possession of the promised land; he declares to them his conviction, that in their

prosperity they would again relapse into their rebellions and idolatries, and imitate the foul vices of those nations which God had driven out from before them for these very crimes. Here again we may appeal to the judgment of infidels: they triumph in the apostasies and crimes of the Jews, and represent them as totally unworthy the divine protection and regard: surely, then, they must confess, that the historian who has thus described them is strictly impartial, and that as he has concealed nothing that would disgrace, we may also be confident that he has feigned nothing to exalt his countrymen; and, admitting this, we may easily show that, notwithstanding the crimes and the stubbornness of the Jews, it was yet not unworthy of the divine wisdom to employ them as the medium of preserving the worship of the true God amidst an idolatrous world, and of preparing the way for the introduction of a pure and universal religion.

“The impartiality of the author of the Pentateuch is not less remarkable in the mode in which he speaks of the nearest relatives and connexions of the Jewish lawgiver. His brother Aaron is reputed to have been engaged in the great crime of setting up the golden calf, to have joined with his sister Miriam in an unjustifiable attack on the authority of Moses, and to have offended God so much, that he was excluded from the promised land; and the two eldest sons of Aaron are related to have been miraculously put to death by God himself, in consequence of their violating the ritual law. The tribe and kindred of the lawgiver are not represented as exempt from the criminal rebellion of the Jews on the return of the twelve spies. Caleb and Joshua, who alone had opposed it, were of different tribes, one of Judah and the other of Ephraim. In a word, nothing in the narrative of the Pentateuch exalts the character of any of the near relatives of Moses and Aaron, except only in the instance of Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron. Numb. xx. 11–13. Of the family of the legislator we are told nothing, but that his father-in-law, Jethro, was a wise man, who suggested to Moses some regulations of utility; that his wife was an Ethiopian woman, and as such the object of contempt and opposition even to his own brother and sister; and that he had two sons, of whom, or their family, the history takes no notice, so that nothing about them is known. How different is all this from the embellishments of fiction, or the exaggerations of vanity! How strongly does it carry with it the appearance of humility and truth!”

Equally convincing is the proof derived from *the general contents*

of the Pentateuch. The writer was plainly cotemporary with the events which he records; every narration shows that he was present at each respective scene; the details are the most minute and circumstantial, and, if false, capable of the most easy refutation. Places, dates, persons, families, tribes, are all introduced in such a way as to show that there could be no intention to deceive. All is natural and artless; the very system of ecclesiastical and other laws has to be compiled by the reader; Moses recorded the appointments as they were given; many of them were originated by the events that required them; and the writing of the whole was finished when the people stood on the borders of Canaan. The genealogies are in themselves ample proof of the authenticity of the writings.

The miraculous attestations were the most extraordinary; they could not be invented; they could not be mistaken. Not one nation only, but many nations, nay, the whole earth, was witness to the plagues brought upon the Egyptians; to the passage of the Red Sea; to the destruction of Pharaoh and his army; to the expulsion of the Canaanites, and the settlement of the Jews; to the preservation of the land from invasion at the periodical observance of the three annual festivals; to the destruction of Sennacherib's army; to the deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, from the furnace of fire, and of Daniel from the power of the lions, &c. Would God have thus confirmed an imposture?

Prophecy still further corroborated the claims of Judaism. Again and again did Moses in Egypt specify the time and circumstances of the divine visitations, and as regularly did the event correspond. The Egyptians, as well as the Israelites, knew this, and Pharaoh himself believed when Moses said, "The thunder shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail."

We must here close the evidence. Objections have been taken, deduced from marks of a supposed *posterior date*, and also from marks of supposed *posterior interpolation*. These have often been urged with the design of weakening the authority of the Jewish writings. They are wholly destitute of force.

The former class of objections refer not so much to the original text as to modern translations, and are almost beneath notice. The word rendered *Gentiles* in Gen. x. 5, means *nations* in general; the proper rendering of Gen. xxxiv. 7 is, "wrought folly *against* Israel," that is, against Jacob, who was also called Israel, (compare Numb. xxi. 7;) and the Hebrew word in Exod. xv. 14 is Paleshetha, which the Greeks softened into *παλαι σινη*, and the Latins into *Palæs-*

tine, whence our Palestine. The objection founded on Deut. i. 1, which describes Moses as speaking *beyond Jordan*, does not even apply to our authorized version, which reads properly *on this side Jordan*, but was borrowed by Spinoza from the Septuagint and Vulgate versions, and has been copied by the more modern opponents of the Scriptures.

With regard to the alleged marks of *posterior interpolation*, it is acknowledged that there are some such passages, but a *few* insertions can never prove the *whole* to be spurious. We have, indeed, abundant reason still to receive the rest as genuine; for no one ever denied the Iliad or Odyssey to be the works of Homer, because *some* ancient critics and grammarians have asserted that a *few* verses are interpolations. The interpolations in the Pentateuch, however, are much fewer and less considerable than they are generally imagined to be; and all the objections which have been founded upon them may be comprised under one general head, namely, "expressions and passages found in the Pentateuch which could not have been written by Moses." Such, for example, Deut. xxxiv., which records his death. The previous chapter has evident marks of being the close of the book by Moses; and this was added by Joshua, or some other writer, as a supplement. Names of cities are mentioned in the Pentateuch, which the places did not bear till after the death of Moses. This is a species of alteration which some transcriber might easily make, without any intention to invalidate the testimony of Moses. Other such instances occur, but they do not at all affect the general evidence; and when we remember how many thousands of transcripts have been made in the course of three thousand years, no surprise can really be felt.

There is another wholly distinct source of proof to which we may just refer—that which arises from the New Testament. Christ and his Apostles expressly refer to the Old Testament Scriptures as genuine; and we have them as they existed at the commencement of the Christian era. This, however, assumes the proof of the authenticity of the New Testament; it is mentioned simply as a corroboration of the whole.

Most certain, however, it is, that "God spake unto Moses," and by him, to the Israelites. The Old Testament is introductory to the New; and to prove the divine origin of a part, is to prove that of the whole.

Reader! open your mind to the truth; lay aside prejudice; calmly examine for yourself; remember that religion, if important

at all, is of paramount importance; the time is short; life is hastening to its close; the Judge standeth before the door; eternity is ready to open upon you; seek the assistance of God your Maker; receive the revelation of his mercy; search the Scriptures; repent *now*, and believe the gospel; to-morrow it may be too late; "behold, now is the accepted time;" "to-day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart."

THE PECULIARITIES OF THE JEWS IN CONNECTION WITH CHRISTIANITY.

The precise claims of Christianity in reference to Judaism are thus stated: "Before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Gal. *iii.* 23-26. "But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away; how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which was done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious." 2 Cor. *iii.* 7-11.

The circumstances which show that Judaism was introductory to Christianity, first claim attention. And the most obvious of these is, that *Judaism was typical of the great facts of Christianity*. It was altogether a system of types. Its founder was a type of Christ. Its priesthood was typical of the priesthood of Christ. Its prophets were types of the great Teacher. Its kings were types of him who is King of kings, and Lord of lords. Its ritual of worship was a shadow of good things to come. The nation itself was an image of the Church of God. Every thing pointed to Christ and Christianity, and terminated in the sacrifice of the cross, and the dispensation of these last days.

Moses was a type of Christ. "A prophet," said he, "shall Jehovah your God raise up unto you of your brethren, *like unto me*; Him shall ye hear." "The law was given by Moses, as the grace and the truth come by Jesus Christ." Moses by his intercessions

saved Israel, as Christ by his advocacy saveth all who come unto God by him. He was the mediator between Jehovah and that people, as Christ between sinners and God. The very facts of his history: the preservation of his infancy; his willing sacrifices for the truth's sake; the retirement of his manhood; the miracles of his public life; the mysterious circumstances of his death, shadowed forth the glory of Him who was to come.

The priesthood of the Jewish economy pointed to that of Christ. When it was required that the person of the priest must be free from visible defects; that his hands, his feet, his garments, must be clean when he ministered in holy things; that he must keep himself from all ceremonial impurity, and prepare himself by abstinence even from lawful enjoyments, for the service of the sanctuary; it was shown that the true priest who should make reconciliation, must be "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners;" that He must "know no sin," who should "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," and "bring us unto God." When the priesthood was fixed in one family, it showed that the Messiah should "abide a priest continually." The high priest of Judaism was "ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices;" to intercede within the veil for the people standing without, and to bless them in the name of the Lord; teaching us that the "High Priest of our profession" should first offer a sacrifice for sin, and then intercede with God, and become the medium of spiritual blessings unto us. The divine appointment and regulation of the office further taught that our salvation is of God. He must appoint the Mediator, and accept the sacrifice.

Jewish prophets were also official types of the great Teacher, Christ Jesus. By their ministry, the will of God was made known; new light was from time to time shed upon truths previously revealed; and the expectation was kept alive of His appearance, who, like Moses, should be the founder of a new dispensation. They were as morning stars, pre-intimating the rising of the Sun of righteousness.

Nor was the kingly office, as sustained in Israel, less important in its typical aspect. The law to be executed was divine, and its sanctions implied the direct interposition of the Supreme Being. The king could enact nothing; his authority consisted in requiring obedience to the law as it was given to him. It was "the shadow of good things to come."

The whole ritual of Judaism was typical of spiritual truths, and spiritual blessings: the passover of Christ's sacrifice and man's

redemption; the day of expiation, of the atonement of the cross; the blood of sprinkling, of the application of the merits of Christ; the water of purification, of the Holy Spirit's influences; the daily sacrifice, the very tabernacle itself, the altar, the ark, the veil, the cherubim, the vestments of the priests, the songs of the Levites, the worship of the people, were all symbolical of the pure and spiritual realities of christianity.

The nation itself was an image of the Church of God; the slavery of Egypt, of the bondage of sin; the journeys through the wilderness, of the conflict of time; in Jordan, of the victory of death; the settlement in Canaan, of the rest in heaven.

Judaism, if this were not its character and design, appears quite unimportant. But, viewed as typical of the New Testament economy, it was worthy of its Divine Author, and every way fitted to excite attention to it, and to prepare for it. It was excellent in its kind, vastly superior to every contemporary religion; and it was wisely adapted to the exigencies of those times. Its typical aspect is, moreover, a striking proof of its divine origin. Nothing less than infinite knowledge and wisdom could have pre-arranged a system so minute in all its parts, with such a direct universal reference to "things to come."

Let us take the typical correspondence between the passover and the great sacrifice of Christ on the cross, as an illustration and proof. The passover was instituted more than fifteen hundred years before it met its antitype, and was annually celebrated by the Israelites. The victim was a lamb, an emblem of humility and meekness, the two great features of His character who was led as a lamb to the slaughter. The paschal lamb was to be without blemish, to typify Him who, as the great propitiation, "knew no sin." It was to be taken out of the flock, and this four days before it was sacrificed: Jesus was "made in all things like unto his brethren," "a partaker of flesh and blood;" and the time of three days prefigured both the public ministry of Christ, a day for a year, and the period of his last residence in Jerusalem when he went to be offered. In these respects the paschal lamb typified the person of the Redeemer; and circumstances apparently arbitrary and inexplicable, are shown to be important and full of meaning. The sufferings and death of Jesus were variously typified by the paschal lamb. It was to be killed by the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel: the whole nation of the Jews conspired against Christ, and all who are saved are justified through the faith of Christ. It was to be

killed by the effusion of its blood: the blood of Christ was shed in the garden and on the cross. It was to be roasted with fire: the sufferings of Jesus were most intense; he was consumed by them; he endured the fierceness of God's anger, which is said to burn like fire. It was to be slain at the place which God should choose to put his name there: this was Jerusalem, and there our Lord was crucified. There was also a coincidence of time: the Saviour suffered his agony on the same evening on which the passover was celebrated, and his death took place the next day, between noon and sunset. These points of correspondence were plainly matters of design. Also several of the fruits and consequences of the death of Christ were remarkably prefigured in this institution; such as protection and salvation by his blood. Hence the blood of Christ is called "the blood of sprinkling:" that of the lamb was sprinkled on the houses as the token of faith, and the means of safety. So, also, freedom from the yoke of sin and Satan. Christ by his own blood has obtained eternal redemption for believers, and brought them into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, as Israel was ransomed from Egypt by the blood of the passover. And further, the passover, as eaten by the Israelites, represented the manner in which we are made partakers of the fruits of Christ's death. The lamb was to be roasted whole, and all eaten: Christ must be received wholly, in all his offices, in order to salvation. The passover was to be eaten with bitter herbs: repentance for sin must accompany faith in Christ; and if we partake the benefits of Christ's death, we must expect to have fellowship with him in his sufferings. It was to be eaten with unleavened bread: sincerity of mind, and purity of heart, are inseparable from a saving interest in Christ. A bone of it must not be broken: the soldiers came and brake the legs of the two men who were crucified with Jesus, but when they saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs. None of the legally unclean might eat of it: the kingdom of heaven is a kingdom of holiness, and "there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth." The Israelites were to eat the first passover in the posture and habit of travelers ready to depart: believers in Jesus must be prepared to follow the lamb whithersoever he goeth; they are strangers and pilgrims on the earth, and they are to act accordingly. The Jews were to eat the passover in haste: we must "flee for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us," and "give all diligence to be found of God in peace." The passover was the only means of safety to Israel: there is no salvation except in Christ Jesus. The Israel-

ites were to eat the passover in their own houses, and none must go out, lest the destroyer should kill him: we are to expect salvation by Christ, and communion with him in his church; and having entered into it, we must not go out, lest we be counted apostates.

Was this correspondence of men, or of God? Would men have ever burdened themselves with the annual celebration of such a service? Could it ever have entered into their minds to institute it, and regard it as a shadow of spiritual things? Does any human system present anything similar to it? Must it not be admitted to have been enjoined on a people to whom the principle of types had been familiarized? And does not this fact of typical reference prove that Judaism and christianity are of the same origin? Neither the rites of the one as legal observances, nor the illustrations and allusions of the other in expounding its sacred truths, can be explained on any other principle than that of their common and divine origin.

'That Judaism was designed to be introductory to christianity may be further proved from the fact that *Judaism was a partial revelation of the truths of christianity*. Our limits forbid us to go at any length into proof of this statement. We will confine our remarks to one point. Judaism is prominently characterized by its external observances; and christianity by its attention to principles, and to mental and moral character. Even in this respect Judaism was a partial revelation of New Testament truth; it every where teaches that true religion "is that of the heart." "Circumcise the foreskin of your heart," Deut. x. 16, said Moses to them. And again, "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live." Deut. xxx. 6. The like doctrine was taught by Samuel: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." 1 Samuel xv. 22. "Thou desirest not sacrifice," says David, "else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt-offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Psalm li. 16, 17. "To do justice and judgment," says Solomon, "is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice." Prov. xxi. 3. Isaiah speaks very fully to the same purpose: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt-

offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats, etc. Wash you, make ye clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." Isaiah i. 11, 16, 17. Thus also Jeremiah: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these." Jer. vii. 3, 4. By Hosea, likewise, God says, "I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings." Hosea vi. 6. Lastly, we read in the prophet Micah: "Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Micah vi. 6-8.

One remark may be made here. Moses gave "the law" to a people familiarized with the figurative and typical mode of religious instruction. God had adopted it from the beginning, as the mode of revelation, and mankind were acquainted with, and prepared to apply such teachings. So that it was natural to look beyond the mere outward forms and circumstances, and to inquire into the spiritual import and design. Nor was any thing more necessary to the successful prosecution of this inquiry, than a holy simplicity of mind in applying the principle adopted from the beginning. The above quotations, however, prove that the Jews were not left to this process; that spiritual truth was actually propounded to them; and so far is it from presenting any thing like contrariety or opposition to the gospel of Jesus Christ, that it exhibits the same principles, and is a partial disclosure of the same eternal verities.

This preparatory character of Judaism is further apparent in *its general spirit*; and this, whether we regard its purity or its benevolence. Exhortations to *purity* are written on every page of the New Testament; exhortations reaching even to the affections, the desires, and the thoughts; and when all these are summed up in one word, "Be ye holy, for I am holy," we feel that perfect purity is demanded. But even this requirement is found in the Jewish law:

“Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the Lord your God. And ye shall keep my statutes, and do them: I am the Lord which sanctify you.” Lev. xx. 7, 8. The previously quoted texts might all be adduced in proof of the present point; and the arrangements of the ceremonial law themselves all breathe the spirit of purity. Many things, indeed, were permitted, such as polygamy, divorce, retaliation, slavery, which are expressly prohibited by the christian dispensation, but even these were specially restricted, so as to divest them of much of their evil, and to place them in decided contrast with the practice of all other nations. The ceremonial purifications, the dresses of the priests, the prohibition of heathen conformities, the voice of prayer, the song of praise, all testify to the vastly superior purity of Judaism.

Similar remarks may be made on the *benevolent* spirit of Judaism. When Jesus Christ says to us, “Love your enemies, bless them who curse you, do good to them who hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you:” “All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them”—we feel at once that this is the very climax of benevolence. Let us see, then, how far this spirit characterizes the law of Moses. “It indignantly prohibited human sacrifices, which at that time were generally prevalent; it softened the horrors of war, so frightful in those barbarous ages; it defended the cause of the poor, of the accused, of the fatherless, and of slaves.” In all these respects, the Hebrew legislator was obliged to make some concessions to his countrymen; but when we compare his institutions with the usages which then generally prevailed, we cannot mistake the tendency and effect of the Mosaic laws. We see, not only all injustice, but all hatred forbidden, and humanity towards the poor most positively enjoined. “Thou shall not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou shall not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” Lev. xix. 17, 18. We cannot multiply quotations respecting the poor, the stranger, their enemies, and the very brute creation. Plain it is, that Judaism and christianity on this point also are one; the former being a partial development of the spirit of the latter.

It may be observed further—*Judaism was a partial attainment of the design of christianity.* This is nothing less than the universal diffusion of divine knowledge, the universal prevalence of divine worship, and the universal happiness of mankind, through faith in the great Saviour. These several results of christianity were most

clearly foretold, and fully defined by Jewish prophets. The present question is, How far was Judaism preparatory to christianity in this respect? How far did it attain the same result? This inquiry is one of historical research, and to pursue it in detail would require a volume: it will be sufficient that we glance at its general outline. At the time of the exodus, mankind in general was sunk in idolatry, debased by superstition, and reckless in cruelty and abominable wickedness. Still there remained considerable traditionary knowledge of the true God; of the fate of the old world, and the history of the new; and in all the countries of their sojournings, of the character and professions of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and their families and establishments. The oppression of the Israelites in Egypt, and the judgments brought on Egypt in order to their deliverance; the departure of from two to three millions of people, under the immediate direction of Jehovah; the overthrow of Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea; the wanderings of the Israelites in the wilderness of Sin for a period of forty years; the miracles wrought for them, and the punishments brought upon them for their sins—were all great, public events, the fame of which necessarily spread through all lands, and as necessarily revived the knowledge, and reasserted the claims of the true God. The circumstances of storm and tempest which accompanied the giving of the law, could not fail to excite the surprise and the inquiry of the adjacent countries. All the events connected with their settlement in Canaan, and the consequent establishment of the worship of Jehovah among them, were well known, and contributed to sustain the partial knowledge of God, which still remained in the earth. The annual festivals; the written law, copies of which gradually multiplied; the national history of the Jews, especially their conquests under David, and their prosperity under Solomon; the division of the kingdom into two states; the frequent alliances with Egypt, with Syria, with Chaldea; and the two captivities, first of Israel and then of Judah, all served to spread the knowledge of God, to arrest attention to his claims, and to show the blessedness of obedience to his will, as well as the danger of rejecting his authority.

Wherever the Jews came, they were the ministers of the truth of God; and the history of the Babylonish captivity, as preserved in the book of Daniel, surprises us by the extent to which the very kings themselves contributed to this result. Once and again, were letters and messengers dispatched through the whole of the vast empire, to declare the glory of the God of Israel, and demand

submission to his will. From these captivities, numbers of Jews never returned; and numbers besides, attracted by the love of gain, or by some other motive, settled themselves in various directions; so that, at the time of the first promulgation of christianity, there was not a province of the wide-spread Roman empire where this people had not located themselves, and scarcely a city or town of any note where they had not a synagogue of worship. This last mentioned fact is in itself a strong proof of the influences of Judaism in extending the knowledge and asserting the claims of Jehovah. We must not omit to mention in this brief enumeration of particulars, the occasional instances of Gentiles who were actually converted to the true God; and the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into the Greek tongue, which, however unacknowledged by the copyists, and denied by the enemies of inspiration, is the immediate source of much of the truth which pagan writings contain.

Nor could it be otherwise, in the very nature of things, than that the knowledge of Judaism thus disseminated, and the association with Jews, by the providence of God thus secured, should exert a favorable influence on both the physical and moral condition of mankind. The history of all nations is but a record of cruelties and crimes. Still there remained every where traces of justice, and occasional instances of kindness, and it is easy to imagine how much worse the state of the world might have been, and would have been, had there been no leavening influence at all. What was the actual influence of Judaism in restraining the excesses of human depravity, and supplying the principles of rectitude and kindness, cannot be determined; that it was very considerable, the preceding sketch will not allow us to doubt.

By scattering hints of knowledge, and maintaining principles of truth; by suggesting the idea of something purer and happier that was yet to come; and keeping alive the expectation of a better system, Judaism prepared the way for christianity, and was introductory to it. "The Acts of the Apostles," furnishes ample proof of the increased facility for propagating christianity, which the residence of Jews every where provided.

But this point should be looked at more particularly in the case of the Jews themselves. As a system, the economy of Moses was the law of but one nation; and amongst that people its beneficial influence was great. When the system was allowed to exert its influence, unfettered by the wickedness of the people, as in the reign of David and the greater part of that of Solomon, the claims of

Jehovah were universally acknowledged; worship was tendered at *his* throne, and the happiness of the people was such as to excite the admiration, not to say astonishment of all the countries around them. Nor should we quite overlook the six centuries of Jewish history that preceded the final dispersion of the people. The system was greatly corrupted by merely human traditions; but the people never fell back into idolatry after their return from Babylon, nay, they suffered grievously for their opposition to it; and the jealous eye with which the governments of the earth looked on Judea, and the avidity which they manifested to possess it, fully prove that the influence of Judaism was highly favorable on the industry, prosperity, civilization, and general happiness of the nation. The commercial character which, during this latter period of its history, the Jewish nation assumed, is important evidence of the same fact.

We shall adduce but one particular more here—*The Jewish writings themselves speak of the cessation of the Mosaic economy and the introduction of another to succeed it.* The typical nature of its services implies its temporary continuance; but besides this, Jeremiah expressly declares it: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, saying, Know ye the Lord; for they shall *all* know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Jer. xxxi. 31-34. From this passage Paul infers, Heb. viii. 7-13, that the mention of a new covenant necessarily implies the first to be old; and that if that first had been faultless, there would have been no occasion for the second. Compare also Haggai ii. 6, with Heb. xii. 26, 27. The prophecies which relate to the calling of the Gentiles into a state of union with the Jews, as one church, imply also the temporary duration and preparatory nature of Judaism.

Looking then at the connection which is thus shown to exist

between Judaism and christianity, let us adore the wisdom and glory of God. There is a unity of object and design in his moral dispensations, as great, and as worthy of himself as that which is apparent in the material universe: and as declarative of the divine origin of those systems in which it is manifested. And however mysterious, in certain points of view, his moral government of mankind may be, we are bound to observe and to adore the grace that is apparent in this arrangement. Filled with infinite compassion, he devised from eternity, the gracious plan which he has ever been executing in time, for alleviating the wretchedness of mankind, and bringing them back again to himself, to his fellowship, his image, his favor. Even Judaism, with its comparative obscurity, was a light to "show the path of life." With what gratitude should we welcome the clear revelation of the New Testament, and glorify God by a humble, entire, and thankful acquiescence in his plan for our salvation!

Having shown the connection between Judaism and christianity, as two successive links in the chain of divine dispensations, our next point is, *the proof of the peculiar claims of christianity as the consummation of the Jewish system.*

Christianity allows the divine origin of Judaism, and claiming to itself the same high prerogative, it abolishes the previously existing system, and asks for itself exclusive and universal regard. We have already looked at the coincidence between the one and the other, and the indirect proof thence arising, that both are parts of one great and wise plan of government; it only remains to glance at the direct proof.

This is assumed by every fact which it narrates, and every doctrine which it propounds; by every ordinance which it appoints, and every precept which it issues; by every invitation which it addresses, and every warning which it announces; by every promise which it makes, and every claim which it prefers. Its very unlikeness to all other systems, excites attention to its peculiar pretensions, and urges to the sober and deliberate investigation of its claims. The evidence of the divine origin of christianity is drawn from various and numerous sources, and is, in many respects, perpetually accumulating. A glance can only be taken at its leading points.

The truth of its facts is undeniable. That there was such a person as Jesus, who appeared in Judea 1800 years ago; that he wrought many miracles, and gained for himself general attention;

that he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and that he rose again from the dead on the third day, and was seen of many—are facts substantiated by every kind of evidence of which they are capable. We cannot behold the apostles of Jesus testifying these facts on the very spot, where these events took place, and in the presence of the very parties who were familiar with them; we cannot behold them risking all that was dear and valuable to them, and even life itself in asserting these facts; we cannot follow them from city to city, and from one country to another, still testifying the same things wherever they came; we cannot think of the unanimity with which they adhered to their testimony, although they were scattered in all directions over the whole face of the Roman empire, and not feel fully satisfied of their firm belief of the facts which they declared. That they were not mistaken is equally evident. None of the facts were ever denied but the resurrection, and if this had not been true, it might at once have been proved false by the production of the dead body, which the Jewish rulers never attempted.

In the history of Christ, and the early establishment of christianity, we trace the most minute and exact accomplishment of *the prophecies of the Old Testament*; prophecies which the Jews, the bitterest enemies of christianity, confess to have had in their possession for many centuries before the Christian era; whilst the miracles both of Jesus and his disciples were admitted, at the time, both by Jews and Gentiles, as undeniable.

To all this must be added the standing miracle of the unbelief of the Jews, and their separation from all other people, in direct fulfillment of ancient prophecy to this effect. Even in lands the most enlightened, and under governments the most liberal, such as Great Britain, they are still aliens, “a by-word and a reproach,” unto this day. Neither persuasion nor force has ever prevailed to induce their submission to christianity; no effort is even yet made by them to associate themselves in one body, or to regain the land of their fathers’ sepulchres. Every Jew is a living witness to the truth of that religion which he denies and rejects.

The *internal evidences* of the truth of christianity, that is, evidences drawn from the contents of the christian revelation, are also most convincing. The doctrines are too sublime to have originated in human invention; and the precepts are too pure to be referred to human authority. Its ordinances are too simple to have been instituted by men; and its biographical delineations are too rigidly impartial to have proceeded from any other than a divine source.

Its historical narratives receive full confirmation from pagan testimony; and the incidental coincidences are so numerous and striking, as to convince us that the writers were men of most undoubted veracity. The character of Christ is so natural, and yet so extraordinary; so unlike every other in all its parts, and yet so perfect as a whole; so completely at variance with all mere human conceptions, and yet so entire and unbroken in its mysterious combinations; and the history of his life is so wonderful, and yet so simply recorded, without one single note of admiration, or expression of surprise, that we are constrained to say, "This is the finger of God!"

The New Testament Scriptures were penned in the first century, and some of them shortly after the ascension of Christ, whilst numbers were still living who took part in the transactions which they record, and by whom, had they been false, they might have been at once discredited. And the canon of New Testament revelation was settled as we now have it, whilst the means of investigating its authenticity, were immediate and abundant.

The *continued existence* of christianity, notwithstanding all the opposition which has been made to it, and its perpetuity in its purity, notwithstanding all the corruptions which have assailed it, goes far to corroborate the truth of the gospel.

An appeal may be made also to *its efficacy*. Success alone cannot, indeed, prove either its authenticity or its divine authority. But that a system so hostile to all the conceptions and prejudices of men, so humbling to their pride, and so exclusive in its claims, should have succeeded, first to establish, and then to maintain itself in the earth, and this, too, by an instrumentality so apparently inadequate, and by means so simple and spiritual, can be explained only by admitting the interposition of divine power. Besides, wherever it is now promulgated, those effects follow upon which the proof of its claims rests. Men hear, and believe it. Idolatry falls before it, superstition is dispersed by it, error is confounded by its instructions, and prejudice yields to the force of its appeals. The ministration of the gospel commends itself to the conscience of him who hears; he feels that it is true; the secrets of his heart are made manifest; he forsakes his sins, abandons his follies, devotes himself to holiness of life, glories even in tribulations for Christ's sake, and lives and dies in hope of the heaven to come. Thus he has the witness in himself, and others have proof in his history, of the truth and divinity of the religion of Jesus.

All this goes to prove that christianity is what it professes to be;

consequently, it is the consummation of Judaism; *the last* of that series of divine dispensations under which man has been placed since the fall, and the *most perfect*; supplying what was defective, verifying what was typical, and shedding light on what was obscure in those which preceded it; whilst itself is incapable of change, and will be succeeded only by the eternal state.

Before we pass on to view christianity as it stands contrasted with all mere human systems, it is important to mark the circumstances which give to it its decided superiority, not only over these, but also over the Mosaic economy itself.

Its gracious revelations first claim attention. When viewed in connection with the Old Testament, these are shown to be rather the perfecting of what was before partially made known, than the discovery of any thing entirely new. Placed in contrast with the outlines of human systems, they are as light to the darkness. In both cases, they furnish a most decisive proof of the vast superiority, and transcendent importance of the Christian religion, and serve, still further, to justify its claims to a divine origin. We can only advert to a few prominent illustrations.

Take, first, *the nature of God*. The essential glory of God as "a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth," was clearly unfolded by previous revelations. Patriarchs rejoiced in the unity of God, and the Jewish Church celebrated it in her beautiful hymns of praise. Even the mystery of the divine essence, as three persons in one God, may be inferred from the Old Testament; but it is to christianity that we are indebted for the clear revelation of this fact—a fact, inexplicable by us, as to the mode of its existence, but invaluable to us, as connected with all the principles of moral government, and all our hopes of divine mercy. What is the nature of the distinctions, or the principle of unity amongst the three Divine Persons, it is not important for us to know. To inquire into it is as rash as it is useless; since no light is thrown upon it in the christian revelation, and there is nothing, by which we can illustrate it. But that which is revealed is of infinite importance to our holiness and happiness. All the dispensations of God towards men, recognize in their origin, and even as their basis, this mysterious peculiarity of the divine essence. This, at least, is plain, that without this peculiarity the dispensations of divine government could not have borne their present character. In

the light of christianity we recognize ecumenical, as well as essential relations in the Godhead. The Father is made known to us, as the great Source and Guardian of all authority in government; the Son as the Mediator between him and us, who has provided the basis, and become the medium of reconciliation; and the Holy Spirit as the Almighty Agent, by whom the actual reconciliation of individuals is effected. To the love of the Father we are pointed as the source of mediation; and to the grace of the Son, as the immediate source of the agency of the Spirit. Whatever of divine purpose is revealed to us centres here, and whatever of gracious promise is made for our encouragement has respect to this mystery; and the interesting truth that "these three are one," gives ample security to our confidence, and full confirmation to our hopes. All this is plainly superhuman in its origin, and beyond the comprehension of reason in its character; but it is so far from being contrary to reason, that as matter of revelation it solves the difficulties of moral government, and excites the confidence of immortal hope.

The principles of divine government are founded in eternal truth, and were known, to some extent, previously to the establishment of christianity. But it is to "the faith of Jesus" that we are indebted for the clear and full discovery of those principles, upon which the government of God proceeds, and especially as exercised towards men. The circumstances in which it is conducted, and the character which it bears, are only understood in the light of christianity; which is itself an authoritative dispensation of heavenly mercy. "The wages of sin is death;" "an everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord." In the case of angels who sinned, the natural course of justice took effect: they were immediately punished according to their desert. But man sinned, and was spared. The sentence of his equitable desert was suspended. And still, though "all flesh have corrupted their way," mercy abounds on every hand. Yet the law of God is immutable, and contempt of his authority cannot be indulged with impunity. To the inquiry, How is this? the christian revelation furnishes a satisfactory reply. It shows us, that to these circumstances of moral failure, God has adapted a remedial government, in which, through the interposition of his own Son, as a Mediator between him and us, the rights of his supreme authority are asserted, the guilt and misery to which man is exposed may be escaped, and his restoration to holiness and happiness secured. The obedience unto death of the incarnate Son of God, is

declared to be an adequate justification of the mercy of God to sinners, in that it is an adequate declaration of his abhorrence of sin. To the vicarious sacrifice of the cross, we are pointed as the basis of the divine government since the fall; as the medium of all the mercy which flows to mankind; as originating the special claims on repentance and faith, which the gospel now prefers; and as supplying the strongest motives to that holiness which the original law of our being requires. Mark the revealed statement of the case: "Him hath God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the forgiveness of sins, that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus." "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Thus, "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors of Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Whilst, then, the character of the divine government is pre-eminently gracious, it is so in full consistency with all the claims of his righteousness, and its design and tendency are to secure practical holiness.

Another feature of the divine government, which arrests universal attention, and often excites painful surprise, is, the enjoyment of outward comforts, and honorable distinctions upon earth, by those who fear not God; whilst the holy and good are often "desitute, afflicted, tormented." Christianity throws light upon this also. The afflictions of the righteous join with those of the Mediator himself, to express the divine abhorrence of sin, and thus become a valuable means of grace; suggesting serious admonition and counsel to the man who goeth on still in his iniquities; whilst the very circumstance of freedom from pain and distress should excite somewhat of suspicion, and lead to self-examination; for "what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" But more: christianity teaches us to view our existence as a whole. It has its commencement upon earth, but it is destined to an eternal state. God deals with it with

reference to its entire continuance, and the day is coming when, to the ungodly complainer, who had his portion in this life, it shall be said, "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented."

Equally valuable is the christian revelation, as the exclusive source of those directions which guide us to *the attainment of salvation*. We have just seen how, by the gracious purpose of God, and the infinite love of Christ in becoming the Mediator, a provision is made for human salvation. This theme occupies the New Testament revelation. The salvation of God is therein shown to include all the mercy which is necessary to our restoration to divine favor; all the power which is necessary to effect our recovery to the divine image; and all the grace which is necessary to consummate the whole in purity and glory everlasting. Pardon, full and free; righteousness, which justifies the ungodly; the gracious influences which sanctify the heart; adoption into the family of heaven; guidance and strength in the ways of the Lord; support in trials, and succor in temptation; preservation to the end; victory in death; and, in the world to come, everlasting life: this is the salvation which is in Christ Jesus. The christian ministry is a proclamation of this grace; an overture of this "benefit." The terms are these: "Be it known unto you, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things; from which they could not be justified by the law." "He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." "There is no salvation in any other." "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." Thousands have proved that "these are the true sayings of God;" and this is the glory of christianity, that it clearly reveals to us "the path of life."

The true doctrine of *the future state* is nowhere to be found but in the Christian Scriptures: "Jesus Christ hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." Here we learn, that when the body dies, the soul at once enters on a state of happiness or woe, according as it has become a partaker of saving mercy or otherwise. The state of happiness is the presence of Jesus: there the myriads of unfallen beings assemble: there "the spirits of just men made perfect" dwell. Knowledge and purity are the characteristic properties of that state. Its wor-

ship is unceasing, and its felicity complete. The state of misery is the abode of "the devil and his angels." Sin rages there without a single restraint, and justice rules there without one influence of mercy. There "the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." In the one or the other of these states all the dead are found, and we shall soon exist. At the end of time, "there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just, and of the unjust." A process of public judgment will justify the ways of God to men, and the wicked "shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal." Christianity dwells at large on these impressive themes; the very process of this world's dissolution is minutely described; and the glories of heaven stand strongly contrasted with the terrors of hell, and the hopes of believers with "the fearful looking-for of judgment," which even now alarms the ungodly.

"Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness." This system was plainly undiscoverable by human reason, and is as plainly inexhaustible by human study. The apostles well said, "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery; even the hidden wisdom, which God hath revealed unto us by his Spirit;" and as fitly did they exclaim, when they contemplated its unsearchable glory, "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" We may next fix our thoughts on its *characteristic features*.

Amongst these, no one can fail to notice its *spirituality*. The christian revelation is occupied with spiritual things, and the system, whose establishment it records, is a spiritual system. The truth which is to be believed is spiritual truth. The precepts which are enjoined are spiritual precepts. The institutions upon which its perpetuity and extending influence depend are spiritual ordinances; and the character which it proposes to form is a spiritual character, exhibiting a holy separation from the sins and fellowship of the world, delighting in divine contemplations and services, and animated by immortal hopes. It is strikingly adapted to the spiritual part of our nature. It has nothing wherewith to captivate the senses, or gratify the carnal-minded. It works by motives, and these are all addressed to the conscience, and drawn from "the word of truth."

Purity is another distinctive feature of christianity. Its exhibition of mercy proceeds upon the declaration of divine holiness, in a propitiation for sin; and its entire efficiency is ascribed to the Holy Spirit, who is the source of that only which is holy and good.

The "partakers of the benefit" are known by their holiness. Every pretension to faith, every indulgence of hope, and every profession of zeal, that is not substantiated by the fruits of holiness, is discarded by christianity as altogether foreign to its influence. It tolerates no sin; it winks at no improprieties; it allows no unholy associations; it makes the world itself the judge of what is becoming its disciples, and then says to them, "Abstain from all appearance of evil." All the motives which it employs are motives to holiness; and the example of the Saviour is a pattern of perfect holiness. An unholy christian is a contradiction in terms. Humility of mind; penitential sorrow on account of sin; delight in spiritual communion, and patient acquiescence in the divine will, are prominent features in every true christian's character.

A third characteristic of christianity is *benevolence*. Such a manestation of love as that which it is the grand design of christianity to reveal, is nowhere else to be found. It is so disinterested, so magnanimous, so enduring, that it is altogether unequalled, and must forever remain unequalled, even in the developments of the divine glory. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." This spirit of benevolence is, however, that which breathes in the religion of the New Testament. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." What system proposes such motives to love, or requires a practical benevolence so costly and extensive? And when the early christians sold their possessions, and consecrated their all to the cause of the Redeemer, contented to derive the same supply as the poorest of their brethren from the common stock; when they "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that in heaven they had a better and an enduring substance;" and for an apostle's life even "laid down their own necks"—this spirit of love stood out in all its loveliness, the beauty and glory of "the faith of Jesus."

We will refer only to another characteristic of christianity, its *universality*. It is adapted to the wants and circumstances of all mankind. Unaffected by all the varieties of their outward condition and mental character, it is calculated to exert its influence alike in every clime, country, and amidst all circumstances. It addresses itself to men as men and as sinners, and offers its benefits to all

without any reference to age or sex, to rank or class, and without any exception or restriction whatsoever.

The past history and present aspect of christianity supply a strong argument in favor of its universal prevalence. It has already been subjected to every species of trial, and has stood the test of all conceivable opposition. Notwithstanding all the insidious influence which attempted to subvert it at the beginning, and all the open violence which threatened to destroy it, it spread with a rapidity strikingly indicative of its divine and matchless energy. And notwithstanding all the persecutions and corruptions of later ages, christianity still remains. Neither paganism, with all its monstrous abominations, nor Mohammedanism, with all its arrogant pretensions; neither popery, with all its efforts to conceal the Scriptures, nor infidelity, with all its attempts to disprove their divinity; neither the civil power, which has been arrayed against it, nor the ecclesiastical authority which has endeavored to undermine it, have lowered in the least degree the tone of its pretensions, nor shorn christianity of one ray of her glory. At this hour she looks abroad on the world, and claims the dominion of it for herself.

The spirit of christianity is diffusive. No man can receive the gospel, and hoard it with impunity. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come, and let him that heareth say, Come." The natural influence of "the truth as it is in Jesus," in the hearts of those who embrace it, is in unison with this claim. If the love of God in Christ has cheered and saved us, it is as natural as it is holy to "show pity and compassion every man to his brother," and to be constrained by motives of all powerful benevolence to seek his salvation too. Christianity has in it, and carries along with it, the means of its own propagation; and if in any case its principles do not thus work, every one knows that it is because its natural tendency is by some means impeded and checked. Even those who reject christianity, despise the man who, professing to embrace it, is either ashamed to own it, or backward to propagate it.

Its universal prevalence has been long retarded, and may yet, through many infirmities, and much coldness, advance but slowly; yet its ultimate attainment is certain. Thus saith the Lord, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations." "His counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure." "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts."

The defective exhibition of practical christianity is a serious

evil, and the guilt which it involves is of fearful magnitude. But the exception taken to its claims on this ground is altogether out of place. None of the adversaries of christianity can more loudly condemn its defective influence than does christianity itself. There is nothing in this to disprove its divine authority; nothing to detract from the value of its revelations; nothing to discredit its practical character. Defective as it is, it is still christianity; and its excellence is still superlative with whatever it may be compared; we feel, therefore, that we are justified in asserting its *exclusive claims*.

It claims to stand alone; allowing no rival; admitting no compeer. Let it be viewed as it is *distinguished from the economy of Moses*. It every where treats that economy as abolished by its own Author, and shows how all its services were typical of christianity, and introductory to it. Hence, when some of the believing Hebrews, in the first age of christianity, would have mixed up the ceremonies of Moses with "the faith of Jesus," the apostles showed that this was virtually to renounce the new system altogether. "The law," says Paul, "was our schoolmaster, to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I, Paul, say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing." And in another place he thus argues the decided superiority of the new dispensation:—"If the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away; how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which was done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious." And whether we look at christianity in the clearness of its revelations, or the simplicity of its services; in the benevolence of its spirit, or the universality of its aspect; it is impossible not to see how fully this argument of the apostle's is sustained.

Christianity is also to be *contrasted with all mere human systems*. And let us here confine ourselves to one point. It has been shown

that the spirit of christianity, is a spirit of purity and love, patience and zeal. This is the uniform spirit of christianity, and let its claims be tried by this test. Is not this spirit peculiar to itself? Survey the religions of the world. Look first at popery; is this *its* spirit? Let the sale of indulgences, as a license to sin, and the tortures of the Inquisition testify. Look at Mohammedanism; is this *its* spirit? Let the dragooning system by which its first establishment was secured, at the point of the sword, and the arbitrary and merciless character of its present adherents, testify. Look at the various pagan systems, both of ancient and of modern times, and ask all around the globe for such a spirit as that which characterizes christianity, and where will you find it? The ancient systems of Greece and Rome, the most refined of all that covered the earth, even patronized vice, and civilized it. It was reserved for christianity to suppress and destroy it. Even *they* fostered the pride of intellect, flattered the selfishness of the heart, and shut the door of knowledge to all but the initiated. It was reserved for christianity to show the beauty of humility, to assert the claims of benevolence, and to unfold its mysteries to all who will listen to its announcements. Whilst they sanctioned hatred and ill-will, christianity requires us to "love our enemies." And such is still the glory of christianity, and the proof of its exclusive character. Debauchery, intemperance, and vice in all its forms, are overthrown by its influence, even where, as in the Southern Pacific, they had raged for ages without restraint, and assumed to themselves the claims of virtue. The haughty wanderers of the desert, over whose unbridled independence no restraint could be placed, and the proud, sophisticated Brahmin of the East, who boasted of his great wisdom and superior caste, sit together at the feet of its messengers, and learn of them. The war-whoop of the Indian, and the yell of the African, are changed by its influence into the song of peace, and the voice of prayer. The christianized portion of the then enslaved population of the West Indies have shown, in our own day, a memorable example. "We cannot shed blood," said they: "our religion forbids us." Wherever christianity comes, the habitations of cruelty become the abodes of joy and peace. The infanticide of the South Seas has been destroyed by it; the suttees of Bengal have been forbidden by it; the devotees of Juggernaut have been diminished by it; yea, the very Hottentots themselves, have eclipsed in benevolence the glory of the most polished pagans, in building hospitals for their sick, and alms-houses for their poor. Nor is this all; but in every land to

which the modern triumphs of christianity have extended, love to the souls of men has appeared in its own proper spirit of proselytism, which labors to convey the mercy it receives. Let christianity calmly abide this test of its importance, this justification of its exclusive claims.

It asserts, further, its exclusive claims as *opposed to all the devices of self-righteousness*. Where the light of revelation is freely diffused, the depravity of man, ever accommodating itself to circumstances, whilst it is every where the same in its principles, assumes other forms, and all to evade the claims of christianity. Hence the numerous methods by which men, bearing the christian name, propose to themselves to obtain mercy. For all these "the faith of Jesus" has but one reply. To the partial obedience, which hopes for acceptance, as if it was entire, and the penitence, which hopes for forgiveness, for its own sake; to the plea of amiableness, which deems itself a substitute for righteousness, and the plea of outward reformation, which thinks itself a substitute for atonement; to the claim of pious descent, as if grace was hereditary; and of religious formality, as if God regarded not the heart; to one and all of these devices christianity says, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin;" and announces the will of God, that "he that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." In this exclusive claim it is fully justified by all the proof of its divine origin, by all the evidence of its paramount excellence, by all the influence of its characteristic spirit, and by all its adaptation in the method of mercy which it reveals, both to the rights of God, and to the circumstances of men.

"Are these things so?" Then christianity should be cordially and universally received. In rejecting christianity as the great remedial system of divine appointment, we reject the counsel of God against ourselves. If such be its claims, it demands the immediate and cordial reception of all to whom it comes. It is the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation. "He that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God." He that sinneth here, "sinneth against his own soul." He that trifles here, trifles with the opening realities of eternity. Delay here is presumption on the mercy, and contempt of the judgment of Him who ruleth over all. Away with every vile excuse and procrastinating spirit. Christianity is true: it is the only religion that comes from above; its benefits are of inestimable value. Life is short and uncertain. "The Judge standeth before

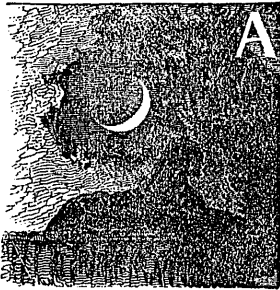
the door." "Now is the accepted time, *now* is the day of salvation." "Repent *now*, and believe the gospel."

"Are these things so?" Then christianity should be steadfastly and invariably maintained. Christians should value the trust that is lodged with them, and feel their obligations to "hold fast the form of sound words." Let them watch for the purity of christianity. Let them labor to maintain the vigor of christianity. Let them "continue in the faith grounded and settled." Let them not be deceived in any wise; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. There is one God, and Father of all; one Mediator between God and man; one Spirit; one faith; one gospel; one hope; one heaven.

"Are these things so?" Then christianity should be vigorously and universally propagated. Let but this truth be deeply infixd in every breast, that the gospel alone can save mankind, and that this gospel is to be made known through human instrumentality; let but christians reflect that they have received the gospel on the express condition of their spreading it; and let them but yield themselves to the legitimate influence of their own holy principles, and the opening facilities of God's providence would be promptly seized; the wealth of the Church would be cheerfully poured into the treasury of God; the talents of the Church would be fully consecrated to the cause of the Saviour; all hearts and all voices would unite to testify the gospel of the grace of God, and to pray for the promised effusion of the Holy Spirit, and "the earth" would even *now* "be filled with the glory of the Lord." "Awake, awake! put on thy strength, O Zion." "Awake, O arm of the Lord! awake! awake!"

SECTION III.

THE ASPECT OF PROPHECY ON THE CONDITION OF THE JEWS.



A FINE remark of the Apostle Peter is, that "we have a more *sure word of prophecy*, unto which we do well that we take heed." One idea thus conveyed is, that prophecy is continually adding certainty to its truth, by the passing events of time. On no subject is this more apparent than in connection with the Jews. In reading the larger portion of a chapter here quoted from "*Keith's Evidence of Prophecy*," the reader will be struck with the extraordinary fact, that prophecy is indeed history anticipated. Thus does he place before us

PROPHECY IN CONNECTION WITH THE PAST.

While Moses, as a divine legislator, promised to the Israelites that their prosperity, and happiness, and peace would all keep pace with their obedience, he threatened them with a gradation of punishments, rising in proportion to their impenitence and iniquity;—and neither in blessings nor in chastisements hath the Ruler among the nations dealt in like manner with any people. But their wickedness and consequent calamities greatly preponderated, and are yet prolonged. The retrospect of the history of the Jews, since their dispersion, could not, at the present day, be drawn in truer terms than in the unpropitious auguries of their prophet above three thousand two hundred years ago. In the most ancient of all records, we read the lively representation of the present condition of the most singular people upon earth. Moses professed to look through the glass of ages: the revolution of many centuries has brought the object immediately before us—we may scrutinize the features of futurity as they then appeared to his prophetic gaze,—and we may determine between the probabilities whether they were conjectures of a mortal,

who "knows not what a day may bring forth," or the revelation of that Being, "in whose sight a thousand years are but as yesterday."

"I will scatter you among the heathen, and draw out a sword after you,—and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste; and upon them that are left of you I will send a faintness into their hearts, in the land of their enemies; and the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them—and they shall flee as fleeing from a sword—and they shall fall when none pursueth—and ye shall have no power to stand before your enemies—and ye shall perish among the heathen;—and the land of your enemies shall eat you up—and they that are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity in your enemies' land; and also, in the iniquities of their fathers, shall they pine away with them,—and yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them to destroy them utterly. Lev. xxvi. 33, 36, 37, 38, 39, 44. And the Lord shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen whither the Lord will lead you. Deut. iv. 27. The Lord shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies—thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them—and shall be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth. Deut. xxviii. 25, 28, 29, 32, 33, 34, 37–45, 46. The Lord shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart,—and thou shalt grope at noonday as the blind gropeth in darkness, and thou shalt not prosper in thy ways, and thou shalt be only oppressed and spoiled evermore, and no man shall save thee. Thy sons and thy daughters shall be given to another people. There shall be no might in thine hand. The fruit of thy land and all thy labor shall a nation which thou knowest not eat up, and thou shalt be only oppressed and crushed away—so that thou shalt be mad for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see. The Lord shall bring thee unto a nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have known,—and thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word among all the nations whither the Lord shall lead thee. Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness and with gladness of heart for the abundance of all things, therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger and in thirst—and in nakedness, and in want of all things—and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee. And the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plague of thy seed, even great plagues and of long continuance. Deut. xxviii. 47, 48, 59. All these curses shall come

upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, and they shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder, and upon thy seed forever,—and it shall come to pass, that as the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you—so the Lord will rejoice over you to destroy and to bring you to naught, and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it, and the Lord will scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other—and among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest; but the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind—and thy life shall hang in doubt before thee, and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life. In the morning thou shalt say, would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see.” Deut. xxviii. 63–67.

The writings of all the succeeding prophets abound with similar predictions. “I will cause them to be removed into all nations of, the earth. I will cast them out into a land that they know not, where I will show them no favor. I will feed them with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink. Jer. ix. 16. I will scatter them also among the heathen—whom neither they nor their fathers have known. I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, to be a reproach, a proverb, a taunt, and a curse in all places whither I shall drive them; and I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence among them, till they be consumed from off the land that I gave unto them and to their fathers. Jer. xxiv. 9, 10; xv. 7. I will bereave them of children. I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, and an astonishment, and a hissing, and a reproach, even among all the nations whither I have driven them. Jer. xxix. 18. I will execute judgment in thee—and the whole remnant of thee will I scatter into all the winds. Ezek. v. 10. I will scatter them among the nations, among the heathen, and disperse them in the countries. Ezek. xii. 15. They shall cast their silver in the streets, and their gold shall be removed—their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord; they shall not satisfy their souls, neither fill their bowels, because it is the stumbling-block of their iniquity. Ezek. vii. 19. I will sift the house of Israel among the nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon

the earth. Death shall be chosen rather than life by all the residue of them that remain of this evil family, which remain in all the places whither I have driven them, saith the Lord of hosts. They shall be wanderers among the nations. Amos ix. 9; Jer. viii. 3; Hos. ix. 17. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and convert and be healed. Then said I, Lord, how long? and he answered, Until the cities be wasted, without inhabitants, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, —and the Lord have removed men far away—and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land. Is. vi. 10, 11, 12. Though they go into captivity before their enemies, thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them,—and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good. But he that scattereth Israel will gather him and keep him. Jer. xxxi. 10. And, fear not thou, my servant Jacob, and be not dismayed, O Israel: for behold I will save thee from afar off, and thy seed from the land of their captivity. I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee; but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure; yet will I not utterly cut thee off, or leave thee wholly unpunished. Jer. xlvi. 27, 28. The children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim. Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king, and shall fear the Lord and his goodness, in the latter days." Hos. iii. 4, 5.

All these predictions respecting the Jews are delivered with the clearness of history and the confidence of truth. They represent the manner, the extent, the nature, and the continuance of their dispersion—their persecutions—their blindness—their sufferings—their feebleness—their fearfulness—their pusillanimity—their ceaseless wanderings—their hardened impenitence—their insatiable avarice—and the grievous oppression—the continued spoliation—the marked distinction—the universal mockery—the unextinguishable existence, and unlimited diffusion of their race. *They were to be plucked from off their own land—smitten before their enemies—consumed from off their own land, and left few in number.* The Romans destroyed their cities and ravaged their country, and the inhabitants who escaped from the famine, the pestilence, the sword, and the captivity were forcibly expelled from Judea, and fled as houseless wanderers into all the surrounding regions. But they clung, for a time, around

the land which their fathers had possessed for so many ages, and on which they looked as an inheritance allotted by Heaven to their race; and they would not relinquish their claim to the possession of it by any single overthrow, however great. Unparalleled as were the miseries which they had suffered in the slaughter of their kindred, the loss of their property and their homes, the annihilation of their power, the destruction of their capital city, and in the devastation of their country by Titus—yet the fugitive and exiled Jews soon resorted again to their native soil; and sixty years had scarcely elapsed, when, deceived by an impostor, allured by the hope of a triumphant Messiah, and excited to revolt by intolerable oppression, they strove, by a vigorous and united, but frantic effort, to reconquer Judea—to cast off the power of the Romans, which had every where crushed them, and to rescue themselves and their country from ruin. A war, which their enthusiasm and desperation alike protracted for two years, and in which, exclusive of a vast number that perished by famine, and sickness, and fire, five hundred and eighty thousand Jews are said to have been slain,—terminated in their entire discomfiture and final banishment. They were so beset on every side, and cut down in detached portions by the Roman soldiers, that, in the words of a heathen historian, very few of them escaped. Fifty of their strongholds were razed to the ground, and their cities sacked and consumed by fire; Judea was laid waste and left as a desert. Though a similar fate never befell any other people without proving the extirpation of their race or the last of their miseries, that awful prediction, in its reference to the Jews, met its full completion—which yet they survived to await, in every country, when exiles from their own, an accumulation of almost unceasing calamities, protracted throughout many succeeding ages. The cities shall be wasted without inhabitant. Every city shall be forsaken, and not a man dwell therein. They were rooted out of their land in anger, and in wrath, and in great indignation. Isaiah vi. 11; Jer. iv. 29; Deut. xxix. 28. A public edict of the emperor Adrian rendered it a capital crime for a Jew to set a foot in Jerusalem; and prohibited them from viewing it, even at a distance. Heathens, Christians, and Mahometans have alternately possessed Judea: it has been the prey of the Saracens:—the descendants of Ishmael have often overrun it: the children of Israel have alone been denied the possession of it, though thither they ever wish to return—and though it forms the only spot on earth where the ordinances of their religion can be observed. And, amid all the

revolutions of states, and the extinction of many nations, in so long a period, the Jews alone have not only ever been aliens in the land of their fathers, but whenever any of them have been permitted, at any period since the time of their dispersion, to sojourn there, they have experienced even more contumelious treatment than elsewhere. Benjamin of Tudela, who traveled in the twelfth century through great part of Europe and of Asia, found the Jews every where oppressed, particularly in the Holy Land. And to this day, while the Jews who reside in Palestine, or who resort thither in old age that their bones may not be laid in a foreign land, are alike ill-treated and abused by Greeks, Armenians, and Europeans, the haughty deportment of the despotic Turkish soldier, and the abject state of the poor and helpless Jews, are painted to the life by the prophet. The stranger that is within thee shall get up above thee very high, and thou shalt come down very low. Deut. xxviii. 43.

But the extent is still more remarkable than the manner of their dispersion. Many prophecies describe it, and foretold, thousands of years ago, what we now behold. They have been scattered among the nations,—among the heathen,—among the people, even from one end of the earth unto the other. They have been removed into all the kingdoms of the earth; the whole remnant of them have been scattered into all the winds; they have been dispersed throughout all countries, and sifted among the nations like as corn is sifted in a sieve, and yet not the least grain has fallen upon the earth—though dispersed throughout all nations, they have remained distinct from them all. And there is not a country on the face of the earth where the Jews are unknown. They are found alike in Europe, Asia, America, and Africa. They are citizens of the world, without a country. Neither mountains, nor rivers, nor deserts, nor oceans,—which are the boundaries of other nations,—have terminated their wanderings. They abound in Poland, in Holland, in Russia, and in Turkey. In Germany, Spain, Italy, France, and Britain they are more thinly scattered. In Persia, China, and India—on the east and on the west of the Ganges,—they are few in number among the heathen. They have trod the snows of Siberia, and the sands of the burning desert;—and the European traveler hears of their existence in regions which he cannot reach,—even in the very interior of Africa, south of Timbuctoo. From Moscow to Lisbon—from Japan to Britain—from Borneo to Archangel—from Hindostan to Honduras, no inhabitant of any nation upon the earth would be known in all the intervening regions but a Jew alone.

But the history of the Jews throughout the whole world, and in every age since their dispersion, verifies the most minute predictions concerning them,—and to a recital of facts too well authenticated to admit of dispute, or too notorious for contradiction, may be added a description of them all in the very terms of the prophecy. In the words of Basnage, the elaborate historian of the Jews—“Kings have often employed the severity of their edicts and the hands of the executioner to destroy them—the seditious multitude has performed massacres and executions infinitely more tragical than the princes. Both kings and people, heathens, christians, and Mahometans, who are opposite in so many things, have united in the design of ruining this nation, and have not been able to effect it. The Bush of Moses, surrounded with flames, has always burnt without consuming. The Jews have been driven from all places of the world, which has only served to disperse them in all parts of the universe. They have, from age to age, run through misery and persecution, and torrents of their own blood.” Their banishment from Judea was only the prelude to their expulsion from city to city, and from kingdom to kingdom. Their dispersion over the globe is an irrefragable evidence of this, and many records remain that amply corroborate the fact. Not only did the first and second centuries of the Christian era see them twice rooted out of their own land, but each succeeding century has teemed with new calamities to that once chosen but now long-rejected race. The history of their sufferings is a continued tale of horror. Revolt is natural to the oppressed; and their frequent seditions were productive of renewed privations and distresses. Emperors, kings, and califs all united in subjecting them to the same “iron yoke.” Constantine, after having suppressed a revolt which they raised, and having commanded their ears to be cut off, dispersed them as fugitives and vagabonds into different countries, whither they carried, in terror to their kindred, the mark of their suffering and infamy. In the fifth century they were expelled from Alexandria, which had long been one of their safest places of resort. Justinian, from whose principles of legislation a wiser and more humane policy ought to have emanated, yielded to none of his predecessors in hostility and severity against them. He abolished their synagogues—prohibited them even from entering into caves for the exercise of their worship—rendered their testimony inadmissible, and deprived them of the natural right of bequeathing their property; and when such oppressive enactments led to insurrectionary movements among the Jews, their property was confiscated, many of them were beheaded,

and so bloody an execution of them prevailed, that, as is expressly related, "all the Jews of that country trembled:" *a trembling heart was given them.* In the reign of the tyrant Phocas, a general sedition broke out among the Jews in Syria. They and their enemies fought with equal desperation. They obtained the mastery in Antioch; but a momentary victory only led to a deeper humiliation, and to the infliction of more aggravated cruelties than before. They were soon subdued and taken captive; many of them were maimed, others executed, and all the survivors were banished from the city. Gregory the Great afforded them a temporary respite from oppression, which only rendered their spoliation more complete, and their suffering more acute, under the cruel persecutions of Heraclius. That emperor, unable to satiate his hatred against them by inflicting a variety of punishments on those who resided within his own dominions, and by finally expelling them from the empire, exerted so effectually against them his influence in other countries, that they suffered under a general and simultaneous persecution from Asia to the farthest extremities of Europe. In Spain, conversion, imprisonment, or banishment were their only alternatives. In France, a similar fate awaited them. They fled from country to country, seeking in vain any rest for the sole of their foot. Even the wide extended plains of Asia afforded them no resting-place, but have often been spotted with their blood, as well as the hills and valleys of Europe. Mahomet, whose imposture has been the law and the faith of such countless millions, has, from the precepts of the Koran, infused into the minds of his followers a spirit of rancor and enmity towards the despised and misbelieving Jews. He set an early example of persecution against them, which the Mahometans have not yet ceased to imitate. In the third year of the Hegira, he besieged the castles which they possessed in the Hegiasa, compelled those who had fled to them for refuge and defence to an unconditional surrender, banished them the country, and parted their property among his Mussulmans. He dissipated a second time their recombined strength, massacred many of them, and imposed upon the remnant a permanent tribute. The Church of Rome ever ranked and treated them as heretics. The canons of different councils pronounced excommunication against those who should favor or uphold the Jews against christians—enjoined all christians neither to eat nor to hold any commerce with them—prohibited them from bearing public offices or having christian slaves—appointed them to be distinguished by a mark—decreed that their children should be taken from them, and

brought up in monasteries; and, what is equally descriptive of the low estimation in which they were held, and of the miseries to which they were subjected, there was often a necessity, even for those who otherwise oppressed them, to ordain that it was not lawful to take the life of a Jew without any cause. Hallam's account of the Jews during the Middle Ages is short, but significant. "They were every where the objects of popular insult and oppression, frequently of a general massacre. A time of festivity to others was often the season of mockery and persecution to them. It was the custom at Toulouse to smite them on the face every Easter. At Beziers they were attacked with stones from Palm Sunday to Easter, an anniversary of insult and cruelty generally productive of bloodshed, and to which the populace were regularly instigated by a sermon from the bishop. It was the policy of the kings of France to employ them as a sponge to suck their subjects' money, which they might afterwards express with less odium than direct taxation would incur. It is almost incredible to what a length extortion of money from the Jews was carried. A series of alternate persecution and tolerance was borne by this extraordinary people with an invincible perseverance, and a talent of accumulating riches which kept pace with the exactions of their plunderers. Philip Augustus released all christians in his dominions from their debts to the Jews, reserving a fifth part to himself. He afterwards expelled the whole nation from France." St. Louis twice banished, and twice recalled them; and Charles VI. finally expelled them from France. From that country, according to Mezeray, they were seven times banished. They were expelled from Spain; and, by the lowest computation, one hundred and seventy thousand families departed from that kingdom. "At Verdun, Treves, Mentz, Spire, Worms, many thousands of them were pillaged and massacred. A remnant was saved by a feigned and transient conversion; but the greater part of them barricaded their houses, and precipitated themselves, their families, and their wealth into the rivers or the flames. These massacres and depredations on the Jews were renewed at each crusade." In England, also, they suffered great cruelty and oppression at the same period. During the Crusades, the whole nation united in the persecution of them. In a single instance, at York, fifteen hundred Jews, including women and children, were refused all quarter—could not purchase their lives at any price—and frantic with despair, perished by a mutual slaughter. Each master was the murderer of his family, when death became their only deliverance.

The scene of the castle of Massada, which was their last fortress in Palestine, and where nearly one thousand perished in a similar manner, was renewed in the castle of York. So despised and hated were they, that the barons, when contending with Henry III., to ingratiate themselves with the populace, ordered seven hundred Jews to be slaughtered at once, their houses to be plundered, and their synagogue to be burned. Richard, John, and Henry III. often extorted money from them; and the last, by the most unscrupulous and unsparing measures, usually defrayed his extraordinary expenses with their spoils, and impoverished some of the richest among them. His extortions at last became so enormous, and his oppressions so grievous, that, in the words of the historian, he reduced the miserable wretches to desire leave to depart the kingdom; but even self-banishment was denied them. Edward I. completed their misery, seized on all their property, and banished them the kingdom. Above fifteen thousand Jews were rendered destitute of any residence, were despoiled to the utmost, and reduced to ruin. Nearly four centuries elapsed before the return to Britain of this abused race.

Some remarkable circumstances attest, without a prolonged detail of their miseries, that they have been a people every where peculiarly oppressed. The first unequivocal attempt at legislation in France was an ordinance against the Jews. And towards them alone one of the noblest charters of liberty on earth—Magna Charta, the Briton's boast—legalized an act of injustice. For many ages after their dispersion, they found no resting-place in Europe, Africa, or Asia, but penetrated in search of one to the extremities of the world. In Mahometan countries they have ever been subject to persecution, contempt, and every abuse. They are in general confined to one particular quarter of every city (as they formerly were to Old Jewry in London); they are restricted to a peculiar dress; and in many places shut up at stated hours. In Hamadan, as in all parts of Persia, "they are an abject race, and support themselves by driving a peddling trade; they live in a state of great misery—pay a monthly tax to the government—and are not permitted to cultivate the ground, or to have landed possessions." They cannot appear in public, much less perform their religious ceremonies, without being treated with scorn and contempt. The revenues of the Prince of Bohara are derived from a tribute paid by five hundred families of Jews, who are assessed according to the means of each. In Zante they exist in miserable indigence, and are exposed to considerable oppression. At Tripoli, when any criminal is condemned to death,

the first Jew who happens to be at hand is compelled to become the executioner,—a degradation to the children of Israel to which no Moor is ever subjected. In Egypt they are despised and persecuted incessantly. In Arabia they are treated with more contempt than in Turkey. The remark is common to the most recent travelers both in Asia and Africa, that the Jews themselves are astonished, and the natives indignant, at any act of kindness, or even of justice, that is performed towards any of this “despised nation” and persecuted people. In Southey’s Letters from Spain and Portugal, this remarkable testimony is borne respecting them: “Till within the last fifty years the burning of a Jew formed the highest delight of the Portuguese; they thronged to behold this triumph of the faith, and the very women shouted with transport as they saw the agonized martyr writhe at the stake. Neither sex nor age could save this persecuted race; and Antonio Joseph de Silvia, the best of their dramatic writers, was burned alive because he was a Jew.” Few years have elapsed since there was a severe persecution against them in Prussia and in Germany, and in several of the smaller states of the latter country they are not permitted to sell any goods even in the common markets. The pope has lately re-enacted some severe edicts against them: and ukases have recently been issued in quick succession, restraining the Jews from all traffic throughout the interior government of Russia. They are absolutely prohibited, on pain of immediate banishment, from “offering any article to sale,” whether in public or private, either by themselves or by others. They are not allowed to reside, even for a limited period, in any of the cities of Russia, without an express permission from government, which is granted only in cases where their services are necessary, or directly beneficial to the state. A refusal to depart when they become obnoxious to so rigid a law subjects them to be treated as vagrants; and none are suffered to protect or to shelter them. Though the observance of such edicts must, in numerous instances, leave them destitute of any means of support, yet their breach or neglect exposes them to oppression under the sanction of the law, and to every privation and insult without remedy or appeal. And though they may thus become the greatest objects of pity, all laws of humanity are reversed, by imperial decrees, towards them. For those who harbor Jews that are condemned to banishment for having done what all others may innocently do, are, as the last Russian ukase respecting them bears, “amenable to the laws as the abettors of vagrants,” and, as in numberless instances besides, no man shall save them,

These facts, though they form but a brief and most imperfect record, and therefore but a very faint image of all their sufferings, show that the Jews have been removed into all kingdoms for their hurt—that a sword has been drawn after them—that they have found no rest for the sole of their foot—that they have not been able to stand before their enemies;—there has been no might in their hands—their very avarice has proved their misery—they have been spoiled evermore—they have been oppressed and crushed away—they have been mad for the sight of their eyes that they did see, as the tragical scenes at Massada, and York, and many others testify—they have often been left in hunger, and thirst, and nakedness, and in want of all things;—a trembling heart, and sorrow of mind have been their portion;—they have often had none assurance of their life;—their plagues have been wonderful and great, and of long continuance,—and that they have been for a sign and for a wonder during many generations.

But the predictions rest not even here. It was distinctly prophesied that the Jews would reject the gospel; that, from the meanness of his mortal appearance, and the hardness of their hearts, they would not believe in a suffering Messiah,—that they would be smitten with blindness and astonishment of heart—that they would continue long, having their ears deaf, their eyes closed, and their hearts hardened—and that they would grope at noonday as the blind gropeth in darkness. Deut. xxviii. 29. And the great body of the Jewish nation has continued long to reject christianity. They retain the prophecies, but discover not their light, having obscured them by their traditions. Many of their received opinions are so absurd and impious, their rites are so unmeaning and frivolous, their ceremonies are so minute, frivolous, and contemptible,—that the account of them would surpass credulity, were it not a transcript of their customs and of their manners, and drawn from their own authorities. No words can more strikingly or justly represent the contrast between their irrational tenets—their degraded religion—their superstitious observances, and the dictates of enlightened reason, and of the gospel which they villify, than the emphatic description, “They grope at noonday, as the blind gropeth in darkness.” And, if any other instances be wanting of the prediction of events infinitely exceeding human foresight, the dispositions of all nations respecting them are revealed as explicitly as their own. That the Jews have been a proverb, an astonishment, a by-word, a taunt, and a hissing among all nations,—though one of the most wonderful of facts, unparalleled in

the whole history of mankind, and as inconceivable in its prediction as miraculous in its accomplishment,—is a truth that stands not in need of any illustration or proof—and of which witnesses could be found in every country under heaven. Many prophecies concerning the Jews, of more propitious import, that yet remain to be accomplished, are reserved for testimonies to future generations, *if not to the present*. But it is worthy of remark, as prophesied concerning them, that they have not been utterly destroyed, though a full end has been made of their enemies,—that the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Romans—though some of the mightiest monarchies that ever existed,—have not a single representative on earth; while the Jews, oppressed and vanquished, banished and enslaved, and spoiled evermore, have survived them all—and to this hour overspread the world. Of all the nations around Judea, the Persians alone, who restored them from the Babylonish captivity, yet remain a kingdom.

The Scriptures also declare that the covenant with Abraham,—that God would give the land of Canaan to his seed for an everlasting possession,—would never be broken; but that the children of Israel shall be taken from among the heathen,—gathered on every side, and brought into their own land, to dwell forever where their fathers dwelt. Three thousand seven hundred years have elapsed since the promise was given to Abraham. And is it less than a miracle, that, if this promise had been made to the descendants of any but of Abraham alone, it could not now possibly have been realized, as there exists not on earth the known and acknowledged posterity of any other individual, or almost of any nation, contemporary with him?

That the people of a single state (which was of very limited extent and power in comparison of some of the monarchies which surrounded it) should first have been rooted up out of their own land in anger, wrath, and great indignation, the like of which was never experienced by the mightiest among the ancient empires, which all fell imperceptibly away at a lighter stroke,—and that afterward, though scattered among all nations, and finding no ease among them all, they should have withstood eighteen centuries of almost unremitting persecution, and that after so many generations have elapsed, they should still retain their distinctive form, or, as it may be called, their individuality of character, is assuredly the most marvelous event that is recorded in the history of nations; and if it be not acknowledged as a “sign,” it is in reality as well as in appearance “a wonder,” the most inexplicable within the province of the philosophy of history.

But that, after the endurance of such manifold woes, such perpetual spoliation, and so many ages of unmitigated suffering, during which their life was to hang in doubt within them, they should still be, as actually they are, the possessors of great wealth; and that this fact should so strictly accord with the prophecy, which describes them, on their final restoration to Judea, as taking their silver and their gold with them (Isa. lx. 9); and also that, though captives or fugitives "few in number," and the miserable remnant of an extinguished kingdom at the time they were "scattered abroad,"—they should be to this hour a numerous people,—and that this should have been expressly implied in the prophetic declaration descriptive of their condition on their restoration to Judea, after all their wanderings,—that the land shall be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants,—and that place shall not be found for them (Isa. lxix. 19; Zech. x. 10) are facts which as clearly show, to those who consider them at all, the operation of an overruling Providence, as the revelation of such an inscrutable destiny is the manifest dictate of inspiration.

Such are the *prophecies*, and such are the *facts* respecting the Jews;—and from premises like these the feeblest logician may draw a moral demonstration. If they had been utterly destroyed—if they had mingled among the nations,—if, in the space of nearly eighteen centuries after their dispersion, they had become extinct as a people, even if they had been secluded in a single region, and had remained united—if their history had been analogous to that of any nation upon the earth, an attempt might, with some plausibility or reason, have been made, to show cause why the prediction of their fate, however true to the fact, ought not in such a case to be sustained as evidence of the truth of inspiration. Or if the past history and present state of the Jews were not of a nature so singular and peculiar, as to bear out to the very letter the truth of the prophecies concerning them, with what triumph would the infidel have produced those very prophecies, as fatal to the idea of the inspiration of the Scriptures? And when the Jews have been scattered throughout the whole earth—when they have remained every where a distinct race—when they have been despoiled evermore, and yet never destroyed—when the most wonderful and amazing facts, such as never occurred among any people, form the ordinary narrative of their history, and fulfill literally the prophecies concerning them,—may not the believer challenge his adversary to the production of such credentials of the faith that is in *him*? They present an unbroken chain of evidence, each link a prophecy and a fact, extending throughout a

multitude of generations, and not yet terminated. Though the events, various and singular as they are, have been brought about by the instrumentality of human means and the agency of secondary causes, yet they are equally prophetic and miraculous; for the means were as impossible to be foreseen as the end and the causes were as inscrutable as the event; and they have been, and still in numberless instances are, accomplished by the instrumentality of the enemies of christianity. Whoever seeks a miracle, may here behold a sign and a wonder, than which there cannot be a greater. And the christian may bid defiance to all the assaults of his enemies from this stronghold of christianity, impenetrable and impregnable on every side.

These prophecies concerning the Jews are as clear as a narrative of the events. They are ancient as the oldest records in existence; and it has never been denied that they were all delivered before the accomplishment of one of them. They were so unimaginable by human wisdom, that the whole compass of nature has never exhibited a parallel to the events. And the facts are visible, and present, and applicable even to a hair's breadth. Could Moses, as an uninspired mortal, have described the history, the fate, the dispersion, the treatment, the dispositions of the Israelites to the present day, or for three thousand two hundred years, seeing that he was astonished and amazed, on his descent from Sinai, at the change in their sentiments and in their conduct in the space of forty days? Could various persons have testified, in different ages, of the self-same and of similar facts, as wonderful as they have proved to be true? Could they have divulged so many secrets of futurity, when, of necessity, they were utterly ignorant of them all? The probabilities were infinite against them. For the mind of man often fluctuates in uncertainty over the nearest events, and the most probable results; but, in regard to remote ages, when thousands of years shall have elapsed,—and to facts respecting them, contrary to all previous knowledge, experience, analogy, or conception,—it feels that they are dark as death to mortal ken. And, viewing only the dispersion of the Jews, and some of its attendant circumstances—how their city was laid desolate—their temple, which formed the constant place of their resort before, levelled with the ground, and ploughed over like a field—their country ravaged, and themselves murdered in mass—falling before the sword, the famine, and the pestilence,—how a remnant was left, but despoiled, persecuted, enslaved, and led into captivity—driven from their own land, not to a mountainous retreat, where they might subsist with safety, but dispersed among all nations, and left to the mercy

of a world that every where hated and oppressed them—shattered in pieces like the wreck of a vessel in a mighty storm—scattered over the earth, like fragments on the waters—and, instead of disappearing, or mingling with the nations, remaining a perfectly distinct people, in every kingdom the same, retaining similar habits, and customs, and creed, and manners in every part of the globe, though without ephod, teraphim, or sacrifice—meeting every where the same insult, and mockery, and oppression—finding no resting-place without an enemy soon to dispossess them—multiplying amid all their miseries—surviving their enemies—beholding, unchanged, the extinction of many nations, and the convulsions of all—robbed of their silver and of their gold, though cleaving to the love of them still, as the stumbling-block of their iniquity—often bereaved of their very children—disjoined and disorganized, but uniform and unaltered—ever bruised, but never broken—weak, fearful, sorrowful, and afflicted—often driven to madness at the spectacle of their own misery—taken up in the lips of talkers—the taunt and hissing and infamy of all people, and continuing ever, what they are to this day, the sole proverb common to the whole world;—how did every fact, from its very nature, defy all conjecture, and how could mortal man, overlooking a hundred successive generations, have foretold any one of these wonders that are now conspicuous in these latter times? Who but the Father of spirits, possessed of perfect prescience, even of the knowledge of the will and of the actions of free, intelligent, and moral agents, could have revealed their unbounded and yet unceasing wanderings—unveiled all their destiny—and unmasked the minds of the Jews, and of their enemies, in every age and in every clime? The creation of a world might as well be the work of chance as the revelation of these things. It is a visible display of the power and of the prescience of God,—an accumulation of many miracles. And, although it forms but a part of a small portion of the Christian evidence, it lays not only a stone of stumbling—such as infidels would try to cast in a christian's path,—but it fixes an insurmountable barrier at the very threshold of infidelity, immovable by all human device, and impervious to every attack.

PROPHECY IN CONNECTION WITH THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE.

I propose to close this brief sketch of the history of one of the most important and interesting nations in the world, by a rapid sketch as to the aspect of prophecy respecting their present and

future state; which I shall give in four propositions, derived from an admirable lecture on the topic by the late Rev. Dr. Collyer.

First,—That they are dispersed in consequence of their sins; their rejection of the Messiah filling up the measure of their iniquities.

It is evident that I must make a selection of prophecies on every part of this discussion; because the whole body of scriptural predictions relative to the Jews, could not pass under review, even if it were but recited—far less could the necessary distinctions be made as to their relation more direct or indirect to this subject—their peculiar character as to that which is literal, that which is figurative, and that which would seem to partake of both these qualities—and the application of those just, and sound, and discriminating rules of interpretation, by which alone we can hope to arrive at accurate conclusions on a point of such deep interest. I shall now, therefore, call your attention to one of the most copious and extraordinary predictions to be found in the Scriptures relative to the Jews—and undeniably applicable to their former sufferings, and in some degree to their actual condition:—“The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongues thou shalt not understand; a nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favor to the young: and he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed; which also shall not leave thee either corn, wine, or oil, or the increase of thy kine, or flocks of thy sheep, until he have destroyed thee. And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst, throughout all thy land: and he shall besiege thee in all thy gates throughout all thy land, which the Lord thy God hath given thee. And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, which the Lord thy God hath given thee, in the siege and in the straitness wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee.” Deut. xxviii. 49–53. And again: “And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone. And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: and thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance

of thy life: in the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see. And the Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again with ships, by the way whereof I spake unto thee, Thou shalt see it no more again: and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy you." Deut. xxviii. 64-68.

I have only selected a part of this sublime and terrible prophecy, referring to the calamities which they should undergo in the desolation of their country, and their dispersion among the nations. Other parts of it relate to personal visitations, and to afflictions which should come upon their land while they yet inhabited it. That this is the language of prophecy, and not the foresight of human wisdom, and of ordinary calculation, is evident from the striking fact, that the great blow was to be struck, not by surrounding nations, by whom they had been assailed on their journey, and with whom they might reasonably expect to be engaged afterwards, but "a nation brought against them from far, from the end of the earth, whose tongue they should not understand." I have preferred this prophecy for several reasons, as it came from the Jewish legislator himself, and at so early a period, even before their settlement in Canaan; it must, therefore, relate to the general punishment of their transgressions, rather than to any specific chastisement of their national crimes during their national existence; and being expressly applied to a general dispersion, "the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even to the other," it would seem to point out their final dispersion, and to indicate the very condition in which they yet remain. It is true that much of the description will but too forcibly apply to the common horrors of war—the waste of life, and devastation of the fruits of the earth, and consequent fearful extremities of famine—leading sometimes even to the destruction of the instincts of nature—and rendering the mother cruel to her infant. Such shocking results appeared in former parts of the Jewish history, and have found their horrible parallel among other people in similar circumstances. This is the record of human nature—of its crimes and sufferings—written, not by the historian, but by the warrior and hero, so called; not with pen and ink, but with the point of his own sword, dipped in his own blood. Some of these threatenings were strikingly fulfilled in the subjugation of the Jews by the Assyrians and other powers, and by

their temporary captivities: but it remained that the whole outline of this prophecy should be filled up by the Romans, and its testimony sealed by the last and utter dispersion. It is also remarkable, how decidedly the prominent features of this description characterize the Roman people—a far distant nation—remote in their local position—whose instruments of desolation, Adrian and Vespasian, came to the destruction of Jerusalem from Great Britain—whose ensign was the eagle—whose tongue had no affinity with those with which the Jews were conversant, or with their own—whose countenances were fierce—and their characters cruel and regardless. The circumstances of their general dispersion, as detailed by Moses, are perfect. It is so complete, that few Jews are permitted to remain in the land which was once theirs—Turks, Greeks, Christians, Moors, Arabians, occupy it—but its former possessors are dispersed over the East, in Europe, in Africa, in the West Indies, among all nations, and literally from “the one end of the earth even to the other.” They were in great multitudes transported to different stations; and, as was foretold, into Egypt, and so little prized, that fourteen thousand of them were suffered to perish with want, while the slave-markets became so glutted, that purchasers of them could scarcely be found, even at an inconsiderable price. While idolatry remained, they were subject to the most cruel persecution to compel them to submit to it; and subsequently, in different, and especially Catholic countries, they have groaned under the bondage of compulsive worship, and been denied the practice of their own religious rites. So early as the seventh century, in Spain, ninety thousand of them were compelled to be baptized. They have “found no rest for the sole of their foot”—banished successively in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries from England, France, and Spain; and yet more recently from Portugal and Bohemia. They have also every where suffered spoliation from the most reckless and unprincipled extortion. Their children have been forcibly taken from them, and educated by strangers: they have been even worse treated by those who call themselves christians, than by pagans and Mohammedans. And, although the spirit of the times has superinduced milder treatment, and a brighter day has risen upon them in their exile, they are still objects of contempt and derision among the nations—still without a country—and even England has refused to naturalize them. Such was the aspect which ancient prophecy bore, even so far back as the days of their great legislator, upon the present state of the Jews.

Why, then, is all this? it may be asked. Prophecy has answered

the inquiry, and Jesus has confirmed the answer. Moses assigns generally, as a cause of their dispersion and desolation, their national sins and their personal forgetfulness of God. But he also points out a prophet to be raised up, the disobedience to whom, Jehovah said he would punish. David represented the combination of Jews and Gentiles against the Messiah as the cause of their ruin. Isaiah pointed out the indignities he should suffer; and Daniel, in numbering the weeks until he should be cut off, connects with his death the ceasing of the sacrifice, the devastation to be effected by the Romans, and the overthrow of his people "for the overspreading of abominations." The foundation laid in Zion, became a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to the Jews; and the general aspect of prophecy, pointed out by the Apostles, relative to their present state, establishes the fact of their dispersion, as especially connected with their rejection of the Messiah. From the aspect of prophecy upon their present state, we advance another proposition:

Secondly,—That they are reserved for a future restoration.

That beautiful expression of Ezekiel, "I will be to them as a little sanctuary, in the countries where they shall come," speaks volumes upon this subject. "A little sanctuary," large enough to contain the remnant of Israel,—small enough to suit every man's personal circumstances; this contraction and expansion—amplitude and aptitude—befits the Promiser, in his attributes of perfection. The whole passage demands your attention: "Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God: Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come. Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof, and all the abominations thereof, from thence. And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you: and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh; that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God." Ezek. xi. 16-20. Whatever accomplishment this prediction may already have had, its fulfillment will not be entire until the veil is taken from the eyes, and the stone from the heart of the Jews. And it is yet more evident to what these pledges tend, and when they shall be consummated, by

the testimony of Jeremiah: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt; (which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord:) but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts: and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which 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 forever. Thus saith the Lord: If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel, for all that they have done, saith the Lord." Jer. xxxi. 31-37. That all this can imply no more than a temporary preservation for the purpose of redemption from a local captivity, such as was that of Babylon, would seem to be an outrage upon common sense, and violence offered to the plainest terms. It must look beyond this,—to their preservation for some great and glorious purpose; and we are therefore prepared for the triumphant confirmation of this sentiment advanced by the Apostle: "I say then, hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the Scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life? But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace." "I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the

fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness?" Rom. xi. 1-5, 11, 12. And the fact meets us daily, as the pledge of the faith of ancient prophecy. The Jews maintain every where their distinction. For this no adequate natural cause can be assigned in their circumstances of dispersion. The tenacity of an unbelief which separates them from the observances of all other people,—the cherished opinion that they shall yet return to their own land operating as a motive for withdrawing from others,—the peculiarities of their religious rites and institutions,—all these things may tend to this distinction, but all taken together cannot account alike for its maintenance and for their preservation, the principle of which alone is to be sought and found in prophecy, and in the divine power guarding the divine purpose, as well in the descendants of Israel as in the only case approaching to a parallel—those of Ishmael. In all other cases, all attempts to preserve a distinction between the different tribes and families of which a great nation is composed, have been so feeble, that they may be said to have altogether failed. And as to entire empires, whose basis seemed to be laid as the foundations of the everlasting hills, and whose stability, like the rock and the mountain, promised to rival the eternal features of nature, if they remain at all, their substance has melted away until they have become but the shadow of themselves; and for the most part, those which were the most conspicuous, and were deemed the most glorious, have vanished as a dream, and left no trace behind them; while the poor and despised Jews, although the plough-share has passed over the site of their loved metropolis, remain preserved through succeeding ages, and distinguished in the midst of all their degradation. The aspect of prophecy upon their present state is borne out by the most indisputable facts, that they are reserved for a future restoration. This introduces another proposition:—

Thirdly,—That they shall receive the Messiah in the spirituality of his kingdom.

This is the first aspect of prophecy respecting the future state of the Jews: "For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth." So careful a preservation cannot be for an end and purpose less glorious than their conversion to him "of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth." That this is their high and certain destination

would seem to admit of no dispute, on the part of those who in common pay homage to the authority of the word of God. For there will be found no predictions relative to the glory of the latter day, in which the Jews are not included, nay, in which they do not bear a distinguished part. The "light to lighten the Gentiles," will be also "the glory of his people Israel." The argument of the Apostle, as to their present, in reference to their future state, is most conclusive, and absolutely irresistible. "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief; even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen." Rom. xi. 25-36.

I have quoted this convincing passage so much at length, because it fully explains the revealed purpose of God as to his ancient and scattered people; because it is an epitome of ample predictions; because it is connected with lessons of holy caution to us; because it suggests our duty towards this wonderful people; and because in unfolding the riches of divine grace, it recognizes and adores the mystery of the divine purposes, and teaches us to reverence "the secret things which belong to the Lord our God." There is, then, a day coming, when they shall find a "fountain opened to the house of Israel and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness;" a day, when "they shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for him as a man mourneth for his only son, and be in bitterness for him, as he is in bitterness for his first-born;" a day, when they "shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the

name of the Lord." These tears of penitence, these views of faith, clearly designate the spirituality of that kingdom which consists not in "meats and drinks, but in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," which, whatever be its progress in the world, and its influence upon society, to produce both moral, and, in consequence, physical changes, has its seat in the heart, and is distinguished in its empire over the mind, by an emancipation from the bondage of corruption, and an establishment of the glorious liberty of the children of God. In the fervor of prophetic description, all nature has been laid under contribution to symbolize the glory of this spiritual empire—and has been invested with attributes, not its own, to swell the description. The extinction of animal animosity, and the harmlessness of the most noxious and formidable animals, well shadow forth the subjugation of ferocious passions, and the return of an age of patriarchal innocence, before man forgot to walk with God. When we read of the arid desert surprised with fountains of water—the wilderness spontaneously springing up a paradise—the earth pouring fourth her redundant and inexhaustible stores, until the reaper presses hard upon the sower, we cannot doubt that we are promised an inconceivable profusion of spiritual benefits, which, in their plentitude, will doubtless overflow upon the face of nature itself; and by its moral agency superinduce the most happy and desirable physical results. When we read that the sun, brightened into sevenfold splendor, shall no more go down—that the moon shall no more withdraw her shining—that a city shall have her foundations laid with precious stones—her walls, salvation—and her gates, praise—her inhabitants released from sickness—and night withdrawing her shadows—we receive in the most beautiful and perfect poetical imagery, the prophecy of the spiritual empire of the Son of God. Into this spiritual kingdom the Jews shall be gathered with the Gentiles—and Jerusalem, rising from her ashes, shall be surprised at the influx of new children in the converts, multiplying from among all nations, like the dew-drops of the morning. "Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains; for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted. But Zion said the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her suckling child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me. Thy children shall make haste; thy destroyers, and they that

make thee waste, shall go forth of thee. Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee as a bride doeth. For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitant; and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away. The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell. Then shalt thou say in thy heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate: a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been? Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me." Isaiah xlix. 13-23. This transcendent promise introduces my last proposition:

Fourthly,—That they shall return, and be established as a nation, in their native land.

I confess, that after the closest attention which I have been able to pay to this subject, this is my conclusion, from what I judge the aggregate testimony of prophecy. Neither is this an opinion hastily adopted; but which has been formed expressly from the constant and private reading of the Scriptures, consecutively, and for years, until my anticipations of the glory of the latter day in its consummation, have become identified with the re-settlement of the Jews in Canaan. If I err, I err from my own impressions, received altogether from habitual and unaided consultation of the Bible; for I have read but little, and spoken less, upon the subject. The passages which relate to the conversion of the Jews in general, appear to me to take this natural direction; but there is one especially, which alone I shall submit to you upon this occasion. "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into

two kingdoms any more at all: neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwelling-places wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments and observe my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob, my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they and their children, and their children's children, forever; and my servant David shall be their prince forever. Moreover, I will make a covenant of peace with them: it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them; yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore." Ezek. xxxvii. 21-28. We know who must be meant by David—so many years after the patriarch had slept with his fathers. We cannot doubt what land is intended—when it is added, "wherein your fathers have dwelt." We are instructed by Jesus Christ himself to understand who is the "one shepherd;" and when this grand event shall occur—when he has brought together all his sheep. We have the sublime close of the passage quoted by St. John, and applied to the glory of the latter day (compare v. 27, "My tabernacle also shall be with them; yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people," with Rev. xxi. 3, "And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.") We have the seal of eternity put upon the whole:—"I will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore." Now it does not appear to me, that, without violence done to this language, any interpretation can be given except that which is literal, and that, all the circumstances considered, its application must be future—that, in a word, it relates to the glory of the latter day. If so, I think the return of the Jews to their native land conclusive. I entirely accord with Lord Bacon's sentiment, "As those wines which flow from the first treading out of the grapes, are sweeter and better than those forced out by the press, which gives the roughness of the husk and the stone; so are those doctrines best

and wholesomest, which flow from a gentle crush of the Scripture, and are not wrung into controversies and commonplace." It appears to me, that if some have separated too much the spiritual from the literal, others have separated too much the literal from the spiritual. I do not see that it is necessary to yield to all the opinions relative to the personal reign of Christ which are afloat, in order to maintain the restoration of the Jews to their own land. I do not perceive how this restoration, which does not suppose any thing contrary to the establishment of rulers as in other cases, militates against the spiritual reign of the Messiah over them, and mankind at large. I do not pretend to know "the times and the seasons, which the father has reserved in his own hands." I do not presume to point out the political means by which this may be effected, although the transfer of countries, by treaty or otherwise, is not unknown in the world; nor is it unlikely that great political changes may arise, in connection with the present possessors of Palestine, which may very materially affect its future destination. I do not see any obstacles to the sudden and general conversion of the Jews, if such be indeed the will of providence, which were not surmounted to our utter astonishment in Tahiti, after years of labor, apparently in vain, and when a nation was, as it were, "born in a day;" nor do I feel the force of that objection particularly, that this event of the return of the Jews to their native land, is not distinctly noticed in the New Testament, although it naturally presents itself, and possesses weight which demands consideration; because it appears to me that the constant insisting of the apostles upon the spiritual nature of our Lord's kingdom, was rendered absolutely necessary, by the exclusive carnal expectations of the Jews; and that as to the fact itself, if indeed it be the concurrent representation of the Old Testament, they would consider further confirmation unnecessary, unless it incidentally arose, because they regarded its evidence as conclusive, and constantly appealed to it as such. It is true, that the Gentiles are represented as one with the Jews; but the admission of the Gentiles to equal rights, and their participation of the common salvation, no more abrogates the first and pre-eminent distinction of the Jews, than the division of the family estate among the younger children, upon their attaining their majority, alienates or diminishes the priority and pre-eminence of the first-born. The propositions which I have endeavored to illustrate are these:—That the Jews are dispersed in consequence of their sins, and their rejection of the Messiah: That they are reserved for a

future restoration: That they shall receive the Messiah in the spirituality of his dominion: and, That they shall return, and be established, as a nation, in their native land.

This, then, is the whole that I can presume to advance upon this subject. "Do I now persuade men? or do I seek to please men?" Assuredly not;—nor to establish or overturn systems. I leave these to struggle and fight *for* themselves—to rise or fall *by* themselves. For some, I have probably gone too far—for others, not far enough. What then? I was to state "The aspect of prophecy respecting the present and future state of the Jews." I have produced all that I can clearly see—and thus much I think I do see distinctly. So far, therefore, and no further I venture: for after all, it is not what man in his speculations can render plausible, but what God in his word has made certain.

And now I solicit your sympathy, and prayers, and pious exertions, on behalf of these poor Jews—I demand it in the name of the Son of God himself, who threw all the compassion of his heart into the passage we just now quoted, and illustrated his emotions of tenderness by the impulses of nature, and the instinctive love of the parent bird to her helpless brood. I may have erred in the application of some particular points of prophecy; but I cannot have mistaken the principle, so clearly defined, so powerfully enforced, that "God hath not cast off his people." Their sufferings have been bitter, and their apostasy has been obstinately maintained; but their unslumbering Guardian has watched over them; and with him "one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." He has determined their recovery, and "faithful is he who hath promised, who also will do it." Their winter has been long and dreary, but the spring, although it may be late, like that of nature, shall also like that be certain. The voice of nature unites with that of Jesus to rouse your attention towards them, and awaken your sympathies with them. Not long since you looked abroad upon a scene of barren desolation, and vegetation seemed to sleep the sleep of death. The spirit of life is abroad; late and slow were its visits, but they are come, and the long repose of the creation is broken. The lymph no longer hides in its secret receptacles, but diffusing itself through the ten thousand visible and invisible veins of the plant and tree, hangs out the ensigns of its vitality in leaves and blossoms. And is not the spirit of religion abroad in your churches and in the world? In that moral spring for which you are looking, according to the divine promise, in the regeneration of the universe, shall not

the Jewish exile, in his wandering, hear the words of his own native song?—"Lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, and come away." Is not the very interest so powerfully and so widely excited a token for good? "Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favor her, yea, the set time is come. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof. So the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth thy glory. When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory." And does not Jesus connect with the sentence which he pronounced, the restoration which he meditated? "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." O children of Abraham, the friend of God, scattered far from your own mountains, and dispersed wide among all nations, though many a dark age has passed over you in your banishment, HE, the Shepherd of Israel, will at last come to gather you to his fold: your wanderings will at length terminate; and the years which you have spent in the captivity of unbelief, shall have their expected and clearly-predicted end. Amen!

THE LIFE

OF

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

CHAPTER I.

PRESAGE OF THE BIRTH OF CHRIST—PREDICTION OF THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST—
SALUTATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN BY THE ANGEL—VISITATION OF THE VIRGIN MARY
TO ELIZABETH—BIRTH OF THE BAPTIST.



NO event in the providence of God has more remarkably displayed his wisdom and power, than the glorious manner in which he brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel of his only Son manifested in the flesh.

The mind of man cannot be more delightfully employed than in the contemplation of the wisdom and goodness of the Omnipotent Creator of the universe, who, by the least suspected means and weakest instruments, confirmed and established that glorious Gospel on which depend all our hopes of eternal salvation.

Notwithstanding the strength and number of its enemies, the church of Christ grew, from the most inconsiderable beginnings, to an immense fabric or building in the Lord; nor shall the united efforts of earth and hell be able to prevail against it. As it was planted, so it was reared by an Almighty hand, which, like the careful husbandman, pruned and cultivated each tender sprig till it arrived at full perfection; or, to use the words of our blessed Lord,

“The least of all seeds grew up, and waxed a great tree, spreading out its branches and filling the earth.”

Thus prevailed eternal truth, although opposed both by the inveterate Jews and idolatrous heathen;—though Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and people of Israel, “gathered themselves together against the Lord and against his anointed;” for the doctrine of God confounded the wisdom of the former, and overcame the folly of the latter.

If we survey the works of a stupendous Creator, we shall find that few arrived at perfection at once. This observation is amply confirmed by the various productions in the natural, and changes in the moral world. The Supreme Being, who conducts all his operations according to his infinite wisdom, appears to have retained the same maxim in the regulation of his kindest design to the sons of men. The divine mind and will were not at first revealed in their clearest evidence and fullest splendor. The dawn, in a spiritual as well as in a natural sense, preceded the meridian glory; the former revelation was but a type or earnest of the latter, and, in comparison with it, intricate and mysterious.

The all-gracious God, as it seemed best to his unerring wisdom, was pleased, by degrees, to open and unfold his glorious councils; and man, by degrees, attained to the knowledge of the great plan of salvation, and the means used by its great author to promote and establish it.

Some time before the incarnation of the blessed Jesus, an opinion prevailed amongst the pious part of the Jews, that the Great Jehovah would condescend to favor them with a clearer revelation of his mind and will, by the mission of some eminent person qualified from above to instruct them in the same. This opinion was founded on the predictions of the ancient prophets, who had described, with the utmost beauty and clearness, the person, character, and glory of the Messiah, appointed by God in his own time to declare his eternal counsels to mankind.

Relying on the fulfillment of these prophecies, the devout persons amongst the Jews imagined the time appointed by God at hand, and that the promised Messiah would shortly make his appearance, and therefore are said to have “waited night and day for the consolation of Israel.” These people, at that time grievously oppressed by the Roman power, and consequently anxious of regaining their liberty, as well as revenging themselves on their tyrannical oppressors, waited the accomplishment of the prophecies with the most solici-

tous desire. But this opinion of the approach of a general deliverer extended much farther than the country of the Jews; for, through their connection with so many countries, their disputes with the learned men amongst the heathens, and the translation of the Old Testament into a language then almost general, their religion greatly prevailed in the East; and, consequently, their opinion, that a prince would appear in the kingdom of Judea, who would dispel the mists of ignorance, deliver the Jews from the Roman yoke, and spread his dominion from one end of the world to the other.

While the Eastern world was fraught with these sanguine hopes, the very angel who had appeared to Daniel, the prophet, with certain information as to the period of the Messiah's coming, as well as his transactions in this lower world, was sent to Zacharias, a pious priest, while he was executing his office before God, in the order of his course, which was to burn incense in the temple of the Lord, to foretell that a child should spring from him and his wife Elizabeth, though they were stricken in years, who should be endowed with extraordinary gifts from heaven, and honored with being the forerunner of the Saviour of the world.

Zacharias, when he saw the angel, though he knew him to be of heavenly extraction, knew not the subject of his mission, and therefore discovered a mixture of fear and surprise; but the ærial ambassador cheered his desponding soul with this kind address: "Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John." That he waited day and night for the consolation of Israel he well knew, which is all we can understand by his prayer being heard; for it was unnatural for him to think that he and his wife Elizabeth, who were advanced in years, should have a son; nay, he intimates his doubt concerning it in these words: "Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years." Besides, he was a priest of the course of Abiah, whose particular office was to pray in behalf of the people, for public and national blessings; so that it is very reasonable to think, that on all occasions of public worship he prayed most earnestly for the accomplishment of the prophecies relative to the appearance of the long expected Messiah, who was promised as a general blessing to all the nations of the earth.

That this was the great subject of his prayer appears from the declaration of Gabriel: The prayer thou hast directed with sincerity to an Almighty ear, concerning the coming of the Messiah, "is

heard, and behold thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son," who shall prepare the way for the mighty Redeemer of Israel. The old priest, indeed, was as much astonished at the subject of the mission as he was at the appearance of the messenger; and esteeming it impossible that his wife, thus advanced in years, should conceive a son, weakly demanded a sign to confirm his belief in the fulfillment of the promise, though he knew the authority of the angel was derived from the God of Truth. But as it is the lot of humanity to err, Zacharias did not reflect for the time that nothing was impossible to Omnipotence, as well as that it was not the first instance of an aged woman conceiving and becoming the mother of a living child. The least reflection would have reminded him that Sarah bore Isaac when she was far advanced in years; and that Samuel was born of a woman who had been long reputed barren.

His curiosity was indeed gratified, but in a manner that carried with it at once a confirmation of the promise, and a punishment of his unbelief. As he had verbally testified his doubt of the fulfillment of the prediction of the angel, he was punished with the loss of his speech, which was to continue to the very day in which the prediction should be accomplished: "Behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season."

Zacharias soon received an awful testimony of the divinity of the mission of Gabriel, who was no sooner departed than he was struck dumb; for when he came to pray in the course of his office, during the oblation of the incense, he could not utter a word, and was under a necessity of making signs to the people, that an angel had appeared to him in the temple, and that he was deprived of the faculty of speech, as a punishment for his doubting the fulfillment of an event foretold to him by his heavenly visitant.

Soon after Zacharias departed to his own house, the days of his ministration being accomplished, his wife Elizabeth, according to the prediction of the angel, conceived, and retired into a private place, where she lived five months in the uninterrupted exercises of piety, devotion, and contemplation on the mysterious providences of the Almighty, and his amazing goodness to the sinful children of men.

When Elizabeth was advanced six months in her pregnancy, the same heavenly ambassador was sent to a poor virgin, called Mary, who lived in obscurity in Nazareth, under the care of Joseph, to

whom she was espoused. This man and woman were both lineally descended from the house of David, from whose loins it was foretold the great Messiah should spring.

This virgin being ordained by the Most High to be mother of the great Saviour of the world, was saluted by the angel in language becoming her lofty destiny: "Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee! Blessed art thou among women!" Such an address, from so exalted a being, greatly alarmed the meek and humble virgin; whose fears, however, were quickly allayed, and her heart encouraged by the angel's relating, in most rapturous terms, the subject of his embassy; which was to assure her that she was chosen by God to the greatest honor which could be conferred on a mortal, and which would perpetuate her memory; an honor no less than that of being mother of the promised and long-expected Messiah, who upon earth should be called Jesus, because he should save his people from their sins, be the restorer of human nature, and the procuring cause of eternal bliss to sinners, who had forfeited the favor and incurred the resentment of an offended God: but that this Divine Person was considered in heaven as the Son of the Most High God, to whom should be given, by his Almighty Father, the throne of David, his earthly father, on which he should preside: and which—being the whole church of Christ, the house of Jacob, the spiritual Israel, or the kingdom of the Messiah—should continue forever and ever.

The astonished virgin, unmindful likewise that Isaiah had long since prophesied "that a virgin should conceive and bear a son," thought her virginity an insurmountable barrier to the fulfillment of the prophecy; especially as such an event had never previously occurred since the creation of the world; and therefore required of the angel an explanation of the manner in which such a circumstance could be effected.

This desire by no means implies a forgetfulness that with God all things were possible, but only serves to prove the weakness of her apprehension on the one hand, or her diffidence and sense of her own unworthiness on the other.

The angel, therefore, perceiving the goodness of her disposition, notwithstanding some little proof of human weakness and shortness of sight, vouchsafed an immediate answer to her inquiry: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall cover thee:" or, in other words, this miraculous event shall be brought about by the aid of the Holy Spirit, and wonderful exertion

of the power of the Most High. "As thy conception is effected by the immediate interposition of the Holy Ghost, therefore that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." To confirm her faith in the glorious message, the heavenly messenger observed to her, that her cousin Elizabeth, notwithstanding her advanced years and reputed barrenness, was above six months pregnant; assigning this incontestable argument for the miraculous incidents, "For with God nothing shall be impossible."

This reply not only removed all her doubts and fears, but filled her with inexpressible joy, so that she even anticipated the promised felicity; for she, with the rest of the daughters of Jacob, had long indulged a hope of being selected by God to be the honored mother of the Saviour of Israel, and therefore, on her being assured that such great happiness was destined her by the omnipotent Disposer of all events, she thus expressed her reliance on the fulfillment of the divine promise, and perfect acquiescence in the pleasure of the Almighty: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word."

The angel had no sooner departed than Mary set out for the mountainous country of Judea, though at a very remote distance from Nazareth, in order to rejoice with her cousin Elizabeth in the joyful news she had received from the angel concerning her. The rapture and delight which filled the minds of Mary, Joseph, and Elizabeth, on the occasion of this salutation, can alone be expressed by the affecting description recorded by the evangelist Luke, who is peculiar for the beauty of his style, and elegance of his expressions.

The evangelist writes, that the salutation of Mary had such an effect upon Elizabeth, that, on her hearing of the miraculous event which had befallen the Virgin, the babe leaped in her womb, and that she, being inspired with a holy delight on the approaching prospect of the nativity of her Saviour, exclaimed with rapture, "And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" Luke i. 43. Nor did her ecstasy cease with this token of humility and joy on the important event; in the ardor of which she herself evinced a prophetic influence, which, while it amazed the blessed Virgin, could not fail of establishing her belief in what the angel had foretold; for she repeated the very words expressed by the angel in his salutation of the holy Virgin, "Blessed art thou among women!" together with a quotation from the Psalms, and "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb!"

For as Mary conceived the seed long promised and earnestly desired,—the seed in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed,—he could not but be blessed himself, according to the words of the Psalmist: “His name shall continue as long as the sun, and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him Blessed.” The happy virgin, catching the holy flame from the aged Elizabeth, broke out into an humble acknowledgment of her unworthiness and the wonderful grace of the Almighty, in appointing her to the exalted honor of bearing in her womb the Redeemer of Israel, as expressed in those sublime words, “My soul doth magnify the Lord,” etc.

Thus having by this visit confirmed herself in the belief of the prediction of the angel Gabriel, when the period of Elizabeth’s pregnancy approached, she returned to Nazareth, having resided in Judea about three months.

Soon after the departure of Mary, Elizabeth brought forth her son, the appointed harbinger of the King of Glory; and on the eighth day after his birth, according to the Judaical custom, he was circumcised, and called, according to the appointment of the angel, John; alluding, in the Hebrew tongue, to the gracious display of the wisdom and goodness God was about to manifest to the world, by the spreading of the Gospel of his Son, of whom this John was the appointed forerunner.

The promise being thus fulfilled, the aged priest was restored to his speech, and immediately broke out in praise and rapture at the marvelous works of God, in strains which astonished all around him.

This surprising event greatly alarmed the people of the adjacent country, who were divided in their opinions concerning a child whose birth was attended with so many extraordinary circumstances. The incidents of it were indeed worthy of general admiration: that he, who was to be the forerunner of the mighty Saviour of Israel, should not make his entrance on life in an obscure and common manner, but with particular tokens of the favor of Heaven, in order to attract the observation of his countrymen, and excite their attention to the ministry which he was called to by God, even the preparation of the people for the reception of the Messiah, who was shortly to appear in the flesh.

It is observable that the Baptist, from his infancy, displayed great qualities both of mind and body; for such was his strength of constitution, through the blessing of the God of Nature, that he

lived till near the thirtieth year of his age, when his public ministry began, in the mountains and desert country of Judea, bereft of almost all the comforts of life. But at length the prophecy of the good old Zacharias, relating to his future elevation, was literally fulfilled: "Thou, O child, shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord, to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of salvation to his people, by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Beautifully has Drummond thus sketched the life and work of the Baptist:

A voice from the desert comes awful and shrill:

"The Lord is advancing, prepare ye the way;

The word of Jehovah he comes to fulfill,

And o'er the dark world pour the splendor of day.

"Bring down the proud mountain, though towering to heaven,

And be the low valley exalted on high;

The rough path and crooked be made smooth and even,

For, Zion! your King, your Redeemer, is nigh.

"The beams of salvation his progress illumine,"

The low dreary wilderness sings of her God,

The rose and the myrtle shall suddenly bloom,

And the time of peace spread her branches abroad."

As Joseph had abstained from all matrimonial intercourse with his wife, he was not a little alarmed when, shortly after her return to Nazareth, she discovered evident signs of pregnancy; nay, so far was he wrought on by the circumstance, that he absolutely resolved on a dissolution of the marriage: but previous to such a rigorous procedure, on questioning her concerning the same, she minutely related to him the particulars of the vision from the angel, and the extraordinary event that had befallen Zacharias and Elizabeth.

Notwithstanding this ingenuous declaration, Joseph's suspicions continued, and suggested to him that this might be a device, concerted by the friends of Mary, to exempt her from the disgrace which must attend a divorce on such a pretence; however, he resolved to execute his purpose as privately as possible, without assigning the cause for it, which would have subjected her to the penalty of death.

But, on cooler reflection, he called to mind the sovereign power of Omnipotence; for which reason, however opposite her case might be to the nature of things in general, her vindication of herself might be well grounded. He now thought himself bound by every tie of justice and duty to preserve her character inviolable; though, as he was a just man, and most religious observer of the law, the assertions she made did not appear to him sufficient to justify him in retaining her in his house.

While he was thus ruminating on this event, he was overtaken with slumber, and received in a vision a communication from the angel of the Lord, which fully revealed the cause and manner of Mary's pregnancy, dispelling his doubts, and encouraging him to take home his falsely suspected spouse: "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost; and she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS; for he shall save his people from their sins."

No sooner did the morning dawn appear, than Joseph arose from his couch and cheerfully obeyed the commands of the Most High, by relating to his wife his assurance of her innocence, and restoring her to his favor. While he related to her the manner of this extraordinary revelation by a messenger from the heavenly Canaan, he discovered in her a remarkable chastity of heart, entirely conformable to so mysterious an operation, and knew her not till she had brought forth the great Redeemer of Israel.

Thus was fulfilled that which was foretold by the prophets, and particularly the prediction of Isaiah, which imported that a Virgin should bring forth a son. "Behold a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel; which, being interpreted, is God with us." Is. vii. 14; Matt. i. 23.

THE STAR OF THE EAST.

Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,
Dawn on our darkness, and lend us thine aid;
Star of the East the horizon adorning,
Guide where our infant Redeemer is laid!

Cold on his cradle the dew-drops are shining,
Low lies his bed with the beasts of the stall;
Angels adore him in slumber reclining,
Maker, and Monarch, and Saviour of all.

Say, shall we yield him, in costly devotion,
Odors of Eden, and offerings divine;
Gems of the mountain, and pearls of the ocean,
Myrrh from the forest, and gold from the mine?

Vainly we offer each ample oblation;
Vainly with gold would his favor secure
Richer by far is the heart's adoration;
Dearer to God are the prayers of the poor!

Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,
Dawn on our darkness, and lend us thine aid!
Star of the East the horizon adorning,
Guide where our infant Redeemer is laid!—BISHOP HEBER.

CHAPTER II.

GENERAL DECREE FOR TAXATION ISSUED—BIRTH OF CHRIST—DECLARATION OF THE SAME TO THE SHEPHERDS—CIRCUMCISION AND PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE—THE WISE MEN OF THE EAST WORSHIP THE HOLY CHILD—FLIGHT OF JOSEPH INTO EGYPT—MASSACRE OF THE INFANTS AT BETHLEHEM—DEATH OF HEROD—RETURN OF JOSEPH OUT OF EGYPT.



UGUSTUS Cæsar, the Roman emperor, having at this time issued an edict for a general taxation on all the nations, cities, and towns subject to the empire, king Herod, in consequence of that decree, commanded all under his government to muster in the city of his people, or place of his descent, that an estimate might be taken of their persons and effects. Pursuant

to this order, Joseph and Mary, as descendants from the line of David, departed from Nazareth, where they then resided, and came to Bethlehem, a city of Judea, the place of the nativity of David and his ancestors.

So numerous were the people that repaired to this place, on account of the general decree, that every dwelling was occupied; and Joseph and Mary, though they could not depart thence till after the taxation, were forced to take up their residence in an humble stable, the spot in which, it pleased the Divine Wisdom, should be born the Lord of Life and Glory, who, as a perfect example of humility to all his followers, was to make his entrance into, and his exit out of, the lower world in the same mean and humble manner. In this lowly tenement, then, the blessed Virgin brought forth her first-born Godlike Son, wrapped him in swaddling-clothes, and laid him, having no better place, in a manger.

It is worthy of note, that all the generations of the intervening spaces, between three of the most remarkable periods relative to the house of David and the birth of our blessed Saviour, are exactly the same; for the evangelist Matthew informs us, that all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David unto the Babylonish captivity are fourteen generations; and from

the Babylonish captivity unto the birth of Christ are also fourteen generations. The same evangelist also traces his genealogy from Abraham, and proves his direct descent from that father of the faithful, through the line of David, from race to race, to that of the humble Virgin and the aged Joseph.

But to return to the immediate subject of our history: The humble manner and place of our Lord's birth, demand our highest admiration and wonder, as a striking display of wisdom, both in the design and accomplishment of the will of his heavenly Father. Considered in his divine nature, heaven is the habitation of his seat, and the earth is his footstool; considered in his human nature, he is humbled beneath all: and confined within the narrow limits of a manger! Though as the Son of God, he is the "brightness of his Father's glory, the express image of his person," and his "throne is forever and ever!" as the son of man: O wondrous condescension! he is wrapped in the meanest swaddling-clothes. Though as the Son of God, he laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of his hands; as man, he takes up his habitation with the beast of the field. In fine, let us adore his grace and love in divesting himself of those glories, for a time, which he enjoyed at the right hand of his Father, assuming our nature, and that in its humblest state, in order to raise us to that degree of glory and happiness, which by our apostasy from God we had justly forfeited; exulting with the prophet, "Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O earth, and break forth into singing, O mountains, for the Lord hath comforted his people."

It pleased the wise Disposer of all things, by a holy angel, first to make known to some pious shepherds, who were watching their flocks by night in the neighboring fields, the birth of the long-promised, long-expected Messiah. The radiance which shone around them terrified the astonished peasants; but, for the purpose of dissipating their fears and confirming their joys, the divine messenger interposed, and thus addressed them:—"Fear not! for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people! For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger." Luke ii. 10, etc.

The glorious news was no sooner proclaimed, than a number of the celestial choir were heard to resound the praises of the Almighty, for this transcendent display of his goodness to sinful men: "Glory

to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men!" Transported with the happy tidings of the birth of the Redeemer of Israel, the angel no sooner departed than the shepherds hastened to Bethlehem in quest of the babe, whom, according to the information of the sacred missionary, they found wrapt in swaddling-clothes and lying in a manger. This event, so exactly conformable to the angel's prediction, equally delighted and amazed them; nor could they conceal the purport of his mission, but published abroad all they had seen or heard concerning the holy child.

Having viewed with joy and wonder their long-expected Saviour, and offered their grateful praises to God for the manifestation of his goodness to mankind, they departed with hearts filled with love and gratitude, still glorifying the Almighty Parent of universal nature.

After the expiration of eight days from the birth of the Holy Infant, he was circumcised according to the Mosaic institution, and his name was called JESUS: that appellation being given him by the angel who appeared to the Virgin before her conception.

The blessed Redeemer passed through this ceremony, not that he stood in any necessity of conforming to laws of any kind, being the supreme lawgiver, with respect to his exalted nature; but as, considered in his humble state, "he was made of a woman, made under the law," and came, according to his own declaration, "to fulfill all righteousness," it was requisite he should conform to that custom, which characterized the Jewish nation, and was one of the principal injunctions of the Mosaical law, under which he was made; in order to fulfill all that is spoken of him in the Scriptures.

Besides, as all the promises made to Abraham were to be fulfilled in the Messiah, it was necessary he should receive the seal of circumcision, in order to prove his descent from the patriarch, concerning whom it was foretold, "In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." As a further reason for our Lord's compliance with this Jewish institution, we may urge the propriety of his finishing the former dispensation, by an exact adherence to its rules, as he was about to establish another and better covenant; which could not be effected more fully than by conforming to that sacrament which was of divine injunction, and indispensably requisite to admission into the former.

As the same institution also required that every first-born son, without any regard to circumstance or family, should be presented to the Lord in the temple, by delivering him into the hand of the priest, and paying five shekels, together with an offering, which from

the poorer sort consisted of a pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons; a ceremony in commemoration of the divine mercy in sparing the first-born in Israel, when those of Egypt, both men and beasts, were destroyed. His parents having tarried at Bethlehem till the days of Mary's purification were accomplished, brought the child Jesus to Jerusalem, and there presented him in the temple to the Lord, in the manner just described, with the offering allowed to the poorer sort of people; a repeated instance of the exact obedience of the immaculate Jesus to the ceremonial law, as well as of the poverty of his parents, though descended from a royal house.

During the presentation of the Holy Infant, Simeon entered the temple, a pious and venerable old man, who, with all the devout, had "waited day and night for the consolation of Israel," and to whom it had been revealed by the Spirit of Truth, that he should not depart this mortal life till he had seen the Lord of life and salvation.

Accordingly, it was signified to him by the Holy Ghost, at whose instance he came at that precise time into the temple, that the child there presented was the long-expected Messiah, even the Redeemer of Israel. In an ecstasy of joy he embraced the heavenly Infant in his arms, and broke out into this rhapsody: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." Luke ii. 29, etc.

The exultation of Simeon astonished the parents of our Lord; not from its unworthiness of the divine subject, to which are due strains superior either to those of men or angels, but as evincing the old man's certain knowledge that the child was the promised Messiah, though he was an absolute stranger. But their surprise was quickly removed by Simeon's saying unto Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel;" or, in other words, this is the stumbling-block and rock of offence which it was long foretold by God should be laid in Zion, and which should occasion the fall of many in Israel; for through the humble manner of his birth, and his abject state upon earth, he became despised and rejected of men; yet he is set for the rising again of many, who shall rely on his merits, and submit to his government.

Commentators are divided in their opinions concerning this old Simeon. Some think he was of the order of priests, and that he

uttered the words we have cited above, while he was presenting the child to the Lord in the office of his function. But as the evangelist, who recites in a particular manner the presentation of our blessed Lord, is silent on that head, it appears little more than conjecture.

Others affirm he was Simon the Just, a disciple of the famous Hillel, the master of Gamaliel, under whom the apostle Paul was educated; and that, while he was attempting to explain to the people that passage in the prophecy of Isaiah, "Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son," it was revealed to him that he should see, with mortal eyes, the promised Messiah; and that, on his beholding the child and his mother in the temple, he broke out into that well-known rhapsody. But if a man of his rank and eminence had made such a declaration in favor of the divinity of Christ's mission, it is reasonable to think it would have had more weight with the generality of the Jews than it appears to have had. Besides, it is remarkable that the Almighty, at that time, was pleased to reveal his designs, with respect to the Messiah, not to the great, the wise, and the learned, but to the poor and illiterate; such as Joseph a carpenter, Zacharias an ordinary priest, and a company of shepherds; therefore, as the point is not settled, we presume to offer it as our opinion, that this old man, to whom God was pleased to make so extraordinary a revelation concerning the Saviour of the world, was a plain man, eminent for the goodness of his heart rather than the knowledge of his head, and who possessed more piety and devotion than learning or earthly pomp.

A certain aged prophetess, called Anna, who had a long time waited for the redemption of Israel, entering the temple at the instant in which the pious Simeon embraced and exulted in the birth of the heavenly Infant, and finding that he was the promised Messiah, likewise joined with him in praising God, and went forth and declared the glad tidings of salvation to all the faithful in those parts.

Having thus in every respect complied with the ceremonies and rites contained in the law of Moses, Joseph and Mary, with the child Jesus, entered into Galilee to their own city Nazareth; but did not long abide there; for, having adjusted their affairs, they returned again to Bethlehem, the place of our Lord's nativity.

This step seems to have been pursued, in consequence of their opinion that it was necessary, in order to his being acknowledged the Messiah sent of God, that he should reside some time in the

place of his birth. Whatever might be their motive for removal, it is evident from Scripture, that while they were in Bethlehem with their Son, certain Eastern philosophers, called magi or wise men, came, in consequence of the appearance they had seen, to Jerusalem, and inquired for the King of the Jews, declaring they had seen his star in their own quarter, and were come to pay him the adorations due to his dignity.

Various conjectures have been formed by the learned concerning this star which is said to have appeared in the East. Some think it was the Spirit of God, others an angel, some a comet, others a luminous appearance, etc. A modern writer supposes it to have been the glory that surrounded the angels who appeared to the shepherds at Bethlehem, on the night of our Lord's nativity.

But notwithstanding these uncertain conjectures, the star answered the end designed, and directed the magi to the spot where resided the Lord of life and glory. Some men, too wise to admit of the evidences to the truth of Revelation, have skeptically inquired, How these Eastern magi could arrive at any knowledge that the Jews expected the Messiah; and why, therefore, on the appearance of this new star in the firmament, they should apprehend it pointed out the birth of the great Redeemer of Israel? The learned assertors of the Christian cause, in answer to these queries, observe, that an opinion of the approach of the Messiah's kingdom had long prevailed all over the East; nay, this is declared in profane history by Suetonius, Tacitus, and Josephus.

The reason of this prevailing opinion is very obvious. The Jews conceived mighty expectations of the Messiah, from the many prophecies concerning him recorded in their own language; and the Arabians, from the prophecies to the same import made to Abraham: it being certain that those people retained a traditional knowledge of this promise, and the words of Balaam, who was an Arabian prophet: "There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall arise out of Israel," etc.; which every impartial reader must acknowledge rather refers to the appearance of the Messiah than to any other incident whatsoever.

The other Eastern nations derived their expectations of the Messiah from their commercial connections with the Jews and Arabians; but more especially from the Jews, who, being scattered over the whole country of the East, spread their religion wherever they came; which occasioned several Roman historians to take notice of the prevalence of that opinion.

Nay, the expectation of the Messiah being born in Judea was strongly impressed on the minds of the followers of Zoroaster, who reformed the religion of the Persians; and who, being servant to the prophet Daniel, was particularly favored with revelations concerning the appearance of the Messiah.

From these considerations, it evidently appears that this opinion prevailed throughout the East, and that the magi might with much reason, on the appearance of the star, repair to Jerusalem in quest of the promised Saviour of Israel.

But to leave this subject, as not immediately appertaining to our purpose, the whole city of Jerusalem was alarmed at the unexpected arrival of the eastern magi; an event which much perplexed the tyrant Herod, whose ambitious mind maintained the utmost aversion to the very thought of a rival or competitor, and consequently could not brook a report that favored the news of the birth of the King of the Jews.

Disguising, however, his vindictive principle, he received the magi with seeming respect, attended to the design of their errand with affected complacency; and, to gratify their curiosity, summoned a general council, and demanded of them where Christ should be born? Of this they did not long keep him in suspense, for, well remembering that the prophets had particularly foretold the place of his birth, they replied to the demand of their monarch, "In Bethlehem of Judea;" and to confirm their answer, cited prophetic authority: "And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda; for out of thee shall come a Governor that shall rule my people Israel." Mat. ii. 6. The tyrant king, in consequence of the reply from the supreme council of the nation, directed the magi to Bethlehem, as the place, according to ancient prophecy, designed for the honor of our Saviour's nativity, earnestly entreating them, at the same time, immediately on their finding out the child, to send him word, that he might repair thither and pay his adoration to him also.

But this was mere pretence and vile hypocrisy; for so far was Herod from entertaining any religious regard for the infant Jesus, that he determined in his heart to destroy him as soon as found; looking on him as designed for a temporal prince, who would expel him or his descendants from the throne of Judea, instead of a prince whose kingdom was wholly spiritual, and whose throne was not to be established upon earth, but in the heavenly Jerusalem.

We have no more convincing evidence of the divinity of our Sa-

viour's mission, than his miraculous preservation from the designs of the ambitious Herod. The tyrant, in this case, acted with the utmost subtilty;—he declined accompanying the wise men in person, nor did he even send attendants with them, who, under the guise of honoring them, might secretly inform him of the abode of the Messiah, or actually destroy both the child and his parents; in reality, he acted as if the event gave him no concern, and in a manner wholly different from the general expectation of the people.

However, the magi, having obtained the intelligence they sought in Jerusalem, set forward under the guidance of the same star which had conducted them from their own country, but had left them on their arrival in Judea, which was the cause of their directing their course to the capital, in order to seek that information which by the desertion of the star became requisite. Thus we find that the design of the Almighty, in directing the eastern magi to the capital of Judea, was, that the whole nation might be made acquainted with the cause of their journey.

Accordingly, no sooner had they proceeded from Jerusalem on their way to Bethlehem, than their kind conductor again appeared, went before them to the very city, and fixed on the habitation of the heavenly Infant. Guided by this celestial conductor, they entered the house, and, prostrating themselves at the sacred feet of their spiritual King, presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Having thus accomplished the design of their expedition, they proposed, according to promise, returning to Jerusalem; but being diverted from that intention by a dream, in which they were warned by God of Herod's design, they pursued another course towards their own country, and thus defeated his malicious purpose.

But it is natural and reasonable to suppose that the end of the divine wisdom, in directing these eastern magi to the kingdom of Judea to worship the child Jesus, was not merely to gratify the curiosity of the wise men, because the event promoted many other very important designs, some of which it may be useful here to mention. It proved to succeeding ages the great expectation the Gentiles formed of the appearance of the Messiah, and consequently established the truth of those prophecies which related to that event, as well as excited in the minds of men the most sanguine hopes and longing desires.

As these magi doubtless reported, on their return to their own country, the particulars they had heard and seen in the kingdom of Judea relative to the Messiah, such report must certainly have pro-

moted the belief of the Gospel in those parts, when afterwards preached there by the apostles. The expedition of the wise men was the cause of the answer of the Sanhedrim, which unanimously declared it to be the opinion of all the Jewish rabbies then living, that, according to ancient prophecies, Bethlehem was the place appointed by the Almighty to give birth to the promised Messiah.

It also contributed to another valuable purpose, in that the offerings of the wise men procured a subsistence for the holy family in Egypt, whither they were soon after warned to fly, in order to escape the vengeance of the enraged king; for no sooner had the wise men departed from Bethlehem, than Joseph was warned by a heavenly messenger of the barbarous purpose of Herod, and commanded to fly into Egypt with the young child and his mother.

Joseph, in obedience to the command of the Almighty, rose that night and fled into Egypt, "and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my Son." This prophecy, which is quoted from Hosea, seems originally to refer to the Israelites; though the evangelist's reference will be amply justified, by considering that the Egyptian captivity alludes to their subjection of the Israelites to great hardships, and their deliverance from the same by an Almighty hand.

Now, as the departure of the holy family into Egypt was in obedience to the divine command, in order to protect the holy Jesus from the incensed Herod, the application of the prophet, "Out of Egypt have I called my Son," appears very just as well as elegant. The king of Judea long waited, with most earnest expectation, the return of the wise men, anxious to glut his full resentment on the innocent Jesus; till, from their long delay, he began to suspect that his designs were frustrated by some extraordinary interposition of Providence.

At length, irritated by disappointment, he resolved to accomplish by cruelty a project he could not effect by art, and accordingly issued orders to a large body of soldiers to go throughout Bethlehem and the neighboring villages, and massacre all the children they could find therein that were two years old and under; thinking that the infant Jesus, whom, as a prince, he both envied and dreaded, would fall in the general slaughter. But the heavenly Missionary was sheltered from above; nor was the relentless king permitted to impede the design of an Almighty Creator. However, the cities through which the soldiers carried the destructive sword exhibited

such scenes of horror and distress as could not fail to thrill every soul not entirely lost to humanity. No sound was heard but the piercing cries of parents, the groans of expiring babes, and a general imprecation of vengeance on the merciless tyrant. But he did not long survive this cruel decree, being swept from his throne by a horrid disease, to answer for his conduct at the bar of a tremendous Judge.

No description can paint the horror of such a scene of relentless cruelty in a more glaring light than the verse quoted by the evangelist Matthew, from the prophet Jeremiah: "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning; Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not." This prophecy must not be understood literally, but descriptively, or as a figure used to display the horror of the scene as there applied by the evangelist, in which acceptance it has a peculiar beauty; representing Rachel, the beloved wife of Jacob, buried many years ago in the fields of Bethlehem, awakened by the cries of slaughtered infants, bursting even the chains of death, and lamenting the hapless fate of the murdered innocents surrounding her.

The tyrant Herod being thus cut off from the face of the earth, Joseph was warned by a heavenly messenger to return to the land of Israel. The good old man obeyed the Almighty command; and it appears that he had a great desire of residing in Judea, and very probably in the city of Bethlehem; but hearing that Herod was succeeded in his throne by his son Archelaus, and fearing that he might pursue the barbarous design of his father, he directed his course another way; but being warned again by a heavenly mission, he retired into Galilee, then under the government of a mild and benevolent prince called Antepas, and took up his abode at Nazareth, where the particular circumstances attending the birth of the blessed Jesus were not generally known. The evangelist affirms that Joseph, with the infant and his mother, resided in Nazareth, where the holy Jesus spent his youth; "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, He shall be called a Nazarene."

The advocates of infidelity, whose notice the smallest inaccuracy in the sacred Scriptures has not escaped, have not failed to observe, that the evangelist refers to what he cannot justify from any of the prophetic writings, in which there are no such words to be found as "He shall be called a Nazarene." But the evangelist may with

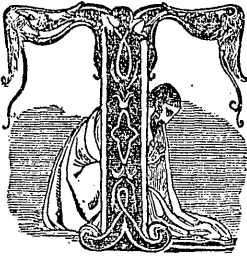
justice be vindicated from the charge of impropriety, by reminding the skeptics, that though the very words are not to be found, the allusion is just, and consequently the application. This expression refers to the general contempt and ridicule in which the Israelites held the Galileans, and especially the Nazarenes, who were even despised by the Galileans themselves, insomuch that the word Nazarene became a term of reproach.

Now, as the prophets in general foretold the disgrace and infamy through which the blessed Jesus should pass, they consequently foretold he should be called a Nazarene, or exposed to every token of contempt and ridicule, of which this appellation at that time was a remarkable instance.

It is evident that our Lord's residing at Nazareth remarkably tended to the fulfillment of those prophecies, because in the course of his public ministry he was frequently reproached with the same, and his countrymen often urged it as a reason for their disregard of his doctrine. But the stubbornness of unbelief will never admit of conviction; we have therefore added these remarks to confirm the faith of the Christian, rather than convince the obstinate Infidel.

CHAPTER III.

STATE OF OUR LORD'S CHILDHOOD AND PRIVATE LIFE—HIS ARGUMENT WITH THE JEWISH DOCTORS—MISSION, CHARACTER, AND DOCTRINE, OF THE BAPTIST—BAPTISM OF CHRIST, AND VISIBLE DESCENT OF THE SPIRIT ON THAT SOLEMNITY—POEM.



THE precise circumstances of our Lord's childhood and life previous to his public ministry, cannot be ascertained from the writings of any of the evangelists; which can alone be relied on as authentic. All we can gather from those inspired men is, that the faculties of his mind were enlarged in proportion to the growth of his body, inso-much that he arrived at the very perfection of heavenly wisdom. As his parents were mean and poor, he had not the advantage of a finished education; and seems to have received no other instruction than what his parents gave him, in conformity to the Jewish laws. But supernatural abilities amply compensated for this deficiency, and he gave instances in his earliest years of amazing penetration and consummate wisdom.

According to the Mosaic institution, his parents annually went up to Jerusalem; and when he arrived at the age of twelve years, they carried him there with them, in order that he might early imbibe the precepts of religion and virtue. In this place the holy Jesus tarried without the knowledge, and consequently without the consent, of his parents, who departed with the rest that were going towards Galilee, thinking that he was gone forward with some of their relations or acquaintance: they therefore continued their journey, expecting to overtake him on the road, or to meet him at the place where they had appointed to lodge. But on their arrival, not finding the child in the village nor amongst their relations, they returned to Jerusalem much troubled; and, after a most anxious search of three days, found him in the temple sitting among the learned doctors, who were amazed at the wisdom of his questions, and the pertinence of his replies, which were so far superior to the utmost they could expect from one of his tender years and mean education.

These doctors, or expounders of the law among the Jews, always

taught the people publicly on the three great festivals; and it was on one of these public occasions that the blessed Jesus gave such manifest proofs of his wisdom and penetration as astonished all beholders, many of whom thought he must be something more than human. As, according to his own declaration, he was employed in his almighty Father's business, it was natural to think, in the course of these disputes, he modestly corrected some of the errors which the Jewish doctors then taught, and which were repugnant to the plan of that religion which he came to promote and establish. The wonder of his parents at finding him in such sublime employment was beyond expression; though his pious mother, who, notwithstanding the pleasure which the discovery afforded her, could not conceal the concern which his absenting himself without their knowledge had occasioned both to Joseph and herself, addressed him thus: "Son, why hast thou dealt thus with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." To this question he replied, "That their surprise at his absenting himself without their knowledge was groundless and absurd, as they might have been assured, from his extraordinary birth, and the wonderful circumstances attending it, that his Father was no less than the Almighty one of Israel; that he assumed human nature to promote his glorious designs; and therefore, as his errand was of such moment, they must not imagine he could always reside with them. How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

Though his parents did not clearly discern the full meaning of this excellent remonstrance, his pious mother committed his words to memory, and, together with Joseph her husband, joyfully returned with him to their poor dwelling at Nazareth, where he lived with them in dutiful subjection, thereby affording a noble example for the imitation of all children, who certainly are bound to yield obedience to their parents, since the Son of God himself, when on earth, has set them the pattern, by practising every branch of filial duty to his earthly parents.

The blessed Jesus continued in this lowly state for some time, during which he grew both in knowledge and stature; and by his extraordinary qualities, both of body and mind, attracted the regard and admiration of all who either saw or heard him.

Being happily free from those inordinate disquieting desires which disturb and distract mortals, he was always in temper calm and sedate, which, added to a pleasant countenance, combined to prove the strength of his faculties and the goodness of his disposition. He was

also an excellent orator, being endowed with a most nervous and persuasive elocution, insomuch that his hearers, frequently astonished at the substance and manner of his address, would suddenly cry out, "Never man spake like this man!" Though considered in his divine nature he was so superior to his human nature, yet during the time in which he lived thus humbly with his parents, he condescended to work with his father at his trade of a carpenter, and thereby left us a shining example of industry.

Thus obscurely, for a time, did the blessed Jesus live, his divine nature concealed under the veil of humanity; nor did he work any miracles, or perform any actions to distinguish him from the rest of mankind, until the commencement of his public ministry.

As this is the whole account given in sacred history concerning the childhood and private life of the Saviour of mankind, we must content ourselves therewith, not seeking to indulge a curiosity which such silence seems to forbid as sinful as well as impertinent.

We are fully aware that many persons, of more speculation than piety, may be induced to inquire the cause which prevented the evangelists giving us an exact detail of the transactions of our Saviour's life, from the twelfth year of his age till the time of his public ministry, as if every occurrence in this intermediate space ought to have been recorded. To such we reply, that the design of the inspired writers being to instruct, they consulted our interest rather than our humor and caprice; and that, therefore, the wisdom of God, by whose inspiration they wrote, demands our admiration, in that they passed over less important parts of our Saviour's life, which would have swelled their Gospels to an enormous bulk, fit only for the perusal of the studious and those persons who have much vacant time; whereas, the four Gospels, as they are written, make only a small volume, convenient for carriage, for reading, and for the memory to retain, as well as adapted, by the plainness of their style, to the meanest capacities; notwithstanding which they contain all the important transactions of our Saviour's life, such as those which relate to his mediatorial office, the design of his incarnation, which was to teach us those things which belong to our eternal peace and happiness; to instruct us in his heavenly doctrines, as our prophet; to offer himself a sacrifice upon the cross, as our priest; and to burst the chains of death, and triumphantly ascend into heaven, as king or head of his church. The omissions, therefore, can be of no real consequence, since "These are written that

ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name."

During the obscure state of our blessed Redeemer at Nazareth, the emperor Augustus died, in Campania, after a long reign of nearly forty years, to the general regret of the whole Roman empire, and was succeeded by Tiberius, his step-son, a prince of a very different temper of mind from his predecessor. This emperor, in the second year of his reign, recalled Rufus from the government of Judea, and sent Valerius Gracchus to succeed him. Eleven years afterwards Gracchus was recalled, and succeeded by Pontius Pilate, a person resembling in disposition his master Tiberius, who was malicious, cruel, and covetous.

Soon after Pontius Pilate was appointed to the government of Judea, John the Baptist began to open his commission for preparing our Saviour's way before him, according as was appointed, "The baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." Sacred history has not informed us of the manner in which the Baptist spent the former part of his life; but, according to ancient tradition, Elizabeth, hearing of Herod's barbarous massacre of the infants of Bethlehem, with all the tenderness of an affectionate mother, fled into the wilderness to secure the infant John, then about eighteen months old, from the relentless cruelty of that inhuman monster; and there, within forty days after, she died.

His aged father Zacharias was afterwards slain while officiating in the temple, by command of the tyrant Herod, for refusing to discover the place of his son's abode. The intended harbinger of the blessed Jesus being thus deprived of his earthly parents, the Father of the fatherless took compassion on him, and sent an angel to defend and support him till he had attained to a sufficient age and strength to provide for himself.

It appears from the narrative of the evangelist that he dwelt in the desert till the time of his public ministry, resembling the ancient prophet Elijah, in the coarseness of his clothing and plainness of his diet. His dress was composed of camel's hair, his food the spontaneous productions of the wilderness, such as locusts and wild honey, and his drink pure water. His course of life was indeed admirably adapted to the doctrine of repentance, which he preached, as well as to engage the attention of his hearers; so that it appears highly reasonable, that those who waited the coming of the Messiah with earnest expectation, should flock to him, anxious to hear what he had to deliver concerning him.

He proved very successful in his ministry, as he enforced the doctrine of repentance, because the kingdom of heaven was at hand; persons of all degrees and professions flocked to him, confessed their sins, were baptized in Jordan, and submitted to whatever the prophet prescribed as necessary to that kingdom, the approach of which he came to declare. Amongst his converts were many of the Pharisees, who confessed their sins, and were likewise baptized in Jordan.

The conversion of the Pharisees surprised the Baptist, knowing that they maintained a high opinion of their own sanctity, for which reason it was very astonishing that they should express any desire of obtaining a remission of their sins. In short, he was much surprised to find the whole nation so affected by his threatenings, especially as he knew that they expected salvation on account of their being of the seed of Abraham; a conceit which they cherished, and which they seem to have derived from a misrepresentation of the passage: "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 forever. 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."

But the Baptist, to curb this arrogance, called them the "offspring of vipers," instead of the "children of Abraham." Perhaps the Pharisees and Sadducees applied to John for baptism, thinking by that means to avoid the danger they might incur from being the avowed enemies of the Messiah, whom they expected to come in all the pomp of royalty, and to maintain his superiority by force of arms.

The Baptist, who was no stranger to these hypocritical sects, and well knew that their application to him arose from sinister views, severely reprimanded them in general:—"O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance." O deceivers, hypocrites, whence have you obtained knowledge of the approaching event I am destined by God to make known? Whence have you a sense of the impending judgment of the Almighty? I have plainly told you the only method of avoiding it is by a sincere repentance, which can alone be evinced by the conformity of the heart and life to the word

and will of God. "And begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." Deceive not yourselves with a vain presumption that your lineal descent from Abraham entitles you to eternal blessings: such a pretence will avail you nothing: for to partake of the promises made to that father of the faithful, you must show forth some resemblance of his faith and piety.

The Almighty Creator, who formed our first parent out of the dust, and caused Sarah to bear a son unto Abraham when they were both well stricken in years, can, by virtue of his omnipotence, raise up children unto that faithful patriarch, even from these very stones; children indeed, who by the integrity of their hearts and purity of their lives, shall prove their spiritual alliance to Abraham, and share with him the promised salvation.

The Baptist, by this plain but honest declaration, at once set at nought the towering expectations of this hypocritical tribe, by showing them, that God respected the heart alone, and that all their pretences to descent, ceremonies, and other outward parade, were of no avail with him who trieth the heart, and searcheth the reins of the children of men. He went further, and assured them that conviction and confession of sin were not sufficient: no, nor even a promise to forsake it; but there must be a speedy and actual putting it into practice. "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Delay not this important work, for the judgments of the Almighty are at hand; therefore, if you continue in your sins, impending ruin will certainly fall upon you.

Nothing could be more sincere, nothing better calculated, than this doctrine of the forerunner of the blessed Jesus: it struck at the very root of the Jewish prejudices, which induced too many of them vainly to rely upon outward rites and ceremonies, with prayers and fastings, which, when not proceeding from a devout heart and a just sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, were an abomination to a holy God. Nor did his conduct less reprove the pride and hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees than his doctrine; for whereas that upstart clan used to shun the converse of the publicans and meaner sort of people, and would rarely deign to give them instruction, the humble Baptist received their applications in the most submissive manner, and preached to them the absolute necessity of faith, repentance, and obedience. Indeed, throughout the whole of his ministration, he happily adapted his discourses to the circum-

stances and capacities of the various people he addressed, and took every pious means to prepare them for the reception of the promised Messiah, who was shortly to appear amongst them in the glorious character of the Saviour and Redeemer of Israel.

Thus, by a life of inflexible virtue, discourses nervous and pathetic, exhortations sincere and fervent, and rebukes honest and courageous, the Baptist became renowned throughout the region of Judæa. Such was the admiration of the people at his life and doctrine, that, from the vision of his father Zacharias in the temple, the arrival of the magi at Jerusalem, the prophecies of Simeon—circumstances recent in their memories—they began to conjecture that John might be the promised Messiah, and were ready to pronounce him the Redeemer of Israel; so that, had he aspired to worldly dignity, he might for a time have shone in all the grandeur of human pomp, and claimed a regard superior to any of the sons of men. But pious in principle, and humble in heart, he could not arrogate honors of which he was conscious of his unworthiness; and therefore honestly undeceived his numerous followers, by assuring them that, so far from being the glorious person promised, he was only his forerunner; and that such was his own inferiority, that he was unworthy of doing his most menial offices. “I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose.” Luke iii. 16.

During the time of the Baptist's continuance at Bethabara, the blessed Jesus left his retirement at Nazareth; and, previous to his public ministry, repaired to the banks of the river Jordan where John was executing his commission from above, in order to be there baptized by him. We cannot impute this conduct of our Lord to any necessity for his conforming to the institution of baptism; for purity needs no cleansing. It is therefore evident that his motive was to add a sanction to that ordinance, forever after appointed to be the initiating rite of Christianity—“Go, baptize all nations,” etc. It appears that John immediately, as it were by a prophetic revelation, knew the Saviour of the world; for we find from the evangelist that he acknowledged his superiority, and declined the office. “I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?” Our Lord's answer, though short, is very full and expressive: “Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.” As if he had said, Regard not the precedence at this time, but perform thy office; for it is necessary that we

should, in the minutest point, conform to the divine will, by which this institution is enjoined.

This remonstrance removed the objections of John, and he baptized the immaculate Jesus in the river Jordan, in the presence of numerous spectators.

When the ceremony was performed, as he needed not the instructions usually given on the occasion, he went up straightway out of the water, and kneeling on the bank of the river, fervently addressed his Almighty Father for an abundant effusion of his Holy Spirit, as he was now entering on his public ministry, the prelude of his important mission, the end of which was the salvation of mankind.

His prayer was heard, his request was granted; and an immediate attestation of the divine pleasure given by a visible ray of glory around him, in the form of a dove, and an audible voice proceeding from the Holy Spirit, pronouncing these words, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!" distinguishing his peculiar approbation of the blessed Jesus by the epithet "beloved," as well as his standing in that relation to him, in a manner nearer than any of the human race, who are called, in common, the sons of God. This voice resembled not any human sound, but was loud and awful, like the thunders of heaven, in order to strike with reverence the surrounding multitude, and publicly declare the holy mission of the long-promised Messiah.

The blessed Jesus was called, in the Old Testament, the Son of God; but was, on this occasion, declared by the Almighty himself to be the long-expected Deliverer of Israel. Thus all who were present at this marvelous descent of the Holy Spirit, were amply convinced of the divine mission of our blessed Lord, by an infallible testimony from above: this being the *Star* that was to come out of Jacob, and the *Sceptre* that was to rise out of Israel; the *Shiloh* foretold by the patriarch Jacob; the *Great Prophet*, by Moses; the *Holy One*, by David; the *Prince of Peace*, by Isaiah, and the *Son of Man*. But this remarkable event tended much more to the glory of the Messiah than all those prophecies, as it was, in some measure, a real display of what they could only picture in the dark.

Our own American poet, N. P. WILLIS, has so beautifully described the baptism of our Lord, that we are sure we shall contribute to the pleasure of our readers by transcribing the whole beautiful poem:—

It was a green spot in the wilderness
 Touched by the river Jordan. The dark pine
 Never had dropp'd its tassels on the moss
 Tufting the leaning bank, nor on the grass
 Of the broad circle stretching evenly
 To the straight larches, had a heavier foot
 Than the wild heron's trodden. Softly in
 Through a long aisle of willows dim and cool
 Stole the clear waters with their muffled feet,
 And hushing as they spread into the light,
 Circled the edges of the pebbled tank
 Slowly, then rippled through the woods away.
 Hither had come the Apostles of the wild,
 Winding the river's course. 'Twas near the flush
 Of eve, and, with a multitude around,
 Who from the cities had come out to hear,
 He stood breast high amid the running stream,
 Baptizing as the Spirit gave him power.
 His simple raiment was of camel's hair,
 A leathern girdle close about his loins,
 His beard unshorn; and his daily meat
 The locust and wild honey of the wood:
 But like the face of Moses on the Mount
 Shone his rapt countenance, and in his eye
 Burned the mild fire of love; as he spoke
 The ear leaned to him, and persuasion swift
 To the chain'd spirit of the listener stole.
 Silent upon the green and sloping bank
 The people sat, and while the leaves were shook
 With the birds dropping early to their nests,
 And the gray eve came on, within their hearts
 They mused if he were Christ. The rippling stream
 Still turn'd its silver courses from his breast
 As he divined their thought. "I but baptize,"
 He said, "with water; but there cometh One
 The latchet of whose shoes I may not dare
 Even to unloose. He will baptize with fire
 And with the Holy Ghost." And lo! while yet
 The words were on his lips, he raised his eyes,
 And on the bank stood Jesus. He had laid
 His raiment off, and with his loins alone
 Girt with a mantle, and his perfect limbs,
 In their angelic slighthness, meek and bare,
 He waited to go in. But John forbade,
 And hurried to his feet and stay'd him there,
 And said, "Nay, Master! I have need of *thine*,
 Not thou of *mine*!" And Jesus with a smile
 Of heavenly sadness, met his earnest looks,
 And answered, "Suffer it to be so now;
 For thus it doth become me to fulfill
 All righteousness." And, leaning to the stream,

He took around him the apostle's arm,
And drew him gently to the midst.

The wood

Was thick with the dim twilight as they came
Up from the water. With his clasped hands
Laid upon his breast, the apostle silently
Followed his Master's footsteps; when lo! a light
Bright as the tenfold glory of the sun,
Yet lambent as the softly burning stars,
Enveloped them, and from the heavens away
Parted the dim blue ether like a veil,
And as a voice fearful exceedingly,
Broke from the midst, "*This is my much beloved
Son, in whom I am well pleased,*" a snow white dove,
Floating upon its wings, descended through,
And, shedding a swift music from its plumes,
Circled and fluttered to the Saviour's breast.

CHAPTER IV.

COMMENCEMENT OF OUR SAVIOUR'S MINISTRY—HIS TEMPTATION IN THE WILDERNESS—
DEPUTATION OF THE SANHEDRIM TO JOHN THE BAPTIST—FIRST MIRACLE WROUGHT BY
THE BLESSED JESUS.



HE great Redeemer having thus complied with the institution of baptism, and received a most convincing testimony of his heavenly FATHER'S approbation, by the miraculous descent and effusion of the Holy Ghost upon him, while praying on the banks of Jordan, in the presence of a multitude of spectators, entered on his public ministry at the age of thirty years, according to the custom of the priests among the Jews. It was apprehended by the people, that as he had just begun his public office, he would repair to Jerusalem, the seat of power and grandeur, in order to display to the mighty and the learned, his miraculous abilities and effulgent glories. But, averse to human parade, the heavenly-minded Jesus preferred solitude to the noise and hurry of mortal life; and therefore retired into the wilderness, to prepare himself, by fasting, meditation, prayer, and sustaining temptation, for the important work on which he was entering—the salvation of mankind.

To promote this grand design, the evangelist writes, that this retirement into the wilderness was in consequence of the immediate direction of the divine Spirit. Though solitude itself is melancholy, the blessed Jesus added to the dismal scene, by retiring to a barren spot, surrounded by high and craggy mountains, forming a dark and gloomy chaos.

In this wild and dreary situation the great Redeemer, as Moses and Elijah had done before him, fasted forty days and forty nights, maintained an incessant communion with his heavenly Father, digested the doctrine he came to deliver, and the obedience he came to perform; and, by a total abstinence from food for forty days and forty nights, evinced the divinity of his mission; or, in other words, proved that he was a "teacher come from God." But the

melancholy solitude of a desert, and the extremes of hunger and thirst, were but a small part of our Saviour's sufferings in the wilderness: Satan, that implacable foe to mankind, was permitted to buffet him with the most insinuating wiles, and assail him with the most alluring temptations, in order to attempt the defeat of Heaven's most gracious designs, and keep mankind under the dreadful dominion of sin and death.

The enemies of Revelation have not failed to represent this event in a most ludicrous manner. If any, therefore, should demand why God permitted his only Son, the Saviour of the world, to be tempted by the devil, we reply as follows:—One cause of the Redeemer's being suffered to be tempted was, that he, being personally acquainted with the wiles of Satan, might become a faithful and compassionate high priest, know how to succor his people in time of adversity, and pity them when they fall into temptations. That in order to be a shining pattern of every virtue, also a wise and valiant General, the blessed Redeemer underwent all the difficulties and trials attending his service; that we, being animated by his glorious example, might not sink under the pressure and troubles which God, for our good, should be pleased to lay upon us.

The Saviour of the world hath not only been exposed to poverty and ridicule, but also to the most trying temptations of Satan; that as the Captain of our salvation has undergone the same, we ought not to faint when we are tempted, but, like him, be able to withstand the fiery darts of the devil. It doubtless appears highly proper, in order that our blessed Lord and Master might both enter upon and prosecute his ministry with more glory to himself and advantage to mankind, that he should previously overcome the most subtle arts of that deceiver, who, under the mask of a serpent, seduced our first parents, and involved them and their posterity in one common ruin.

The peculiar devices used by the old Serpent, to tempt the Son of God, during the time of his fasting, are not recorded in Holy Writ, and consequently cannot be ascertained.

At the expiration of the forty days, when the blessed Jesus had endured the keenest hunger, the tempter, to make proof of the divinity of his mission, insolently demanded why he bore the sensation of hunger, since, if he was the Son of God, he must have power to change even the stones of that dreary wilderness into bread; and by so marvelous a transmutation he might have the satisfaction of knowing the truth of what was said concerning him at his baptism.

But our blessed Saviour repelled this device, by citing the words

of Moses, which implied that God, whenever it seemed good in his sight, could, by extraordinary means, provide for the support of the human race: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." Luke iv. 4.

Satan, being defeated in this effort, carried him to the top of a very high mountain, and, thinking to gain upon his ambition, showed a bright view of all the kingdoms of the world, with their alluring glories, promising him universal empire over them, if he would bow down and yield to him the honor of the benefaction.

But observe his accursed pride and arrogance in promising that which is the gift of God alone, universal empire over the earth; and requiring what was due to none but the Supreme object of religious homage. This blasphemy, as well as insolence, incited the holy Jesus to exert his divine authority, and command him, in a peremptory manner, to desist, citing that special injunction from Sacred Writ, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Though thus repelled, he repeated the attempt; and having carried our Lord through the air, placed him on the pinnacle of a temple, and, by a taunt of insolence, urged him to prove the truth of his mission, by casting himself down from thence; citing, as an encouragement for him to comply with his desire, the words of the inspired Psalmist, "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down; for it is written, he shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." Mat. iv. 6. But our Saviour soon baffled this attempt, by another apt quotation from Scripture, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Mat. iv. 7. Thou shalt not provoke the Lord, either by disobeying his command, or by an impertinent curiosity to know more concerning his mind and will than he is pleased to reveal. Thus baffled in all his art and devices by the wisdom and power of the Son of God, he departed from him for a season, and a host of celestial spirits, dispatched from the regions of bliss, came and ministered refreshment unto him after his victory over the great enemy and deceiver of mankind.

Hence, as before observed, notwithstanding the ridicule of the Infidel, Christians may derive great encouragement to fight manfully against the flesh, the world, and the devil, under the banner of the great Captain of their salvation, who is ever ready to supply them with spiritual armor, to sustain the combat with that inveterate and subtle foe, whose devices he has experienced, being in every respect tempted like them.

During the time of our Saviour's retirement in the wilderness, his faithful harbinger, the Baptist, being assured, from the miraculous descent of the Holy Spirit, and other concurring testimonies, that Jesus was the promised and long-expected Messiah, continued publishing his mission to the multitude; so that the rulers in Jerusalem received information of the surprising events that had happened in Bethabara, beyond Jordan, before they saw the blessed Jesus, in confirmation of whose mission and doctrine they were effected. Prompted by curiosity, they dispatched a deputation of priests and Levites to the Baptist, to demand of him, whether he was the Messiah or Elias; or that Prophet who was to rise from the dead, and precede the Messiah, the powerful Prince so earnestly expected by the whole nation of Israel? To this inquiry the Baptist frankly replied, that he was not the Messiah whom they expected, nor Elias, who, as they vainly thought, would personally appear amongst them, nor any other prophet risen from the dead; but at the same time hinted to them, that though he was not Elias himself, yet he was that prophet spoken of by Isaiah, and of whom he thus prophesied: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." Is. xl. 3.

The priests and Levites, not sufficiently gratified with this reply of the Baptist, demanded of him, Why he assumed the power of baptizing the people, if he was neither the Messiah nor Elias, nor any of the ancient prophets risen from the dead? To this demand John answered, "I indeed baptize, to show the necessity of repentance, but my baptism is only that of water, and wholly ineffectual in itself to the remission of sins; whereas that washing foretold by Zacharias, which is of most sovereign effect, is not my province, but solely that of the Messiah, the latchet of whose shoes I am unworthy to unloose, and who is actually upon earth and among ye, though ye know him not, because he hath not manifested himself unto the world." The Messiah is so far exalted beyond me in power and dignity, that I am not worthy to do him the meanest offices.

The day after the departure of the priests and Levites from Bethabara, our blessed Lord left the wilderness, and repaired thither himself while John was yet baptizing and preaching the doctrine of repentance.

The Baptist, as his grand business was to direct all persons to the Messiah for life and salvation in and through him, embraced this seasonable opportunity of pointing him out to the multitude: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world."

Lest the attending crowd should surmise that it had been previously concerted between them that the Saviour should assume, and the latter give him, the appellation of Messiah, he publicly and solemnly declared that he was ignorant of the pretensions of Jesus to that high character, until he saw the miraculous descent of the Holy Ghost, and heard him pronounced, in the most awful manner, 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. 32-34.

The Baptist having made this public declaration, the Messiah left Bethabara, but returned the day following; and John, happening to stand with two of his followers on the bank of the river Jordan, pointed to him as he passed, and in a pious rapture repeated what he had addressed to the multitude the preceding day: "Behold the Lamb of God!" It is hence imagined that these two disciples, or followers of the Baptist, were absent at the time of the descent of the Holy Ghost, and for that reason this method was taken of pointing out to them the person of the promised Redeemer. Animated with an ardent desire of hearing as well as seeing this extraordinary person, they left John and followed Jesus, who, conscious of their design, turned about, and with the utmost affability gave them an invitation to the place of his residence.

The evangelist John informs us, that one of these disciples was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter; and it is conjectured, from his silence, that himself was the other; for it is remarkable that in his writings he has studiously concealed his own name. Be that as it may, it is abundantly evident that the testimony of the Baptist, added to the tokens he had from the ever-blessed Jesus in the course of his converse with him, amply satisfied Andrew that he was indeed the promised Messiah, the Saviour and Redeemer of a lost and perishing world.

Andrew soon after found his brother Peter, and brought him to our Lord, who immediately called him by his name, telling him that he should afterwards be called Cephas, which signifies a rock, from his firm resolution of mind, and also because he should contribute towards the foundation of the Christian church.

Some time after Jesus casually met with Philip, an inhabitant of the town of Bethsaida, and said to him, "Follow me." Philip im-

most readily obeyed the divine command, having heard of the character and mission of our blessed Saviour. It is supposed that this disciple was present at the miraculous descent of the Holy Spirit on our Lord at his baptism, and that therefore his ready compliance with his call is no matter of admiration.

Philip meeting with Nathanael, an inhabitant of Cana, a town of Galilee, informed him of the actual coming of the long-expected Messiah, that Great Deliverer of Israel, spoken of by Moses and the ancient prophets—"Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathanael was assured, from the predictions concerning the Messiah, that he was to be descended from the line of David, and born in the city of Bethlehem, and therefore discovered an amazement at his being called Jesus of Nazareth—"Can any good thing come out of Nazareth! Can that most contemptible of places, Nazareth, be supposed to have given birth to the mighty Saviour, the Prince of Peace, especially as it was expressly foretold by the prophet that he was to be born in Bethlehem, the city of David!"

Notwithstanding the improbability of such an event, Nathanael determined on an examination of the person who was said by Philip to be the promised Messiah. Accordingly, under his direction, he repaired to the blessed Jesus, who, knowing his character, saluted him on his approach with this honorable appellation, "An Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile!"

Nathanael, amazed at our Lord's pertinent address, as he had never before seen him, asked by what means he obtained such precise knowledge of him? Our Lord replied, he had seen him under the fig-tree.

Probably Nathanael had been praying under the fig-tree, and been overheard by our Lord, who, from the substance of his prayer, thus concluded his character; for when Jesus informed him, that he gave him that character on account of what had passed under the fig-tree, Nathanael perceived that he knew not only what passed at a distance, but had access to the inmost thoughts of the heart—a property not allotted to mortals; and therefore exclaimed with rapture, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God! thou art the King of Israel!" Our Saviour then told him, he should hereafter have much stronger testimonials of the divinity of his mission, when he should be eye-witness to what the old patriarch Jacob had before seen in a vision—the angels of heaven "descending and ascending," to attend the person and execute the commands of the "Son of man;" an appellation our dear Lord assumed not only as considering his humanity, but in order to fulfill most peremptorily that

remarkable prediction of the prophet Daniel concerning him: "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." Dan. vii. 13, 14.

The great Redeemer having attested the divinity of his mission by many incontestible evidences, and made five disciples, departed for Galilee; where, soon after his arrival, he was invited, with his mother and disciples, to a marriage-feast at Cana, a place near Nazareth.

At these nuptials there happened to be a scarcity of wine; and his mother, who interested herself in the conduct of the feast, and was therefore desirous that every thing should be done with decorum, applied to him, hoping that he should be able to remedy the defect. She had doubtless been eye-witness to his power of working miracles, and was therefore desirous that he would give proof of his ability in the presence of her friends, who were assembled at the marriage. Therefore, addressing herself to her son, she represented to him that they had no wine. Our Lord gently reproved her in these words, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come;" that is, the time or period of my public ministry is not yet arrived, nor is it time yet for me to display my supernatural powers.

Notwithstanding this mild reproof, his mother still entertained an opinion that he would interest himself in behalf of her and the company, and therefore ordered the servants punctually to obey his commands.

Our blessed Lord, being assured that the exertion of his divine power in working a miracle would greatly tend to confirm the faith of his young disciples, ordered the servants to fill six water-pots, containing each about twenty gallons, with water; which was no sooner done, than the whole was converted into excellent wine. He then desired them to draw, and bear to the governor of the feast; who, being ignorant of the miracle that had been wrought, and astonished at the preference of this wine to that which had been served up at the beginning of the feast, addressed himself to the bridegroom, in the hearing of the whole company, telling him that, contrary to the usual custom, he had reserved the best wine to the last; at the same time commending so judicious a practice, as a plain

proof of his approbation of his friends present at the entertainment. The bridegroom was equally surprised at the address of the governor of the feast, and the occasion of it, which was effected by the supernatural power of our blessed Lord.

This miracle, which was the first wrought by Jesus, confirmed the faith of his followers, and spread his renown through the adjacent country.

The votaries of infidelity have not failed to arraign the truth of this event at the bar of their superior reason, and to vent their sarcastic humor upon it.

Their mirth and ridicule seem chiefly founded on a supposition that most of the company were intoxicated, and consequently more liable to delusion; but we desire them to suspend their opinion, or at least their judgment, a little, while we remind them that the governor, in his speech to the bridegroom, does not imply even such a supposition; but evidently refers to the manner in which the entertainment was conducted, a manner much preferable to that customarily followed, in which "Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine, and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse." Nor can these wise people, in their own conceit, rationally think that Jesus ordered or expected that all the wine he had furnished should be expended at this entertainment; though, according to the Jewish custom on these occasions, it continued a week.

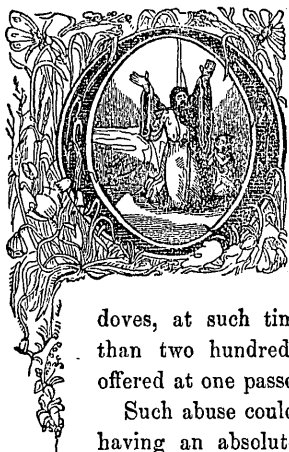
Permit us also to observe, that there might be a very important reason assigned for our Lord's furnishing such abundance; because, if the quantity had been considerably less, the miracle would have been much less apparent, and the enemies of Christianity, ever ready to grasp at the shadow of the pretence, might have denied that a miracle was wrought at all, it having been easy to convey away a small quantity of water, and substitute the like quantity of wine in its place; whereas such a deception must be allowed impracticable in so large a quantity; the transmutation being momentary.

The Deists have likewise made much parade of argument concerning the size of these water-pots. In this we give them their utmost scope, persuaded that all which they can say on that head will not in the least tend to invalidate the Christian cause.

The blessed Jesus having thus, by divers means, confirmed the faith of his disciples, and attested the truth and the divinity of his mission amongst those with whom he had been brought up, departed from Cana, and proceeded towards Jerusalem in order to keep the approaching passover.

CHAPTER V.

EXPULSION OF THE PROFANERS OF THE TEMPLE—JESUS VISITS AND DISPUTES WITH NICODEMUS—BAPTIZES IN JUDEA—INSTRUCTS A POOR SAMARITAN—HEALS A SICK PERSON AT CAPERNAUM—RETIRES AGAIN TO NAZARETH—AND IS EXPELLED THENCE BY HIS IMPIOUS COUNTRYMEN.



OUR blessed Lord, immediately on his arrival at Jerusalem, repaired to the temple, where he was shocked at beholding a place dedicated to the solemn service of Almighty God, so prostituted to purposes of fraud and avarice, and become the resort of traders of every kind. It is evident there must have been a grand market for oxen, sheep, and

doves, at such times, for Josephus tells us that no less than two hundred and fifty-six thousand victims were offered at one passover.

Such abuse could not long escape his notice or correction, having an absolute right to chastise so flagrant a perversion of a place that, strictly speaking, was his own.

“The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple; even the Messenger of the Covenant whom ye delight in; behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.”

Accordingly, the blessed Jesus, whose pious soul was vexed at their profanation of the sacred place, drove out the traders, and upset the tables of the money-changers, saying unto them that sold doves, “take these things hence: make not my Father’s house a house of merchandise.”

These mercenary wretches appear to have been struck at once with a consciousness of their guilt, and the severity of our Lord’s reproof; as they immediately departed, without making the least resistance. But our Lord’s conduct in this affair, carrying with it every token of zeal, for which the ancient prophets were so remarkable, the Council assembled, and determined to inquire by what authority he attempted such a reformation; requiring, at the same time, a demonstrative proof of the divinity of his commission.

To gratify their curiosity, our blessed Lord referred them only to the miracle of his own resurrection: "Destroy," says he, probably laying his hand on his breast, "this temple, and I will raise it up in three days." The rulers, mistaking his meaning, imagined that he referred to the superb and lofty temple finished by Herod, and therefore told him such a statement was highly improbable, nor had they the least reason to think he could possibly rebuild, in three days, that magnificent structure, which had been finished at immense expense, and was the labor of forty-six years.

Though the blessed Jesus declined compliance with the request of the mighty and noble amongst the inhabitants of Jerusalem, he wrought several miracles in the presence of the common people, in order to confirm the doctrines he delivered, and prove the divinity of his mission.

As there had not been any miracles wrought amongst them for a considerable time, though many were recorded in their sacred books, they beheld our blessed Lord with amazement and veneration; and numbers were satisfied that he was the long-promised Messiah, "the Desire of all nations," so often foretold by the ancient prophets. For wise reasons, however, he did not publicly discover that he was the *great prophet*, as he knew that the faith of numbers was yet but weak; and that, consequently, many would desert his cause when they found he was opposed by the Sanhedrim, or great council of the nation, and did not set up a worldly kingdom, as they thought the expected Messiah was to do.

But the miracles wrought by the holy Jesus did not excite the wonder and astonishment of the common and illiterate class of the people alone. Nicodemus, a principal person among them, impartially reflecting on his wondrous works, so astonishing in their nature, so demonstrative in their proof, so salutary in their effect, so happily adapted to the confirmation of his doctrines, and so perfectly agreeable to the attributes of the Deity, as well as the predictions of the ancient prophets concerning the Messiah, "the Sun of Righteousness, who was to rise with healing in his wings;" was perfectly assured that nothing less than Omnipotence itself could produce such wonders; and thence, like many others of his countrymen, concluded that Jesus was of a truth *sent* of God; which last term is the meaning of the word *Messiah*. But scruples still arose in his mind, when, on the other hand, he considered the obscurity of his birth, and the meanness of his appearance, so different from the exalted notions the people of the Jews always entertained concerning

this powerful prince, who was to erect his throne in the mighty city of Jerusalem, and subject to his dominion all the states and kingdoms of the earth. To obviate therefore these scruples, and solve these perplexing doubts, Nicodemus resolved on an interview with the blessed Jesus; but choosing to conceal his visit from the other members of the Sanhedrim, who were greatly averse to his person and doctrine, he chose the night, as most convenient for that purpose.

His salutation of the mighty Redeemer of Israel was this—“Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him.” John iii. 2.

Rabbi, I am sufficiently convinced that thou art immediately sent as a teacher from on high; for nothing less than power divine could enable thee to perform the miracles which thou hast wrought in the presence of multitudes. But this salutation by no means implies that Nicodemus thought Jesus the great promised Messiah, even the Redeemer of Israel; nor could he obtain that knowledge till it was revealed to him by the blessed Spirit of God.

We may observe that our Saviour, waiving all formality and circumlocution, which tend to no real profit, immediately preaches to this noted Rabbi the first great doctrine of Christianity—regeneration: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus, I declare unto thee, as a truth of the last importance; verily, verily, unless a man be regenerated in the spirit of his mind, have his will and affections transferred from earthly to spiritual objects, he cannot see the kingdom of God, which is holy and spiritual in its nature and enjoyments. This was a mysterious system to the Rabbi, whose religious views extended no farther than rites and ceremonies, and were bounded by time and space; besides, he thought the very position of our Lord an absurdity in terms. “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?” Our Lord replies to this question, “except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” The regeneration which I preach is not of a natural, but of a spiritual nature. Unless a man embraces the Christian religion and doctrines, whose initiating ordinance is baptism, and the subject of divine grace, he cannot be the subject of divine glory, which consists not in earthly splendor, and the gratification of the meaner passions, but in an exemption from whatever is earthly, sen-

sual, and devilish, and the prosecution of whatever is heavenly, holy, and spiritual. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again." It is a truth that you are all concerned in, that you yourselves, even though you are Jews and Pharisees, and rulers of the people—ye must be born again; since the degeneracy of the human nature is common to all. You must undergo a spiritual regeneration, a renovation of the heart, which changes the whole man, and fits you for the participation of heavenly blessedness.

This important work is likewise spiritual in its operation, unseen by mortal eyes, being wrought on the heart of man by the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit, which changes his nature, and, with respect to eternal things, makes him another, a new creature. "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."

Notwithstanding this explanation of the blessed Jesus, Nicodemus was so prepossessed with partiality towards the Jews, who, on account of their alliance to Abraham, thought they were the people of God, entitled to heaven, and consequently in no need of this new operation on the mind called regeneration, that he again demanded, "How can these things be?" The divine instructor then reproves his dullness and misapprehension of what he had so clearly explained and propounded to him, especially as he was himself a teacher of the people, and one of the great council of the nation; "Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?" The doctrines I deliver are not fiction and mere surmise, but founded on eternal truth, immediately revealed from God, and consistent with the will of Heaven. I am witness to the same, and therefore affirm that such testimony is sufficient to render them valid. But your prejudices still prevail, nor can your unbelief be conquered by all the arguments I can advance. "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness."

If ye thus reject the first principles of the Christian religion—such as the necessity of regeneration, or the influence of the Spirit of God upon the heart of man—how will ye believe the sublimer truths I shall hereafter deliver concerning the kingdom of God, or state of the saints in glory? If I inform you of spiritual transactions in this lower world, and ye believe not, how can ye believe if I tell you of those things which relate solely to another and hea-

venly state? But to confirm your belief in what I have delivered, know, that my assured knowledge of these things is derived from the Father of light, the God of truth, by whom I am vested with gifts superior to any of the ancient prophets.

No man hath ascended the regions of immortality, and descended from thence, but "the Son of man;" consequently no man, but "the Son of man," can, with truth and certainty, reveal the immediate will of the Father who is in heaven. Your great lawgiver Moses ascended not there; Mount Sinai was the summit of his elevation: whereas the Son of man, who was in heaven, and came down from thence with a divine commission to sinful mortals, had the most clear and convincing proofs of the will of his Almighty Father, penetrated into the designs of infinite wisdom and grace, and consequently must be higher than any prophet; being, in a peculiar sense, the Prophet of the most high God, or Angel of his presence.

The divine preacher, who spake as no man ever spake, likewise labors to eradicate the favorite principle of the Jews; I mean, that of confining all blessings, temporal and eternal, to their own nation and people; as well as to show the vanity of their expecting the appearance of the Messiah in pomp and magnificence.

To effect this glorious design, he lays open to the Rabbi, that it was agreeable both to the doctrines of Moses as well as the will of God, that the Redeemer, in this state of mortality, should be exposed to poverty and distress of every kind; that his conquests were not to be of a temporal nature, but over the hearts and wills of men; that his throne was not to be established in the earthly but heavenly Jerusalem; previous to which he was to shed his blood; as, by virtue of the same, all of every nation and kingdom throughout the earth might pass into the heavenly world, and there forever—provided they relied on his merits, and conformed their lives to the doctrines he preached—enjoy that perfection of bliss which, through his sufferings, was provided for them by God himself, to all eternity.

Let us remember therefore that it is not enough that a new name be given, or that a new profession be assumed; it is not enough that we are descended from the most pious ancestors, that we have been externally devoted to God by the early seal of his covenant, or that we openly have made a solemn and express profession of our own faith and obedience, and have been born of baptismal water in our riper years; there must be a *new nature* implanted, a new creation formed in our souls by the almighty energy of the eternal

Spirit, or it had been better for us that we had never been born at all.

That God Almighty, the Father, out of his unsupplicated, unmerited grace and mercy to the sinful race of men, sent his only begotten Son to purchase eternal life, through the effusion of his own blood, for all of every nation and kingdom throughout the earth, who should believe in him; that is in the divinity of his mission, the efficacy of his atonement, and, in consequence of that faith, conform to the rules of his Gospel. "Only let your conversation be as cometh the Gospel of Christ." Condemnation, justly passed on all transgressors of the law of God, which are all mankind, can alone be averted according to the divine institution, the propriety of which it is the height of impiety and presumption to call in question. By faith in the blessed Jesus, such a faith as we have just explained, "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."

It appears from the future conduct of Nicodemus, that, instead of supposing Jesus to be only "a teacher come from God," he was fully convinced that he was the *Messiah, the Redeemer of Israel*: for he afterwards constantly espoused his cause in the great council of the nation; and when his countrymen put him to an ignominious death, he, together with Joseph of Arimathea, buried him, when all others had forsaken him.

The time of the passover at Jerusalem being expired, Jesus, together with his disciples, withdrew into the remote parts of Judea, where he continued a considerable time preaching the kingdom of God, and baptizing the new converts. John the Baptist being also, at the same time, baptizing in the river Enon, a dispute arose between his disciples and certain Jews concerning the preference of the baptism of Jesus.

Being unable to decide the point, they referred it to the opinion of John; on which the pious Baptist immediately declared, that he was only the harbinger of the great Messiah, who baptized not only with water, but with the Holy Spirit; adding, that his own ministry was on the decline, as the beauty of the morning star, the harbinger of the sun, decreases when that fountain of light but dawns in the chambers of the east.

The Baptist likewise mentioned to his disciples and hearers many circumstances, tending to prove the divinity of the mission of the holy Jesus, and the important design of his incarnation. "He that

believeth on the Son hath eternal life, but he that believeth not the Son shall not see life ; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

The Baptist, having publicly preached the great doctrine of salvation through faith in Jesus, departed from the wilderness of Judea, where he had continued a considerable time, and went into Galilee, often repairing to the court of Herod, who esteemed, or affected to esteem, both his preaching and person. But John, being faithful in his ministry, could not fail to remonstrate on the injustice and impiety of a known practice of Herod, which was his cohabiting with Herodias, his brother Philip's wife ; and thereby incurring the displeasure of that ambitious woman, he was, at her instance, cast into prison, and there reserved for future destruction.

Whilst these things happened in Galilee, our blessed Lord continued preaching in the wilderness, whither great numbers resorted, attracted by curiosity to see the miracles which fame reported he daily wrought. The success of his ministry exciting the envy of the hypocritical tribe of Pharisees, our blessed Lord thought proper to retire into Galilee, in order to promote the design of his mission in those parts.

In the course of his journey, being weary with traveling in so warm a country, and excessively thirsty, he sat down in Samaria by a celebrated well, given by the old patriarch Jacob to his son Joseph, while his disciples were gone to the city to procure provisions.

While the humble Jesus was sitting by the well-side, a woman, a native of the country, came with her pitcher to fetch water ; and our Lord requested of her to give him to drink. The appearance of Jesus astonished the woman, because she knew him to be a Jew ; and the Samaritans were held in the utmost contempt by those people, who indeed arrogated a preference to all nations upon earth. But though she knew him to be a Jew, she knew not that he was the Son of God, full of grace and truth, divested of human prejudices, and the very essence of humility and every virtue. As the design of his mission and incarnation was to promote the real happiness of mankind, he embraced every opportunity of enforcing his salutary doctrines ; and therefore, though his thirst was extreme, he delayed its gratification in order to inform this woman, though of an infamous character, of the means by which she might obtain living water, or, in other words, eternal life. As the best method to effect this purpose, he gave her to understand, that, had she known the character of the supplicant, she would have eagerly satisfied his

desire, and would have received a gift the most invaluable, even living water, issuing from the well of eternal salvation.

The woman, taking his words in the common acceptation, imagining that he suggested his power of supplying her with water flowing from a perpetual spring, which, in that parched climate, appeared impossible, demanded of him if he was vested with a power superior to their father Jacob, who dug this well, drank out of it with his family, and left it for the benefit of posterity.

The Saviour and friend of mankind, still benign in his purpose towards this poor sinner, replied, "That all who drank of the water of Jacob's well would thirst again, being but a temporary allay of a desire incident to human nature; whereas those who drank of the water which he was ready to dispense, should never thirst; because that water flowed from the inexhaustible Fountain of Divine Grace, and could not be drained but with immensity itself."

Though this great Preacher of Israel, by a simple and natural allegory, displayed the power of divine grace, the woman, ignorant of the allusion and meaning of the blessed Jesus, desired of him that water that she might not thirst in future, nor have occasion to come to Jacob's well daily for water.

To show her the nature of sin, and thereby create in her soul desires after the water of life, the blessed Jesus, by some pertinent questions and replies, evinced his knowledge of her infamous course of life, and by that means convinced her that he acted under an influence more than human. To evade, however, the present subject of discourse, which filled her with a degree of awe and fear, she proposed to his discussion a case long warmly contested between the Jews and Samaritans: Whether Mount Gerizim, or the city of Jerusalem, was destined by God as the place peculiarly set apart for religious worship? Our blessed Lord replied to this insignificant question, that it was not the place, but the manner, in which adoration was offered to the Father of Spirits, that rendered such worship acceptable; observing, that "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." John. iv. 24. In consequence of this reply to her, which apparently referred to things spiritual and eternal, she informed the blessed Jesus of her expectation of the arrival of the promised Messiah, who should punctually inform them concerning these points so long undecisively contested. Our Lord, embracing the opportunity of preaching himself to this poor woman as the Saviour of sinners, replied without hesitation, "I that speak unto thee am he."

While Jesus continued talking with the woman, his disciples returned, and approached him at the very time when he told the woman that he was the Messiah. Though they were astonished at his condescension in conversing with an inhabitant of Samaria, and even of instructing her in the doctrines of religion, none presumed to ask him why he conversed with one who was an enemy to the Jews, and the worship in the temple of Jerusalem. But the woman, hearing Jesus call himself the Messiah, left her pitcher, and ran into the city to publish the glad tidings that the great Deliverer of mankind was then sitting by the well of Jacob, and had told her all the secret transactions of her life. This report astonished the Samaritans, and, at the same time, roused their curiosity to see a person foretold by Moses and the prophets, and of whose appearance there was then so universal an expectation.

The disciples, on their return, set before their Master the provision they had purchased; but he, wholly absorbed in meditation, refused the refreshment so highly requisite, telling them that he had "meat to eat that they knew nothing of." This unexpected answer surprised his disciples, who, understanding his words in their natural sense, asked one another, whether any person had, during their absence, supplied him with provisions? But Jesus soon explained the mystery, by telling them that he did not mean natural, but spiritual food; that to execute the commission he had received from his Father, was far better to him than meat or drink; and the satisfaction he was going to receive from the conversion of the Samaritans, much greater than any sensual enjoyments.

Many of the Samaritans were now near Jesus, who lifting up his eyes, and seeing the ways crowded with people coming to him from the city, stretched out his benevolent hands towards them, and addressed his disciples in the following manner: "Say not ye, there are yet four months and then cometh 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. Behold yonder multitudes, how they are thronging to hear the word which has only a few minutes been sown in their hearts! It is not therefore always necessary to wait with patience for the effect; for it sometimes immediately follows the cause. To gather this spiritual harvest, and finish the work of Him that sent me, is my proper food: adding, for the encouragement of his disciples, as you have labored with me in this harvest of souls, so shall you participate in the great recompense of eternal rewards. "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.

Many of the people had been so affected at the words of the woman, that they were fully persuaded Jesus could be no other than the great Messiah; accordingly, their first request was, that he would deign to take up his residence in their city. The compassionate Redeemer of the human race so far complied, as to stay with them two days, an interval which he spent in preaching to them the kingdom of God; so that the greatest part of the city embraced the doctrine of the Gospel; and at his departure said unto the woman, "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.

Having accomplished his gracious design in Samaria, Jesus continued his journey to Galilee, to exercise his ministry and preach there the kingdom of God, telling his disciples, that the time was now accomplished which had been predetermined by Omnipotence for erecting the happy kingdom of the Prince of Peace.

Our Lord had performed several miracles at Jerusalem during the passover, at which the inhabitants of Galilee were present. His preaching was therefore at first attended with great success, for they listened attentively to his doctrine, and received it with particular kindness and courtesy; especially the people of Cana, where he had turned the water into wine.

During his residence in that city, a nobleman of Capernaum came to him, requesting, with great humility and reverence, that he would come down and heal his son, who was at the point of death. Our blessed Saviour readily complied with the latter part of his request; but to remove a prejudice they had conceived, that it was necessary to be personally present in order to restore the sick person to health, he refused to go down to Capernaum, dismissing the father with this assurance, that his son was restored to health: "Go thy way, thy son liveth." John iv. 50. "What notes," asks the late Dr. Collyer, "ever sounded half so sweet in a mortal ear! Not the cry of the infant Isaac in the ears of Sarah; nor the lisping of Samuel in the ears of Hannah. Not more sweet did the voice of Joseph sound in the ears of Israel, after an absence of twenty years, and when he received him again as it were from the dead. 'Thy son liveth!' In a moment, a mountain of anguish removes from his heart. The faith of the father, built upon evidence so incontrovertible, respected not merely the miracle which he had witnessed, but the person, character and glory of the Saviour; and his family participated his

joy. Apply this affecting and encouraging subject, ye parents who are weeping over your children. Do not despair. While you see traces of disease on their countenances, spread their case before this great Physician!" The nobleman obeyed the word of Jesus, and immediately departed for his own house; but before his arrival he was met by his servants, with the joyful news that his son was recovered. On this the father inquired at what time they perceived an alteration for the better? and from their answer was satisfied, that immediately after the words were spoken by the blessed Jesus, the "fever left him," and he was recovered in a miraculous manner. This amazing instance of his power and goodness, abundantly convinced the nobleman and his family, that Jesus was the true Messiah, the great Prophet so long promised to the world.

After some stay in the city and neighborhood of Cana, Jesus went to Nazareth, where he had spent the greatest part of his youth; and, as his constant custom was, went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and read that celebrated prediction of the Messiah in the prophet Isaiah: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Luke iv. 18, 19.

It should be remembered that our blessed Saviour read this passage in the original Hebrew, which was then a dead language; and, as he had never been taught letters, could do it only by inspiration from above. But he did more; he explained the passage with such strength of reason and beauty of expression, that the inhabitants of Nazareth, who well knew he had never been initiated into the rudiments of learning, heard him with astonishment. But as he performed no miracle in their city, they were offended at him. Perhaps they thought the place of his residence should have been his peculiar care; and as he could, with a single word, heal the sick at a distance, not a single person in Nazareth should have been afflicted with any kind of disease. That they really entertained sentiments of this kind, seems plain from our Saviour's own words: "Ye will say to me, physician, heal thyself; whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country;"—evidently alluding to the great and benevolent miracle he had wrought on the nobleman's son.

But the holy Jesus, by enumerating the miracles Elijah had done

in behalf of the widow of Sarepta, who was a heathen; and the inhabitants of an idolatrous city, in the time of famine, when many widows in Israel perished with hunger; and of Naaman the Syrian, who was cured of his leprosy by the prophet Elisha, when numbers of Jews, afflicted with the same loathsome disease, were suffered to continue in their uncleanness; sufficiently proved that the prophets had, on some extraordinary occasions, wrought miracles in favor of those whom the Israelites, from a fond conceit of their being the peculiar favorites of Heaven, judged unworthy of such marks of particular favor. The Council were so incensed at this reply, that, forgetting the sanctity of the Sabbath, they hurried him through the streets "to the brow of the hill whereon their city was built," intending to cast him headlong down the precipice: but the Son of God defeated their cruel intentions, by miraculously confounding their sight, and withdrawing from the fury of these wretched people.

CHAPTER VI.

OUR LORD PROCEEDS TO CAPERNAUM—ADDS TO THE NUMBER OF HIS FOLLOWERS—PROCLAIMS THE GOSPEL IN GALILEE—PREACHES TO A NUMEROUS AUDIENCE HIS DISCOURSE UPON THE MOUNT.



AGGRIEVED by the cruel Nazarenes, the holy Jesus departed from them and fixed his habitation in Capernaum, the capital of Galilee, which, from being built on the borders of the Lake of Gennesaret, was a place highly convenient for the design; for, besides the numerous inhabitants of that city, the trading towns on the lake were crowded with strangers, who, after hearing the doctrine of the Gospel preached by the great Redeemer of mankind, would not fail to spread, in their respective countries, the happy tidings of salvation.

Though it was expedient that he should spend a considerable time in preaching and working miracles, to confirm his mission, and instruct his disciples in the doctrine they were afterwards to publish to the whole world, this could not be done at Jerusalem, the residence of the Scribes and Pharisees, whose ambition would never have suffered so celebrated a teacher as Jesus to reside among them; these countries were therefore the only places where he could for any time take up his residence, and instruct the people in such a manner as to answer the great intention of his coming into the world.

If any should inquire, why he chose Capernaum in preference to all the other places situated on the Lake of Gennesaret, we reply, because he was certain of being favorably received by the inhabitants of that city. He had gained the friendship of the principal family, by restoring to health a favorite child, who, to all human appearance, was just sinking into the chambers of the grave. Nor was this family the only friends he had in that city; so stupendous a miracle could not fail of procuring the love and esteem of all the relations of that noble family: besides, so benevolent and surprising a miracle must have greatly conciliated the respect of all the inhabitants of Capernaum, who could not be ignorant of so remarkable an event. And accordingly our Saviour spent here, and in other

places bordering on the lake, a great part of the time of his public life; so that the inhabitants of these parts enjoyed a considerable share of the blessed company and divine instructions of the Son of God.

It may not be amiss in this place to give a short description of this celebrated lake, called in the Old Testament the Sea of Chinneroth; but in the New it has three different appellations, being called the Sea of Galilee, from the province of Galilee in general; the Sea of Tiberias, from a city of that name on its western shore; and the Lake of Gennesaret, from a particular tract of Galilee, extending a considerable way along its western side.

According to Josephus, it is a hundred furlongs in length, and forty in breadth. The bottom is of gravel, which renders the water both of a good color and taste. It is softer than either fountain or river water; and, at the same time, so cold that it will not grow warm though exposed to the rays of the sun in the very hottest season of the year. The river Jordan runs through the middle of it, which stocks it with a great variety of fish, of a peculiar form and flavor, not found in any other place.

The countries surrounding this lake were large, fertile, and populous, especially the two Galilees; which, according to Josephus, had a great many towns; and a multitude of villages, the least of which contained fifteen hundred souls. On the east side were the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, Gadara, and Hippon; on the west, Capernaum, Tiberias, and Tarrichea. And, from all these advantages, it was a common saying among the Jews, that God loved the Sea of Galilee above all other seas, an observation strictly just, if to these we add its greatest advantage, namely, that this sea, above all others, was frequently honored with the divine presence of the great Redeemer of mankind while he dwelt at Capernaum, and even once after he arose from the dead.

While Jesus tarried at Capernaum, he usually taught in the synagogues on the Sabbath-day, preaching with such energy of power as greatly astonished the whole congregation. He did not, however, constantly confine himself to that city; the adjacent country was often blessed with his presence, and cheered with the heavenly words of his mouth.

In one of the neighboring villages he called Simon and Andrew, who were following their occupation of fishing on the lake, to accompany him. These disciples, who had before been acquainted with him, readily obeyed the heavenly mandate, and followed the

Saviour of the world. Soon after he saw James and John, who were also fishing on the lake, and called them also. Nor did they hesitate to follow the great Redeemer of mankind; and, from their ready compliance, there is reason to believe that they, as well as Simon and Andrew, were acquainted with Jesus at Jordan; unless we suppose, which is far from being improbable, that their readiness proceeded from the secret energy of his power upon their minds. But however this be, the four disciples accompanied our blessed Saviour at Capernaum, and soon after to different parts of Galilee.

How long our Lord was on this journey cannot be determined; all the evangelists have mentioned is, that he wrought a great number of miracles on diseased persons; and that the fame of these wonderful works drew people from Galilee, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond Jordan. Nor was the knowledge of these miracles concealed from the heathen, particularly the inhabitants of Syria; for they also brought their sick to Galilee to be healed by him. Consequently, the time our blessed Saviour spent in these tours must have been considerable, though the evangelists have said very little concerning it.

But whatever time was spent in these benevolent actions, the prodigious multitudes which flocked to him from every quarter, moved his compassion towards those who were bewildered in the darkness of ignorance, and determined him to preach to them "the words of eternal life."

For this blessed purpose he ascended a mountain in that neighborhood, and, placing himself on an eminence from whence he could be heard by throngs of people attending him, he inculcated, in an amazingly pathetic manner, the most important points of religion. But, alas! they were coldly received, because many of them were directly opposite to the standing precepts delivered by the Scribes and Pharisees. Surely these people who had seen the blessed Jesus perform so many benevolent actions to the poor, the diseased, and the maimed, might have entertained a more favorable opinion of his doctrine, and known that so compassionate and powerful a person must have been actuated by the Spirit of God; and, consequently, that the doctrine he taught was really divine.

He opened his excellent sermon with the doctrine of happiness, a subject which the teachers of wisdom have always considered as the principal object in morals, and employed their utmost abilities to

convey a clear idea of it to their disciples, but differed very remarkably with regard to the particulars in which it consisted.

The Jews were in general persuaded that the enjoyments of sense were the sovereign good. Riches, conquest, liberty, mirth, women, fame, revenge, and other things of the same kind, afforded them such pleasures, that they wished for no better in the Messiah's kingdom, which they all considered as a secular one, and that a golden instead of a sceptre of righteousness would have been the sceptre of his kingdom. Nay, the very disciples themselves long retained this notion, and first followed him with a view of obtaining honors, profits, and pleasures, in their posts under him.

Our Lord and Master, therefore, to show his hearers in general, and his disciples in particular, the grossness of their error, declared that the highest happiness of men consists in the graces of the Spirit; because, from the possession and exercise of them the purest pleasure results; pleasures which satisfy even the Almighty himself, and constitute his ineffable felicity.

The rich, the great, the proud, said our Lord, in whom the wisdom of God was fully displayed, are not happy as you imagine; they are always wishing for what they cannot obtain, and their disappointments are poisoned arrows festering in their bosoms.

On the contrary, the poor in spirit are the truly happy, who discharge the duty of their station, whatever it be, with virtue and integrity, and bless the Omnipotent hand which fashioned them in the womb, and guards them from all danger in this humble vale of sorrow and distress; and though they are excluded from enjoying an earthly kingdom, yet they have a much better reserved for them, eternal in the heavens.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The jocose and flighty are not the happy race of mortals; but, on the contrary, the afflicted, provided they rightly improve their afflictions; that is, if they are excited by them to mourn for their sins, forsake their wicked courses, and seek a better country. For they shall here enjoy the consolation that their sins may be forgiven; and, after passing through the valley of the shadow of death, the fruition of eternal joys.

"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." The truth of this heavenly aphorism is very evident; for what has so great a power to turn the feet of the sons of men into the path of virtue as affliction? Has not affliction a natural tendency to give mankind a distaste to the pleasures of the world, and convince them

they are nothing more than vanity and vexation of spirit; and, consequently, to demonstrate that they must seek for happiness in things more solid and permanent than any in this vale of tears?

Affliction awakens the most serious thoughts in the mind; composes it into a grave and settled frame, very different from the levity inspired by prosperity; gives it a fellow feeling for the sorrows of others; and makes it thoroughly sensible of the danger of departing from God, the source and centre of all its joys.

Nor are the passionate happy; but, on the contrary, the meek. Those who have subdued their tempers can patiently bear provocation, and are strangers to that destructive passion, envy. The meek shall inherit the choicest blessings of the present life; for indeed they principally flow from that benevolent and heavenly temper of mind. Meekness consists in the moderation of our passions, which renders a person lovely and venerable in the eyes of his fellow-mortals; and thence he possesses their sincere esteem, while the passionate and envious man is considered as despicable, though adorned with the robe of honor, and dignified with the most ample possessions. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

Men, through vanity and blindness, consider those as happy who enjoy the pleasures of this life by rioting in luxury and excess. But this is far from being the case; on the contrary, those are the truly happy who have the most vehement desire of treading the paths of virtue and religion. For they, by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, shall obtain every thing they desire, shall be happy here in the practice of righteousness; and after this transitory life is ended, shall be received into the blissful mansions of the heavenly Canaan.

"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Resentment of injuries is not a spring of happiness, but forgiveness of them; and beings of a humane and beneficent disposition, rejoice when they can perform a benevolent action, especially to their fellow-mortals in distress. The merciful shall see themselves recompensed even in this life; for they shall find, after many days, the bread they have cast upon the waters of affliction, returned tenfold into their bosom. And surely nothing can surpass the pleasure felt by a generous mind, at having relieved a brother when pressed beneath a load of misfortunes: the pleasure is divine; it is godlike! "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

From indulgences in sensuality no comfort can arise: it is the lot of those who have mortified their carnal appetites, to enjoy an

inward purity of mind. With what delight do we behold the glories of the sun, and contemplate the beautiful scenes of nature that surround us! But what proportion has this to the ineffable delights that must fill the minds of those who behold the great Creator himself, who called the whole universe from nothing, and still supports it with the word of his power? "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

The tyrants and conquerors of the earth, who disturb the peace of mankind, are far from happy. It falls to the share of those who love their fellow-creatures, and do all in their power to promote peace and harmony among the children of men; for they imitate the great perfection of their Maker, and therefore shall be acknowledged by him for his children, and participate of his happiness. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."

Nor does happiness consist in liberty and ease, if those privileges are purchased at the expense of virtue: it is the consequence of a persecution for conscience' sake; for those who have suffered the severest trial that human nature is capable of sustaining, shall be honored with the highest rewards in the blissful mansions of eternity. "Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Contentment is not to be expected from the applause of the world, but will be the portion of those who are falsely reviled for their righteousness, and share in the affronts offered to God himself; for by these persecutions the prophets of all ages have been distinguished. "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." Mat. v. 11, 12.

These are the declarations, with regard to happiness, made by the Son of God; and surely we may believe the words of him that came down from heaven: who, in compassion to our infirmities, took upon him our nature; and to redeem us from the power of sin and death, offered himself a sacrifice on the cross; by which he has satisfied the justice of Omnipotence, and opened to us the gates of eternal life.

Having shown in what true happiness consisted, our Saviour addressed himself to his disciples, and explained their duty as the teachers appointed to conduct others in the paths that lead to eternal felicity: excited them to diligence in dispensing the salutary

influences of their doctrine and example, that their hearers might honor and praise the great Creator of heaven and earth, who had been so kind to the children of men. As his definition of happiness was very different from what the Jews were accustomed to hear from the Scribes and Pharisees, he thought proper to declare that he was not come to destroy the moral precepts contained in the law and the prophets, but to fulfill or confirm them.

Nothing is so steadfast as the eternal truths of morality: the heavens may pass away, and the whole frame of nature be dissolved, but the rules of righteousness shall remain immutable and immortal. And therefore he ordered his disciples, on the severest penalties, both to enforce by preaching and example the strict observation of all the moral precepts contained in the sacred writings; and that in a much greater latitude than they were taken by the teachers of Israel. And, in consideration of the frailties of human nature, taught them that excellent form of prayer, which has been used by Christians of all denominations to this very day.

“Our Father which art in heaven,” etc. If earthly parents are called fathers, the Almighty has the best title from every creature, and particularly from men, being the Father of their spirits, the Maker of their bodies, and the continual Preserver of both. Nor is this all: he is our Father in a still higher sense, as he regenerates us, and restores his image upon our minds: so that, partaking of his nature, we become his children, and, therefore, we can, with a holy boldness, call him by the title of that relation. In the former sense, God is the Father of all his creatures, whether good or bad; but in the latter, he is the Father only of the righteous.

Father is the most magnificent title invented by philosophers or poets in honor of their gods. It conveys the most lively idea possible to be conveyed to the human breast. As it is used by mankind in general, it marks the essential character of the true God; namely, that he is the first cause of all things, or author of their being; and at the same time, conveys a strong idea of the tender love he bears to his creatures, whom he nourishes with an affection, and protects with a watchfulness, infinitely superior to that of any earthly parent.

The name of Father also teaches us, that we owe our being to God, points out his goodness and mercy in upholding us, and expresses his power in giving us the things we ask; none of which are more difficult than creation. Nor is this all. We are likewise taught to give the great God the title of Father, that our sense of the

tender relation in which he stands to us may be confirmed, our faith in his power and goodness strengthened, our hopes of obtaining what we ask in prayer cherished, and our desire of obeying and imitating him quickened; for the light of Nature teaches us that it is disgraceful in children to degenerate from their parents, and that they cannot commit a greater crime than to disobey the commands of an indulgent father.

Lastly, we are commanded to call him our Father, in the plural number, and that even in our secret addresses to the throne of grace, to put us in mind that we are all brethren, the children of one common parent; and that we ought to love one another with sincerity, as we pray not for ourselves only, but for all the human race.

“Who art in heaven.” These words do not suppose the presence of God confined; he is present every where, about our paths and about our bed, and narrowly inspecteth every action of the sons of men: but they express his majesty and power, and distinguish him from those we call fathers upon earth, and from false gods which are not in heaven, the happy mansions of bliss and felicity, where the Almighty, who is essentially present in every part of the universe, gives more especial manifestations of his presence to such of his creatures as he hath exalted to share with him in the eternal felicities of the heavenly Jerusalem.

“Hallowed be thy name.” By the name of God the Hebrews understood God himself, his attributes and his works; and therefore the meaning of the petition is, may thy existence be universally believed, thy presence loved and imitated, thy works admired, thy supremacy over all things acknowledged, thy providence revered and confided in. May all the sons of men think so highly of his Divine Majesty, of his attributes and of his works: and may we so express our veneration for God, that his glory may be manifested in every corner of the world!

“Thy kingdom come.” Let the kingdom of the Messiah, or the Gospel dispensation, be extended to the utmost parts of the earth, that all the children of men may become one fold under one shepherd, Jesus Christ the righteous.

“Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” May thy will, O thou great Father of the universe, be made known to us by the light of thy glorious Gospel, that we may be enabled to imitate the angels of light, by giving as sincere, universal, and constant obe-

dience to thy divine commands, as the imperfections of human nature will permit.

“Give us this day our daily bread.” Give us from time to time such wholesome and proper food, that we may be enabled to worship thee with cheerfulness and vigor.

“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” The great God, as supreme governor of the universe, has a right to support his government by punishing those who transgress his laws. The suffering of punishment therefore is a debt which sinners owe to the divine justice; so that, when we ask God in prayer to forgive our debts, we beg that he would be mercifully pleased to remit the punishment of all our sins; and that, laying aside his displeasure, he would receive us into favor, and bless us with life eternal. In this petition, therefore, we confess our sins, and express the sense we have of their guilt; namely, that they deserve death; and surely nothing can be more proper than such a confession in our addresses to God; because humility, and a sense of our own unworthiness, when we ask favors of the Almighty, whether spiritual or temporal, have a tendency to augment the goodness of God in bestowing them upon us.

The terms of this petition are worthy our notice: “Forgive us only as we forgive.” We must forgive others, if we hope ourselves to be forgiven; and are permitted therefore to crave from God such forgiveness only as we grant to others: so that if we do not forgive even our enemies, we seriously and solemnly implore the Almighty to condemn us to the punishments of eternal death! How remarkably careful, therefore, should men be to purge their hearts from all rancor and malice before they venture into the temple of the Almighty God, to offer up their prayers to the throne of grace!

“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” That is, do not lead us into such temptations as are too hard for human nature; but deliver us, by some means, from the evil; either by removing the temptation, or increasing our strength to resist it. This petition teaches us to preserve a sense of our own inability to repel and overcome the solicitations of the world, and of the necessity there is of our receiving assistance from above, both to regulate our passions, and to conquer the difficulties of a religious life.

“For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever.” Because the government of the universe is thine forever, and thou alone possessest the power of creating and upholding all things; and

because the glory of thine infinite perfections remains eternally with thee, therefore all men ought to hallow thy name, submit themselves to thy government, and perform thy will. And, in an humble sense of their dependence, seek from thee the supply of their wants, the pardon of their sins, and the kind protection of thy providence.

This is emphatically called the Lord's Prayer, because delivered by the Son of God himself; and therefore we should do well to understand it thoroughly, that when we enter the temple of the Lord, and address him in solemn prayer, we may have hopes that he will grant our petitions. And, above all, not to harbor in our breasts the least envy or malice against any who have offended us; for it is only on a supposition that we have forgiven others, that we have the least reason to hope for obtaining forgiveness from the great Creator.

The conciseness and simplicity of this prayer of our Lord's, ought to be an example unto us in all our petitions to the Father Almighty, that we observe the same uniformity and order, and not to multiply words to the exclusion of meaning, as is sometimes the case.

The divine Preacher proceeded to consider the great duty of fasting, in which he directed them not to follow the hypocrites in disfiguring their faces, and in clothing themselves in the melancholy weeds of sorrow, but to be chiefly solicitous to appear before God as one that truly fasteth. Then will the Almighty, who constantly surrounds us, and is acquainted with even the most secret thoughts of our hearts, openly bestow upon us the rewards of a true penitent, mortification, contrition, and humility: he can discern without the external appearance of sorrow and repentance. It must, however, be remembered that our blessed Saviour is here speaking of private fasting, and to this alone his directions are to be applied; for when we are called upon to mourn over public sins or calamities, it ought to be performed in the most public manner.

Heavenly-mindedness was the next virtue inculcated by the blessed Jesus; and this he recommended with a peculiar earnestness, because the Jewish doctors were in general strangers to this virtue, in which he was desirous his followers should be clothed, as being the most excellent ornament for a teacher of righteousness.

This virtue is strenuously recommended by our beloved Saviour, by showing the deformity of its opposite—covetousness, which has only perishable things for its object. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves

treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Mat. vi. 19-21. More solid happiness will accrue from depositing your treasures in the chambers of the courts of heaven than in this earthly habitation of clay, where they are subject to a thousand disasters, and, even at best, can remain only for a short series of years; whereas those laid up in the heavenly Jerusalem are permanent, subject to no accident, and will purchase "a crown of glory that fadeth not away, eternal in the heavens."

Nor let any man be so foolish as to think he can place his heart on the happiness of a future state, when his treasures are deposited in the vale of misery; for wherever are laid up the goods which his soul desireth, there his heart and affections will also remain. If therefore, ye are desirous of sharing in the joys of eternity, you must lay up your treasures in the "mansions of my Father's kingdom." Lest they should imagine it was possible to be both heavenly-minded and covetous at the same time, he assured them that this was fully as absurd as to imagine a person could, at the same time, serve and divide his affections equally between two masters of opposite characters. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Mat. vi. 24.

To strengthen this doctrine, he added a few plain and evident instances of the power, perfection, and extent of God's providence, in which his tender care for the least and weakest of his creatures shines with a remarkable lustre, demonstrating the wise and parental attention of the Deity to all the creatures of his hand. He desired them to observe the birds of the air, the lilies, and even the grass of the field; leading his most illiterate hearers to form a more elevated and extensive idea of the divine government than the philosophers had attained; who, though they allowed in general that the world was governed by God, had very confused notions of his providence with regard to every individual creature and action. He taught them that the Almighty Father of the whole is the guardian and protector of every being in the universe; that every action is subject to his will, and that nothing is left to the blind determination of chance.

And if we direct our lives according to the divine will, we have surely no reason to be anxious about the necessaries of life. "Behold," says the blessed Jesus, "the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns: yet your heavenly

Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" Mat. vi. 26. Are not the fowls of the air, who have no concern for future wants, fed and nourished by the beneficent hand of your benevolent Father? And can ye doubt that man, whom he hath made the lord of the whole earth, shall be destitute of his tender care? "And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Mat. vi. 28, 29. Consider the lilies that so finely adorn the adjacent fields; how beautiful their form! how lively their colors! how fragrant their scent! The productions of art but faintly imitate them! Even Solomon himself, dressed in his splendid robes of royalty, was but meanly adorned in comparison of these. And surely if Omnipotence thus beautifully clothes the inanimate productions of the field, whose duration is remarkably transient and uncertain, you have not the least reason to doubt but he will bless your honest endeavors, and send you proper clothing. Are ye not of infinitely more value than they? Be you anxiously solicitous to obtain the happiness of the life to come; and all the good things of this life shall, in the course of Divine Providence, be added unto you.

Our Lord then prohibited all rash and uncharitable censure, either with regard to the characters of others in general, or of their actions in particular; lest, in so doing, both God and man resent the injury. If you judge charitably, says the meek and benevolent Redeemer of the human race, making proper allowances for the frailties of human nature, and are ready to pity and pardon their faults, both your heavenly Father and man will deal with you after the same manner. But if you always put the harshest construction upon every action, and are not touched with a feeling of your brother's infirmities, nor show any mercy in the opinions you form of his character and actions, no mercy will be shown you either from Omnipotence or the sons of men. God will inflict on you the punishments you deserve, and the world will be sure to retaliate the injury. "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." Mat. vii. 1, 2.

The blessed Jesus, in his pious discourse, told them to inculcate an entire reformation in themselves; a particular absolutely necessary in those whose office it is to reprove and reform their brethren. And surely nothing can be more preposterous, than to condemn in others what we practice ourselves; or to set up for reformers of the world,

when we are ourselves contaminated with the most enormous vices. With what countenance can we undertake to rebuke others for small faults, when we are ourselves plunged in the most detestable pollutions? Well might the Redeemer of the world say—"Thou hypocrite, first cast the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." Mat. vii. 5.

These are the important points of doctrine recommended by the infallible Preacher, as necessary to the teachers of the Gospel of peace; but it is not enough that they know and practice the several branches of their duty: to extend their doctrines among mankind, there must also be a readiness and even a desire in the people to receive them; for if these be wanting, all attempts to spread these heavenly truths will prove abortive; and therefore our blessed Saviour added, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." Mat. vii. 6. Do not reprove men of a snarling disposition, as the attempt, instead of having the happy effects intended, will but provoke them to pursue their wickedness with greater boldness than ever. You may warn others against their company and example; you may weep over them, and you may pray to your heavenly Father for them; but you cannot reprove them with safety or any hope of success. Lest the disciples should think that these precepts were not to be attained by human nature, he directed them to apply to God for the assistance of his Spirit, together with all other blessings necessary to their salvation; assuring them, that if they asked with earnestness and perseverance, the Father of mercies would not fail to answer their request, and give them whatever they desired. Adding the noblest precept of morality that was ever delivered by any teacher—"All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." Mat. vii. 12. How clear a rule of duty is this, and how easy and applicable to practice! Look into your own breast, and do as you would be done by in every condition.

Having enforced these heavenly precepts, he exhorted them to place an humble dependence on the Spirit, to strive to practice the precepts of religion, however difficult the task may appear. "Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Mat. vii. 13, 14. How strait indeed is the gate, how narrow the way that leadeth to life! In the

way nothing can be found that flatters the flesh, but many things that have a tendency to mortify it: poverty, fasting, watching, injuries, chastity, sobriety. And with regard to the gate, it receives none that are puffed up with the glory of this life; none that are elated and blown up with pride; none that are distended with luxury. It does not admit those that are laden with the casket of riches, or encumbered with the goods of this world. None can pass through it but those who are stripped of all worldly lusts, and who, having put off their bodies, are, if I may be allowed the expression, emaciated into spirits. There is, however, no reason for us to despair of entering this heavenly portal; if we sincerely endeavor, the assistance of the Holy Spirit will make us more than conquerors; and we shall safely pass through the strait gate, and pursue our journey with ease along the narrow path, till we arrive at the blissful mansions of the heavenly Canaan. But lest evil-minded men, under the mask of piety and religion, should endeavor to draw them from the paths of righteousness, our blessed Saviour cautioned his disciples to beware of such persons, and carefully make the strictest scrutiny into their lives and doctrines.

Our Lord closed his sermon with the parable of the houses built on different foundations; intimating that the bare knowledge, or the simple hearing of the most divine lessons of morality ever delivered, nay, even the belief of these instructions without the practice of them, is of no manner of importance. Religion alone is the foundation which can so firmly establish us, that we cannot be shaken by all the tempests of afflictions, temptations, and persecutions of the present age. It is this foundation alone, which, like a flinty rock, or the eternal basis of the mountains, can support us in the day of trial. This alone can enable us to frustrate the attempts of men and devils, and patiently endure all the troubles of mortality.

In mansions above,
Near the fountain of love,
Where no moth nor corruption can enter,
Oh! be it thy care
To lay up treasures there,
Where thy heart's best affection may centre.

Earth's joys pass away,
Her treasures decay,
Her pride is not worth the securing,
Her pomp will deceive,
Her flatteries grieve,
All fading, and nothing enduring.

But treasures in heaven
Can never be riven,
But endure as the throne of Jehovah,
When all else decay,
And time passes away,
And life's troubled journey is over.

The high meed of fame,
The bright laurel'd name,
Some dark disappointment may sever;
Then away from all strife,
In the Lamb's book of Life,
Let our names stand engraven forever.

CHAPTER VII.

OUR BLESSED LORD CURES THE LEPROSY AND PALSY—CASTS OUT A DEVIL—SUCCORS THE MOTHER-IN-LAW OF PETER; AND PURSUES HIS JOURNEY THROUGH THE COUNTRY OF GALILEE.



HAVING finished his excellent discourse, the great Preacher of Israel came down from the mountain, surrounded by a multitude of people, who had listened with astonishment to the doctrines he delivered, which were soon confirmed by divers miracles. A leper met him in his way to Capernaum, and being doubtless acquainted with the wondrous works he had already performed, threw himself with great humility before the Son of God, using this remarkable expression, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." The species of leprosy common among the Jews, and other eastern nations, was equally hideous and infectious; but this was so far from preventing the blessed Jesus from approaching so loathsome an object, that it increased his pity; he even touched him; but, instead of being polluted himself, the leper was instantly cleansed, and he departed glorifying God.

The evangelist adds, that Jesus forbade him to tell any person what had been done, but repair immediately to the priest, and offer the gift commanded by Moses. Having effected the cure on the leper, our blessed Lord proceeded to Capernaum; but as he entered the city, he was met by a Roman centurion, who represented to him, in the most pathetic manner, the deplorable condition of his servant, who was grievously afflicted with a palsy. The compassionate Redeemer of the world listened attentively to his complaint, and immediately told him he would come and heal him. The centurion thought this a great condescension to one that was not of the seed of Jacob, and therefore told him that he did not mean that he should give himself the trouble of going to his house, as this was an honor he had not the least reason to expect, he being assured that his word alone would be sufficient; disease and devils being as much subject to his commands, as his soldiers were to him.

Our Lord was amazed at these words, not that he was ignorant of the centurion's faith, or the basis on which it was built; he well knew the thoughts of his heart long before he uttered his request; but he was filled with admiration at the exalted idea the Roman officer had conceived of his power; and to make this faith the more conspicuous, he gave it the praise it so justly deserved. "Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel."

This centurion doubtless relied on the miracle Jesus had before wrought upon the nobleman's son; but the excellency and peculiarity of it consisted in applying the most grand ideas of superior power to Jesus, who, according to outward appearance, was only one of the sons of men. This exalted faith induced the blessed Jesus to declare the gracious intentions of his Almighty Father with regard to the Gentiles; namely, that he would as readily accept their faith as that of the Jews; and place them with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, while those who boasted of being the offspring of the great patriarchs, but fell far short of the heathens in faith, should be excluded from the blissful seats of paradise. "And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and 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.

Having thus addressed the multitude, the blessed Jesus turned himself to the centurion, and said, "Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee." Though the idea thou hast conceived of my power is just, though remarkably great, as a reward for thy faith I grant the petition thou hast asked of me. And the evangelist adds, "his servant was healed in the self-same hour." Mat. viii. 13. On the succeeding Sabbath our Saviour went into the Jewish synagogue at Capernaum and taught the people, delivering his instructions in so graceful and elegant a manner, that they were all astonished; and to increase their admiration, one of the congregation, possessed of an unclean spirit, cried out in a terrible manner, "Let us alone: what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." Mark i. 24.

But the blessed Jesus, who wanted the testimony of no such confessors, commanded him to keep silence, and immediately come out of the man; which command the evil spirit instantly obeyed, to the great surprise and astonishment of all the spectators. The enemies

of the Gospel have always endeavored to depreciate our Saviour's miracles, pretending that no more is meant by a person possessed of the devil than that he was afflicted by some loathsome disease; and that because sepulchres were considered as polluted places, therefore, whenever any melancholy persons frequented them, they were said to be possessed with unclean spirits. They add that it will be difficult to assign a reason why demons were at this time more numerous in Judea than in any other country.

To the first of these objections, namely, that the demoniacs were, in reality, nothing more than persons afflicted with some loathsome disease, we reply, it is evidently false; the evangelist having taken care to be very particular on this head. "They brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy, and he healed them." Mat. iv. 24. "He gave to the apostles power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease." Mat. x. 1. And accordingly, "He healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils." Mark i. 34.

It is therefore evident that those said to be possessed with unclean spirits were different from those that had diseases. Let us therefore pass to the second objection, and see whether we cannot give a satisfactory reason why demons were, at this time, more numerous in Judea than in any other country.

That there were evil spirits of this kind is abundantly evident from the Holy Scriptures, the sacred penmen having taken care to acquaint us with their origin and fall, their names and numbers, their government and orders, their malicious designs and employments, with several other particulars: so that no one can doubt of the existence of demons, who believes these holy oracles to be the word of God. And it is equally evident, both from profane and sacred history, that before our Saviour's advent great numbers of men were possessed of those evil spirits. The truth is, these spirits of darkness had at this time taken possession of so large a share of the world, that they began to rival the Almighty in his worship; and therefore one end of the incarnation of the Son of God was, "that he might destroy the works of the devil." And hence we may easily see the reason why Omnipotence suffered these apostate spirits to appear so frequently in Judea at the time of our Saviour's ministry, namely, that the Son of God might, in a

more signal manner, triumph over all the powers of darkness, and convince mankind that he was truly the Saviour of the world.

But to return. The fame of this miracle was soon spread over the neighboring country. He had before healed the sick, and done many other wonderful things; but to command with authority the unclean spirits to quit their residence, and to see these enemies to mankind readily obey his voice, filled them with astonishment, and abundantly convinced them that he was filled with the Spirit of God.

It has been asked, why the devil, who, it is plain from the text, knew our Saviour to be the Son of God, should put it into the heart of Judas to betray him, since this was the proper method of accomplishing the redemption of mankind? but the answer to this is obvious and easy. The devil, doubtless, knew Jesus to be the Messiah; but he was ignorant of the mystery of man's redemption: and, therefore, though he was not ignorant of his divinity, yet he might be so far infatuated as to think, that by destroying his body he should defeat the great design of Omnipotence. For, however extensive we may suppose his intellectual faculties to be, yet the wonderful work of man's redemption by the death of Christ, was a mystery that no finite understanding could comprehend, till God himself was pleased to reveal it.

Having performed this astonishing miracle in the synagogue, our Lord retired to Peter's house, where he found his wife's mother sick of a fever; but on his taking her by the hand, she was immediately restored to her former health, and arose from the bed, and "ministered unto him."

The evangelist St. Luke, in his account of this miraculous cure, tells us that he "rebuked the fever" (Luke iv. 39), to intimate his authority over all diseases, being analogous to the figurative expressions in Scripture, which not only represent all inanimate creatures as servants to the Almighty, but diseases, famine, pestilence, and the like, as executioners waiting on him to inflict punishment on rebellious sinners: "Before him went the pestilence, and burning diseases went forth at his feet." The fame of the miracles was soon spread through the city; and as soon as the Sabbath was over, which ended at the setting of the sun, the whole city was gathered together about Peter's house, and with them great numbers of sick persons, and those possessed with devils. The sight of so many objects in distress excited the pity of this heavenly Physician, so that he immediately healed them all. And thus was the prophecy

of Isaiah fulfilled—"Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses."

But the vast concourse of people that now gathered around him in Capernaum began to be troublesome, and he retired into a desert, whither the multitude soon followed him, and entreated him never to depart from them. But as this request was inconsistent with the design of his mission, he, for the first time, refused their request, "and preached in the synagogues of Galilee." Luke iv. 44.

CHAPTER VIII.

JESUS CONFIRMS HIS MISSION BY PRODUCING A MIRACULOUS DRAUGHT OF FISHES—CURING THE LEPROSY A SECOND TIME—APPEASING THE BOISTEROUS WAVES—CASTING DEVILS OUT OF DIVERS PERSONS GRIEVOUSLY POSSESSED.



OUR blessed Lord, having spread his glorious doctrine throughout Galilee, returned to Capernaum, followed by such throngs of people, that he found it necessary to step into Peter's ship; from whence he taught the multitude who stood on the shore, listening with great attention to his doctrine. Having concluded his sermon, he turned himself to

Simon Peter, desiring him to launch out farther from the shore, and let down his net. On which the disciple told him of the unsuccessful pains they had taken during the whole night; but added, that he would, in obedience to his command, make one trial more. Nor had he any cause to repent; for the net was no sooner in the lake, than they found it so full of large fishes, that it was in danger of breaking.

This success, after such ill-fortune, astonished Peter, who falling down at the feet of Jesus, cried out, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." He was conscious of the many sins he had been guilty of, and therefore afraid of being in the company of so divine a person, lest some infirmity, or offence, might have exposed him to more than ordinary chastisement. But the benevolent Redeemer of mankind dissipated his fears, and told him, that from henceforth the employments for him and his companions should be far more noble: they should catch men; that is, they should turn them from the crooked paths of iniquity to the straight road leading to the heavenly mansions.

This miracle was considered by the disciples as a plainer manifestation of his being the Son of God, than they had seen him perform on the sick in the neighborhood of Capernaum. It was a received opinion among the Jews that all good men, by prayers and laying their hands on the sick, were able to cure certain diseases, and even to cast out devils; but that the creatures inhabiting the elements of

air, or water, were subject only to the commands of Omnipotence himself: consequently the power shown by our blessed Saviour, on this occasion, undeniably proved him to be divine. And, accordingly, this demonstration of his power rendered these disciples, for the future, absolutely devoted to his will; and, in the greatness of their admiration, they abandoned every thing, and followed the Saviour of the world.

The disciples being thus attached to their Divine Master, followed him through the cities of Galilee, where, according to his usual custom, he preached the Gospel of the kingdom of God, and confirmed the doctrines he delivered, with astonishing miracles. In one of these cities through which he passed, he found "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.

It was the custom in Judea for the priests to banish from society those persons who were afflicted with the contagious species of leprosy. The disease of this person therefore was of a less pestilent kind, as he was suffered to be present to join the conversation of men. His case, however, excited the pity of the compassionate Jesus, who immediately cleansed him, ordered him to repair to Jerusalem, and, after showing himself to the priest, offer the gifts commanded by Moses; giving him the same admonition he had done to others, namely, not to tell any man what had been done for him. But the blessing he had received was so great and unexpected, that, instead of concealing, he published every where the great things Jesus had done for him; which brought such crowds to the Son of God, that he was obliged to retire from Capernaum into the wilderness, to refresh his body with rest, and his spirit with prayer and meditation. The generality of commentators supposed that this leper, and the other mentioned in the foregoing chapter, are one and the same person; but this is a mistake: the former was cured in the fields, the latter in the city. After cleansing the first, Jesus went to Capernaum and healed the centurion's son; but after curing the latter, he retired into the wilderness to shun the prodigious crowds which soon gathered round him, from the leper's publishing every where the miracle Jesus had wrought for him. If the curious should wish to inquire why our blessed Saviour so often commanded the people to conceal his miracles, we answer them: His modesty and humility would not suffer that his works should have the least appearance of ostentation; nor the Jews to have the least pretence for accusing him of seeking his own glory. Nor was it proper, at this time, to

irritate the Scribes and Pharisees. He well knew, that in a certain determinate space of time they would bring about what had been determined concerning him in the Councils of Omnipotence. In the mean time, "he was to work the works of him that sent him while it was day" (John ix. 4), and to propagate his Gospel as much as possible, both among the Jews and Gentiles; which could not have been so conveniently performed if the greatness of his miracles had once provoked the malice and envy of his enemies to exert their utmost power against him. He likewise knew the mad capricious humor of the multitude, and had reason to apprehend "that they might come and take him away by force and make him king" (John vi. 15), if all his miracles had been blazed abroad before he had sufficiently instructed them in the spiritual nature of his kingdom, and that his throne was not to be established in the earthly, but in the heavenly Jerusalem.

From these instances we see that the blessed Jesus did not, without sufficient reason, desire his miracles to be concealed. The fame of this single miracle being spread through the neighboring countries, brought such multitudes of people to Capernaum, that, as we have already observed, he was obliged to retire into a solitary part of the neighboring wilderness. Nor could he long enjoy the repose of the tranquillity he sought even in this thirsty waste; the people soon discovered the place of his retreat, and flocked to him from every quarter.

Our blessed Lord, finding all his endeavors to conceal himself in the desert would be in vain, ordered his disciples to accompany him to the other side of the lake; upon which a certain scribe, who happened to be present, declared he would follow him; but Jesus, who well knew that his desire was only to gain the profits and advantages of an earthly kingdom, which he supposed the Messiah would establish, told him, if he intended nothing more by following him than to improve his worldly fortune, he would find himself wretchedly mistaken. "The foxes have holes," said the blessed Jesus to this teacher of Israel, "and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Mat. viii. 20. The title, "*son of man*," is a name by which the Messiah is called in the prophecy concerning him recorded by the prophet Daniel, vii. 13, where his universal dominion is described; and therefore, when applied to our great Redeemer, denotes his human nature, and, at the same time, conveys an idea of that glorious kingdom over which he was in his human nature to preside. But as it was also the name by

which the old prophets were called, from the contempt in which they were held by their countrymen, it is used on several occasions to express the deep humiliation of the Son of God.

The disciples having prepared the ship, took on board their Master, and departed for the other side of the lake, attended by many boats full of people, who were desirous of hearing his heavenly discourses, and being spectators of his astonishing works. But Jesus being fatigued with the labors of the day, sat himself down at the stern of the ship and fell asleep. The weather, which had till now been calm and serene, suddenly changed. A terrible storm came on, and the rising waves dashed impetuously against the ship, threatening every moment to bury them all in the bowels of the deep. The darkness of the night increased the horrors of the tempest. Now they were carried on the top of the mountainous wave, and seemed to touch the skies; then plunged to the bottom of the deep, while the foaming billows roared horribly above them. In vain the disciples exerted their utmost strength; the storm continued to increase, and baffled all the efforts of human exertion. The waves broke over the ship, the water rushed in, and she began to sink. All hopes of escaping were vanished; despair seized every individual; and they were on the brink of perishing, when they ran to Jesus, crying out, "Master, Master, we perish!" Their vehement cries roused him from his sleep. He raised his hand, so often employed in acts of mercy and benevolence, and, with a stern and awful voice, rebuked the boisterous element. The raging sea instantly obeyed his command; the aerial torrent stopped short in its impetuous course, and became silent as the grave; while the mountainous waves sunk at once into their beds, and the surface of the deep became as smooth as polished marble.

The disciples had before seen their great Master perform many miracles; and therefore had abundant reason to rely wholly on his power and goodness. They should have considered that he, who could by his word restore the sick, and bring the inhabitants of the sea to their nets, could with the same ease have supported them on the surface of the deep, had the ship sunk beneath them, and carried them safe to the place whither they were going. But they seemed to have forgotten the power of their Master, and, when human assistance failed, to have abandoned all hopes of life. The blessed Jesus therefore very justly rebuked them, "Why are ye fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?" Why should you doubt of my power to protect you? The voyage was undertaken at my command,

and therefore you should have been confident that I would not suffer you to perish in it. It is indeed strange that the disciples should have been so remarkably terrified during the storm, and after it to make this singular reflection, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!" Mat. viii. 27.

But it should be remembered, that the terror of the storm had deprived them of all presence of mind, so that they did not recollect the divine power of their Master during the fury of the tempest; and the transition from a terrible storm to the most perfect calm was so quick and astonishing, that they uttered this reflection before the confusion in their minds was over. Soon after the storm was allayed, they arrived in the country of Gadara; and, on their landing, two men possessed with devils came from the tombs to meet Jesus. One of them, who was more furious than the other, had been often bound with chains and fetters, but to no purpose, being always broken with great fury, so that no man attempted further to restrain him. Being therefore at liberty, he shunned the society of men, wandering day and night in desert places, among the sepulchres or caverns where the dead were deposited, crying and making the most dismal complaints, and cutting himself with stones. The disciples were terrified at the approach of these furious mortals; but Jesus soon dissipated their fears, commanding, while the men were at a distance, the devils to come out of them. The heavenly mandate was no sooner given, than they fell on their faces, crying out, "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God?" Mark v. 7. "Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" Mat. viii. 29. "I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not." Mark v. 7. The apostate spirits well knew the power of the Son of God, and trembled lest he should immediately cast them into the torments prepared for them, and not suffer them to continue roving through the earth till the day of judgment, when they should be condemned to eternal punishment in the sight of the whole creation.

Jesus being willing that the torments suffered by these miserable men should be known before he healed them, asked one of the devils his name, who answered, "Legion, for we are many." Mark v. 9. Begging at the same time, that he would not command them to repair into the deep, or bottomless pit, but suffer them to enter a herd of swine feeding at a distance. How subtle are the wiles of the devil! The power of the Son of God he knew was not to be resisted; but he could not help envying the benevolent miracles he had wrought for the sons of men, and was therefore willing to prevent, as much as possible, their good effects on the miserable people of this country.

This was the true reason why he begged leave to enter the herd of swine: he knew if he could obtain that permission, he could destroy them; and this he hoped would render our ever-blessed Saviour odious to the wicked inhabitants of Gadara. Though Jesus well knew his crafty design, yet he permitted the devils to enter the swine, that his disciples, and others who were with him, might be fully convinced these unhappy persons were really possessed by apostate spirits; and, at the same time, gave them a terrible instance of their power when free from all restraint. The divine permission was no sooner granted, than the spectators beheld, at a distance, the torments these poor creatures suffered, with what amazing rapidity they ran to the confines of the lake, leaped from the precipices into the sea, and perished in the waters; while the persons, who a moment before were raving and cutting themselves in the most shocking manner, became at once meek and composed, having recovered entirely the exercise of their reason. The keepers of the herd, terrified at this astonishing miracle, ran into the city, publishing in every part the cure of the men possessed with the devils, and the destruction of the swine. This surprising report threw the inhabitants into the greatest consternation: they left the city to the spectators of so wonderful an event; but when they saw the men who had been possessed sitting at the feet of Jesus, decently clothed, and in their right minds, their fear was increased. For knowing they had trespassed in keeping the swine, which was contrary to the law of Moses, they dreaded a more severe punishment; and being ignorant of the goodness of Jesus, though he had given them so remarkable a proof of it in the cure of these wretched mortals, besought him that he would leave their country.

There prevailed a custom among the heathens, when any illustrious hero had delivered his country from wild beasts, monsters, tigers, or any other evil, to erect proud columns to his memory; his statue was seen in every place; altars blazed to his glory: they honored him with the appellation of Saviour; and thought nothing, not even divine honors, too great to confer on him. But when Christ had removed a monster from the Gadarenes, more formidable and fearful than any recorded in heathen history, even a legion of devils, and rendered the way by which no man could pass before secure from danger, instead of being received by them as a Saviour, and as the Son of God, with the acclamations and hosannas of the people, he was besought to depart out of their coasts.

Stupid people! They had indeed lost their herd of swine; but

surely the valuable gift they had received, in two of their countrymen and fellow-creatures being delivered from the tyranny of Satan, was better than the cattle on a thousand hills, and merited at least their thanks and acknowledgment!

The stupid request of the Gadarenes was, however, immediately complied with by the blessed Jesus, who entering the ship returned to the country from whence he came, leaving to them a valuable pledge of his love, and to us a noble pattern of perseverance in well doing, even when our kindnesses are condemned or requited with injuries. He would not suffer the persons dispossessed to accompany him, though they earnestly requested it; but ordered them to stay in their own country, as a standing monument of his power and goodness. "Go home to thy friends," said the compassionate Jesus to one of them, "and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." Mark v. 19.

We cannot but remark in this place, that we have here a fuller display of the tyranny and power of the devil than in any other part of Scripture; and therefore we may oppose it to the loose scoffs, and recommend it to the serious attention, of those infidels and thoughtless sinners, who, like the Pharisees and the Sadducees of old, when exhorted to abandon their evil courses, from a consideration of the power of Satan, and the dread of eternal torments, make a mock at both, esteeming them nothing more than religious fables, calculated to keep an ignorant world in awe. But with regard to themselves, their minds are too well furnished with wisdom, and their discernment too penetrating, to believe any thing of the flames of the bottomless pit, and the malice of the prince who sways the sceptre of that horrid place; esteeming him a more mild and generous governor than he is represented in this miracle. But could they be persuaded to attend seriously to the miserable spectacle drawn by the evangelist, of a wretched mortal, naked, dwelling in tombs, crying out day and night, cutting himself with stones, furious, fierce, destructive—surely their scoffs and idle mockeries would be changed into compassion, and a watchful care of themselves. This, surely, common prudence would dictate. But if they will deride and still misbelieve, a short space of time, perhaps a single moment, will convince them of their error; and dreadful experience force them to acknowledge the greatness of the tyranny, the bitterness and malice of this prince of darkness against the souls of the sons of men! May that blindness of mind and obduracy of heart be removed, that so they may know and acknowledge the salvation of God, through Jesus, who is the way, the truth, and the life.

CHAPTER IX.

OUR LORD PROCEEDS IN ACTS OF MERCY AND BENEVOLENCE—ADDS MATTHEW TO THE NUMBER OF HIS DISCIPLES—CASTS OUT AN EVIL SPIRIT—PASSES AGAIN THROUGH GALILEE—SELECTS TWELVE FROM HIS DISCIPLES, AS HIS CONSTANT COMPANIONS; AND ADDRESSES THE MULTITUDE IN AN EXCELLENT DISCOURSE.



HE arrival of our blessed Saviour and his disciples at Capernaum, a city of Galilee, was no sooner published, than such throngs of people were gathered together, that the house could not contain them, nor even the court before it. He, however, preached the words of eternal life to the listening audience, among whom were many Pharisees and doctors of the law, who, from the fame of his miracles, were come from all quarters to hear him.

He not only addressed them in the most nervous and pathetic manner, in order to inculcate the doctrines he delivered, but also performed such astonishing miracles, as ought to have removed all their scruples with regard to the truth of his mission.

Among many instances he gave of his divine power, was that of restoring a man to perfect health, who had long been afflicted with the palsy, and was reduced by that terrible disease to the most melancholy condition, being unable to move any member of his body, but seemed rather an emaciated carcass than a man. This miserable object was supported in his bed by four persons, who, being unable to enter by the door on account of the multitude, carried him to the top of the house, which, like the other roofs in that country, was flat, and had a battlement round, according to the direction given by Moses. Deut. xvii. 8.

On these roofs there was a kind of trap-door, by which they came out of the houses upon the roofs, where they spent a considerable part of the day. It was also common to have a flight of stairs from the garden to the roof; and by these the persons seem to have carried the sick of the palsy; but finding the door fastened, forced it open, or uncovered the roof, and through the opening let down by ropes the sick of the palsy, lying on his bed, into the midst of the

company before Jesus: who, seeing the faith of the friends of this afflicted person, had compassion on him, and spake aloud, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee."

The pride of the Scribes taking offence at this saying, cried out, This man speaketh blasphemy, for he appropriates that to himself which is solely the property of Omnipotence. "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" They were ignorant that the person who uttered such gracious words was the Son of God; and consequently had the power of forgiving the sins of the human race.

But our Lord, who had recourse to the most secret recesses of the heart, and was willing to show them that he was really endued with the Spirit of God, said to them, "Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed and walk?" These were questions beyond the abilities of the haughty Scribes to answer, and they held their peace. The blessed Jesus then added, that the miracle he was going to perform would sufficiently demonstrate that he had not usurped what did not in the strictest manner belong to him. And turning himself from these bigoted teachers of Israel, towards the sick of the palsy, he said unto him, "Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house." Mat. ix. 6.

Nor was this divine mandate any sooner given than the man was restored to his former health and strength; and, to the astonishment of all present, rose, took up his bed, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw this great work, expressed the highest degree of surprise, mixed with admiration, for the great honor the Almighty had conferred on human nature. "They glorified God who had given such power unto men."

But with regard to the Scribes and Pharisees, though they must have been confounded at this miracle, yet they still continued in their unbelief; an instance which should awaken in us the most serious thoughts, as it abundantly demonstrates that the palsy of the soul is a much more deplorable disease than the palsy of the body.

The blessed Jesus, having wrought this miracle, repaired to the sea-side, and taught a multitude of people. What the subject of his sermon was the evangelists have not told us; but it was doubtless, like the rest, calculated to promote the eternal welfare of mankind.

His discourse being ended, he returned to the city; and in his

way saw Matthew, or Levi, the son of Alpheus, a rich publican, sitting in his office, where the customs were levied at the port of Capernaum, whom he ordered to follow him. Matthew immediately obeyed the summons, and followed the Saviour of the world, to pursue a far more honorable and important employment, being afterwards both an Apostle and Evangelist.

A few days after his calling, he made a splendid entertainment for his Master, inviting all the publicans he knew; hoping that, by hearing the heavenly conversation of Christ they might also repent, and embrace the doctrines of the Gospel.

The self-righteous Scribes and Pharisees, who considered all men as sinners except themselves, especially the publicans, were highly offended that one who called himself a prophet, should so far demean himself as to be seen in the company of such men; and asked his disciples, with an air of insolence, in the hearing of all the guests, how their Master could sit down at the same table with publicans and sinners?

Our Lord replied to this artful question, that the sick only had need of a physician, and desired them to reflect seriously on the prophet Hosea's declaration: "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." The turning sinners into the paths of righteousness, which is the highest act of benevolence, is far more acceptable to the Almighty than all the ceremonies of the law of Moses, so highly magnified by your fraternity, who, on many occasions, observe them at the expense of charity; adding, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." The repentance of the righteous is not so much the object of my attention, as the conversion of sinners.

This answer, however satisfactory to an unprejudiced person, was far from being so to the Scribes and Pharisees, who, joining with some of John's disciples then present, returned to Matthew's house, and demanded of him why his disciples wholly neglected to fast, a duty often performed both by the rulers of Israel and the disciples of John? To this the blessed Jesus replied, It is not a proper season for the friends of the bridegroom to fast and afflict themselves while they enjoy his company: "but the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then they shall fast." The various calamities and afflictions that shall attend them, after the departure of their Master, shall cause them to fast, which they shall repeat as often as the circumstances of distress and danger, with which they are surrounded, shall require. And added, that to have obliged his disciples to observe the precepts of frequent ab-

stinence at a time when he was employing them to preach the Gospel, by which all the legal ceremonies of the law were to be abolished, would have been as absurd as to sew a piece of new cloth upon a rotten garment, which would only make the rent the worse; or to put new wine into old leathern bottles, which, on the first fermentation of the liquor, would burst. Indicating, that the old corrupt nature of man would not admit of a thorough reformation being made at once: that infant virtue must not immediately be put to the greatest trials, lest it be destroyed by the severity of the exercise.

During this controversy between our Lord and the haughty Scribes and Pharisees in Matthew's house, Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, came running to him in all the agonies of grief; and, in the presence of the whole company, fell on the ground before him, beseeching that he would come and heal his daughter, who lay at the point of death.

When did the beneficent Jesus deny his gracious assistance to those who implored it of him? He immediately arose, and followed the ruler towards his house, surrounded by a great multitude of people, who were desirous of seeing so great a miracle.

But as he passed through the streets, a woman, who had for twelve years been afflicted with an issue, or flux of blood, and had spent her whole substance on physicians to no purpose, "came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment: for she said within herself, If I may but touch his clothes, I shall be well." Nor was she deceived, for no sooner had she touched the border of the garment of the Son of God, "than her issue of blood dried up:" and she felt, by the return of her health and strength, and other agreeable sensations that accompany such sudden changes from painful diseases to perfect health, that the cure was absolutely complete.

But this transaction could not be concealed: the blessed Jesus knew the whole, and her secret thoughts, before she put them in practice; and, pleased with the opinion this woman had entertained both of his power and goodness, would not by any means suffer it to pass unapplauded. Accordingly, he turned himself about and asked, "Who touched me?" He well knew the person; but asked this question for the fuller manifestation of the woman's faith, and that he might have an opportunity of instructing and comforting her.

His disciples, being ignorant of what had passed, were surprised at the question; "Thou seest," said they to their Master, "the mul-

titude thronging and pressing thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?" They did not distinguish between the spiritual and corporeal touch, nor knew that such efficacious virtue had gone out of their Master. Jesus, however, persisted in knowing who it was that had done the thing; and the woman, finding it in vain to conceal her action any longer, came to him trembling and told him all. Perhaps the uncleanness of her distemper was the reason of her fear, thinking he would be offended even at her touching the hem of his garment. But the divine physician, far from being angry, spake to her in the kindest manner, and commended her faith, on which account he had consented to heal her plague: "Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole." Mat. ix. 24.

Such a miraculous incident must doubtless have greatly strengthened the ruler's faith; for behold a virtue, little inferior to that of raising the dead, issues from the border of Christ's garment, and heals a disease, which for the space of twelve years had baffled all the precepts of the healing art, and defied the power of medicine. Indeed the faith of this ruler had great need of the strongest confirmations: for news was brought him that his daughter was even now dead; and therefore it was needless for him to give any further trouble to Jesus, not in the least suspecting that he had power to recall the fleeting spirit, and re-animate a breathless body.

This message was a terrible blow to the affectionate parent. His only daughter, who a few days before was in the bloom of youth, was now a pale and lifeless corpse: and with her all his joys and comforts were fled. But Jesus, commiserating his grief, desired him to be comforted, promising that his daughter should be made whole.

On his coming to the ruler's house he found it full of mourners, who made terrible lamentation; a sufficient demonstration that the damsel was really dead. And, accordingly, when our blessed Saviour desired the mourners to cease their funeral ceremonies, as "the maid was not dead, but sleeping, they laughed him to scorn."

It is necessary to remark in this place, that the Jews, when they spoke of a person's death, styled it sleep, to intimate their belief that his spirit existed in the happy scenes of paradise, and their hopes of a future resurrection to life eternal. But the blessed Jesus used the word with remarkable propriety, to signify, that though she was now locked in the cold embraces of death, yet he was going to release her from the power of the king of terrors, with the same ease as a person is awakened from sleep. Thus our blessed Saviour,

in the very manner of performing a miracle, modestly declined the honor that would undoubtedly result from a work so greatly superior to all the power of the sons of men.

Having thus briefly addressed the mourners, he entered the chamber where the damsel was lying, but suffered none to follow him except Peter, James, and John, together with the father and mother of the damsel. Probably his reason for suffering these only to be spectators of so stupendous a work, was, that they might have an opportunity of examining the whole transaction in the most careful manner, and be thence enabled afterwards to report it upon the fullest conviction, and with every circumstance of credibility.

The blessed Jesus now approached the body, took her by the hand, and with a gentle voice said, "Maid, arise." The heavenly command was instantly obeyed; the damsel arose as from a sleep, and with all the appearance of health and vigor, for Jesus commanded to give her something to eat; a plain proof that she did not appear in the weak and languished condition of a person worn out with disease, or even like one who had fainted away; a circumstance that abundantly proves the greatness and perfection of the miracle. It is therefore no wonder that her parents should be astonished at so stupendous a work, the fame of which was soon spread through all the neighboring country; though Jesus, who was in every sense above praise, and therefore never courted it, had strictly charged them that they should tell no man what was done.

These instances of power did the blessed Jesus display, to convince the world that those who die in him are not dead; and that he hath the keys of life and death. Those also of the present age who believe that the soul sleeps with the body till the resurrection, would do well to consider the expression of the evangelist, "Her spirit came again." Luke vii. 55. Which sufficiently shows that the soul exists separately when the body is laid in the chambers of the grave.

Having performed this benevolent miracle, our blessed Saviour left the ruler's house, and was followed through the streets by two blind men imploring assistance; nor did they implore in vain. The Redeemer of mankind was, and still is, always ready to grant the petitions of those who apply to him for relief. Accordingly, he was no sooner entered into the house to avoid the thronging of the multitude, than he touched their eyes, and said, "According to your faith be it unto you." Mat. ix. 29. And immediately the valuable gift of sight was bestowed upon them.

The blind men were so overjoyed at beholding the light, that

though our Saviour charged them to keep the miracle a secret, they published his fame in every part of the country, being unwilling to conceal what, in gratitude for so great a mercy, they thought themselves obliged to divulge.

The men who thus miraculously received their sight being departed, the multitude brought to him a "dumb man possessed with a devil." So moving a sight could not fail of attracting a compassionate regard from the Saviour of the world, who, being never weary of well-doing, immediately cast out the apostate spirit; on which the dumb man recovered the use of his speech, and spake in a very rational manner to the multitude, who, with one voice, declared that such wondrous works were never wrought by any of the old prophets. "It was never so seen in Israel." Mat. ix. 33.

These words did not remove the prejudices of the Pharisees, who, being unable to deny the miracle, insinuated that he did it by a power received from Beelzebub, "the prince of the devils." A poor pretence indeed, and it did not escape the animadversion it deserved from the Saviour of the world, as we shall see in a succeeding chapter. Well might the prophet Isaiah cry out, in a prophetic ecstasy, "Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

But all their calumnies could not provoke the meek and merciful Jesus to cease from performing these compassionate offices for the children of men. On the contrary, he exerted himself still more and more to promote the prosperity and salvation of the whole human race. Accordingly he left Capernaum and traveled through the country in search of miserable objects, on whom he might confer happiness and peace; visiting "all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people." Mat. ix. 35.

In his return from this tour to Capernaum, he was attended by a great number of people, who expressed a more than common desire to hear the doctrine of the Gospel,—an incident abundantly sufficient to engage the attention of this divine teacher, who was always careful to cultivate the latent seeds of virtue, and cherish the least appearance of piety and religion.

It was not this desire of the people alone that excited his compassion towards them: he well knew they were wholly destitute of spiritual teachers; for the Scribes and Pharisees, who ought to have instructed them, were blind, perverse, and lazy guides, who, instead

of seeking the glory of the Almighty, made it their whole business to support and augment their own. They magnified the ritual ceremonies and traditions, but took no care to inspire the people with a love of virtue. "To do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with their God," were no parts of their doctrine. The small appearance for religion they entertained was wholly hypocritical; and the disputes carried on with so much bitterness between the factions of the Pharisees and Sadducees, distracted the minds of the people.

The inhabitants of Judea were truly in a deplorable situation, which called loudly for the compassion of the Son of God, who always regarded the descendants of Jacob with the most tender affection. He saw the sheep of Israel scattered on the barren wastes of error and superstition, without a shepherd to lead them to the heavenly pastures of the law and the prophets. He saw, he commiserated their distress, and resolved to provide some remedy for it. Accordingly, he directed his apostles to intercede with the Almighty, who, by his servants the prophets, had sown seeds of piety and virtue in the minds of the Jews, that he would not suffer the rich harvest to be lost for want of laborers. "The harvest," said the blessed Jesus to his disciples, "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." Mat. ix, 37, 38.

To these gracious acts he added the most powerful of all intercessions to the throne of grace—his own prevailing prayer; and accordingly ascended to the top of the mountain, and there spent the night in making the most powerful petitions in behalf of "the lost sheep of Israel," to his heavenly Father.

Having spent the night in this pious exercise, he lost no time in putting his beneficent intentions in execution; for no sooner had darkness withdrawn her sable vail, and the blushing rays of the morn adorned the chambers of the east, than this benevolent Redeemer of mankind called his disciples to him, and chose twelve, "whom he named apostles, to be with him;" and "that he might send them forth to preach." He ordered them to be with him, that they might learn from his own mouth the doctrines they were to preach to the whole world; that they might "see his glory," the transcendent glory of the virtues which adorned his human life; and that they might be witnesses of all the wondrous works he would perform during his residence in this vale of misery, and by which his mission from the courts of heaven was to be fully demonstrated.

These twelve persons, thus qualified, were to supply the people

with that spiritual food they so greatly wanted, both while their Master continued here below, and after his ascension to the right hand of power.

Having ordained them to their respective offices, he sent them out, two and two, into the most distant parts of Judea, to preach there the glad tidings of the Gospel, and prepare the way for their Master, the great Shepherd of Israel. And, that nothing might be wanting to render their preaching acceptable to the people, and confirm the important doctrines they delivered, he invested them with full power to cure all diseases, cast out devils, and even to raise the dead.

Perhaps the number of twelve apostles was fixed upon, rather than any other, to show that God intended, by their ministry, to gather together the scattered remnant of the twelve tribes of Israel. But be that as it may, these twelve apostles constantly continued with him, from the time of their election, till he offered himself a sacrifice on the cross for the sins of mankind, never departing from him unless by his own appointment.

All these persons being illiterate Galileans, and at first destitute of the qualifications necessary in the discharge of their duty—integrity alone excepted, were the most unlikely persons in the world to confound the wisdom of the wise, baffle the power of the mighty, overturn the many false religions which then flourished every where under the protection of the civil government; and, in short, to reform the manners of mankind, then universally corrupted.

Had the choice of instruments for so grand an undertaking been committed to human prudence, such doubtless, would have been chosen as were remarkable for learning, strong reasoning, and prevailing eloquence. But, behold, the wisdom of God, infinitely superior to that of man, acted very differently; for the treasure of the Gospel was committed to earthen vessels, that the excellency of its power might in all countries appear to be of God.

Accordingly, the religion which these illiterate Galileans taught through the world, exhibited a far juster notion of things than the Grecian and Roman philosophers were able to attain, though their lives were spent in study and contemplation. Hence, by its own intrinsic splendor, as well as by the external glory of the miracles that accompanied it; this religion sufficiently appeared to be wholly original and divine.

Besides, its truth and dignity were sufficiently attested by the remarkable success that attended it. It was received every where, by

the bulk of mankind, with the highest applause, as something they had hitherto been seeking in vain; while the maxims and precepts of the philosophers seldom spread farther than their respective schools.

It was, therefore, with the highest wisdom that the foundations of the church were laid in the labors of a few illiterate fishermen; for it demonstrated, with irresistible evidence, that the immense fabric was at first raised, and is still sustained, not by the arm of flesh, but purely by the hand of the Almighty.

After appointing the twelve apostles, he came down from the mountain, and was joyfully received by the multitudes of people who were waiting for him in the plain, and pressed to touch him; well knowing that if they could only touch the hem of his garment, they should be healed of whatever distemper they were afflicted with. A sufficient reason why they were continually waiting for him, and were willing to accompany him into the remotest corners of the wilderness.

The preaching and miracles of our Lord were not attended to by the low and vulgar only; persons of the first rank and character, came from distant parts of the country to converse with him, hear his doctrine, and be spectators of his wonderful works. It therefore evidently appears that persons of all ranks were desirous of following him; and their desire could be founded on nothing but the truth of his miracles.

After healing all the sick among the multitude, he turned towards his disciples, and delivered a divine discourse, something like that he had before preached to them on the mountain; but in the former he only pronounced blessings, whereas in the latter he added curses also; and in this principally it differs from that recorded by St. Matthew; we shall therefore only select a few passages from the sermon now delivered, as we have given a larger paraphrase on the former.

“Woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation.” Luke vi. 24. Riches, considered in themselves, have no tendency to render us the objects of the Almighty’s hatred, unless accompanied with those vices which too often flow from an opulent fortune; as luxury, covetousness, and the like. The woe, therefore, is here denounced against such only as are contaminated with these vices; for those who make a proper use of their wealth, and possess the virtues which should accompany affluence, have no share in the malediction.

“Woe unto you that are full, for ye shall hunger.” The pain ye shall suffer in a future life shall be sharp and excruciating. The opportunities you neglected of doing good to your afflicted brethren in this life, shall then be remembered with the most poignant grief, and be bewailed with the most bitter lamentations.

“Woe unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep.” This malediction of our blessed Saviour is not inconsistent with the apostle’s precepts, which command Christians always to rejoice. Neither is the mirth, against which the woe is here denounced, to be understood of that constant cheerfulness of temper which arises in the breasts of true Christians; from the comfortable and cheerful doctrine with which they are enlightened by the Gospel, the assurance they have of reconciliation with God, the hope they have of everlasting life, and the pleasure they enjoy in the practice of virtue; and the other duties of religion; but it relates to that turbulent carnal mirth, that excessive levity and vanity of spirit, which arises not from any solid foundation, but from immoderate sensual pleasures, or those vain amusements of life, in which the giddy and the gay contrive to spend their time; that sort of mirth which dissipates thought, leaves no time for consideration, and gives them an utter aversion to all serious reflection. Persons who constantly indulge themselves in this kind of mirth shall weep and mourn eternally, when they are excluded from the joys of heaven, and banished forever from the presence of God, by the light of whose countenance all the righteous are enlivened, and made transcendently happy.

“Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets.” Woe unto you, if, by propagating such doctrines as encourage men in sin, you shall gain the applause and flattery of the generality of men; for thus in old times did the false prophets and deceivers, who, accommodating their doctrines to the lusts and passions of men, gained the applause of men, but incurred the wrath and displeasure of a just and all-seeing God.

CHAPTER X.

CONTINUATION OF OUR LORD'S DOCTRINES, ACTS, AND MIRACLES, WROUGHT IN CONFIRMATION OF THE DIVINITY OF HIS MISSION, AND EXTENDING HIS KINGDOM.



HE divine Preacher having closed this excellent sermon, repaired to Capernaum, and was met by certain messengers from a centurion, desiring him to come and heal a servant who was dear to him, and ready to die.

This centurion, from the account given of him by the evangelist, seems to have been a proselyte to the Jewish religion, as he was a lover of the sons of Jacob, and had erected for them a place of worship; and accordingly the inhabitants of Capernaum strongly espoused his cause on this occasion, saying, "that he was worthy for whom he should do this. For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue." Luke vii. 4, 5.

There was not the least danger that this petition would be rejected by the blessed Jesus, who sought all occasions of doing good to the children of men. Accordingly, he very readily accompanied the messengers; but before he came to the house, he was met by some of the centurion's friends, who expressed the high idea that officer entertained of his power, and desired that he would not take the trouble of coming to his house, as his word was abundantly sufficient to perform the cure. At this message, Jesus turned himself about, and said to the multitude, "I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Luke vii. 9.

The persons having delivered their message, returned to the house and found the servant, who had been sick, perfectly recovered.

Many persons have thought that this miracle and that mentioned in Mat. viii. are the same; but this is a mistake. The centurion in the former came in person, but in the latter the petition was sent by the elders of Capernaum. There is not the least hint in the first miracle that the centurion was a proselyte; but he in the second is said to have been a lover of the Jewish nation, and to have built them a synagogue. Several other particulars, which prove these miracles

to have been really different, will easily occur to the reader, and therefore I shall not here enumerate them; what has been said will, I presume, be sufficient to remove any objection that may be offered against our considering them as different transactions.

Having thus miraculously healed the centurion's servant, he repaired to Peter's house to eat bread; but the multitude came again together, and surrounded the house in a very tumultuous manner, demanding, in all probability, that he would heal their sick: and it was not without difficulty they were dispersed by his friends.

The multitude being dispersed, Jesus called unto him the twelve apostles he had before chosen, and conferred on them the power of working miracles, in confirmation of the doctrines they were appointed to preach, and delivered them such instructions as he thought necessary to enable them to discharge the duties of this important commission.

"Go," said their heavenly Master, "and preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Publish in every corner of Judea the glad tidings of the Gospel, and the near approach of the great Messiah's kingdom; not a temporal but a spiritual empire, consisting of righteousness and peace.

To inure them to those hardships and dangers which were to attend them in their preaching, after the death of their Master, our Lord forbade them to provide any thing for their journey; teaching them to rely wholly on the providence of God for support in every distress, and to have recourse to his protection in every danger.

Our Lord's disciples had perhaps flattered themselves with the pleasing expectation, that the glad tidings they were going to publish, and the miraculous cures they were enabled to perform, would procure them an honorable reception wherever they came. Their Master, however, told them the event would not in any manner answer their expectations; but that they were every where to be despised, persecuted, delivered into the hands of the rulers, and punished as wicked men. But at the same time he promised them the aid of the Almighty, and gave them instructions for their behavior in every particular. He added, that those who rejected their message should be treated with severity by the great Judge of all the earth; but those who received them kindly, and gave even a cup of cold water to the least of his disciples, for their Master's sake, should not fail of receiving a large reward.

Having received this commission, the apostles visited all the parts of Palestine where the Jews inhabited, preaching the Gospel and

the doctrine of repentance, working miracles for its confirmation, and particularly healing the sick, while our blessed Saviour continued the course of his ministry in Galilee.

The apostles being returned from their tour, Jesus went to Nain, a town situated near Endor, about two miles south of Mount Tabor, attended by many of his disciples, and a great multitude of people.

On their coming to the entrance of the city, a melancholy scene presented itself to the eyes of Jesus and his followers. "Behold there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." Luke vii. 12. Who would not have imagined that God had indeed forgotten to be gracious, and in his anger shut up his tender mercies from this poor widow, suffering under the heaviest load, and laboring under the most oppressive burden of distress, deprived of her son, her only son, in the flower of his youth, when he might have repaid his mother's toils, and been to her in the place of a husband; of that husband she had long since lost, and whose loss was supportable only through the comfort of this child, the surviving image of his departed father, the balm of her grief, the hope of her afflicted soul? Who now shall administer consolation to this solitary widow; to this lonely parent, bereaved of her husband, deprived of her child? What misery can be more complicated? What can be more natural than that she should "refuse to be comforted," that she should "go down to the grave with mourning," and visit the chambers of death, the residence of the beloved remains of her husband and her son, with sorrow?

Towards the receptacle of mortality, that dreary waste of forgetfulness, the mournful funeral was now with slow and solemn pomp advancing, when the compassionate Redeemer of mankind met the melancholy procession, composed of a long train of her weeping neighbors and relations, who pitied her distress, sympathized with her in this great affliction, and were melted with compassion at her deplorable circumstances; but sighs and tears were all that they had to offer, relief could not be expected from a human being: their commiseration, though grateful to her oppressed soul, could neither restore the husband nor the son; submission and patience were the only lessons they could preach, or this afflicted daughter of Israel learn.

But though man was unable to relieve the distresses of this disconsolate widow, the Saviour of the world, who beheld the melancholy procession, was both able and willing to do it. There was no need of a powerful solicitor to implore assistance from the Son of

God, his own compassion was abundantly sufficient: "When the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her," he both sought the patient, and offered the cure unexpectedly. "Weep not," said the blessed Jesus to this afflicted woman. Alas! it had been wholly in vain to bid her refrain from tears, who had lost her only child, the sole comfort of her age, without ministering the balm of comfort to heal her broken spirit.

This our Redeemer well knew; and therefore, immediately advancing towards the corpse, "he touched the bier:" the pomp of the funeral was instantly stopped, silence closed every mouth, and expectation filled the breast of every spectator. But this deep suspense did not long continue; that glorious voice that shall one day call our dead bodies from the grave, filled their ears with these remarkable words: "Young man, I say unto thee, arise." Nor was this powerful command uttered without its effect. "He spake and it was done;" he called with authority, and immediately "he that was dead sat up, and began to speak; and he restored him to his mother." He did not show him around to the multitude; but by a singular act of modesty and humanity, delivered him to his late afflicted, now astonished and rejoicing mother, to intimate that in compassion to her great distress he had wrought this stupendous miracle.

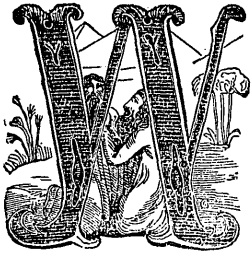
A holy and an awful fear fell on all who heard and saw this astonishing event: "and they glorified God, saying, that a great prophet is risen up among us; and that God hath visited his people."

Here it must be observed, that as this miracle is liable to no objection, it therefore abundantly proves that the power of the blessed Jesus was truly and absolutely divine. He met this funeral procession by accident. It was composed of the greatest part of the inhabitants of the city, who bewailed the disconsolate state of the afflicted widow, and therefore well knew that the youth was really dead. The powerful word, which called the breathless body to life, was delivered in an audible voice before all the company, and even at the very gate of the city, the place of public resort.

This miracle, with others amply attested, abundantly evince the truth of our Saviour's mission, and that he was indeed the Son of God, the Redeemer of mankind.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CHARACTER OF JOHN THE BAPTIST JUSTIFIED BY THE BLESSED JESUS—HE VISITS SIMON THE PHARISEE—DISPLAY OF OUR LORD'S CONDESCENSION.



WE have taken notice, in a foregoing chapter, that Herod, incensed at the honest freedom of the Baptist reproving his criminal affinity with Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, had cast him into prison; and in this state he still continued, though his disciples were suffered to visit and converse with him. In one of these visits they had given him an account of our Saviour's having elected twelve apostles to preach the Gospel, and of his miracles, particularly of his raising to life the daughter of Jairus, and the son of the widow of Nain. On hearing these wonderful relations, the Baptist immediately dispatched two of his disciples to Jesus to ask him this important question: "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"

Accordingly, the disciples of John came to Jesus, and proposed the question of their master, at the very time when he "cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits, and to many that were blind he gave sight." Jesus therefore, instead of directly answering their question, bade them return and inform their master what they had seen; "Go," said he, "and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them." Mat. xi. 4, 5. Go, tell your master, that the very miracles the prophet Isaiah so long since foretold should be wrought by the Messiah, you have yourself seen performed.

It appears from Scripture, that the Baptist, through the whole course of his ministry, had borne constant and ample testimony to our Saviour's divine mission; that he exhorted those who came to him to rest their faith not on himself, but on "him that should come after him:" and that as soon as he was acquainted who Jesus was, by a visible descent of the Holy Ghost and a voice from heaven, he

made it his business to dispose the Jews in general, and his own disciples in particular, to receive and reverence him, by testifying every where that he was the Son of God, the Lamb of God, who came down from heaven, and spake the words of God, and to whom God had not given the Spirit by measure.

The Baptist, therefore, well knew who Jesus was; and, consequently, he did not send his disciples to ask this question to solve any doubt in his mind concerning the Saviour of the world.

But it may be asked, what else could induce the Baptist to put such a question? To this some answer, that he had no other intention than to satisfy his disciples that Jesus was the Messiah, so long expected among the Jews: and to engage them to follow a more perfect Master, especially as he himself was now on the point of leaving the world.

This solution is doubtless partly right, but it does not seem to remove the whole difficulty, as it is plain, from the very account recorded by the evangelist, that the question had actually some relation to himself; and therefore we must remove the difficulty by another method. In order to which, it must be remembered, that John had been long confined in prison; that he was persuaded it was necessary for him to preach the Gospel, and prepare men to receive the kingdom of the Messiah; and for that reason, from the very time of his imprisonment, he earnestly expected the Messiah would exert his power to procure his release. But, on hearing that Jesus had chosen twelve illiterate fishermen to preach the Gospel, and furnished them with miraculous powers in order to enable them to perform so great a work; and that two persons of no consequence were raised from the dead, while he was suffered to remain in prison, he began to think himself neglected, and his services disregarded. He therefore sent two of his disciples to ask him this question: "Art thou he who should come, or look we for another?" Not that he entertained any doubt of his being the true Messiah—intending nothing more, by asking the question, but to complain that Jesus had not acted the part which he thought the Messiah should have acted: and that this was really the case, seems sufficiently plain from the caution added by our blessed Saviour himself—"And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me:" as if he had said, when you have informed your master of what you have seen and heard, tell him that he would do well not to be offended, either at the choice of the apostles, or that no miracle has been wrought for his release.

From this circumstance, it is evident that impatience on account of his long confinement was the true reason for the Baptist's sending his disciples with this question to Jesus; and that the purport of the answer was to teach him submission, in a case that was plainly above the reach of his judgment.

Lest the people, from this conversation, should imbibe any opinion prejudicial to the character of the Baptist, our blessed Saviour thought fit to place it in a proper point of light. He praised his invincible courage and constancy, which was not to be overcome, or "like a reed to be shaken with the wind;" his austere and mortified life; for he was not "clothed in soft raiment," like those who wait in the palaces of kings; adding, that he was "a prophet, nay, more than a prophet, for this is he of whom it was written, Behold, I send thy messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee." But subjoined, "notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

The propriety of this remark will appear, when it is considered that though the Baptist excelled all the prophets that were before him, yet the least inspired person in the kingdom of heaven, the least apostle or preacher of the Gospel, was greater than he; because by constantly attending on Jesus they were much better acquainted with his character, disposition, and doctrine, than the Baptist, who had only seen him transiently; wherefore, in respect of their personal knowledge of the Messiah, the apostles greatly excelled the Baptist. They were also employed, not in making preparation for the Messiah's kingdom, but in erecting it, and consequently greater than the Baptist with regard to the dignity of their office. Moreover, by having the gift of miracles, and the like, conferred on them for that office, they were far superior to him with regard to illumination. They were so fully possessed by the Spirit, that on all occasions they could declare the will of God infallibly, being as it were living oracles; and having been the subjects of ancient prophecies, they had been long expected by the people of God.

Having thus shown the greatness of the Baptist's character, and wherein he was surpassed by the disciples, our blessed Saviour took occasion from thence to blame the perverseness of the age, in rejecting both his own and the Baptist's testimony.

It seems that the Scribes and Pharisees, seeing their pretended mortifications eclipsed by the real austerity of the Baptist, impudently affirmed that his living in the deserts, his shunning the company of men, the coarseness of his clothing, the abstemiousness of

his diet, and the other severities he practiced, were the effects of his being possessed by an apostate spirit, or of a religious melancholy. "For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil." Mat. xi. 18.

On the other hand, they would not listen to the heavenly doctrines preached by Christ, because he did not separate himself from society; attributing his free manner of living to a certain looseness of disposition, though they well knew that he observed the strictest temperance himself, and never encouraged the vices of others, either by dissimulation or example. "The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners: but Wisdom is justified of her children." Mat. xi. 19.

He next proceeded to upbraid the several cities where his most wonderful works had been performed. For though they had heard him preach many awakening sermons, and seen him perform such astonishing miracles, such as would have converted Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom, cities infamous for their impiety, contempt of religion, pride, luxury, and debauchery; yet so great was their obstinacy, that they persisted in their wickedness, notwithstanding all he had done to convert them from the evil of their ways. "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee." Mat. xi. 21, etc.

Having denounced these judgments on the cities which had neglected to profit by his mighty works, he concluded his discourse with these heavenly words: "Come unto 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: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Mat. xi. 28, etc.

This affecting invitation must engage the most serious attention and particular regard of every reader; if the greatness of the speaker, the importance of his message, or the affectionate manner

of his address, have any weight, have any force, have any power, to affect the soul. It is Christ the Almighty Redeemer, the Son of the Most High, he into whose hands, as our Mediator, all things are delivered of his Father; he unto whom all power in heaven and earth is given; even he who shall come in the clouds of heaven to judge all the inhabitants of the earth, and even by those words he hath himself delivered. It is this wonderful Person who speaks, declaring at once his great willingness to receive, and his own supreme power to give, that rest and peace to the soul which should be the pursuit of every son of Adam, and is the gift of his religion only.

And that nothing may prevent our accepting this benevolent offer, he invites, with the most affectionate tenderness—not the great, the happy, and the powerful, nor the merry-hearted, or the sons of joy—“all that labor and are heavy laden,” all that are under the bondage of sin and sorrow, and those he calls not with a desire to expose their miseries, to punish their offences, or to display his own glory, but solely with a view to render them happy. Come, says he, come to me, I entreat you to come, I will give you rest; I myself will relieve and release you from your heavy burdens; come to me, and you shall find rest and peace to your souls. “Take my yoke upon you, for it is easy; and my burden, for it is light.”

Is it possible that creatures of a day like us—can it be possible “that mortals who have but a short time to live and are full of misery, who come up and are cut down like a flower, who fly as it were like a shadow, and never continue in one stay”—can it be possible that they could reject and disregard a call so full of love, so full of affection, of such infinite consequence, of such unspeakable advantage? Can they reject the love of him who gave them rest, took their burdens upon himself; and who, after all his sufferings, desires them only to “come” to exchange their own oppressive burdens for his lightsome yoke; to abandon their sins and sorrows, and become his disciples; to love and obey him, and thence to be happy? Can we possibly despise such grace, refuse such offers, fly from such rest thus freely proposed to us, and prefer the heavy yoke of sin, and the cruel pangs of a wounded conscience?

Having concluded this public address, one of the Pharisees named Simon, desired he would “eat with him:” the blessed Jesus accepted the invitation, and accompanied him to his house, and sat down to meat.

He had not continued long at the table, before a woman, who had lately left the paths of vice for those of virtue, placed herself behind

him; and, from a deep conviction of her former crimes, and the obligation she owed the Saviour of mankind for bringing her to a sense of them—shed such quantities of tears that they trickled down on his feet, which, according to the custom of the country, were then bare. But observing that her tears had wet the feet of her beloved Instructor, she immediately wiped them with the hairs of her head, kissed them with the most ardent affection, and anointed them with precious ointment she had brought for the purpose.

It was a custom, among the inhabitants of the East, to pour fragrant oils on the heads of such guests as they intended particularly to honor while they sat at meat; and probably the woman's original intention was to anoint Jesus in the usual manner. But being exceedingly humbled on account of her former crimes, she could not presume to take that freedom with him, and therefore poured it on his feet, to express at once the greatness of her love and the profoundness of her humility.

The Pharisee, who had attentively observed the woman, concluded from thence that our Saviour could not be a prophet. "This man," said the Pharisee to himself, "if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him; for she is a sinner." Luke vii. 39.

But though Simon spoke this only in his heart, his thoughts were not concealed from the great Redeemer of mankind, who to convince him that he was a prophet, and that he knew not only the characters of men, but even the secret thoughts of their hearts, immediately conversed with him on the very subject he had been revolving in his mind. He did not indeed expose him before the company, by relating what he had said in secret; but, with remarkable delicacy, pointed out to Simon alone the unreasonableness of his thoughts. "Simon," said the blessed Jesus, "I have somewhat to say unto thee. There was a certain creditor who had two debtors; the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged." And then immediately applied this short parable to the subject of the woman, on which the Pharisee had so unjustly reasoned with himself. "Simon," continued our Saviour, "seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me

no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment." Luke vii. 44, etc.

This woman's kind services were in no danger of losing their reward from the blessed Jesus, who possessed the softer and finer feelings of human nature in their utmost perfection. Accordingly, he added, in pursuance of so kind an invitation he had before made to weary and heavy-laden sinners, "Wherefore, I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." Luke vii. 47.

The blessed Jesus having thus commended the conduct of the woman to the company, and rebuked, with great delicacy, the unjust suspicions of Simon, turned himself to the woman, and, in the kindest manner, assured her that "her sins were forgiven." But the power he assumed in forgiving sins greatly offended the Jews, who, not being acquainted with his divinity, considered his speech as derogatory to the honor of the Almighty. Jesus, however, contemned their malicious murmurs, and repeated his assurance, telling the woman that her faith had saved her, and bade her depart in peace.

The next day Jesus traveled from Capernaum to different parts of Galilee, going "through every village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God." Luke viii. 1. That is, he declared to the people the welcome tidings of the Almighty's being willing to be reconciled to the children of men, on condition of their repentance and embracing the Gospel of the grace of God.

Leaving Galilee, he repaired to Jerusalem to keep the passover, being the second feast of that kind since his public ministry. In this journey he was accompanied by certain pious women, "who ministered to him of their substance."

CHAPTER XII.

MIRACULOUS CURE EFFECTED AT THE POOL OF BETHESDA—REPROOF OF THE SUPERSTITION OF THE JEWS IN CONDEMNING THE PERFORMANCE OF NECESSARY WORKS ON THE SABBATH-DAY—AFTER DOING MANY ACTS OF MERCY AND WONDER, OUR BLESSED LORD IS VISITED BY HIS MOTHER AND HIS BRETHREN, AND MAKES A SPIRITUAL REFLECTION ON THAT INCIDENT.



OUR Lord had no sooner entered the ancient city of Jerusalem, so long famous for being the dwelling-place of the Most High, than he repaired to the public bath or pool, called in the Hebrew tongue "Bethesda;" that is, "the house of mercy," on account of the miracles wrought there by the salutary effects of the water at certain seasons. This bath

was surrounded by five porches or cloisters, in which those who frequented the place were sheltered both from the heat and cold; and were particularly serviceable to the diseased and infirm, who crowded thither to find relief in their afflictions.

These porches were now filled with 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. 3, 4.

Such is the account of this miraculous pool given us by St. John the evangelist. Many controversies have arisen concerning the place, the time, and the nature of the pool; questions which will perhaps never be answered, because the pool of Bethesda is not mentioned by any of the Jewish historians.

The time when this miraculous effect took place is not precisely determined; but it is almost universally agreed, that it could not be long before the coming of our Saviour; and that the miracle was intended to lead us to the Son of God. For the gift of prophecy and of miracles had ceased among the Jews for above four hundred

years; and therefore, to raise in them a more ardent desire for the coming of the Messiah, and to induce them to be more circumspect in observing the signs of his coming, God was pleased to favor them with this remarkable sign at Bethesda. And as the descendants of Jacob, in the last times, were very obnoxious, not only to the irruptions and tyranny of the Gentiles, but had wholly lost their liberty, so God favored them with this eminent token of his favor, this wonderful pool, that they might not despair of the promises made to their forefathers being fulfilled.

The pool was situated near the gate of victims, which were figures of the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, that they might be convinced God had yet a regard to the posterity of Abraham, and the worship which he himself had established; and might thus support themselves with the pleasing hope of the coming of the Messiah, the great Angel of the covenant, to his temple.

And as this miracle of the angel descending from heaven began when the coming of the Messiah was at hand, to advise them of the speedy and near approach of that promised salvation; so Christ entered these porches, which were situated without the temple, and performed the miracle we shall presently relate, to vindicate what was the true intent of this gift of healing; namely, to lead men to himself, "the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness." And the waters were troubled only at this certain season of the passover, or at other stated periods, and one only healed each time the angel descended, to show them at once the weakness of the law, and the great difference between that and the Gospel dispensation; and to teach them not to rest satisfied with the corporeal benefit only, as in the ministration of an angel, but to reflect attentively on the promises of the Messiah's approaching advent.

Having made these necessary remarks relative to the celebrated pool of Bethesda, we shall now return to the blessed Jesus, who thought proper to visit the porches of Bethesda, now crowded with persons laboring under various diseases.

Among these objects of pity was one who had labored under his infirmity no less than thirty-and-eight years. The length and greatness of this man's afflictions, which were well known to the Son of God, were sufficient to excite his tender compassion, and make him the happy object to demonstrate that his power of healing was infinitely superior to the sanative virtue of the waters; while the rest were suffered to remain in their affliction.

Had not our Lord at this time restored any of them to health, he

would have acted contrary to the general account which the evangelists give of his goodness on other occasions; namely, that "he healed all who came to him." For such diseased persons, who left their habitations through a persuasion of his power and kindness, were proper objects of his mercy; whereas the sick in the cloisters of Bethesda were no more so than the other sick throughout the whole country, whom he could have cured with a single word of his mouth, had he been pleased to have uttered it.

Our compassionate Lord now approached the man whom he had singled out as the person on whom to manifest his power; he asked him whether he was desirous of being made whole? A question which must induce the man to declare publicly his melancholy case in hearing of the multitude, and consequently render the miracle more conspicuous. And as this was done on the Sabbath-day, our blessed Saviour seems to have wrought it to rouse the sons of Jacob from their lethargy, and convince the inhabitants of Jerusalem that the long-expected Messiah was now come, and "had actually visited his people."

This distressed mortal, beholding Jesus with a sorrowful countenance, and understanding that he meant his being healed by the sanative virtue of the waters, answered in a plaintive accent, "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool; but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me." John v. 7. But the compassionate Redeemer of mankind soon convinced him that he was not to owe his cure to the salutary nature of the waters, but to the unbounded power of the Son of God; and accordingly said to him, "Rise, take up thy bed and walk." No sooner was the heavenly mandate uttered, than the impotent man, to the astonishment of the multitude, "was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked." John v. 9.

This great and miraculous cure could not fail of having a proper effect on the spectators; and his carrying his bed on the Sabbath-day, which the Jews considered as a profanation of that day of rest, tended greatly to spread the fame of the miracle over the whole city. Nor did the man scruple to obey the commands of his kind physician; he well knew that the person who had the power of working such miracles, must be a great prophet; and consequently that his injunction could not be sinful. He therefore thought that he gave a sufficient answer to those Jews, who told him it was not lawful to carry his bed on the Sabbath-day, to say, "He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed and walk." John v. 11. He

that restored my strength in an instant, and removed, with a single word, a disease that had many years afflicted me, commanded me, at the same time, to take up my bed and walk; and surely a person endowed with such power from on high, would not have ordered me to do any thing but what is truly right.

The votaries of infidelity should remember, that this signal miracle was performed in an instant, and even when the person did not expect any such favor, nor even knew the person to whom he owed it. No one therefore can pretend that imagination had any share in performing it. In short, the narrative of this miracle of mercy, sufficiently proves that the person who did it was really divine.

Soon after Jesus had miraculously cured this man at the pool of Bethesda, he happened to meet him again in the temple, and took the opportunity of reminding him that, as he was now freed from an infirmity he had brought on himself by irregular courses, he should be careful to abstain from them for the future, lest the Almighty should think proper to afflict him in a more terrible manner. The man, overjoyed at having found the divine physician who had relieved him from his melancholy condition, repaired to the Scribes and Pharisees, and with a heart overflowing with gratitude, innocently told them that it was Jesus who had performed on him so astonishing a cure, being doubtless persuaded that they would rejoice at beholding so great a prophet.

But, alas! this was far from being the case; the rulers of Israel, instead of being pleased with the accounts of his many stupendous works of mercy and kindness, attacked him tumultuously in the temple, and carried him before the Sanhedrim, probably with an intention to take away his life, merely because he had done good on the Sabbath-day.

Jesus, however, soon vindicated, by irrefragable arguments, the propriety of his works; observing, that in performing acts of mercy and beneficence on the Sabbath-day, he only imitated his heavenly Father, the God of Jacob, whose providence was continually employed, without any regard to times or seasons, in doing good for the children of men. And surely he must be more than blind, who cannot discover that the Almighty, on the Sabbaths, as well as on other days, supports the whole frame of the universe; and, by the invisible operations of his power, continues the motion of the heavenly bodies, on the revolution of which the vicissitudes of day and night, of summer and winter, so necessary to the production of the fruit of the earth, depend.

But Jewish prejudice could not be overcome by argument. Nay, the very observation increased their malice, as he claimed a peculiar relation to God; and, by asserting that he acted like him, insinuated that he was equal to the Almighty himself.

The Saviour of the world did not deny this conclusion; but showed that he acted agreeably to the will of God, and was equal with him in power, doing whatsoever he saw done by his Father—a convincing proof of his Father's love for him. "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 the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth: and he will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel." John v. 19, 20.

The blessed Jesus added, that he had not only power to heal the sick, but even to raise the dead; and that his Father had constituted him the universal Judge of the world; and therefore those who refused to honor him, refused to honor the Father. But whoever believed on him should inherit eternal life.

And that they might not doubt of the truth of his mission, but that he was actually invested with the power of raising the dead, he desired them to remember the undoubted instances he had already given of it, in restoring the daughter of Jairus, and the widow's son of Nain, to life; and, consequently, that he could, on any future occasion, exert the same power: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself, and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man." John v. 25, 26.

The blessed Jesus added to this, Be not surprised at the power of raising a few from the dead, and the authority of inflicting punishment on a small number; I have a far greater power committed to me, even that of raising all the sons of Adam at the last day, and of judging and rewarding every one of them according to his works. "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." John v. 28, 29.

The great day of retribution will distinguish between the good and the evil; for the omniscient Judge has been privy to all the actions of the sons of men, from the beginning to the end of time; nor has

he any interest to pursue, or any inclination to satisfy, different from those of his heavenly Father; "And my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of my Father which hath sent me." John v. 30.

Nothing could more evince the character of our Lord than these assertions, though he did not require his hearers to believe them merely on his own testimony: he appealed to that of John, who was a burning and a shining light; and in whom for a time they greatly rejoiced, because the prophetic spirit, which had ceased in Israel, was revived in that holy man. Nay, he appealed to a much greater testimony than that of John, even that of the God of Jacob himself, who was continually bearing witness of his mission, by the many miracles he empowered him to perform; and who, at his baptism, had, with an audible voice from the courts of heaven, declared him to be his beloved Son; a voice which multitudes of people had heard, and probably even some of those to whom he was now speaking.

The Jews had long expected the Messiah; but they had expected him to appear as a temporal prince, who would not only restore the former lustre of the throne of David, but infinitely augment it, and even place it over all the kingdoms of the earth. And hence they were unwilling to acknowledge Jesus for their Messiah, notwithstanding the proofs of his mission were so undeniable, because they must, in so doing, have abandoned all their grand ideas of a temporal kingdom. Our blessed Saviour therefore desired them to consult their own Scriptures, particularly the writings of the prophets, where they would find the characters of the Messiah displayed; and be fully convinced they were all fulfilled in his person.

He also gave them to understand, that the proofs of his mission were as full and clear as possible, being supported by the actions of his life, which in all things agreed with his doctrine; for he never sought the applause of men or assumed secular power, but was always innocent and humble, though he well knew that these virtues made him appear little in the eyes of those who had no idea of a spiritual kingdom, but expected the Messiah would appear with all the pomp of secular authority.

In short, the fatal infidelity of the Jewish doctors was principally owing to their pride. They had long filled the minds of the people with grand ideas of the glory and power of the Messiah's kingdom; they had represented him as a potent prince, who was to appear at once adorned with all the ensigns of power; and therefore to have ascribed that august character to a mere teacher of righteousness,

destitute even of the ordinary advantages of birth, fortune, and erudition, would have been so plain a confession of their ignorance of the Scriptures, as must have exposed them to the ridicule and contempt of the whole people.

Our blessed Saviour added, that he himself should not only be their accuser to the God of Jacob for their infidelity; but Moses, their great legislator in whom they trusted, would join in that unwelcome office; for by denying him to be the Messiah, they denied the writings of that prophet. "For had ye," added he, "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.

Thus did the blessed Jesus assert himself to be the Son of God, the great Judge of the whole earth, and the Messiah promised by the prophets, and at the same time gave them such convincing proofs of his being sent from God, that nothing could be said against them.

Convincing as these proofs were, yet they did not in the least abate the malice of the Scribes and Pharisees; for the very next Sabbath, upon his disciples plucking a few ears of corn as they passed through the fields, and eating the grain after rubbing it out in their hands, they again exclaimed against this violation of the Sabbath. But our blessed Saviour soon convinced them of their error, by showing, both from the example of David, who with his attendants eat the showbread—which was not lawful for any but the priests, and the constant practice of their own priests, who never omitted the necessary works of the temple on the Sabbath-day; that works of necessity were often permitted, even though they broke a ritual command; that acts of mercy were the most acceptable services to God of any whatever; that it was inverting the order of things to suppose that "man was made for the Sabbath, and not the Sabbath for the benefit of man." Adding, that if the service of the temple should be said to claim a particular dispensation from the law of the Sabbath, he and his disciples, whose business of promoting the salvation of mankind was of equal importance, might justly claim the same exemption; as they were carrying on a much nobler work than the priest who attended on the service of the temple. Thus did our blessed Saviour prove that works of mercy should not be left undone, though attended with the violation of some of the most sacred institutions of the ceremonial law.

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

The Pharisees, who observed the compassionate Jesus advance towards the man, did not doubt but he would heal him; and therefore watched him attentively, that they might have something to accuse him with to the people. Their malice was arrived to that monstrous pitch, that they determined to injure his reputation by representing him as a Sabbath-breaker if he dared to heal the man, while they themselves were profaning it by an action which would have polluted any day; namely, of seeking an opportunity of destroying a person who had never injured them, but done many good actions for the sons of Jacob, and was continually laboring for their eternal welfare.

The Saviour of the world was not unapprized of these malicious intentions. He knew their designs, and defied their impotent power, by informing them of the benevolent action he designed, though he well knew they would exert every art they were masters of, in order to put him to death.

Therefore, when our Saviour ordered the man to show himself to the whole congregation, in order to excite their pity, these hypocritical teachers declared, in the strongest terms, the unlawfulness of his performing even such beneficent actions on the Sabbath; "Is it lawful," cried they, "to heal on the Sabbath-day?" They did not, however, ask this question with an intention to hinder him from performing the miracle. No, they had a very different intention than that of accusing him; for they hoped he would have declared openly that such actions were lawful; or at least make no reply to their demands, which they would have construed into an acknowledgment of what they asserted.

Nor did our Lord fail to expose their malice and superstition; and accordingly asked them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath-day to do good, or to do evil; to save life, or to destroy it?" Luke vi. 9. Is it not more lawful for me, on the Sabbath-day, to save men's lives, than for you to seek my death without the least provocation? This severe rebuke would admit of no answer, and therefore they "held their peace," pretending not to understand his meaning. He therefore made use of an argument, which stupidity itself could not fail of understanding, and which all the art of these hypocritical sophists was unable to answer. "What man," said the blessed Jesus, "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." Mat. xii. 11, 12.

The former question they pretended not to understand, and therefore held their peace; but this argument effectually silenced them, though they were determined not to be convinced. This unconquerable obstinacy grieved the spirit of the meek, the benevolent Jesus, who beheld them with anger, that, if possible, an impression might be made either on them or the spectators.

But at the same time that he testified his displeasure towards the Pharisees, he uttered words of comfort to the lame man, bidding him stretch forth his hand; and he no sooner obeyed the divine command than "it was restored whole as the other."

This astonishing work, performed in the midst of a congregation, and in presence of our Lord's most inveterate enemies, many of whom doubtless knew the man while he labored under this infirmity, must certainly have had a great effect on the minds of the people, especially as they saw it had effectually silenced the Pharisees, who had nothing to offer either against the miracle itself, or the reasonings and power of him who had performed it.

But though these whited sepulchres, as our blessed Saviour justly termed them, were silenced by his arguments and astonished at his miracles, yet they were so far from abandoning their malicious intentions, that they joined their inveterate enemies, the Herodians or Sadducees, in order to consult how they might destroy him; well knowing, that if he continued his preaching and working of miracles, the people would wholly follow him, and their own power soon become contemptible. Jesus, however, thought proper to prevent their malicious designs by retiring into Galilee, and there pursuing his benevolent purposes.

This retreat could not however conceal him from the multitude, who flocked to him from all quarters, bringing with them the sick and maimed, who were all healed and sent away in peace.

Some of his disciples, however, who still entertained the popular opinion that the Messiah would establish his kingdom by force, and bear down all opposition, were extremely mortified to find their Master retreat from so weak an enemy. But had they read with attention the prophecy of Isaiah, they would have known that this supposed weakness was one part of the Messiah's character. "Behold my servant whom I have chosen; my beloved in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my Spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smacking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth

judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust. Mat. xii. 18, 21.

Though there are several small variations between this prophecy as quoted by St. Matthew, and the original in the book of Isaiah, yet the sense in both places is the same. By this prophecy we may observe the evident difference there is between the Jewish religion published by Moses, and the Christian religion published by Christ. The doctrine of salvation, as taught by Moses, extended only to the single nation of the Jews: whereas that published by the Messiah extended to every nation and people under heaven. Accordingly our blessed Saviour, by retiring into Galilee, fulfilled the first part of this famous prophecy, "He shall show judgment to the Gentiles;" for the evangelist tells us, "great multitudes came to him from beyond Jordan, and from Syria, about Tyre and Sidon." Mark iii. 8.

Being now returned into Galilee, there was brought to him a blind and dumb man possessed with a devil; but Jesus with a single word cast out the evil spirit, and restored the noble faculties of sight and speech. A miracle so surprising could not fail of astonishing the numerous spectators, who now seemed convinced, that the person endued with such remarkable power could be no other than the Messiah.

The Pharisees, who were come thither from Jerusalem, filled with malice at seeing him perform so many miracles, impiously asserted, contrary to the conviction of their own minds, that they were wrought by the power of Beelzebub, the prince of the devils.

So blasphemous a declaration could not be supposed to escape a censure from the Son of God, who, addressing himself both to them and the people, demonstrated the absurdity of the calumny by an argument drawn from the common affairs of life. "Every kingdom," said the blessed Jesus, "divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand. And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand?" Your calumny is malicious and absurd; it is malicious, because your own consciences are convinced of its falsehood; and it is absurd, because Satan cannot assist me in preaching the kingdom of God, and subverting all the works of darkness, unless he be divided against himself, and destroy all the works of his own kingdom. Adding, "And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you." Ye

did not impute the miracles of your prophets to Beelzebub, but received them, on the evidence of their miracles, as the messengers of God. But ye reject me, who work greater and more numerous miracles than they, and impute them to the power of evil spirits. Is this conduct reconcilable? These prophets therefore shall be your judges, they shall condemn you. But as it is true that I cast out devils by the assistance of the Almighty, it follows that the kingdom of God, so long expected, is going to be established.

But this blasphemy, however great, may be forgiven you, because stronger and more evident proofs of my mission may convince you of your sins, and induce you to embrace the offers of eternal life. For the time is coming when the Son of man shall be raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Ghost, the gifts of miracles showered on almost all believers, and the nature of the Messiah's kingdom more fully explained, in order to remove the foundation of your prejudice, the expectation of a temporal prince. But if you then shut your eyes, and speak evil against the Holy Ghost, by affirming that his gifts and miracles proceed from the prince of darkness, it shall never be forgiven you: because it is a sin you cannot possibly repent of, as no greater means of conviction will be offered; but you shall be punished for it, both in this world and in that which is to come. "Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." Mat. xii. 31, 32.

This solemn sentence on the sin against the Holy Ghost, was probably now pronounced by our Saviour to awaken the consciences of the Pharisees, by a sense of their danger, if they continued in such detestable calumnies, when their own hearts sufficiently told them, that they flowed entirely from malice and resentment.

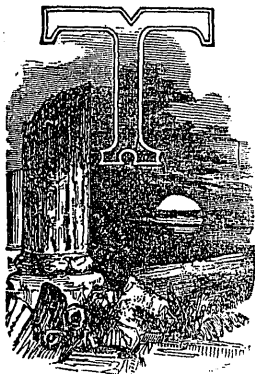
But all his reasonings and threatenings had no effect on this perverse set of mortals, who sarcastically answered, "Master, we would see a sign from thee." Strange stupidity! Had not he, a short time before, cast out a devil, and restored the faculties of sight and speech to the blind and dumb; cleansed lepers, raised the dead, and even rebuked the tempestuous winds and waves? Were not these signs sufficient to convince the most bigoted mortal? What therefore could these stubborn doctors of the law require? Well might the

great Saviour of the world call them "a wicked and adulterous generation;" for surely they could boast of no part of the faith and piety of Abraham, their great progenitor. Persons of such incorrigible inclinations certainly merited no further gratification, and therefore Jesus only referred them to a sign that would not come to pass till after his death; namely, that of Jonah, whose deliverance from the whale's belly, after three days' confinement, was an eminent type of his resurrection, after his body had remained three days and three nights in the chambers of the tomb. Adding, that the Ninevites repented at the preaching of the prophet Jonah; and the queen of the South undertook a long journey to Jerusalem to hear the wisdom of Solomon; but they refused to attend to the doctrines of an infinitely greater prophet than Jonah, or listen to one much wiser than Solomon. Concluding his discourse with a very apposite parable, tending to show the great danger of resisting conviction, and breaking through resolutions, as such actions tended entirely to render men more obdurate and abandoned than before.

During this dispute with the Pharisees, Jesus was informed that his mother and brethren, or kinsmen, were without, desiring to speak to him; upon which the blessed Jesus stretched out his hands towards his disciples, and said, "Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." Mat. xii. 49, 50. This glorious truth should be stamped on the minds of all believers, as it shows that every one, of what nation or kindred soever, who is brought into subjection to the will of God, is allied to the blessed Jesus, and entitled to the salvation of God.

CHAPTER XIII.

OUR LORD DELIVERS MANY REMARKABLE PARABLES, AND EXPLAINS SEVERAL OF THEM — RETURNS TO NAZARETH, AND COMMISSIONS THE TWELVE APOSTLES TO PREACH THE GOSPEL IN DIVERS PLACES — CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.



HE miraculous power of our blessed Lord, both in performing the most astonishing acts, and confuting the most learned of the Pharisaical tribe, who endeavored to oppose his mission and doctrine, brought together so great a multitude, that he repaired to the sea-side; and, for the better instructing of the people, entered into a ship, and the whole multitude stood on the shore. Being thus conveniently seated, he delivered many precepts of the utmost importance, beginning with the parable of the sower who cast his

seed on different kinds of soil, the products of which were answerable to the nature of the ground, some yielding a large increase, others nothing at all. By this striking similitude, the blessed Jesus represented the different kinds of hearers, and the different manner in which they are affected by the precepts of religion. Some wholly suppress the doctrines delivered, in others they produce the fruits of righteousness in proportion to the goodness of their hearts. And surely a more proper parable could not have been delivered, when such multitudes came to hear his discourses, and so few practiced the precepts, or profited by the heavenly doctrines they contained.

To vindicate the propriety of our Saviour's conduct, it may not be amiss here to observe, that parables were very familiar to the oriental nations, particularly those of Palestine, as we learn from the concurrent testimony of all the eastern writers; and it was the general method, both of the old prophets, John the Baptist, and our blessed Saviour himself, to allude to things present, and such as immediately offered themselves. Our Saviour also, by using this manner of teaching, fulfilled the prophecies concerning the Messiah re-

lating to his method of instruction; it being foretold, "that he should open his mouth in parables, and utter things which had been kept secret from the foundation of the world." It is therefore no wonder that the mysteries and secrets of the kingdom of heaven are generally the subject of our Saviour's parables; his grand and fundamental doctrines being delivered in clear, plain, and express terms, but sometimes heightened and enlivened by the addition of beautiful parables. Similitudes of this kind are indeed the most simple method of teaching, and best accommodated to the apprehension of the vulgar and unlearned, and very easy to be remembered, understood, and applied. At the same time they are the finest veil for mysteries, and the best means of convicting the proud and obstinate, as well as concealing from them those truths which their perverseness and infidelity have rendered them unworthy of having more clearly displayed.

But to return. The parable being finished, his disciples asked why he taught the people in parables? To which he answered, "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables; because, they seeing, see not; and hearing, they hear not; neither do they understand." Mat. xiii. 11, etc. As if he had said, You, my beloved disciples, who are of an humble, docile temper, and are willing to use means, and resort to me for instruction and the explanation of the truths I deliver, to you it shall be no disadvantage that they are clothed in parables. Besides, my discourses are plain and intelligible to all unprejudiced minds: truth will shine through the veil in which it is arrayed, and the shadow will guide you to the substance. But these proud, these self-conceited Pharisees, who are so blinded by their own prejudices that they will neither hear nor understand a thing plainly delivered; to them I preach in parables, and hide the great truths of the Gospel under such metaphorical robes as will forever conceal them from persons of their own temper. They have therefore brought upon themselves this blindness, that in seeing they see not; and this willful deafness, that in hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

The blessed Jesus added, that there was no reason for their being surprised at what he had told them, as it had long before been predicted by the prophet Isaiah. "By hearing ye shall hear, and shall

not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive. For this people's 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." Mat. xiii. 14, 15. There is some variation in the words as quoted by the evangelist and those found in Isaiah; but the import of both is the same, and may be paraphrased in the following manner:—"The sons of Jacob shall indeed hear the doctrines of the Gospel, but not understand them; and see the miracles by which these doctrines are confirmed, without perceiving them to be wrought by the finger of God: not because the evidences produced by the Messiah are insufficient, but because the corruption of their hearts will not suffer them to examine and weigh these evidences; for the sins of this people have hardened their hearts; their pride and vanity have shut their ears, and their hypocrisy and bigoted adherence to traditions and forced interpretations of the law and the prophets, have closed their eyes, lest the brilliant rays of truth should strike their sight with irresistible force, and the powerful voice of divine wisdom force their attention, and command their assent; being unwilling to be directed to the paths of righteousness which lead to the heavenly Canaan."

Such are the reasons given by our blessed Saviour for his teaching the people by parables; and to enhance the great privilege his disciples enjoyed, he added, that many patriarchs and prophets of old had earnestly desired to see and hear these things which they now saw and heard, but were denied that favor; God having, till then, showed them to his most eminent saints in shadows only, and as they lay brooding in the womb of futurity. "But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear: for verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." Mat. xiii. 16, 17.

Our Lord, having by these means excited the desire of his disciples, proceeded to explain to them the parable of the sower. "The sower," said he, "soweth the word." The seed therefore implies the doctrines of true religion, and the various kinds of hearers. The ground by the highway-side, which is apt to be beaten by men treading upon it, is an image of those who have their hearts so hardened with impiety, that though they hear the Gospel preached, it makes no impression on their callous hearts, because they hear it

inattentively, or quickly forget the words of the preacher. And surely no similitude could more strongly represent this insensibility and inattention, than the beaten ground bordering on the highway, into which this seed never entering, it is picked up by the fowls of the air, or trodden down and crushed by the feet of passengers. "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which receiveth seed by the wayside." Mat. xiii. 19.

We must not suppose that the devil has the power of robbing hearers of their knowledge by an immediate act of his own, because he is said to catch away the word sown in their hearts, but by the opportunities they give the deceiver of mankind for exerting his strong temptations, and particularly those which have a relation to their commerce with men: a circumstance that could not escape the observation of St. Luke, who tells us that the seed was trodden down, or destroyed, by their own headstrong lusts, which, like so many birds of prey pinched with hunger, devour the seed implanted in their minds.

The rocky ground represents those hearers who so far receive the word into their hearts, that it discovers itself by good resolutions, which are perhaps accompanied with a partial reformation of some sins, and the temporary practice of some virtues. But the word has not sunk deep enough in their minds to remain constantly there, its abode with them is only for a season; and therefore when persecution ariseth for the sake of the Gospel, and such hearers are exposed to tribulations of any kind, the blade, which sprung up quickly, withers, for want of being watered with the streams of piety and virtue; like the vegetable productions of the earth, when deprived of the enlivening rains and dews of heaven, and a want of earth to contain this nourishing fluid when the rays of the sun dart in full vigor upon them. "But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with great joy receiveth it: yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended." Mat. xiii. 20, 21.

The ground encumbered with thorns, which sprung up with the seed and choked it, represents all those who receive the word into their hearts already filled with the cares of this world, which will, sooner or later, destroy whatever good resolutions are raised by the word. The cares of the world are compared to thorns, not only

because of their pernicious tendency in choking the word, but because they cannot be eradicated without great pains and difficulty. In the parable, the hearers of this denomination are distinguished from those who receive the seed on the stony ground, not so much by the effect of the word upon their minds, as by the different natures of each; for in both the seed sprang up, but brought forth no fruit. Those represented by the stony ground, have no depth of soil; those by the thorny ground are choked by the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the love of pleasures, which, sooner or later, will stifle the impressions of the word; by which means they at last become as unfruitful as the former. But both are distinguished from those hearers represented by the seed sown by the highway-side, that they receive the word, and in some measure obey its precepts. Whereas the first never receive the word at all, hearing without attention; or, if they do attend, forget it immediately. "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 these unprofitable hearers of the word, others are represented, whose goodness of heart, signified under the similitude of the soil, receive the word with gladness, and bring forth large increase. These are convinced of the truths delivered, and practice them, though contrary to their prejudices, and opposite to their inclinations. All those bring forth, some an hundred-fold, some sixty, and some thirty, in proportion to the different degrees of strength in which they possess the graces necessary to the profitable hearing the word of righteousness.

Having ended this interpretation of the parable of the sower, he continued his discourse to his disciples; explaining to them, by the similitude of a lighted lamp, the use they were to make of all the excellent instructions they had and should receive from him. Their understanding, he told them, was to illuminate the world, as a brilliant lamp placed in the centre of an apartment, enlightens the whole. He added, that though some of the doctrines of the Gospel were then concealed from the people because of their prejudices, yet the time would come when those doctrines should be preached openly and plainly through the world; and therefore it was their duty, to whom God had given both an opportunity of hearing, and a capacity of understanding these doctrines, to listen with the utmost attention. "Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and

not to be set on a candlestick? For there is nothing hid which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear." Mark iv. 21-23.

But as it was a matter of great importance that the disciples, who were to publish the Gospel throughout the whole world, should listen with the closest attention to his sermons, he repeated his admonitions; adding, that their present privileges and future rewards should be both proportioned to the fidelity and care with which they discharged the important trust committed to them. "Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you; and unto you that hear shall more be given." Mark iv. 24.

Having explained these parables to his disciples, he turned himself to the multitude on the shore, and, in his usual endearing manner, delivered the parable of the enemy's sowing tares among the wheat: and on their first appearance astonishing the husbandman's servants, who knew the field had been sowed with good seed; and, in order to free the wheat from such injurious plants, proposed to root them up. But this the husbandman absolutely refused, lest by extirpating the one they injured the other; adding, that he would take care, at the time of harvest, to give orders to his reapers, that they should first gather the tares into bundles and burn them, and afterwards carry the wheat to the granaries. "The kingdom of heaven," said the blessed Jesus, "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 the tares also. So the servants of the householder came, and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn." Mat. xiii. 24, etc.

This parable of the tares being ended, he spake another concerning the seed which sprung up secretly; representing the gradual and silent progress of the Gospel among the sons of men. He informed them under this similitude, that the husbandman does not, by any

efficacy of his own, cause the seed he casts into the ground to grow, but leaves it to be nourished by the teeming virtues of the soil, and the enlivening rays of the sun. In the same manner, Jesus and his apostles having taught men the doctrine of true religion, were not by any miraculous force to constrain the wills, far less by the terrors of fire and sword to interpose visibly in the assistance of it, but suffer it to spread, by the secret influences of the Holy Spirit, till it attained its full effect. And as the husbandman cannot, by the most diligent observation, perceive the corn in his field extending its dimensions as it grows; so the ministers of Christ were not, at the first planting of the Gospel, to expect to see it make a quick progress through the world.

The ministers of religion must not, however, from hence imagine that religion will flourish without their carefully and importunately pressing its precepts upon the minds of their hearers. The parable was spoken to inform the Jews in particular, that neither the Messiah nor his servants would employ force to establish the kingdom of God, as they vainly expected the Messiah would have done; and to prevent the disciples from fainting, when they saw that an immediate and rapid success did not attend their labors. "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come." Mark iv. 26, etc.

The next parable he spake to the multitude was that of the mustard seed, which, though very small when sown, becomes in Palestine, and other parts of the east, a full spreading tree. Intimating to his audience, under this similitude, that notwithstanding the Gospel would at first appear contemptible, from the ignominy flowing from the crucifixion of its author, the strictness of its precepts, the weakness of the persons by whom it was preached, and the small number and mean condition of those who received it; yet, being founded on truth itself, it would increase to an astonishing magnitude, filling the whole earth, and affording spiritual nourishment to persons of all nations, who should enjoy all the privileges of the Messiah's kingdom equally with the Jews. And surely a more proper parable could not have been uttered, to encourage his disciples to persevere in the work of the ministry, notwithstanding it would in the beginning be opposed by the learned, the rich, and the powerful. "The kingdom of heaven

is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree; so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof." Mat. xiii. 31, 32.

Our blessed Saviour concluded his discourse to the multitude with the parable of the leaven, to intimate the influence of the doctrine of the Gospel on the minds of particular persons: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." Mat. xiii. 33.

While Jesus was thus employed in his heavenly Father's business, his mother and brethren came a second time, desiring to see him. In all probability they feared that the continued fatigue of preaching would injure his health; and were therefore desirous of taking him with them that he might refresh himself. But the blessed Jesus, who was never weary of doing good, answered his indulgent parent as before, "My mother and my brethren are those which hear the word of God and do it." Luke viii. 19-21.

Night approaching, Jesus dismissed the multitude, and returned to the house in Capernaum where he abode, and there explained to his disciples the parable of the tares in the field. The husbandman, said our blessed Saviour, is the Son of man; the field the Christian church, planted in different parts of the world. The wheat are those Christians who obey the precepts of the Gospel, and are supported by the influences of the Holy Spirit; and the tares the bad professing Christians, seduced into the paths of vice by the temptation of the devil. Our blessed Lord therefore, by this parable, represented the mixed nature of the church on earth, the dismal end of the hypocrites and those who forget God; for those may deceive for a time, by assuming the robes of virtue and religion; yet they will not fail, sooner or later, to betray themselves, and show that they are only wolves in sheep's clothing. At the same time, however sincerely we may wish to see the church freed from her corrupted members, we must not extirpate them by force, lest, being deceived by outward appearances, we also destroy the wheat, or sound members. We must leave this distinction to the awful day, when the great Messiah will descend to judgment; for then a final separation will be made, the wicked cast into torments that will never have an end, but the righteous received into life eternal, "where they shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." Mat. xiii. 43.

Our Lord, on this occasion, delivered the parables of the treasure hid in the field, and of the pearl of great price. The former was

designed to teach us that some meet with the Gospel as it were by accident, and without seeking after it, agreeable to the prediction of the prophet, "That God is found of them that seek him not." But with regard to the latter, it was designed to intimate, that men sometimes take the utmost pains to become acquainted with the great truths of the Gospel. And surely the similitudes, both of the treasure and pearl, are very naturally used to signify the Gospel: the former, as it enriches all who possess it, and the latter, because it is more precious than rubies.

But that the disciples might expect that the Christian church would consist of a mixed multitude of people, the good blended with the bad in such a manner that it would be difficult to separate them, he compared it to a net cast into the sea, which gathered fish of every kind, good and bad, which were separated when the net was drawn to land; that is, at the last great day of account, when the righteous will be conveyed to life eternal, and the wicked cast into everlasting misery.

Our blessed Saviour having finished these parables, asked his disciples if they understood them; and, upon their answering in the affirmative, he added, that every teacher of the Gospel ought to resemble a person whose house was completely furnished, and brought "forth out of his treasure things new and old."

Soon after, Jesus left Capernaum and repaired to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and preached in the synagogue the glad tidings of the kingdom of God; but his townsmen, though astonished at his doctrine, could not overcome the prejudices they had conceived against him on account of the meanness of his family, and thence refused to own him for the Messiah. Our Saviour, finding them the same incorrigible persons as when he visited them before, departed from them, and taught in the neighboring villages. They, in common with all the Jews, were strangers to the true character of the Messiah, whom they considered as a temporal prince, and therefore could not bear that a person so mean as Jesus appeared to be, should perform works peculiar to that idol of their vanity—a glorious, triumphant, secular Messiah.

While our Lord resided in the neighborhood of Nazareth, he sent out his disciples to preach in different parts of Galilee, and to proclaim the glad tidings that God was then going to establish the kingdom of the Messiah, wherein he would be worshiped in spirit and in truth. And in order that they might confirm the doctrines they delivered, and prove that they had received their commission from

the Son of God, they were endowed with the power of working miracles. How long they continued their preaching cannot be known, but it is reasonable to think they spent a considerable time in it, preaching in several parts of Judea.

The miracles which the apostles wrought raised the expectations of men higher than ever; the people were astonished to see the disciples of Jesus perform so many miracles; and then concluded that our Saviour must be greater than any of the old prophets, who could not transmit the power they enjoyed to any other. This extraordinary circumstance could not fail of spreading his fame through the whole country: it even reached the ears of Herod the tetrarch, who, fearing a person of such extraordinary abilities, was very uneasy; which some of his courtiers observing, endeavored to remove, telling him that one of the old prophets was risen from the dead: but this did not satisfy him, and he declared that he believed it was John the Baptist risen from the dead. "And he said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him." Mat. xiv. 2.

The evangelists, having on this account mentioned John the Baptist, inform us that Herod had put him to death; but when this happened is uncertain.

It has already been observed, that Herod had cast John into prison for his boldness in reproving him for the unlawful affinity in which he lived with his brother's wife. The sacred writers have not told us how long he continued in prison; but it is plain from his two disciples, who came from him to our Saviour, that his followers did not forsake him in his melancholy condition. Nay, Herod himself both respected and feared him, knowing that he was highly and deservedly beloved by the people: he consulted him often, and in many things followed his advice. But Herodias, his brother's wife, with whom he lived in so shameful a manner, being continually uneasy lest Herod should be prevailed upon to set him at liberty, sought all opportunities to destroy him; and at last an incident happened which enabled her to accomplish her intention.

The king having on his birth-day made a great feast for his friends, she sent her daughter Salome, whom she had by Philip, her lawful husband, into the saloon to dance before the king and his guests. Her performance was remarkably elegant, and so charmed Herod, that he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she asked.

Having obtained so extraordinary a promise, she ran to her

mother, desiring to know what she would ask; and was instructed by that wicked woman to require the head of John the Baptist. Her mother's desire, doubtless, surprised Salome, as she could not possibly see the use of asking what could be of no service to her. But Herodias would take no denial, peremptorily insisting on her demanding the head of the Baptist. Accordingly she returned to Herod, saying, "I will that thou give me, by and by, in a charger, the head of John the Baptist."

So cruel a request thrilled every breast; the gayety of the king vanished; he was vexed and confounded. But being unwilling to appear either rash, fickle or false, before a company of the first persons of his kingdom for rank and character, he commanded the head to be given her; not one of the guests having the courage to speak a single word in behalf of an innocent man, nor attempt to divert Herod from his mad purpose, though he gave them an opportunity of doing it, by signifying to them that he performed his oath merely out of regard to the company. Thus Herod, through a misplaced regard to his oath and his guests, committed a most unjust and cruel action; an action that will forever brand his memory with dishonor, and render his very name detestable to the latest posterity.

Soon after the command was given, the head of that venerable prophet, whose rebukes had struck Herod with awe in the loosest moments, and whose exhortations had often excited him to virtuous actions, was brought, pale and bloody, in a charger, and given to the daughter of Herodias in the presence of all the guests.

The young lady eagerly received the bloody present, and carried it to her mother, who enjoyed the whole pleasure of revenge, and feasted her eyes with the sight of her enemy's head, now silent and harmless. But she could not silence the name of the Baptist; it became louder, filling the earth and heavens, and publishing to every people and nation this woman's baseness and adultery.

Thus fell that great and good man, John the Baptist, who was proclaimed by our blessed Saviour himself, to be "more than a prophet." Josephus tells us, that his whole crime consisted in exhorting the Jews to the love and practice of virtue; and, in the first place, to piety, justice, and regeneration, or newness of life; not by the bare abstinence from this or that particular sin, but by an habitual purity of mind and body.

It may not be improper on this occasion to hint, that the history of this birthday, transmitted to posterity in the Scriptures, stands a perpetual beacon to warn the great, the gay, and the young, to

beware of dissolute mirth. Admonished by so fatal an example, they should be careful to maintain, in the midst of their jollity, an habitual recollection of spirit, lest reason at any time, enervated by the pleasures of sense, should slacken the rein of wisdom or let it drop, though only for a moment; because their headstrong passions, ever impatient of control, may catch the opportunity, and rush with them into follies or crimes, whose consequences will be unspeakably, perhaps eternally, bitter.

CHAPTER XIV.

OUR LORD ADDS TO THE CONFIRMATION OF HIS MISSION, BY WORKING A MIRACLE IN THE WILDERNESS OF BETHSAIDA—THE PEOPLE PROPOSE TO RAISE HIM TO THE DIGNITY OF KING—PETER, BY MEANS OF HIS BLESSED MASTER, PERFORMS A MIRACLE IN WALKING UPON THE SEA—OUR LORD DISCOURSES IN THE SYNAGOGUE AT CAPERNAUM.



HE disciples were so alarmed at the cruel fate of the Baptist, whose memory they highly revered, that they returned from their mission, and assisted in performing the last offices to the body of their old master, many of the apostles having been originally disciples of John. As soon as these pious rites were over, they repaired to Jesus, and told him all that had hap-

pened.

Their compassionate Master, on hearing this melancholy news, retired with them by sea into a desert place belonging to Bethsaida, that, by retirement, meditation, and prayer, they might be refreshed and recruited for their spiritual labors; and, at the same time, leave an example to us that we should often retire from the noise and hurry of the world, and offer up the most fervent prayers to our heavenly Father.

But the multitude attended so closely, that their departure was not long concealed; and great numbers of people repaired to the place where they supposed Jesus and his disciples had secluded themselves. Struck with the greatness of his miracles on those that were sick, and anxious to hear more instructions from the mouth of so divine a teacher, no difficulties were too great for them to surmount, nor any place too retired for them to penetrate, in search of their admired preacher.

Nor was the beneficent Saviour of the world regardless of their pious esteem. He saw them, he was "moved with compassion" towards them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd, multitudes of people without a pastor, a large harvest without laborers; motives abundantly sufficient to excite compassion in the Son of God.

The situation of these numerous throngs of people scattered abroad without a guide, without a guardian; a large flock of defenceless sheep, without a single shepherd to defend them from the jaws of the infernal wolf, was truly deplorable; the blessed Jesus, therefore, that "good Shepherd who came to lay down his life for the sheep," was moved with pity towards them: the same pity which brought him from the courts of heaven, for the sake of his lost and wandering sheep in the desert, now brought him to this multitude of people, whom he instructed in the doctrines of eternal life; and, with his usual goodness, healed all the sick among them.

Intently devoted to teaching and healing of the people, our blessed Saviour did not perceive the day to wear away, and that the greatest part of it was already spent: but his disciples, too anxious about the things of this world, thought proper to advise him of it; as if the Son of God wanted any directions from man. The day, said the disciples, is now far advanced, and the place a solitary desert, where neither food nor lodging can be procured: it would therefore be convenient to dismiss the people, that they may repair to the towns or villages on the borders of the wilderness, and provide themselves with food and lodging, for they have nothing to eat.

But our Lord prevented that trouble, by telling them there was no necessity for sending the people away to procure victuals for themselves, as they might satisfy the hunger of the multitude by giving them to eat. And, at the same time, to prove what opinion his disciples entertained of his power, addressed himself to Philip, who was well acquainted with the country, and said, "Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?"

Philip, astonished at the seeming impossibility of procuring a supply for so great a multitude with the small sum of money which he knew was their all, and forgetting the extent of his Master's power, answered, "Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little." John vi. 7.

Our blessed Saviour might now have put the same question to Philip that he did on another occasion: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" John xiv. 9. Hast thou beheld so many miracles, and art still ignorant that I can supply food, not only for this people, but for all the sons of men, and for "the cattle upon a thousand hills?" But he contented himself with answering, "Give ye them to eat." The twelve, not yet comprehending the design of their Master, repeated the objection

of Philip; but added, that they were willing to expend their whole stock in order to procure as large a supply as possible. "Shall we go," said they, "and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, that they may eat?"

But this was by no means the design of their great Master, who, instead of making a direct answer to their question, asked them, "How many loaves have ye?" How much provision can be found among this multitude? Go and see.

The disciples obeyed the command of their Master; and Andrew soon returned to inform him that the whole stock amounted to no more than five barley loaves and two small fishes, a quantity so inconsiderable that it scarcely deserved notice. "What are they," said the disciple, "among so many?" What indeed would they have been among such a multitude of people, if they had not been distributed by the creating hand of the Son of God!

Jesus, notwithstanding the smallness of the number, ordered them to be brought to him; and immediately commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, with which the place abounded, directing his disciples at the same time to range them in regular order by hundreds and fifties in a company, each company forming a long square containing an hundred in a rank and fifty in a file, that the number might be more easily ascertained, and the people the more regularly served.

In obedience to his command, the people sat down in the manner they were ordered, big with the expectation of what this uncommon preparation portended; while the great Master of the banquet stood ready to supply the necessities of all his guests: a banquet, where, though they had no canopy but the azure sky, no table but the verdant turf, where their food was only coarse barley bread and dried fishes, and their drink only water from a bubbling fountain,—yet displayed more real grandeur, by the presence of the divine Master of it, than the royal feast of the great Ahasuerus, or the splendid entertainment of the imperious Nebuchadnezzar.

The multitude being seated, Jesus took the loaves and fishes into his hands in sight of all the people, that they might be convinced of the small quantity of provisions that were then before them, and that they could only expect to be fed by his supernatural power. But that hand, which had constantly sustained nature, could now easily multiply these five loaves and two fishes; for, as the Psalmist elegantly observes, "He openeth his hand, and filleth all things living with plenteousness." Accordingly, he looked up to heaven, and

returned thanks to God, the liberal giver of all good things, for his infinite beneficence in furnishing food for all flesh, and for the power he had conferred on him, of relieving mankind by his miracles, particularly for that he was about to work. This done, he blessed them; and so peculiarly efficacious was his blessing, that these five barley loaves and two fishes were multiplied into a quantity sufficient to supply the wants of five thousand men, besides women and children, who, on the most favorable supposition, must amount to an equal 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.

Thus did the compassionate and powerful Redeemer feed at least ten thousand people with five barley loaves and two small fishes, giving a magnificent proof both of his power and goodness. For after all had eaten to satisfy, they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces; a much larger quantity than was at first set before our Lord to divide.

Miraculous work! But what is too hard for God! What is impossible to Omnipotence! Strange perverseness of the sons of men, that, after such manifestations of Almighty power, they should incredulously doubt, or impiously distrust, the providence and fatherly care of this Sovereign—this infinitely gracious Being, into whose hands the Father hath delivered this world and all its concerns! We are his by right of creation and redemption, and him we are bound to serve; and blessed are they who have so kind a Master, so compassionate a Father!

The literal account of this miracle, as recorded by the several evangelists, is very plain as well as circumstantial; and it is remarkable that the circumstance of the place and time tended to magnify its greatness. The place was a desert, where there was no possibility of procuring any sustenance. Had he done this mighty work in any of the towns or villages round about, the Pharisees in those days, and the infidels in ours, might have objected that he had received secretly some supplies; but this, in the present case, was impossible. The time was the evening; the people had been all the day fasting, and consequently were ready for their meal; had it been done in the morning, they might have said, either that the people had been just refreshed, or were not hungry; consequently the miracle not great. But the time and place wholly removed all

objections of this kind, and proved, beyond a possibility of doubt, that "God can furnish a table in the wilderness."

We should learn from this great miracle to remember, that it is this Lord who every year blesses mankind with plentiful supplies of every thing necessary; it is this Lord who, agreeably to the emphatical words of David, "visiteth the earth, and blesseth it, who maketh it very plenteous; who watereth her furrows, and sendeth rain into the little valleys 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 valleys stand so thick with corn, that they laugh and sing." Whose beneficent hand and liberal bounty call for all their praise, and claim all their thankfulness. For, however inattentively we may behold this mighty work of Omnipotence, it is no less a miracle that our Lord should every day support and feed the whole race of mankind, and all the creatures of his hand, than that Christ should feed five thousand with five loaves and two fishes: for what proportion does five thousand bear to those myriads of men who are daily fed from the fruits of the earth; the increase of which is equally a miracle with the increase of the bread and loaves by the blessing of Jesus! How small is the seed sown when compared with the produce! It is carried out in handfulls and brought home in sheaves; and who can tell by what secret operations this wonderful effect is wrought? Nature is equally wonderful in all her works as in this particular; and the divinity, to an attentive observer, equally visible in these regular productions as in supplies miraculously afforded; equally seen in the wine produced from the moisture of the earth filtrated through the branches of the vine, as in that instantaneously made from water, at the marriage in Cana; equally seen in the corn gradually ripened, and made into bread for the support of mankind, as in the bread miraculously blessed to the support of the five thousand. But the constant repetition of these surprising operations renders them common, and, being common, they are less observed. Our heavenly Father, therefore, condescends to deviate from the common order of things, to ~~rouse~~ arouse and awaken our attention. But if we are dead, and utterly inattentive to the work of God in nature, where we see the divine magnificence and bounty so visibly, so richly displayed, there is too much reason to fear that outward miracles will not now awaken us. We are however apt to deceive ourselves in this respect, and are often led to conclude that, had we been present at so stupendous a miracle as that we are contemplating, we should have adored the

divine hand that wrought it, and never have forsaken the blessed Jesus. But, alas! if all the displays of God's divine power in the works of creation, if all the evidences of his Omnipotence, if the continual supplies of his bounty, and the most legible characters of his adorable love written upon all the creatures of his hand, will not elevate our grateful and rejoicing hearts to him, there is great reason to fear, that had we seen the blessed Jesus feed five thousand men with five barley loaves and two small fishes, had we ourselves been partakers of this miraculous banquet, we should have acted like many who really enjoyed these privileges, and have turned away at some of his hard sayings, "and walked no more with him."

But to return. The people, when they had seen the Saviour of the world perform so stupendous a miracle, were astonished above measure; and, in the height of their transport, purposed to take Jesus by force, and make him a king; concluding that he must then assume the title of the Messiah, whose coming they had so long earnestly expected, and under whose reign they hoped to enjoy all kinds of temporal felicity. But our Lord, well knowing the intentions of the multitude, and the inclinations of his disciples to second them, ordered the latter to repair immediately to their boat and sail for Bethsaida, while he sent away the multitude. They would, it seems, gladly have detained the people, with whom they fully agreed in sentiments, and even lingered till he constrained them to get into the boat; so fully were they still possessed of the opinion that their Master was to take the reins of government, and become a powerful prince over the house of Jacob.

The people suffered the disciples to depart without the least remorse, as they saw that Jesus did not go with them. Perhaps they imagined he was sending away to provide such things as they had need of. Nor did they refuse to disperse when he commanded them, purposing to return in the morning, as we find they actually did.

Having thus sent the disciples and the multitude away, Jesus repaired himself to the summit of a mountain, spending the evening in heavenly contemplations and ardent prayers to his Almighty Father.

But the disciples, meeting with a contrary wind, could not continue their course to Bethsaida, which lay about two leagues to the northward of the desert mountain where the multitude was miraculously fed. They, however, did all in their power to land as near that city as possible, but were tossed up and down all night by the

tempest; so that at the conclusion of the fourth watch, or five o'clock in the morning, they were not above a league from the shore.

Their divine Master beheld from the mountain their distressed situation; but they were ignorant of his presence, though he was coming to their relief. From hence we should learn, when the stormy billows of affliction assault and seem ready to overwhelm us, not to despair of relief; for he who beholds every particular of our distress, hath not "forgotten to be gracious," but will surely come to our relief, and work our deliverance in a manner altogether unexpected. He often calms the storm of affliction that surrounds us, and commands the bellowing waves of distress to subside. Human wisdom indeed is often at a loss; it can discover no hopes of deliverance, nor see any way to escape: but the Almighty can easily effect the one, or point out the other.

Such was the state of the disciples: they were tossed by boisterous waves, and opposed in their course by the rapid current of the wind, so that all hopes of reaching the place intended were vanished; when, behold, their heavenly Master, to assist them in this distressful situation, comes to them walking on the foaming surface of the sea. Their Lord's approach filled them with astonishment; they took him for one of the apostate spirits, and shrieked for fear. Their terrors were however soon removed; their great and affectionate Master talked to them, with the sound of whose voice they were perfectly acquainted—"Be of good cheer," said the blessed Jesus, "it is I, be not afraid."

Peter, a man of a warm and forward temper, beholding Jesus walking on the sea, was exceedingly amazed, and conceived the strongest desire of being enabled to perform so wonderful an action.

Accordingly, without the least reflection, he immediately begged that his Master would bid him to come to him on the water. He did not doubt but that Jesus would gratify his request, as it sufficiently intimated that he would readily undertake any thing, however difficult; at the command of his Saviour. But it appeared that his faith was too weak to support him to that height of obedience to which he would have willingly soared. To convince this forward disciple of the weakness of his faith, and render him more diffident of his own strength, our blessed Saviour granted Peter his request. He ordered him to come to him upon the water.

Peter joyfully obeyed his divine Master: he left the boat, and

walked on the surface of the sea. But the wind increasing made a dreadful noise, and the boisterous waves at the same time threatened every moment to overwhelm him. His faith now staggered; his presence of mind forsook him; he forgot that his Saviour was at hand; and, in proportion as his faith decreased, the waters yielded, and he sunk. In this extremity he looked around for his Master, and, on the very brink of being swallowed up, cried, "Lord, save me!" His cry was not disregarded by his compassionate Saviour; he "stretched forth his hand and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Mat. xiv. 31.

Peter was convinced, before he left the ship, that it was Jesus who was coming to them on the water; nor did he even doubt it when he was sinking, because he then implored his assistance. But when he found the storm increase, and the billows rage more horribly than before, his fears suggested that either his Master would be unable or unwilling to support him amidst the frightful blasts of the tempest. His fears were therefore both unreasonable and culpable; unreasonable, because the same power that had enabled him to walk on the surface of the deep, was abundantly sufficient to support him there, notwithstanding all the horrors of the storm; culpable, because he considered his Master as unable to preserve him, or that he paid no regard to his promise; for Jesus had virtually promised him his assistance when he granted this petition. This circumstance should teach us not to be presumptuous and self-sufficient; nor to rush on dangers, and fly in the face of opposition, unless there is a necessity for so doing. We should never refuse to undertake any action, however difficult, when the cause of Christ calls upon us; or abandon the paths of virtue from a fear of resentment of the children of this world; but we should, at the same time, be careful not to go farther than necessity obliges us, lest, like Peter, we repent our temerity.

This miracle alarmed the disciples; for though they had so very lately seen the miracle of the five loaves, they did not seem to have formed a proper idea of his power; but being persuaded that he could be no other than the expected Messiah, "they came and worshiped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God." Mat. xiv. 33.

Our Saviour seems to have confirmed this miracle by working another; for the evangelist tells us, that he had no sooner entered the ship, and hushed the horrors of the storm, than they arrived at the place whither they were going. "Then they willingly received him into the ship; and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went." John vi. 21.

When our Lord disembarked, the inhabitants of the neighboring country ran to him, bringing with them all those that were sick, and they were all healed. It must be remembered, that though Jesus ordinarily resided in the neighborhood of Capernaum, yet he had been absent ever since his visiting Nazareth; and, therefore, it is natural to think that the inhabitants, on his return, would not omit the opportunity of bringing their sick in such prodigious crowds, that it seems our blessed Saviour did not bestow particular attention on each of them; and this was the reason for their beseeching him, "that they might only touch the hem of his garment; and as many as touched were made perfectly whole." Mat. xiv. 36.

The virtue of that power by which he wrought these miracles lay not in his garment, for then the soldiers, who seized them at his crucifixion, might have wrought the same miracles; but it was because Jesus willed it to be so. It was now the acceptable time, the day of salvation, foretold by Isaiah, and Christ's power was sufficient to remove any distemper whatsoever.

It has been mentioned that our blessed Saviour, after miraculously feeding the people, ordered them to disperse, and retire to their places of abode. The former command they obeyed, but instead of complying with the latter, they stayed in the neighborhood of the desert mountain; and, observing that no boat had come hither since the disciples left their Master, they concluded that Jesus still continued in that place, and had no design of leaving his attendants. Hence they were persuaded, that though Jesus had modestly declined the honor of being made a king, he would accept it the next day; especially as they might fancy his disciples were dispatched to the other side, with no other intention than to prepare every thing necessary for that purpose. Hopes like these animated them to continue in this solitary wilderness, and take up their lodgings in the caverns of the rocks and mountains, notwithstanding their difficulties were greatly increased by the raging of the storm. But no sooner did the cheering rays of light appear, than the multitude left their retreat and searched for Jesus in every part of the mountain, to the summit of which they had seen him retire. Finding their search in vain, they concluded that he must have departed for the other side in some boat belonging to Tiberias, which had been forced by the storm to take shelter in a creek at the foot of the mountain. Accordingly they repaired to Capernaum, where they found him in the synagogue teaching the people; and could not help asking him with some surprise, "Rabbi, when camest thou hither?" John vi. 25.

To this question our Lord replied, that they did not seek him because they were convinced by his miracles of the truth of his mission, but because they hoped to be continually fed in the same miraculous manner as before. "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." These are the views which induce you to follow me; but ye are entirely mistaken; for happiness does not consist in the meat that perisheth; nor is it that sort of meat ye must expect to receive from the Messiah. Mere animal foods, which please and delight the body only, are not the gifts he came down from heaven to bestow; it is the meat that endureth to everlasting life, divine knowledge and grace, which, by invigorating all the faculties of the soul, make it at once incorruptible and immortal: neither ought ye to follow the Son of man with any intention to obtain the meat that perisheth; but in the hope of being rewarded with the meat that endureth to everlasting life: "Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you; for him hath God the Father sealed." John vi. 27.

The Jews, who were accustomed to the metaphors of meat and drink, as they were frequently found in the writings of their own prophets to signify wisdom and knowledge, might have easily understood what our blessed Saviour meant by the meat "enduring to everlasting life." They however, entirely mistook him; imagining that he spake of some delicious healthful animal food, which would render them immortal, and which was only to be procured under the government of their great Messiah. It is therefore no wonder that his exhortation should so greatly affect them, that they asked him what they should do to erect the Messiah's kingdom, and obtain that excellent meat which he said God had authorized him to give to his followers.

The Jews were elated with the prospect of the mighty empire the promised Messiah was to establish; and doubtless expected that Jesus would first have desired them to rise against the Romans, vindicate their own liberties, and then establish in every country, by the terror of fire and sword, the authority of that powerful prince so long expected by the Jewish nation. To convince them therefore of their mistake, and inform them what God really required of them towards erecting the Messiah's kingdom, Jesus told them that they should believe on the person sent to them from the God of Jacob; but at this answer they were exceedingly offended. They were persuaded that he could not be the Messiah promised in the law and

the prophets, who took no care to erect a temporal kingdom. And some of them, more audacious than the rest, had the confidence to tell him, that, since he assumed the character of the Messiah, and required them to believe in him as such, it was necessary that he should perform greater miracles than either Moses or any of the old prophets, if he was desirous of convincing them that they ought to believe him the long-expected Messiah. "They said therefore unto him, What sign showest 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. 20.

By extolling the miracles of the manna, by calling it bread from heaven, and by insinuating that this miracle was wrought by Moses, the Jews endeavored to depreciate both Christ's mission and his miracle of the loaves. They considered this miracle as a single meal of terrestrial food, at which but a few thousands had been fed; whereas Moses had supported the whole Jewish nation, during the space of forty years in the wilderness, by celestial food. To this objection the blessed Jesus replied, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." John vi. 32, 33. Moses did not give you the manna that fell around the camp in the wilderness, nor did it descend from heaven; it was formed in the regions of the air by the omnipotent hand of the God of Jacob. But by the miracle of the loaves, my heavenly Father hath typified the true, the spiritual, the heavenly bread, which he himself giveth to the sons of men, and of which the manna was only a symbolic representation: the food that sustained the Israelites in the wilderness was sufficient only for a single nation, but this for all the children of men.

Many of the Jews who listened with pleasure to his doctrine, and having heard him describe the properties of the celestial bread, were animated with an earnest desire of being always fed with it. "Lord," said they, "evermore give us this bread;" to which the blessed Jesus answered, "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. 35.

Having made this answer to those who listened attentively to his doctrine, he turned himself to such as had heard him with prejudice, and took every advantage of wresting his words. You ask me, says he, to show you a sign that ye may see and believe me to be the

true Messiah. Surely you have seen it: you have seen my character and mission in the many miracles I have performed; miracles abundantly sufficient to convince you that I am really the Messiah so often promised by the ancient prophets, so long expected by the whole Jewish nation. But, notwithstanding all these proofs, your hearts were still hardened; you expect a temporal prince, who shall raise the Jewish kingdom above all the empires of the earth: and because I do not affect the authority and pomp of an earthly monarch, you reject me as an impostor. Your infidelity, therefore, does not proceed from want of evidence, as you vainly pretend, but from the perverseness of your own dispositions, which may perhaps in time be overcome; for all those that the Father hath given me, however obstinate they may be for a season, will at last believe on the Son of God. Nor will I ever reject any that come to me, however low their circumstances may be, however vile they may appear in their own eyes, or however greatly their violence against my doctrines may have been exerted. I came down from heaven not to act according to the common method of human passions, which excite men to return evil for evil, but to bear with them; to try all possible means to bring them to repentance, and lead them in the strait paths of virtue, which terminate at the mansions of the heavenly Canaan.

It is the fixed will of my Father to bestow eternal life on all who truly believe in me; and therefore I will raise them up at the last day. As the prospect of the greatest part of the Jews extended no farther than temporal privileges and advantages, it is no wonder that they were offended at this doctrine; especially at his affirming that he was the bread of life, and that he came down from heaven. Was not this man, said they, born into the world like other mortals? And are not we acquainted with his parents? How then can he pretend to come down from heaven?

But these degrading thoughts could not escape the censure of him to whom nothing is a secret; you need not, said the blessed Jesus, object to my birth and the meanness of my relations, nor consider them as inconsistent with my heavenly extraction; for while you believe your teachers, who have so shamefully corrupted the oracles of Omnipotence, and filled your minds with the vain expectations of a temporal kingdom, you cannot believe on me. No man can believe on the Son of God unless he be persuaded by the Father. You need not be surprised at this; for however ye may imagine that all men, at the appearance of the Messiah, will flock to him

with great cheerfulness, and become the willing subjects of his kingdom without any extraordinary means of persuasion, the prophets plainly foretold the contrary : for they promise that men shall enjoy the teaching of the Father in a far more eminent manner during the Messiah's kingdom, than under any preceding dispensation ; consequently persuasion, and the most earnest persuasion too, is necessary. You are not to understand that, by being taught of God, you are to see with your bodily eyes the invisible Jehovah, because that privilege is confined to the Son alone ; but that you are to be taught by the Spirit of God whatever is requisite for your eternal interest in and by me, who am the way, the truth, and the life.

Having thus asserted the dignity of his mission, and demonstrated that it really belonged to him, the blessed Jesus examined the comparison between himself, considered as the bread from heaven, and the manna which Moses provided for their fathers in the wilderness. The manna, said he, which your fathers ate in the desert, could not preserve them from temporal death ; but the bread which came down from heaven will render men immortal. "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." John vi. 51.

Though the divine teacher, on this occasion, made use of no other expressions than what the Jews had been accustomed to interpret in a figurative sense ; yet so great was their perverseness, that they considered them as spoken literally, and were astonished beyond measure at what he could mean by saying he would give them "his flesh to eat." Jesus, however, knowing how unreasonable his hearers were, did not proceed to explain himself more particularly at this time. But persisting in the same figurative manner of expression, he repeated and affirmed more earnestly what he had before asserted. Except; said he, ye be entirely united to me by a hearty practice and belief of my doctrine, partake of the merit of that sacrifice which I shall offer for the sins of the world, continue in the communion of my religion, and receive spiritual nourishment, by the continual participation of those means of grace which I shall purchase for you by my death, ye can never enter the happy mansions of eternity. "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." John vi. 54, 55.

This is the bread which came down from heaven ; a kind of bread

infinitely superior to that of manna, both in its nature and efficacy. It is different in its nature from manna; because it is not to be eaten as your fathers did that food in the wilderness; they "ate manna and are dead." It is different in its effect; because he that "eateth of this bread shall live forever."

These particulars Jesus spake in the hearing of all the people who attended the public worship in the synagogue of Capernaum; and though most of the metaphors were very easy to be understood, yet they could not comprehend what he meant by "eating his flesh, and drinking his blood;" a thing not only prohibited by the laws of Moses, but also repugnant to the customs of all civilized nations. Many, therefore, who had followed, considered it as inconsistent and absolutely absurd. But Jesus answered, Are you offended, because I told you my flesh is bread; that it came down from heaven; and that you must, in order to have eternal life, eat my flesh and drink my blood? But what if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up bodily into heaven, from whence he was sent by his heavenly Father? You will then surely be persuaded that I really came from heaven; and at the same time be convinced, that you cannot eat my flesh in a corporeal manner. I never meant that you should understand the expression literally; my flesh, in that case, would be no advantage to the children of men. The metaphor was only used to indicate that you must believe in the doctrines which I preach; for, to reveal these, I took upon me the vail of flesh, and assumed the nature of man. It is therefore, more properly my Spirit that confers this life on the human race, and renders them immortal. My doctrine may perhaps be ineffectual to some of you, because ye are desirous of perverting it, and from thence to form a pretence for forsaking me. I well know the secret recesses of every heart; and therefore told you, that no man can believe on me except it were given him of my Father.

The self-sufficient, self-righteous Jews, were so offended at his discourse, that many of them, who had hitherto been our Saviour's disciples, went out of the synagogue, and never came more to hear him. They found that all their pleasing views of worldly grandeur, and an extensive kingdom, could have nothing more than an ideal foundation, if they acknowledged Jesus to be the Messiah. And as they were unwilling to abandon all their favorite hopes of power, they refused to own him for the great Redeemer of Israel they had so long expected.

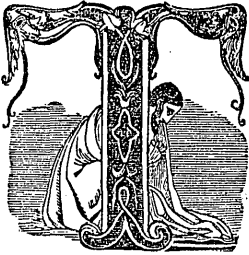
When the Jews were departed, Jesus turned himself to his dis-

iples, and, with a look of ineffable sweetness, said to them, "Will you also go away?" To this Peter answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life! And we believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." John vi. 68, 69.

Peter, in this reply, alluded to our Lord's declaration of himself, in which he says that he was the bread of life, founding his faith in him as the Messiah. But Jesus, to convince him that he was not ignorant of the most secret thoughts of the heart, nor afraid that his enemies should be spectators of his most retired actions, told him that one of the twelve was a wicked man, and would be guilty of the vilest action. The prediction of Jesus was punctually verified when Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve chosen disciples, basely betrayed his great Lord and Master.

CHAPTER XV.

PHARISAICAL SUPERSTITION SEVERELY REPRIMANDED—THE GREAT REDEEMER CONTINUES TO DISPLAY HIS POWER AND BENEVOLENCE IN THE RELIEF OF AFFLICTION—GUARDS HIS DISCIPLES AGAINST THE PREVAILING ERRORS OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES—PROCEEDS ON THE WORKS OF HIS HEAVENLY FATHER.



HE season of the grand passover approaching, Jesus went up to Jerusalem to attend that solemnity. But the Jews, being offended at his discourse in the synagogue of Capernaum, made an attempt upon his life. Our Lord, therefore, finding it impossible to remain at Jerusalem in safety, departed from that city and retired into Galilee.

The Pharisees were sensible they could not perpetrate their malicious designs upon him on that occasion; they therefore followed him, hoping to find something by which they might accuse him; and at length ventured to attack him for permitting his disciples to eat with unwashed hands; because, in so doing, they transgressed the tradition of the elders. Moses had, indeed, required external cleanness as a part of their religion, but it was only to signify how careful the servants of the Almighty should be to purify themselves from all uncleanness, both of flesh and spirit. These ceremonial institutions were, in process of time, prodigiously multiplied, and the Pharisees, who pretended to observe every tittle of the law, considered it as a notorious offence to eat bread with unwashed hands, though at the same time they suffered the more weighty precepts of the law to be neglected and forgotten.

To expose the absurdity of such superstitious customs, our Saviour applied to them the words of the prophet Isaiah, "This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." Adding, that all their worship was vain, and displeasing to the Almighty, while they praised themselves, and imposed upon others the frivolous precepts of man's invention, and at the same time neglected the eternal rules of righteousness; and to remove all objections that might be brought against this imputation of gross profaneness in the Pharisees, he supported it by a very remarkable instance,—God,

said the Saviour of the world, hath commanded children to honor their parents, and to maintain them, when reduced to poverty by sickness, age, or misfortunes; promising life to such as obey this precept, and threatening death to those who disregard it. But notwithstanding the peremptory commandment of Omnipotence, you teach, that it is a more sacred duty in children to enrich the temple, than to nourish their parents, although reduced to the utmost necessity, pretending that what is offered to the great Parent of the universe is much better bestowed, than what is given to the support of our earthly parents; making the honor of God absolutely different from the happiness of his creatures. Nay, ye teach, that it is no breach of the commandment for a man to suffer his parents to perish, provided he has given, what ought to nourish them, to the temple of Jerusalem. Thus have you concealed, under the cloak of piety, the most horrid, the most unnatural crime any person can commit.

Having thus reproved the Pharisees, he called the multitude to him, and desired them to reflect on the absurdity of the precepts inculcated by the Scribes. These hypocrites, said he, solicitous about trifles, neglect the great duties of morality, which are of eternal obligation. They shudder with horror at unwashed hands, but are perfectly easy under the guilt of a polluted conscience, though they must be sensible, that "not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man." Mat. xv. 11.

The haughty Pharisees were highly offended at his having spoken in a degrading manner of their traditions. And the apostles, who would gladly have reconciled their Master and the Pharisees, insinuated to Jesus that he ought to have acted in another manner. To which our Saviour answered, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." Mat. xv. 13. As if he had said, you have no cause to fear their anger, as both they and their doctrine shall perish together, for neither of them came from God. Adding, "Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." Mat. xv. 14. His disciples, not fully comprehending this doctrine, desired their Master to explain it. This our Saviour complied with, and showed them that meats, being of a corporeal nature, could not defile the mind of man, nor render him polluted in the sight of the Almighty, unless they were used to excess, or in opposition to the commandment of God, and even then the pollution arose from the man, and not from the meat. But, on the contrary,

that which proceedeth out of the mouth of a man comes from his heart, and really polluteth his mind.

These doctrines of truth could not fail of irritating the Pharisees, as they tended to strip them of the mask with which they concealed their deformity, and rendered themselves so venerable in the eyes of the vulgar; and therefore their plots were leveled against his reputation and life. Jesus, to avoid their malice, retired to the very borders of Palestine, to the coasts of those two celebrated Gentile cities, Tyre and Sidon, purposing there to conceal himself for a time; but he could not be hid. It was as impossible for the divine "Sun of righteousness" to be concealed where he came with his healing wings and message of peace, as it is for the Sun in the firmament, when he riseth in all his glory "as a bridegroom cometh out of his chamber, and as a giant rejoiceth to run his course." For a certain woman of Canaan, having heard of him, determined to implore his assistance. She was, indeed, one of the most abject sort of Gentiles; a Canaanite, one of that detested race with which the Jews would have no dealing, nor even conversation; but notwithstanding all these discouraging circumstances, she threw herself, as an humble petitioner, on the benevolent mercies of the Son of God. Strong necessity urged her on; grief and insuperable distress caused her to be importunate. Alas! unhappy parent! her only daughter, her beloved child, had an unclean spirit, "was grievously vexed with a devil." When her case was so urgent, and her woes so poignant, who can wonder that she was so importunate, and would take no refusal from this divine person, who she knew was able to deliver her? Accordingly she came; she fell at his feet, she besought him, she cried, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David," have mercy! I plead no merits; as a worthless, suffering wretch, I entreat only the bowels of thy mercy; I entreat it, for I believe thee to be the Son of David, the promised Messiah, the much-desired Saviour of the world; have mercy on me, for the case of my child and her distress are my own; "My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." Mat. xv. 22.

Is it not at the first view astonishing that such a petitioner should be apparently rejected; and that by a bountiful and merciful Redeemer, who kindly invited all that were heavy laden to come to him; who promised never to cast out any that would come, and whose business it was "to go about doing good?"

We, however, find he answered this woman not a word; he did not, in appearance, take the least notice either of her or her

distress. But this silence did not intimidate her; she still cried, she still besought, she still importunately pressed her petition; so that the very disciples were moved with her cries, and became her advocates. They themselves, though Jews, besought their Master to dismiss this petitioner, to grant her request, and to send her away. But Jesus soon silenced them, by an answer agreeable to their own prejudices. "I am not sent," said he, "but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." To this the disciples readily assented; and as they had a high opinion of the Jews' prerogative, were so well satisfied with the answer, that we hear them pleading no more for this lost, this miserable Gentile. But this soothed not her griefs; it was her own cause, and what is immediately our own concern animates us to the most zealous application. Somewhat encouraged that she was the subject of discourse between our Lord and his disciples, she ventured to approach the Saviour of the world, though she well knew that the law actually forbade such an intercourse; yet she came, she worshipped "this Son of David," she confessed again his divinity, and prayed, saying, "Lord, help me."

The compassionate Saviour now condescended to speak to her, but with words seemingly sufficient to have discouraged every further attempt; nay, to have filled her with bitter dislike to his person, though she had conceived such high and noble notions of his mercy and favor: "It is not meet," said he, "to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." Mat. xv. 26. It is not justice to deprive the Jews, who are children of the covenant, the descendants of Abraham, of any part of those blessings which I came into the world to bestow, especially to you, who are aliens and strangers from the commonwealth of Israel.

This answer, so seemingly severe, could not shake her humility, nor overcome her patience; she meekly answered, "Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their Master's table." Mat. xv. 27. Let me enjoy that kindness which the dogs of any family are not denied; from the plenty of miraculous cures, which thou bestowest on the Jews, drop this one to me, who am a poor distressed heathen; for they will suffer no greater loss by it, than the children of a family do by the crumbs which are cast to the dogs.

Our Lord having put the woman's faith to a very severe trial, and well knowing that she possessed a just notion of his power and goodness, as well as of her own unworthiness, wrought with pleasure the cure she solicited in behalf of her daughter; and, at the same time, gave her faith the praise it so justly deserved. "Oh! woman, great

is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour." Mat. xv. 28.

After performing this miracle, Jesus returned to the sea of Galilee, through the region of Decapolis. In this country a man was brought to him who was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech. Objects in distress were always treated with benevolence by the holy Jesus: but as the people now thronged about him, in expectation that he would soon establish his kingdom, he thought proper to take the man, with his relations, aside from the multitude; after which he put his fingers in his ears, and touched his tongue, that the deaf man, who could not be instructed by any language, might know from whence all his benefits flowed. He then "looked up to heaven; he sighed, and said unto him, Ephphatha; that is, Be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. And he charged them that they should tell no man." Mat. vii. 34-36.

But, notwithstanding they were enjoined to secrecy, the man or his relations published it in every part of the country, doubtless thinking they could not be too lavish in the praises of so great a benefactor; especially as the modesty with which he had performed the cure, abundantly demonstrated that his sole view was the benefit of the human race.

This rumor gathered the multitude around him in the region of Decapolis: for the fame of his miracles was extended to every part of the country. He, therefore, to avoid the prodigious crowds of people, retired into a desert mountain, near the sea of Galilee. But the solitary retreats of the wilderness were unable to conceal the beneficent Saviour of the human race. They soon discovered his retreat, and brought to him from all quarters the sick, the lame, the dumb, the blind, and the maimed. The sight of so many objects in distress so excited the compassion of the Son of God, that he graciously released them from all their complaints. Miracles like these could not fail of astonishing the spectators, especially those performed upon the dumb; for it must be remembered, that he not only conferred on those the faculty of hearing, and pronouncing articulate sounds, but conveyed at once into their minds the whole language of their country; they were instantly acquainted with the whole words it contained, their significations, their forms, their powers, and their uses; at the same time they enjoyed the habit of speaking it both fluently and copiously. This was surely enough to demonstrate to the most stupid, that such works could have been effected

by nothing less than infinite power. "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." Mat. xv. 31.

The various works performed by the blessed Redeemer detained the multitude in the desert with him three days, during which time they consumed all the provisions they had brought into this solitary place. But Jesus would not send them away fasting, lest any who had followed him so far from their habitation should faint in their return. Accordingly he again exerted his almighty power, to feed the multitude a second time in the wilderness.

It is highly worthy our notice, the great wisdom of our blessed Saviour, in choosing to spend so great a part of the time he executed his public ministry, in the wilderness and in solitary places. He did not seek the applauses of men, but the eternal salvation of their souls; and therefore often delivered his doctrines in the silent retreats thereof; in consequence of which he was followed by such only as had dispositions adapted for profiting by his instructions. It could not be supposed that many of different dispositions would accompany him into solitudes, where they were to sustain the inconveniences of hunger for several days successively, and be at the same time exposed to all the inclemencies of the weather. Those only who were desirous of instruction, could therefore be expected to follow the blessed Jesus into those retired parts; and on those, doubtless, his doctrine distilled like dew, and like the small rain upon the tender herb. Happy mortals! who thus exchanged the shallow and frothy streams of folly, for the deep and salutary rivers of eternal wisdom; who left the noise and bustle of a covetous, bigoted people, for the calm instructions of the Son of God; and exchanged the perishing bread of this world for the "bread of life, the bread that came down from heaven!"

After feeding the multitude miraculously, Jesus retired into a district called Dalmanutha, a part of the territory of Magdala. Here he was visited by the Pharisees, who, having heard that he had a second time fed the multitude miraculously, were fearful that the common people would acknowledge him for the Messiah: and therefore determined openly and publicly to confute his pretensions to that character.

In order to do this, they boldly demanded of him a sign from heaven; for it must be remembered, that the Jews expected the Messiah would make his first public appearance in the clouds of heaven, and

in a glorious manner establish a temporal kingdom. This opinion was founded on the following prophecy of Daniel, which they understood literally: "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." Dan. vii. 13, 14.

It is therefore evident that the Pharisees, by desiring him to show them a sign from heaven, meant that he should demonstrate himself to be the Messiah, by coming in a visible and miraculous manner from heaven, and wresting with great pomp the sceptre of David from the hands of the Romans.

If the minds of the Pharisees had been open to conviction, the proofs which Jesus was daily giving them would have been more than sufficient to establish the truth of his mission, and demonstrate that he was the long-expected Messiah. But they were not desirous of being convinced; and to that alone, and not to want of evidence, or of capacity in themselves, it was owing, that they refused to acknowledge our Saviour to be the person foretold by the prophets. Their disposition was absolutely incorrigible; so that Jesus sighed deeply in his spirit, and declared that the sign they sought should never be given them; and that the only sign they were to expect, was that of the prophet Jonas, or the miracle of his own resurrection; a sign indeed much greater than any shown by the ancient prophets; and consequently a sign which demonstrated that Jesus was far superior to them all. "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." Mat. xvi. 14.

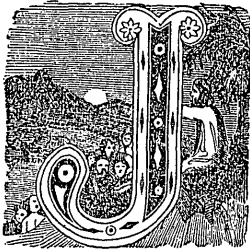
Having thus reproved the impertinent curiosity of the Pharisees, he departed with his disciples, and entered into a ship; and as they sailed, he cautioned them to beware of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees, which he termed leaven, from its pernicious influence in filling the minds of men with pride, and other irregular passions. These hypocrites chiefly insisted on the observations of frivolous traditions, but neglected the true principles of piety, and hence filled the minds of their hearers with a high opinion of their own sanctity. But the disciples having forgotten to take bread with them, understood that he intended to caution them against procuring it from the heathens or Samaritans. They were so weak, as not to think that

their Master, who had fed some thousands of people with five loaves, was also capable of providing for them in their necessities.

On his landing at Bethsaida, they brought unto him a blind man, desiring that he would heal him: Jesus accordingly took the man by the hand, and led him out of the city, and having spit upon his eyes, and put his hands upon him, asked him if he saw aught? To which the man answered, "I see men as trees walking." A very proper expression to convey an idea of the indistinctness of his vision. Jesus then put his hands again upon him, and he was restored to sight, "and saw every man clearly." It should be remembered that the people of Bethsaida had, by their ingratitude, impenitence, and infidelity, greatly displeased the Saviour of the world; and this perhaps was the reason why Jesus would not perform the cure in the city, but led the man out into the adjacent plain. The people had also, for a long time, been solicitous that he would take upon himself the character of a temporal Messiah; and therefore he chose to perform this miracle without the city, to prevent their further importunity, so incompatible with the modesty and lowliness of our dear Lord and Master.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BLESSED JESUS DELEGATES A SPECIAL POWER TO PETER, ONE OF HIS DISCIPLES—
PRONOUNCES THE FINAL JUDGMENT OF THE WORLD, AND IS AFTERWARDS TRANSFIGURED
UPON THE MOUNT.



JESUS having displayed his power and goodness in restoring the blind man to his sight, departed from Bethsaida, and retired into the territory of Cesarea Philippi, where, being desirous of proving in some measure the faith of the apostles, he asked them, saying, "Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" In answer to this question, the disciples replied, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets." Mat. xvi. 14.

The people in general mistook the character of our Saviour, because he did not assume that outward pomp and grandeur with which they supposed the Messiah would be adorned. Jesus was therefore desirous of hearing what idea his disciples formed of his character, as they had long enjoyed the benefit of his doctrine and miracles; and accordingly asked them, What they themselves understood him to be? To this question Simon Peter replied, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Our Saviour acknowledged the title; telling Peter that God alone had revealed the secret to him. And in allusion to his surname Peter, which signifies a rock, our Saviour promised, that upon himself as the foundation, or upon the confession which Peter had just made of his being "the Christ, the Son of the living God," he would build his church, and that he should have a principal hand in establishing the Messiah's kingdom, never to be destroyed. "Other foundation can no man lay." 1 Cor. iii. 11. On him may our souls rest, and the fiercest tempest shall rage in vain! "And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I 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 what-

soever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." Mat. xvi. 18, 19.

Having delegated this power to Peter, our Saviour strictly forbade his disciples to tell any man that he was the Messiah; because it had been foretold by the prophets, that he should be rejected by the rulers of Israel as a false Christ, and suffer the pains of death. "Then charged he his disciples, that they should tell no man that he was the Christ." Mat. xvi. 20. Circumstances which could not fail of giving his followers great offence, as they did not yet understand the true nature of his kingdom, and therefore he thought proper to let every man form a judgment of his mission from his doctrine and miracles.

The foregoing discourses had doubtless filled the apostles' minds, with lofty imaginations, and therefore our Saviour thought proper to acquaint them with his sufferings, in order to check any fond expectation of temporal power. Peter, however, was greatly displeased to hear his Master talk of dying at Jerusalem, when he had just before acknowledged the title of Messiah. Accordingly he rebuked him for the expression, which he was so bold as to think unguarded. But Jesus, turning himself about, said to Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." Mat. xvi. 23.

Peter's conduct in this respect, arising from an immoderate attachment to sensual objects, our Saviour thought proper to declare publicly, that all who intended to share with him in the glory of the heavenly Canaan, must deny themselves; that is, they must be always ready to renounce every worldly pleasure, and even life itself, when the cause of religion required it. He also told them, that in this life they must expect to meet with troubles and disappointments; and that whoever intended to be his disciple, must take up his cross daily, and follow him."

Thus did the blessed Jesus fully explain to his disciples the true nature of his kingdom; and at the same time intimated, that though they had already undergone many afflictions, yet they must expect still more and greater, which they must sustain with equal fortitude, following their Master in the footsteps of his afflictions. This duty, however hard, was absolutely necessary; because, by losing their temporal life, they would gain that which was eternal: "for whosoever will save his life, shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it." Luke ix. 24. "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?" Mat. xvi. 26.

To add to the weight of this argument, and to enforce the necessity of self-denial, our Saviour particularly declared, that a day was fixed for distributing rewards and punishments to all the human race; and that he himself was appointed by the Father as universal Judge; so that his enemies could not flatter themselves with the hope of escaping the punishments they deserved, nor his friends be afraid of losing their eternal reward. "Whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of me and my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." Mark viii. 38.

To fortify the minds of his disciples, he informed them that he would not appear to judge the world in his low and despised condition, but magnificently arrayed in both his own and his Father's glory; nor attended by twelve weak disciples, but surrounded by myriads of celestial spirits, with numberless hosts of mighty angels; nor should his rewards be the great offices and large possession of a temporal kingdom, but the joys of immortality.

Let us now meditate on the glory of the Judge, and the solemnity of the final judgment. He shall come in the majestic splendor of his glorified body, pompously arrayed with the inaccessible light wherein Jehovah resides, and which, darting through and enlightening the infinite regions of space with its ineffable brightness, shall make even the sun to disappear. Dressed in this awful manner, the great Judge, attended by the whole celestial host, will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, (1 Thes. iv. 16,) making heaven, earth, and hell, to resound. The dead of all countries, and of all times, will hear the tremendous call. Hark! the living, filled with joy, exult at the approach of Omnipotence; or, seized with inexpressible horror, send up the most piercing cries, and are all changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye! The dead press forth from their graves, and follow each other in close procession! Behold—but ah! nothing can behold; nothing can bear his presence! The heavens depart, like a scroll rolling itself together! Every mountain and every island is moved. The bond, the free, the rich, the great, captains and kings, to avoid the face of him that sitteth on the throne, the presence of the Lamb, rush beneath trembling mountains, and plunge into flaming rivers! but neither mountains nor flames will devour them, for they

are raised immortal. Behold him then, for all must behold him! even his eye, whose unthinking hand drove the nails at Calvary: nor heaven nor earth exist; stars and sun are vanished, lest they should darken the procession! Once the crucifixion of Jesus, and now his glory, extinguishes the sun! Lo, hell, with what reluctance, comes forth for sentence! Lo! two worlds to be judged, and the third an assistant spectator! Behold! with what beauty, with what boldness, with what joy, some spring forward towards the judgment-seat. See, on the other hand, how amazed, how terrified, the wicked appear! with what vehemence they wish the extinction of their being! fain would they fly, but cannot! impelled by a force, by strong necessity, they hasten to the place of judgment: as they advance, the sight of the tribunal from afar strikes them with new terror. They approach in the deepest silence, and gather round the throne by thousands and thousands. In the mean time the angels, having gathered together the good from the uttermost parts of the earth, fly round the numberless multitudes, chanting melodious songs, and rejoicing that the day of general retribution is come, when vice shall be thrown from its highest post of usurpation, and virtue be exalted to the pinnacle of honor; when the intricacies of providence shall be unraveled, the perfections of the Almighty vindicated, the church of Christ, purchased by his blood, cleared from her iniquitous members, and every thing which offendeth banished for ever.

Behold! the books are opened, silence proclaimed, and every individual filled with awful consciousness that he in particular is observed by the Almighty; so that not one single person can be concealed by the immensity of the crowd. The Judge, who can be biassed by no bribes, softened by no subtle insinuations, imposed upon by no feigned excuses, needs no evidences, but distinguishes with an unerring certainty. They separate! they feel their judgment in them, and hasten to their proper places; the righteous on the one hand of the throne, and the wicked on the other. Behold how beautiful, with the brightness of holiness, do the righteous stand at God's tribunal! their looks serene, and expressive of hopes full of immortality! On the other hand, the wicked, confounded at the remembrance of their past lives, terrified with the bitter apprehensions of what is to come, hang down their dejected heads, and wish to hide themselves in the fathomless abyss! but all in vain; there is no escaping nor appealing from this tribunal.

Behold, with mercy shining in his countenance, the King invites

the righteous to take possession of the kingdom prepared for them from the beginning of the world; but with frowns of anger drives the wicked to punishment which will have no end, no remission, no alleviation. What horror, what despair, must seize these wretched souls, when they see hell gaping, hear the devils howling, and feel the unspeakable torment of an awakened conscience. Now they seek for death, but find it not; would gladly be righteous, but it is too late.

The happy land of promise, formed by the hand of the Almighty, large, beautiful, and pleasant, a proper habitation for his people, and long expected by them as their country, now appears. Here all the righteous are assembled, forming one vast, one happy society, even the kingdom, the city of God. Here Omnipotence manifests himself in a peculiar manner to his servants, wipes away all tears from off their faces, and adorns them with the beauties of immortality. Here they drink a plentitude of joys from the crystal river proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, and eat of the fruit of the Tree of Life. Here there shall be no death, nor sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain. Happy day! happy place! and happy people! imagination faints with the fatigue of stretching itself to comprehend the vast, the unmeasurable thought!

As this doctrine, of Christ being appointed the universal Judge, might appear incredible at that time on account of his humiliation, Jesus told them that some who heard him speak, should not taste of death till they saw him coming in his kingdom; "Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." Mat. xvi. 28. There are some here present, who shall not die till they see a faint representation of the glory in which I shall come at the last day, and an eminent example of my power inflicted on the men of this sinful generation. To verify which prediction the disciples lived to see their Master coming in his kingdom, when they were witnesses of his transfiguration, resurrection, and ascension, and had the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit conferred upon them; lived to see Jerusalem, with the Jewish state, destroyed; and the Gospel propagated through the greatest part of the then known world.

About eight days after this discourse, our blessed Saviour, being with the multitude in the country of Cesarea Philippi, left them in the plain, and, accompanied with Peter, James, and John, ascended an exceedingly high mountain. In this solitude, while Jesus was praying with these three disciples, he was transfigured; his face be-

came radiant and dazzling; it shone like the sun in his meridian clearness. At the same time his garment acquired a snowy whiteness, far beyond any thing human art could produce; a whiteness bright as the light, and sweetly refulgent, but in a degree inferior to the radiance of his countenance.

Thus, as it were for an instant, the Son of God, during his state of humiliation, suffered the glory of his divinity to shine through the vale of human nature with which it was covered; and to heighten the grandeur and solemnity of the scene, Moses, the great lawgiver of Israel, and Elijah, a zealous defender of the laws, appeared in the beauties of immortality, the robes in which the inhabitants of the heavenly Canaan are adorned. The disciples, it seems, did not see the beginning of this transfiguration; happening to fall asleep at the time of prayer, they lost that pleasure, together with a great part of the conversation which these two prophets held with the only begotten Son of God. They, however, understood that the subject was his meritorious sufferings and death, by which he was to redeem the world; a subject that had, a few days before, given great offence to his disciples, particularly Peter. At beholding the illustrious sight, the disciples were greatly amazed; but the forwardness of Peter's disposition prompting him to say something, he uttered he knew not what. "Master," said he, "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. This disciple imagined that Jesus had now assumed his proper dignity; that Elias was come according to Malachi's prediction, and the Messiah's kingdom was at length begun. Accordingly, he thought it was necessary to provide some accommodation for his Master and his august assistants; intending, perhaps, to bring the rest of the disciples, with the multitude from the plain below, to behold his matchless glory. This, he thought, was much better for his Master than to be put to death at Jerusalem, concerning which Jesus had been talking with the messengers from Heaven, and the design of which Peter could not comprehend. But, "while he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and, behold, a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." Mat. xvii. 5. When the three disciples heard the voice, which, like the roaring thunder, burst from the cloud, and was such as mortals were unaccustomed to hear, they fell on their faces, and continued in that posture till Jesus approached, raised them up, and dispelled their fears, saying unto them, "Arise, and be not afraid. And when

they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only." Mat. xvii. 7, 8.

Jesus having continued all night with his three disciples on the mountain, returned to the plain early in the morning, charging them to conceal what they had seen till after he was risen from the dead. He well knew that the world, and even his own disciples, were not yet able to comprehend the design of his transfiguration; and that if it had been published before his resurrection, it might have appeared incredible; because nothing but afflictions and persecutions had hitherto attended him. "He was truly a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." But the doctrine of the resurrection, to which the transfiguration possibly alluded, was what the disciples were utterly unable to understand. They had never learnt that the Messiah was to die; far less that he was to be raised from the dead. They were, on the contrary, persuaded that he was to abide forever; and that his kingdom was to have no end. They were also greatly surprised at the sudden departure of Elias, and could not comprehend what the Scribes meant, by affirming that he must appear before the Messiah would erect his empire. They therefore, after long debating among themselves, asked their Master, "Why say the Scribes that Elias must first come?" To which Jesus answered, that Elias should truly come first, according to the prediction of Malachi, "and restore all things:" but at the same time he assured them that Elias was already come, and described the treatment he had met with from that stiff-necked people; giving them to understand that he spake of 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." Mat. xvii. 12, 13.

CHAPTER XVII.

OUR SAVIOUR RELIEVES A YOUTH TORTURED WITH A DUMB SPIRIT—CONFORMS CHEERFULLY TO THE CUSTOM OF THE COUNTRY BY PAYING THE TRIBUTE—REPROVES THE PRIDE OF HIS DISCIPLES, AND DELIVERS SOME EXCELLENT PRECEPTS.



WHEN our Lord approached the descent of the mountain, accompanied by his three disciples, he saw a great multitude surrounding the nine who continued in the plain, and the Scribes disputing with them. The people, seeing Jesus coming down from the mountain, ran to him, and saluted him with particular reverence. After which Jesus asked the Scribes, what was the subject of their debate with his disciples? To which one of the multitude answered, "Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit: and wheresoever he taketh him, he tear-eth 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.

This answer being made by one of the multitude, and not by the Scribes to whom the question was directed, indicates that they had been disputing with the disciples on their not being able to cure this afflicted youth. Perhaps their making this unsuccessful attempt, had given the Scribes occasion to boast that a devil was at length found, which neither they nor their Master were able to conquer. This seems to be indicated by the manner in which our Saviour addressed himself to these arrogant rulers. "O faithless generation," says he, "how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?" Will no miracles ever be able to convince you? Must I always bear with your infidelity? You have surely seen sufficient demonstrations of my power, notwithstanding ye still discover the most criminal infidelity? After speaking in this manner to the Scribes, he turned himself to the father of the young man, and said, "Bring thy son hither." But no sooner was he brought in sight of his deliverer, than the evil spirit attacked him as it were with double

fury: "The spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed, foaming." Mark ix. 20.

Jesus could easily have prevented this attack; but he permitted it, that the minds of the spectators might be impressed with a more lively idea of this youth's distress. And for the same reason probably it was, that he asked the father, how long he had been in this deplorable condition? To which the afflicted parent answered, "Of a child. And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him; but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us." Mark ix. 21, 22.

The inability of our Lord's disciples to cast out this spirit had greatly discouraged the afflicted father; and the exquisite torture of his son, and the remembrance of its long continuance, so dispirited him, that he began to fear this possession was even too great for the power of Jesus himself, as the Scribes had probably before affirmed; and therefore could not help expressing his doubts and fears. But Jesus, to make him sensible of his mistake, said to him, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." On which the father cried out, with tears, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." The vehement manner in which he spake causing the crowd to gather from every quarter, "Jesus rebuked the foul spirit;" saying unto him, "Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee come out of him, and enter no more into him." Mark ix. 25.

No sooner was the powerful exit pronounced, than the spirit, with an hideous howling, and convulsing the suffering patient in the most deplorable manner, came out, leaving the youth senseless, and without motion; till Jesus, taking him by the hand, restored him to life, and delivered him, perfectly recovered, to his father.

The nine disciples, during this whole transaction, remained silent. They were doubtless mortified to think that they had lost, by some fault of their own, the power of working miracles, lately conferred upon them by their Master; and for this reason were afraid to speak to him in the presence of the multitude. But when they came into the house, they desired Jesus to inform them why they failed in their attempt to heal that remarkable youth? To which Jesus answered, "Because of your unbelief." But to encourage them, he described the efficacy of the faith of miracles. "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove: and nothing shall be impossible unto you." Mat. xvii. 20. Nothing shall be too great for you to accomplish, when the glory of God and the good of the church are

concerned, provided you have a proper degree of faith; even yonder mountain, which bids defiance to the storm, and smiles at the attacks of its mingled horrors, shall, at your command, leave its firm basis, and remove to another place.

The expulsion of the dumb spirit seems to have astonished the disciples more than any other miracle they had seen their Master perform; so that our Saviour found it necessary to moderate their high admiration of his works, by again predicting his own death, and retiring for a time into the unfrequented parts of Galilee.

But they could not comprehend how the Messiah, who was to abide forever, and was come to deliver others from the stroke of death, should himself fall by the hand of that universal destroyer. And because he spake of rising again the third day, they could not conceive the reason for his dying at all, and for his lying so short a time in the chambers of the grave. But though they were alarmed at this declaration, they remembered that he had often inculcated this doctrine, and reprimanded Peter for being unwilling to hear it.

After a short tour through the desert part of Galilee, Jesus returned into Capernaum, the place of his general residence. Soon after his arrival, the tax-gatherers came to Peter, and asked him whether his Master would pay the tribute? That disciple, it seems, had promised that Jesus would satisfy their demand; but, on a more mature consideration, feared to ask him concerning his paying taxes on any pretence whatever.

Jesus was, however, no stranger to what had happened, and the fear of Peter to ask him; and therefore turned his discourse to this subject, by saying unto him, "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;" insinuating, that as he was himself the Son of the great King, to whom heaven, earth, and the sea belong, he had no right to pay tribute to any monarch whatever, because he held nothing by a derived right.

Or, if we suppose this contribution was made for the service and reparation of the temple, he meant, that as he was himself the Son of that Omnipotent Being to whom the tribute was paid, he could have justly excused himself. But the blessed Jesus was always careful not to give offence; and therefore sent Peter to the lake, with a line and a hook, telling him that, in the mouth of the first fish that came up, he should find a piece of money equal to the sum demanded of them both. "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; that take, and give unto them for me and thee." Mat. xvii. 27.

Our Lord took this extraordinary method of paying the tribute-money in this manner, because the miracle was of such a kind, as could not fail to demonstrate that he was the Son of the great Monarch worshiped in the temple, and who rules the universe. In the very manner therefore of paying this tribute, he showed Peter that he was free from all taxes; and at the same time gave this useful lesson to his followers, that when their property is affected only in a small degree, it is better to recede a little from their just right, than to offend their brethren, or disturb the state, by obstinately insisting on it.

Notwithstanding our blessed Saviour had lately foretold his own sufferings and death, and though these melancholy accounts had greatly afflicted the minds of his disciples, yet their grief was of no long continuance; for within a few days they forgot the predictions of their Master, and disputed with each other about the chief posts of honor and profit in the Messiah's kingdom. This debate was overheard by the blessed Jesus, though he did not mention it till after the tax-gatherers were retired, when he asked them what they were disputing about on the way? This question rendered them all silent. They were fearful of discovering the cause that had given rise to the debate, as they knew it would draw on them a reprimand from their Master. Jesus perceiving that they still continued silent, sat down, and ordered them all to stand around him, and attend to what he was going to deliver. If any man, said the Saviour of the world, is ambitious of being the greatest person in my kingdom, let him endeavour to obtain that dignity by preferring others in honor, and doing to them all the good offices in his power. "If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all." Mark ix. 35.

The disciples were now convinced, that it was in vain to conceal the subject of the debate that had happened on the way; and accordingly they drew near to their Master, desiring him to decide a point which had often given occasion to disputes; "Who," said they, "is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Mat. xviii. 1. Jesus, to check these foolish emulations in his disciples, called a little child unto him, and placed him in the midst, that they might consider him attentively; and said unto them, "Verily I say unto you, Except

ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Mat. xviii. 3. Unless ye be regenerated by the power of divine grace, and brought to a due sense of the vanity of all earthly preferments, riches, and honors, and become meek and humble in spirit, ye shall be so far from becoming the greatest in my kingdom, that ye shall never enter into it. But whosoever shall accept of the remedy provided, and receive with meekness all the divine instructions, however contrary to his own inclinations, and prefer others to himself, that man is really the greatest in my kingdom. "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Mat. xviii. 4.

Our Saviour, to demonstrate how truly acceptable the grace of humility is to the Almighty, took the child in his arms, declaring that whoever humbled themselves like a little child, and showed kindness to their fellow-creatures for his sake, should have the same kindness showed them in the great day of account, especially if they performed these actions in obedience to his commands.

It appears, from circumstances, that James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were principally concerned in this debate; for we find that John endeavored to divert it, by telling his Master they had seen one casting out devils in his name, and had forbidden him, because he did not join himself to their company. To which Jesus replied, that they should not have forbidden him, since he must have entertained very high notions of their Master's power, at seeing the devils leave the bodies of men on mentioning the name of Jesus. "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. 3.

You should, added the blessed Jesus, consider that every one that does not persecute us is a friend, and that the ejection of devils in my name will advance my doctrine, and promote my cause, even though the exorcist and the devils themselves should design the contrary. He also told his disciples, that the least degree of respect showed him by any one, even though it should be no more than the giving a cup of cold water to his thirsty disciples, was acceptable to him, and should not fail of meeting an adequate reward. "For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward." Mark ix. 41.

But, on the other hand, the least discouragement given to his disciples in the propagation of the Gospel, come from what quarter

it will, shall be punished with the greatest severity. "And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea." Mark ix. 42.

From this saying, Jesus inferred that it was more advantageous to deny ourselves the highest enjoyments of this world, and to part with every thing, however precious, represented by a hand, a foot, or an eye, than by these to cause the weakest of his friends to stumble. And as the disciples were appointed to sow the seeds of truth and religion in the world, or, according to the metaphor, to salt the people for an offering to heaven, in allusion to sacrifices being salted at the temple, Jesus exhorted them to mortify themselves, that they might appear worthy of so high an office as that of salting mankind for the altar of heaven; for as they were to be the salt of the earth, it was requisite they should themselves be filled with the spiritual salt of all the graces, and particularly the holy salt of love and peace, that they might, as far as possible, be free from the rottenness of ambition, pride, contention, and every evil work.

Pride is the source of numberless sins; and therefore the blessed Jesus cautioned his disciples, in the most solemn manner, to beware of that vice; assuring them that the meanest child is an object of the care of Providence; and, "that their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." Our blessed Saviour did not mean by this expression, that every man, who practices the duties of religion, has a particular guardian angel assigned him; but as all angels are sent as ministering spirits, they may be called "his angels."

To show the concern of his Almighty Father for the least of his reasonable creatures, and the great value he sets upon the souls of the human race, our Saviour told them, that he not only gave his highest angels charge concerning them, but had also sent his only begotten Son to seek and to save that which was lost, and would share in the joy which the heavenly beings are filled with on their recovery. "How think ye? If a man have a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, Verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so, it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish." Mat. xviii. 12-14.

Having thus addressed the offending party, he turned himself

towards his disciples, and gave them instructions with regard to the offended. "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouths of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." Mat. xviii. 15-17.

Try every measure to reclaim thy brother, and in order to this, represent his fault to him privately. If this rebuke has the desired effect, thou hast brought him back to the paths which lead to happiness; but if this gentle method fail, two or more grave persons should join in the rebuke, that he may be convinced of the injury he has done thee. If he still remains obstinate, tell his offence to the church, whose sentence will sufficiently show that thou hast done thy duty, and that he alone is to blame. But if he be so hardened as not to be affected by the censure of the church, he is from thenceforth to be treated as the Pharisees treated the heathens and publicans; namely, as an incorrigible sinner, whose company and conversation being contagious, ought to be shunned by all who have any love for virtue and religion.

Our Saviour now conferred the special power, which some think he had before confined to Peter, on all his disciples. "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Mat. xviii. 18. That is, Ye have free power to excommunicate such offenders as will not be reclaimed by proper means, or to free from church censure those who were truly penitent: and such decree will remain valid in the court of heaven, though passed here below.

But, on the other hand, if the offending brother continue impenitent after all the methods above described and tried, his guilt is bound the faster upon him; because, by the precepts of the Gospel, none but penitents can obtain pardon.

Our blessed Saviour also added, as an encouragement to good men, that if they continued earnest in their endeavors to bring sinners to repentance, and offered up their prayers to the Almighty for assistance, he would always grant their petitions, provided they were agreeable to the wise ends of his 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 by 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." Mat. xviii. 19, 20.

Peter had before heard his Master speak of the doctrine of frequent forgivenesses, and imagined that what he had now so strongly inculcated might prove dangerous to society; and therefore thought it his duty to offer his objections. "Lord," said he, "how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" Mat. xviii. 21. He thought it a strange doctrine which obliged him to forgive offences seven times repeated: but our blessed Saviour told him that he was very greatly mistaken; that he never intended to limit forgiveness to seven times, but that it ought to be extended even to seventy times seven.

This excellent moral precept he enforced by the parable of the two servants, debtors to one lord; in order to show the necessity of forgiving the greatest injuries in every case where the offending party is sensible of his fault, and promises amendment; because on this condition alone our heavenly Father will forgive our offences. "Therefore," said the blessed Jesus, "is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants." God is the great King and Sovereign of all creatures, and all are accountable to him, as servants to a master. He will reckon with all; and happy are they who live sensible of this important truth. When he had begun to reckon, one servant was brought unto him who owed him an immense debt, "ten thousand talents," a debt much greater than he was able to pay. His lord therefore commanded him, agreeably to the custom of those times, to be sold for a slave, and "his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made."

The servant, convinced of the justice of the sentence, and knowing he had nothing to hope for but from the mercy and clemency of his Lord, fell down in the most humble manner, and importunately besought him, saying, "Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." The master, moved with compassion towards him, accepted his humiliation; and, to make his happiness complete, loosed him from the sentence inflicted, and freely forgave him the enormous debt; an obligation, one would have supposed, sufficient to have melted the hardest heart into gratitude towards his lord, and the tenderest sympathy towards any of his brethren in distress. But, alas! who is acquainted with the human heart? This very servant went out from the presence of his compassionate lord, and found one of his fellow-servants who owed him a "hundred pence;" a poor inconsiderable debt in comparison of what he himself owed his lord.

But behold the inhumanity of this servant! he laid hands on the poor debtor, seizing him violently by the throat, and said, "Pay me that thou owest." His fellow-servant fell down at his feet, even just as he had before done at the feet of his lord, and besought him in the very same words he himself had so lately used, "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." Such a similarity of circumstances, one would have thought, must have affected his stony heart, and brought to remembrance his own late distress, and melted his soul into the like generous compassion which had flowed so sweetly from his lord to him. But his conduct was the very reverse; he would have no patience, he would show no pity; he went and cast the unhappy debtor into prison, till he should pay the debt.

His fellow-servants, when they saw what was done, were exceedingly afflicted; and came and told their lord the whole transaction. Upon which he summoned the unmerciful servant to appear before him; and, filled with indignation and abhorrence, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, how perverse is thy behavior, how ungrateful and base thy proceeding! "I forgave thee all that debt," that enormous debt thou owedst me, "because thou desiredst me;" I was moved to clemency and compassion by thy entreaties and distress: and "shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?" Shouldst not thou much rather have forgiven him, who was thy fellow-servant, and owed thee so small a sum, when I, thy king and lord, had forgiven thee so immense a debt?

Having thus expostulated with him, his wrath was kindled, and he "delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him." So likewise, added 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." Mat. xviii. 34, 35. And surely this awful threatening ought to strike the minds of fierce and implacable men with terror: for, whatever they may think, it will certainly, in its fullest extent, be inflicted upon all who refuse to obey the dictates of divine mercy, and to forgive not only their fellow-servants, but every brother in Christ, who through weakness and inadvertence may have done them an injury, either in person or property. How unreasonable and how odious does a severe and uncharitable temper appear, when we view it in the light of this parable! Let us then, from this moment, earnestly pray to be saved from every sentiment of rancor and revenge, nor ever allow a word, or even a wish, that savors of it.

CHAPTER XVIII.

OUR BLESSED LORD ATTENDS, FOR THE FOURTH TIME, THE CELEBRATION OF THE PASSOVER AT JERUSALEM — ADDRESSES THE MULTITUDE AT THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES — EXEMPTS THE WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY FROM THE PUNISHMENT ANNEXED BY THE JEWS TO THAT CRIME — ESCAPES FROM THE SNARES LAID FOR HIM BY THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES.



HAVING promoted his Father's work in Galilee, the great Redeemer departed into Judea, passing through the country beyond Jordan, that the Jews who inhabited those distant parts might enjoy the unspeakable benefits of his discourses and miracles. After sowing the seeds of eternal life, and publishing the glad tidings of salvation in those remote

countries, he repaired to Jerusalem, to celebrate the fourth passover, but the malignity of the Scribes and Pharisees was so great, that he stayed but a short time in the capital; and then returned into Galilee, while the multitude again resorted to him, and he again instructed them in the paths that lead to everlasting life.

The feast of the tabernacles now drew on, at which all the males of the Jewish nation, capable of traveling, repaired to Jerusalem, and dwelt in the tabernacles, or booths made of the boughs of trees, in commemoration of their fathers having had no other habitation during their forty years' sojourning in the wilderness. To this feast some of the kinsmen of the blessed Jesus desired he would accompany them, and there show himself openly to the whole nation of the Jews. They did not themselves believe that he was the great Prophet so long expected, and therefore condemned the method he pursued in his public ministry as altogether absurd. They could not conceive what reason he had for spending so much of his time in the deserts and remote corners of the kingdom, while he professed so public a character as that of the Redeemer of Israel. Jerusalem, the seat of power, was in their opinion much the properest place for him to deliver his doctrines, and work his miracles in the most public manner possible, before the great and learned men of the nation, whose decision in his favor would have great weight in in-

creasing the number of his disciples, and inducing the whole nation to own him for the Messiah. "Depart hence, and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. For there is no man that doeth anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly: if thou do these things, show thyself to the world. For neither did his brethren believe in him." John vii. 3-5.

Our Lord well knew the rancorous prejudice of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and therefore did not think proper to reside among them any longer than was absolutely necessary. They had more than once attempted his life, and therefore very little hope remained that they would believe his miracles, or embrace his doctrine; but, on the contrary, there was great reason to think they would destroy him, if possible, before he had finished the work for which he had assumed the vail of human nature, and resided among the sons of men. "My time," said the blessed Jesus to these unbelieving relations, "is not yet come; but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come." John vii. 6-8. As if he had said, It is not proper for me to go before the feast begins; but you may repair to the capital whenever you please; the Jews are your friends, you have done nothing to displease them: but the purity of the doctrine I have preached to them, and the freedom with which I have reproved their hypocrisy and other enormous crimes, have provoked their malice to the utmost height; and therefore, as the time of my sufferings is not yet come, it is not prudent for me to go so soon to Jerusalem.

There was also another reason why our blessed Saviour refused to accompany these relations to the feast of tabernacles: the roads were crowded with people, and these gathering round him, and accompanying him to Jerusalem, would doubtless have given fresh offence to his enemies, and have in a great measure prevented his miracles and doctrines from having the desired effect. He therefore chose to continue in Galilee, till the crowd were all gone up to Jerusalem, when he followed, "as it were in secret," neither preaching nor working miracles by the way; so that no crowd attended him to the feast.

As Jesus did not go openly up to Jerusalem, so neither did he on his arrival repair to the temple, and there preach openly to the people. This gave occasion to several disputes among the Jews with

regard to his character. Some affirmed that he was a true prophet, and that his absenting himself from the feast could be only owing to accident; while others as confidently asserted, that he only deceived the people, and paid no regard to the institutions they had received from heaven. But about the middle of the feast, Jesus appeared openly in the temple, and taught the people, delivering his doctrines with such strength of reason and elegance of expression, that his very enemies were astonished, knowing that he had never enjoyed the advantage of a learned education. "Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and taught. And the Jews marveled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned." John vii. 14, 15.

To which the great Redeemer of mankind replied, My doctrine was not produced by human wisdom; the sages of the world were not my instructors; I received it from heaven! it is the doctrine of the Almighty, whose messenger I am. "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." John vii. 16. Nor can he who is desirous of practicing the doctrines I deliver, if he will lay aside his prejudices, and sincerely desire to be taught of God, be at a loss to know from whom my doctrines are derived; because he will easily discern whether they are conformable to the will of man, or of God. It is no difficulty to discover an impostor, because all his precepts will tend to advance his own interest, and gratify his pride. Whereas all the doctrines delivered by a true prophet have no other end than the glory of God, however contrary they may prove to himself. "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.

Our Lord was upbraided with impiety by some of the Jews, because he had healed on the Sabbath the impotent man in one of the porches of Bethesda, which they pretended was a violation of the law of Moses, and consequently what no prophet would be guilty of. In answer to which, our blessed Saviour told them, that however they might pretend to reverence the authority of Moses and his law, they made no scruple of violating the most sacred of his precepts; they had resolved to put him to death, directly contrary to every law of God and man; and in order to execute their detestable scheme, were laying plots against his life.

The people replied, "Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee?" To which Jesus answered, I have done a miracle of an extraordinary kind on the Sabbath day, which you think inconsistent

with the character of a pious man, and therefore wonder how I could perform it. But surely Moses gave you the law of circumcision, and you make no scruple of performing that ceremony on the Sabbath day, because it is a precept both of Moses and the fathers. Since, therefore, ye think yourselves bound to dispense with the strict observance of the Sabbath, in order to obey a ceremonial precept; can you be angry with me, because, in order to fulfill the great end of all the divine law, I have cured a man who was infirm in all his members, and even with far less bodily labor than you perform the ceremony of circumcision? Consider therefore the nature of the thing, divest yourselves of your prejudices, and the superstitious opinions taught by your elders, and judge impartially. "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. 22-24. Notwithstanding the strength of this argument, several of our blessed Saviour's inveterate enemies asked, with sarcastical surprise, If the boldness of Jesus, and the silence of the rulers, proceeded from their being convinced that he was the Messiah; and at the same time, to deride his pretensions to that high character, said, that they were acquainted both with his parents and relations; but that no man, when Christ appeared, would be able to tell from whence he came; founding their opinion on these words of the prophet Isaiah, "Who shall declare his generation?" Is. liii. 8. To which the blessed Jesus answered, that their knowing his parents and relations was no reason against his having the prophetic character of the Messiah. Adding, I am not come of myself, but sent from heaven by God, who has uttered nothing by his servants the prophets, concerning the Messiah, but what is true, and will all be fulfilled in me; but ye are totally ignorant of his gracious perfections and gracious counsels, and have no inclination to obey his just commands. You are really ignorant of what the prophets have delivered concerning the Messiah; for had you understood their predictions, you would have known that one of his principal characters is, to understand the perfections and will of God more fully, and to explain them to the sons of men more clearly, than any other messenger ever before sent from the Most High. And would you attentively consider the doctrines I deliver, you would soon perceive this cha-

racter remarkably fulfilled in me, and be convinced that I came from the Almighty God of Jacob.

This observation, however powerful, and his reasons, however solid, were far from disarming his enemies of their malice; for some of them were desirous of apprehending him; but providence would not suffer any to lay hands on him, because the time of his sufferings was not yet come. Many of the people, however, convinced by the powerful miracles he had lately wrought, and the unanswerable reasons he had advanced in support of his character, believed on him, and affirmed publicly 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 these which this man hath done?" John vii. 31. The Scribes and Pharisees were highly provoked at this attachment of the common people to Jesus; and accordingly, on the last and great day of the feast, they met in council, and sent several officers to apprehend him and bring him before them. Jesus, during these transactions in council, continued in the temple teaching the people. My ministry, said he to the multitude, is drawing near its period; and therefore you should, during the short time it has to last, be very careful to improve every opportunity of hearing the word: you should listen with the greatest attention to every discourse, that your minds may be stored with the truths of the Almighty before I return to my Father; for, after my departure, you shall earnestly wish for the same opportunities, of seeing me and hearing my instructions, but shall never obtain 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." John vii. 33, 34.

The Jews, who did not understand that our blessed Saviour alluded to his own death, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of the Majesty on high, whither their sins would not permit them to follow him, wondered at this doctrine, and imagined that he intended to leave Judea, and preach to their brethren dispersed among the Gentiles. But this supposition was not sufficient; because, if he did go and preach among the Gentiles, they thought it was not impossible for them to follow him thither. "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 Gentiles? What manner of saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me; and where I am, thither ye cannot come?" John vii. 35, 36.

While the divine Teacher was thus instructing the people in the temple, the water from Siloam was brought in, according to the appointment of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, part of which they drank with loud acclamations, in commemoration of the mercy showed to their fathers, who were relieved by a stream which miraculously flowed from a rock, and refreshed a whole nation, then ready to perish with thirst in a dreary and sandy waste; and the other part they poured out as a drink-offering to the Almighty, accompanying it with their prayers for the former or latter rain to fall in its season: the whole congregation singing the following passage—"With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation."

It was the custom of the blessed Jesus to deliver moral instructions, in allusion to many occurrences that happened; and accordingly he took this opportunity of inviting, in the most affectionate manner, all who were desirous of knowledge or happiness, to come to him and drink, alluding to the ceremony they were then performing. And to encourage all such as were desirous of believing in him, he promised them the gifts of the Holy Spirit; which he represented under the similitude of a river flowing out of their belly. 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." John vii. 37, 38.

During this discourse to the people, the officers from the council came to apprehend him; but hearing that the topic he was discussing was a singular one, and he seemed to deliver his discourse with remarkable fervor, their curiosity induced them to listen some time to his discourse before they laid hands on him. But the eloquent manner in which he delivered his subject appeased their rage: the sweetness of his pronunciation, and the plainness and perspicuity of his discourse, elucidated the beauties of truth, and caused them to shine before the understanding with their native lustre. Accordingly, his very enemies, who were come from the council on purpose to apprehend him, were astonished; the greatness of the subject, made as it were visible by the divine speaker, filled their understandings; the warmth and tenderness with which he delivered himself penetrated their hearts; they felt new and uncommon emotions, and being overwhelmed with the greatness of their admiration, were fixed in silence and astonishment; they condemned themselves for having undertaken the office, and soon returned to the rulers of Israel without performing it.

If our Lord had pleaded for his life before the officers of the council who were sent to apprehend him, the success of his eloquence, even in that case, had been truly wonderful; but in the case before us, it surely was superior to all praise, for in a discourse addressed to others, and even on a spiritual subject, it disarmed a band of inveterate enemies, and made them his friends. Nor were the officers the only persons affected by this discourse; for many of them declared that he must be one of the old prophets; and others, that he was no other than the Messiah himself. Some, however, led away with the common mistake that he was born at Nazareth, asked, with disdain, If the Messiah was to come out of Galilee? and, whether they would acknowledge a Galilean for the Messiah, when the Scripture had absolutely declared that he was to be born in Bethlehem, the native town of his father David? "Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet. Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the Scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?" John vii. 40-42.

Such were the dissensions on this subject, that some of his enemies, knowing that the officers were sent to apprehend him, threatened to lay hands on him: but the Almighty would not suffer them to execute their wicked design. "And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him." John vii. 44.

The officers now returned to the council, and were asked why they had not brought Jesus of Nazareth? To whom the officers answered, "Never man spake like this man." This reply enraged the council, who reviled them for presuming to entertain a favorable opinion of one whom they had pronounced an impostor. It is strange, said they, that you, who are not ignorant of our sentiments concerning this person, should entertain a favorable idea of him. Have any persons of rank, or celebrated for their knowledge of the laws, believed on him? Are not his followers the lower order of the people, who are totally ignorant of all the prophecies concerning the Messiah? The officers made no answer to these railing accusations of their masters; but Nicodemus, a member of the council, arraigned their conduct in a very poignant manner: Does our law, says he, condemn any man before he has been heard? They had before condemned their officers for being ignorant of the law, when it appeared they were themselves far more ignorant in pretending to condemn a person before they had proved him guilty. They were acting directly contrary to the

fundamental principles of the law of equity, at the time they boasted of their profound knowledge of its precepts.

Incensed at this reprimand of Nicodemus, they asked him, with an air of disdain and surprise, if he was also one of those mean persons who had joined together to support the pretences of a Galilean? though the Scripture had plainly said, that Bethlehem was the place of the Messiah's nativity: adding, that if he refused to listen to them, he should soon be convinced that the great Prophet mentioned by Moses was not to be born in Galilee. "Art thou also of Galilee? Search and look; for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." John vii. 52. Having made this reply to Nicodemus, the council broke up; and Jesus, who well knew their malicious intentions, retired to the Mount of Olives, where he spent the night with his disciples.

Our blessed Lord, early the following morning, returned to the temple, and again taught the people. The Scribes and Pharisees now determined to render him odious to the multitude, or obnoxious to the Roman governor; and therefore placed before him a woman that had been taken in the act of adultery, desiring his opinion what punishment she ought to suffer. "This woman," said they to Jesus, "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.

Had our Lord disapproved the sentence of the law, they would doubtless have represented him to the multitude, as a person who contradicted Moses and favored adultery; which could not have failed of rendering him odious to the people. On the other hand, had he ordered her to be stoned, it would have afforded a plausible pretence for accusing him to the Roman governor as a person who stirred up the people to rebellion; the Romans having now taken the power of life and death into their own hands.

But Jesus, who well knew their malicious intentions, made them no answer, but "stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground as though he heard them not." John viii. 6. They, however, still continued pressing him to give an answer; and at last Jesus, in allusion to the law, which ordered that the hands of the witnesses, by whose testimony an adulterer was convicted, should be first upon him, said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." Let those who are remarkably zealous for having justice executed upon others, at least take care to purify themselves from all heinous crimes.

This reply had its desired effect. The hypocritical Scribes and

Pharisees were convicted of sin by their own consciences; so that they immediately retired, fearing Jesus would have made their particular sins public. "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. The woman's accusers being all retired, Jesus told her, that as no man had pronounced sentence of death upon her, neither would he pronounce it: but advised her to be very careful for the future, to avoid the temptations which had induced her to commit so black a crime.

The wisdom, knowledge, and power of our blessed Saviour, were eminently displayed on this occasion: his wisdom, in defending himself against the malicious attempts of his enemies; his knowledge, in discovering the secrets of their hearts; and his power, in making use of their own consciences to render their artful intentions abortive. It was therefore with remarkable propriety, that the great Redeemer of mankind now called himself the "light of the world;" as if he had said, I am the spiritual sun that dispels the darkness of ignorance and superstition in which the minds of men are immersed, and discovers the path that leads to eternal life; nor shall any who follow me ever be involved in darkness. "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.

This assertion of our Lord highly provoked the Pharisees, who told him he must be a deceiver, because he boasted of himself. To which the great Redeemer of mankind replied, You are not to imagine that I called myself the light of the world from a principle of pride and falsehood; that title justly belongs to me; nor would you yourselves refuse to acknowledge it, did you know from what authority I received my commission, and to whom, when I have executed it, I must return. But of these things ye are totally ignorant, and therefore judge according to outward appearance, and condemn me because I do not destroy those who oppose me, as you vainly think the Messiah will do those who shall refuse to submit to his authority. But the design of the Messiah's coming is very different from your mistaken notions; he is not come to destroy, but to save the children of men. "Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true; for I know whence I came, and whither I go: but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go. Ye judge after the flesh, I judge no man." John viii. 14, 15. He added, that if he should condemn any person for unbelief, the condemnation would be just; because his mission was true, being confirmed by his own testimony,

and that of his almighty Father, the God of Jacob, by whose authority, and agreeable to whose will, all his sentences would be passed. "And yet if I judge, my judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me." John viii. 16.

Having thus asserted the divinity of his mission, and shown that his judgment was just, he proceeded to inform them that his Father himself bare witness to the truth of his mission. You cannot, said he, justly complain, even if I should punish you for your unbelief, because you are, by your own laws, commanded to believe the testimony of two witnesses, that my mission evidently is true. For the actions of my life, which are perfectly agreeable to the character of a messenger from heaven, bear sufficient witness of me; and the Father, by the miracles he has enabled me to perform, beareth witness of me; ye are therefore altogether culpable in objecting to my mission. "It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that beareth witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me." John viii. 17, 18. The Jews then asked him, Where is thy Father, the other witness to whom thou appealest? Jesus replied, Your conduct sufficiently demonstrates that ye are strangers both to me and my Father; for had ye known who I am, ye must have also known who it is I call my Father; had ye been convinced that I am the Messiah, you must also have been convinced that the Father is no other than that Omnipotent Being who created and upholds all things by the word of his power. "Then said they unto him, 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." John viii. 19.

This discourse, the evangelist tells us, was held in the treasury, a court of the temple where the chests were placed for receiving the offerings of all who came up to worship in the temple; and therefore must have been a place of great resort, being frequented by all, even the priests and rulers. But notwithstanding the public manner in which our blessed Saviour now asserted his claim to the character of the Messiah, no man attempted to seize him; Providence not suffering them to put their malicious designs in execution, because his "hour," or the time of his sufferings, "was not yet come."

The debate being ended, Jesus again repeated what he had before told them; namely, that he should shortly depart from them; and that they should then seek him, but not be able to find him. "I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go ye cannot come." John viii. 21. As if he had said, After my

ascension into heaven, when the Roman armies shall spread horror and desolation in every corner of the land, ye shall then earnestly wish for the coming of the Messiah, in expectation of being delivered by his powerful arm from your cruel enemy: but ye shall then find your mistake; ye shall die in your sins, and be forever excluded from the mansions of happiness.

The Jews by no means comprehended this departure of which our Lord told them. They even fancied he would destroy himself, because they thought the only retreat where they could not find him was the gloomy habitation of the grave. To which the blessed Jesus replied, Your vile insinuation discovers at once the wickedness of your hearts, and the baseness of your original. Ye are from the earth, and therefore subject to all the evil passions that infect human nature; and from the dictates of your own hearts, you fancy that I can be capable of committing the horrid crime of self-murder. But my extraction is very different; it is from heaven; and, consequently, my mind is not tainted with the corruption of human nature, the source of temptation to every sin. You therefore must believe that I am the "bread of life," the heavenly manna, the light of the world, the true Messiah, if you are desirous of being cleansed from those pollutions which flow from your earthly origin; but if you still continue in your unbelief, "you shall die in your sins."

The Jews now, in order to vindicate themselves, demanded what sort of person he pretended to be? To which Jesus answered, "Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning," that is, at the beginning of this discourse, "the light of the world." Adding, "I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him." John viii. 26.

This discourse, however plain it may appear, was not understood by the perverse Jews; they did not perceive "that he spake to them of the Father." But Jesus told them, that when they crucified him, they would be convinced by the miracles accompanying that awful hour, the resurrection from the dead, the effusion of the Holy Spirit on his disciples, and the destruction of the Jewish nation, who he was, and the Father that sent him. "When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then ye shall know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things." John viii. 28. He added, that, though he should be crucified as a malefactor, punishment would not be inflicted on him as a consequence of his being deserted by his Father; because he would

never leave him in any period of his sufferings, or even at the hour of his death, as he always acted agreeably to his will.

These words induced many of the people to believe him to be the Messiah. Perhaps, by "lifting him up," they did not understand his crucifixion, but his ascension to the throne of David; and hence supposed that he now entertained sentiments worthy of the Messiah, and were therefore very ready to acknowledge him as such, and believe the doctrine he had delivered concerning his mission. But Jesus told them, that if they persevered in the belief and practice of his word, they should in reality become his disciples, have a title to that honorable appellation, be fully instructed in every doctrine of the Gospel, and not only freed from the slavery of sin and its consequences, but from the ceremonial laws delivered by Moses. "If ye continue in my word, then ye are my disciples indeed: and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John viii. 31, 32. The Jews, on hearing him mention that they should be made free, answered, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man." This assertion, if taken literally, was absolutely false, the whole nation at that very time being in bondage to the Romans; nor were their ancestors any strangers to slavery, having severely felt the hand of tyranny, both in Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon. The expression, therefore, according to some writers, must be taken in a metaphorical sense, to signify spiritual bondage; it was a freedom by truth, a freedom in respect of religion, which they now asserted. They meant that they were the descendants of illustrious ancestors; and, during the worst of times, had preserved sentiments in religion and government worthy the posterity of Abraham; nor had the hottest persecution of the Assyrian kings been able to compel them to embrace the religion of the heathens. In respect of truth, "we were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, ye shall be made free?"

In answer to this question, Jesus told them, that those who gave themselves up to the practice of sin, and the gratification of their sinful appetites, were absolute slaves; and how far they might deserve that appellation, it was incumbent on them to consider. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." And as a slave cannot be assured of the continuance of his master's favor, or certain of abiding continually in the family; so my Father can, when he pleases, discard such habitual sinners, deprive you of the external economy of religion in which you so highly boast; as you have, through sin, rendered yourselves bondmen to his justice.

If ye are desirous of becoming the children of God, and of remaining forever in his family, you must submit to the authority of his Son, and embrace his doctrine, which will induce him to adopt you as co-heirs with himself. It is he only that can make you free indeed, and place you in the city of the heavenly Jerusalem without the least danger of being removed. I well know that you are, in a natural sense, the seed of Abraham; but in a moral one the offspring of Satan; for many of you are desirous of destroying me, because I enjoin a greater degree of sanctity than you are willing to acquire. "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 you have seen with your father. They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father." John viii. 37-39.

Notwithstanding their claim to immediate descent from that father of the faithful, Jesus told them, that if they were the spiritual progeny of Abraham, they would resemble that great and good man in his righteousness; and therefore, instead of endeavoring to take away the life of a person who came with a revelation from God, they would believe on him, in imitation of Abraham, who was justly styled the father of the faithful, and the friend of God. "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. Jesus added, that their deeds sufficiently showed whose children they were, and from what stock they were descended; even from the great deceiver of mankind: who "goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."

The Jews at length discovered the purport of our Lord's meaning, and accordingly replied, that they were undoubtedly in that sense the children of God, as they were certainly not born of fornication; alluding to the marriage-covenant, which in Scripture is metaphorically said to subsist between God and the people of Israel, and by which their obligation to love, honor, and obey him, was represented in a very lively manner. We are neither, said the Jews, idolatrous ourselves, nor sprung from idolatrous parents; consequently we are, with respect to a spiritual descent, the children of God. "We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God." John viii. 41. But Jesus told them, that an outward profession of the true religion was of no consequence. They must "love it indeed and in truth," if they hoped to be in reality the

children of God; and if they truly loved religion, they must love him who came down from heaven on purpose to reveal it to the sons of men. Adding, that he did not come of himself, but was sent by the great Creator of the universe. "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 ye, continued the blessed Jesus, inherit the nature of your father the devil; and therefore will continue to gratify the lusts ye have derived from him. He was an enemy to, and a murderer of mankind from the beginning, and has ever since exerted his whole power to work their destruction; sometimes by seducing them into sin by his falsities, and sometimes by instigating them to kill those whom God thought proper to send to reclaim them. And having early departed from holiness and truth, a custom of lying is become habitual to him. Being therefore a liar, and the father of lying, when he speaketh a falsity he speaketh what is properly his own. But I tell you the truth; and therefore it is natural to think that ye will disbelieve me. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do: he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not." John viii. 44, 45.

Though ye dare even to reject my doctrine, are any of you able to show that I have not received my commission from heaven? or that I have done any thing that has a tendency to render me unworthy of belief? Can you show that I have taught false doctrines, reproved you unjustly for your actions, or been guilty myself of sin? If you are unable to do this, but, on the contrary, must acknowledge that my doctrine and life are such as become a messenger of God, what reason can ye pretend for not believing me? "And if," in affirming that I am perfectly free from sin, "I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?" Whoever is of God, receives, with the greatest humility, whatever revelations God is pleased to make of himself by his messengers, and makes it his study and delight to obey all his commandments. But ye reject the revelations and precepts of the Almighty delivered by me, who came down from heaven, for no other reason than because ye are not the children of God. "He that is of God heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." John viii. 47.

The Jews, still attached to their lineal descent, replied, that his

calling the descendants of Abraham the children of the devil, was a sufficient proof that he was either a very profligate wretch himself, or instigated by some evil spirit. But Jesus told them he was neither mad nor actuated by an evil spirit. On the contrary, he honored his Father, by speaking the words of truth which he had sent him to deliver; and therefore they dishonored him in calling him by so opprobrious a title. Adding, that he sought not their applause, but referred their conduct to an omniscient and impartial Judge. "I seek not my own glory; there is one that seeketh and judgeth." John viii. 50.

Our Lord having declared his mighty and divine power, asserts the happy effects of faith and obedience to the Gospel. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death." John viii. 51. On this declaration, the Jews, who were total strangers to our Lord's spiritual meaning of death, cried out, Now we sufficiently know that thou art possessed with a devil; for the most righteous persons that ever flourished among the sons of men are dead: Abraham, and the prophets, and other holy men are all laid in the chambers of the dust; and thou hast the impudence and folly to affirm, that whoever keeps thy precepts shall never die. Thou surely canst not think nor pretend to be more in favor with the Almighty than Abraham and the prophets were, who, though the strictest observers of the divine precepts, could not obtain the privilege of being themselves exempt from the stroke of death, much less for their followers. "Now we know that thou hast a devil: Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself?" John viii. 52, 53.

In reply to this impertinent query, the Messiah returned, If I should attempt to speak in praise of myself, you would call it vain and foolish, and, like the Pharisees, tell me, "Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true." Instead, therefore, of giving you a full description of my dignity, I shall only inform you, that it is my Father who speaketh honorably of me, by the many miracles he enables me to perform. And surely this may be sufficient to convince you of what I have promised to my disciples; especially when I tell you, that my Father is no other than the Almighty God of Jacob, whom all the descendants of Abraham pretend to worship. But though you vainly boast of worshiping my Father as your God, you are ignorant of him; you neither form just conceptions of him,

nor worship him in the manner you ought. Your knowledge and actions therefore disagree with your profession; but, on the contrary, I entertain proper ideas of him, and obey his precepts. You may perhaps construe this declaration as proceeding from vanity; but if I should say, I do not form adequate conceptions of him, or acknowledge him as he deserves, I should be a liar like unto you. Even your father Abraham, of whom you so highly boast, earnestly desired to behold the time when I, the promised Seed, should put on the vail of human nature, and convert the nations of the world from their ignorance and idolatry to the knowledge and worship of the true God. He earnestly desired to see the great transactions of my life, by which this invaluable blessing was to be procured for all the sons of men; and view the happy state of all nations when this blessing was bestowed upon them. This was granted him; he "saw it, and was glad." He was favored with the ravishing prospect of these happy times, then concealed in the womb of futurity, and was exceedingly transported with the scene. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad." John viii. 56.

The Jews, still blind to the spiritual meaning of our Lord's words, concluded he had affirmed that he was before Abraham; and knowing he was not yet fifty years old, considered it as absolutely ridiculous. They had no conception of his divine nature, though he had so often told them he was the Son of God; and consequently existed with the Father before this world was called from its primitive chaos. This gross stupidity and perverseness induced the Saviour of the world to assert his dignity in still plainer terms; "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." John viii. 58. The Jews, incensed at our Lord's prior claim to Abraham in point of existence, rushed on him, and attempted to stone him; but Jesus, by miraculously concealing himself, passed unhurt through the crowd, and retired out of the temple.

With what patience did our blessed Redeemer bear, and with what meekness of wisdom did he answer, the most virulent and opprobrious language! And shall we too keenly resent the reflections which are thrown upon us? May but our conscience witness for us, and we need not fear all that are against us.

CHAPTER XIX.

OUR LORD CONTINUES TO WORK MIRACLES IN CONFIRMATION OF HIS MISSION AND DOCTRINE—CALLS FORTH AND SENDS OUT SEVENTY DISCIPLES—PREACHES TO THE PEOPLE OF JUDEA, BY WAY OF PARABLE.



HE great Preacher of Israel, having defeated the cruel designs of the obstinate Jews, in passing on his way, saw a man who had been blind from his birth. The sight of so affecting an object could not fail to excite the compassion of the benevolent Saviour of mankind. Nor could the affronts and indignities he had just received from the Jews hinder him from “working the works of him that sent him,” and dispensing blessings on that rebellious and ungrateful nation. Accordingly, he beheld this poor blind man, not with a transient view, but fixed on him the eyes of pity, and presented him with the riches of his adorable love.

The disciples observing the affectionate regard of their Master to this object of compassion, and probably imagining that he was going to extend his usual mercy to this unfortunate object, asked their Master, whether his blindness was occasioned by his own sin or the sin of his parents? They had often heard their Master say, that afflictions were commonly the punishment of particular sins; and had learned, from the law of Moses, that sin was the fruitful source of evil; and that the Lord punished the iniquities of the fathers upon the children. Their Master kindly answered, that neither his own, nor the sins of his parents, were the immediate cause of this peculiar affliction; but that he was born blind, “that the works of God should be made manifest in him;” particularly his sovereignty in bringing him blind into the world, his power in conferring the faculty of sight upon him, and his goodness in bearing witness to the doctrine by which men are to be saved.

We may learn, by this pertinent reply of the Saviour of the world, that a curious inquiry into the cause of afflictions in other men may be safely avoided; and that we ought to suppose every calamity subservient to the glory of Omnipotence; never imputing to their

personal sins whatever miseries we behold in others, lest, like the disciples in the present case, we assign to sin what owes its origin to the glory of our Maker.

Having assigned the cause of this person's blindness; namely, "that the works of God should be made manifest in him," Jesus added, "I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work." John ix. 4. Intimating to his disciples, and all the sons of men, his unwearied labor in the work of his almighty Father. In this he was employed day and night, during the time of his sojourning in the flesh. To this alone he directed all his thoughts and all his intentions. This he esteemed even as his meat and drink; and for this he suffered the neglect of his ordinary food, that he might finish the blessed, the beneficent work of human salvation—a work, to accomplish which he left the courts of heaven; and, during the execution of it, went about doing good.

It was now the Sabbath-day, and the blessed Jesus was about to perform a miracle, in which there was to be a small degree of servile work; and therefore he told his disciples, that they need not be surprised to see him work miracles of that kind on the Sabbath-day. For though they should imagine that he might defer them till the day of rest was over, his time on earth was so short, that it was necessary for him to embrace every opportunity that offered of working miracles. Perhaps he chose to perform this work on the Sabbath, because he knew the Pharisees would, for that reason, inquire into it with the utmost attention, and consequently render it more generally known. But however this be, our blessed Saviour, who was now about to confer sight on one that was born blind, took occasion from thence to speak of himself as one appointed to give light also to the minds of men involved in darkness. "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." John ix. 5.

It appears from hence, that our Saviour's miracles were designed not only as proofs of his mission, but also as specimens of the power he possessed as the Messiah. For example, by feeding the multitude with the meat that perisheth, he signified that he was to come to quicken and nourish mankind with the "bread of life," that sovereign cordial and salutary nutriment of the soul. His giving sight to the blind, was a lively emblem of the efficacy of his doctrine to illuminate the blinded understandings of men. His healing their bodies, represented his power to heal their souls, and was a specimen of his authority to forgive sins, as it was a real, though a par-

tial, removal of its punishment. His casting out devils, was an earnest of his final victory over Satan and all his powers: his raising particular persons from the dead, was the beginning of his triumph over death, and a demonstration of his ability to accomplish a general resurrection; and, in a word, his curing all promiscuously who applied to him, showed that he was come, not to condemn the world, but to save even the chief of sinners. Accordingly, at or soon after performing of these miracles, when the memory of them was fresh in the minds of his hearers, we often find him turning his discourse to the spiritual things they represented.

Having declared the salutary design of his coming into the world, "he spat 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.

From former examples, it is evident that our blessed Saviour could as easily have performed this miracle without the assistance of any external means. Indeed, those the great Redeemer of mankind made use of on this occasion, were so far from being likely to effect the cure, that they seemed properly adapted to produce a quite contrary effect. We must therefore conclude, that they were intended to direct our attention to higher mysteries; and show us, as in a glass, that it was through the same divine power, who first created man out of the dust of the earth, and gave sight to his eyes, that fallen men were now restored and regenerated; and the cement of sin which closed their eyes was wiped away.

This person seems to have known the power of the Redeemer, or at least to have been informed by some person near him who Jesus was, the fame of whose miracles had been published in every corner of Judea. Indeed we cannot otherwise account for the implicit and ready obedience paid him by the blind man; who was amply rewarded for his faith and confidence, by receiving the invaluable gift of sight.

This miraculous operation could not fail of producing a general curiosity and surprise: it induced those who had seen this blind man in his dark and deplorable condition, to be very particular in their inquiries into the means of so singular a miracle. It was doubtless the subject of general conversation; and it is natural to think, should also have proved the means of a general conversion; but, as it too frequently happens, a perverse curiosity prevented its salutary effects upon their souls. Unbelief, and hardness of heart, led some of them

even to doubt of the plainest fact; a fact the most evident and indisputable, and plainly the work of the Divinity: and others, to persecute at once both the object and the author of it! "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." John ix. 8, 9. The man, transported with gratitude and joy, and perceiving his neighbors to doubt of the identity of his person, proclaimed himself to be the very same whom they lately saw begging in total darkness. I am he thus wonderfully blessed with sight by the peculiar mercy of the Almighty. I am he who was blind from my birth, whom ye have all seen, and many relieved in my miserable distress! I am he who was, even from my mother's womb, involved in total darkness, but now enjoy the enlivening light of day!

So ingenuous an acknowledgment of the fact excited their curiosity to know how this admirable effect was produced. "How were thine eyes opened?" To this question he readily replied, "A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam and wash; and I went and washed, and I received sight." John ix. 11. They then asked him, where the person was who had performed so stupendous a work? To which the man answered, "I know not:" for Jesus had retired while the man went to wash his eyes in the pool of Siloam, probably to avoid the applauses which would naturally have been given him, and which we see, through the whole Gospel, he generally studied to avoid. The neighbors, either stimulated by envy, or excited by a desire of having the truth of this extraordinary event searched to the bottom, brought the man before the council, as the proper judges of this affair. Accordingly, he was no sooner placed before the assembly, than the Pharisees began to question him, "how he had recovered his sight?" Not daunted by this awful assembly, though terrible to a man of his mean circumstances, he boldly answered, "He put clay on mine eyes, and I washed and do see." John ix. 15.

On hearing this account of the miracle, the Pharisees declared that the author of it must be an impostor, because he had, by performing of it, violated the Sabbath-day. But others, more candid in their way of thinking, gave it as their opinion, that no deceiver could possibly work a miracle of that kind, because it was too great and beneficial for any evil being to have either the inclination or power to perform. The court being thus divided in their opinions with regard to the character of Jesus, they asked the man himself what he

thought of the person who had conferred on him the blessing of sight? To which he boldly and plainly answered, "He is a prophet." But the Jews, wanting to prove the whole a cheat, started another objection, namely, that this person was not born blind, though all his neighbors had really testified the truth of it. Accordingly they called his parents, and asked them whether he was their son? if he had been born blind? and by what means he had obtained his sight? To which they answered, that he was truly their son, and had been born blind; but with regard to the manner in which he received his sight, and the person who had conferred it on him, they could give no information; their son was of age and he should answer for himself. "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. 22.

This proves that the convictions of conscience act powerfully on the mind. The parents of this blind man well knew by what means their son had received his sight; and, like him, they should have glorified the divine hand that had wrought so marvelous a work, and dared to have confessed him before all men, whatever dangers might have threatened them. Let us learn from hence, to fear our own, and to pity human frailty, and to implore the assistance of the Holy Spirit, to give us courage and resolution in the day of trial; and let us take care not to love the praise of men more than the praise of God.

The Pharisees, finding that all attempts, either to discredit or disprove the fact, were useless, had recourse to their usual method of calumniating the author of it. They called again "the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner." John ix. 24. To which the man boldly answered these rulers of Israel, "Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know that whereas I was blind, now I see." John ix. 25. This reply prevailed not with the obstinate Jews; they were desirous of confounding him with repeated questions, and the art of sophistry, and accordingly asked him, "What did he to thee? How opened he thine eyes?" They had before asked those questions, but now proposed them a second time, in order that the man, by repeating his account of the servile work performed at the cure, might become sensible that Jesus had thereby violated the Sabbath, and consequently must be an impostor. Thus the enemies of our dear Redeemer would gladly have prevailed on the person who had

received the invaluable gift of sight, to join with them in the judgment they had passed on the great Person who had wrought so stupendous a miracle. But their obstinacy in denying the truth appeared so criminal to him, that he boldly answered, "I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? Will ye also be his disciples?" John ix. 27. The council were highly exasperated at this retort. "They reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses; as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is." John ix. 28, 29. The poor man, incensed at their unbelief and hardness of heart, replied, It is very strange that you should not acknowledge the divine mission of a teacher who performs such astonishing miracles; for common sense sufficiently declares, that God never assists impostors in working miracles; and accordingly there cannot be found a single example, since the creation of the world, of any such person's opening the eyes of one born blind. My opinion therefore is, that if this man had not been sent by God, he could not work any miracle at all. "The man answered and said unto them, Why, herein is a marvelous 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 worshiper of God, and doeth 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, etc.

The honest man's arguments, though plain, were powerful, and founded upon truths they could not deny. They all owned that "God heareth not sinners:" they all knew that God heard Jesus, by the miracle he had wrought, which was a fact proved beyond any possibility of doubt, and was such as never man performed: it therefore undeniably followed that Jesus was not a sinner, but sent from God; since otherwise, he could do nothing.

The Pharisees were not ignorant that this argument was conclusive; they felt its whole force, and well knew that it could not be resisted. Accordingly they did not attempt to answer it, but had recourse to punishment and abusive language. Thou wicked, illiterate, impudent mortal, said they, whose understanding is still as blind as thy body lately was, and who wast born under the heaviest punishment of sin, dost thou pretend to instruct, in a matter of this kind, the guides of the people, and those who have rendered themselves eminent for their knowledge in the law? "Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?" John ix. 34.

After their presumptuous taunts, the evangelist adds, that "they cast him out;" that is, they passed on him the sentence of excommunication, which was the highest punishment they had power to inflict. But though he was cut off from the Jewish society, he was nevertheless thereby united to one where no unjust sentences can be ever passed, nor any member be ever separated, during a joyful eternity.

The presumption of the Pharisees should teach us, to contemplate the various arts, and subtle endeavors, of all the adversaries and enemies of the Gospel and cross of Christ; and not be surprised to find them, though in different shapes, employed against ourselves, if we zealously embrace the truth of Christ, as well as against all who are not afraid to confess, before all men, the glory of him who hath opened their eyes. It is impossible that the world should love those who boldly declare that its works are evil. Let us not therefore be shaken when we come to experience it, but learn from this blind man, freely and openly to confess the faith, and to declare the power of that God, who hath brought us from darkness into his marvelous light, and turned our feet into the way of peace.

The feast of dedication now drew near. This solemnity was not appointed by Moses, but by that heroic reformer, Judas Maccabeus, in commemoration of his having cleansed the temple, and restored its worship, after both had been polluted by Antiochus Epiphanes. Although this feast was merely of human institution, Jesus determined to be present at it, even though he knew that further attempts would be made against his life. His public ministry was indeed now drawing near its period; and therefore the blessed Jesus would not omit any opportunity of preaching to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and of doing good to the children of men. Nor did he now, as he had formerly done, travel privately to the capital, but openly declared his intentions of going to Jerusalem, and set forwards on his journey with great courage and resolution.

The road from Galilee to Jerusalem lay through Samaria, and the inhabitants were those which entertained the most inveterate hatred against all who worshiped in Jerusalem. Jesus, being no stranger to this disposition of the Samaritans, thought proper to send messengers before him, that they might, against his arrival, find reception for him in one of the villages. The prejudiced Samaritans, finding the intention of his journey was to worship in the temple at Jerusalem, refused to receive either him or his disciples into their houses. The messengers being thus disappointed, returned to Jesus,

and gave him an account of all that had passed; at which James and John were so exceedingly incensed, that they proposed to their Master to call fire from heaven, in order to destroy such inhospitable wretches; alleging, in excuse for such violent proceedings, the example of the prophet Elijah. "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even as Elias did?" Luke ix. 54. Our Lord, desirous of displaying an example of humility on every occasion, sharply rebuked them for entertaining so unbecoming a resentment for this offence. "Ye know not," said he, "what manner of spirit ye are of." Ye are ignorant of the sinfulness of the disposition ye have now expressed; nor do ye consider the difference of times, persons, and dispensations. The severity exercised by Elijah on the men who came from Ahab to apprehend him, was a just reproof of an idolatrous king and people; very proper for the times, and very agreeable to the characters, both of the prophet who gave it, and of the offenders to whom it was given; and, at the same time, not unsuitable to the Mosaic dispensation. But the Gospel breathes a very different spirit; and the intention of the Messiah's coming into the world was not to destroy; but to save the lives of the children of men.

Ye wise of this world, who reject saving knowledge, behold here an instance of patience under a real and unprovoked injury, which you cannot parallel among all your boasted heroes of antiquity! An instance of patience, which expressed infinite sweetness of disposition, and should be imitated by all the human race, especially by those who call themselves the disciples of Christ.

Being denied reception by the inhospitable inhabitants of this Samaritan village, Jesus, attended by his disciples, directed his way towards another; and as they traveled, a certain man said to him, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." But Jesus, to whom the secret purposes of all hearts were open, knowing he only desired the riches and honors of the Messiah's kingdom, thought proper to make him sensible of his mistake: and accordingly said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Luke ix. 58. I am so far from boasting of a temporal kingdom, and the power and pomp attending it, that I have not even the accommodation provided for the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air. They have safe and secure retreats; but the Son of man is destitute of an habitation.

Jesus, in the course of his wanderings, met with one who had formerly been his disciple, and ordered him to disengage himself from

all worldly employments, and to follow him; but he was desirous of excusing himself for the present, under the pretence that he was bound by the ties of gratitude to continue with his aged father till death, and he had laid his remains in the sepulchre of his ascetors: "Lord," said he, "suffer me first to go and bury my father." To which Jesus answered, "Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." Luke ix. 60. Let those who are immersed in worldly affairs, follow the affairs of the world; but those who have embraced the doctrines of the Gospel, do every thing in their power to spread the glad tidings of salvation in every part of the earth.

A third person offered to follow him, provided he would give him the liberty to return to his house, and take leave of his family: but Jesus told him, that he should not suffer any domestic affairs to interfere with the care of his salvation; that the calls of religion were too pressing to admit of the least delay or excuse whatever; and that all who set themselves to seek the welfare of their souls, should pursue the work assiduously, without looking carelessly around them, as if they were regardless of the work they had undertaken to perform. "No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Luke ix. 62.

As our blessed Saviour's ministry was from this time till its final period, to be confined to Judea and the countries beyond Jordan, it was necessary that some harbingers should be sent into every town and village he was to visit to prepare his way. Accordingly he called his seventy disciples unto him, and after instructing them in the duties of their mission, and the particulars they were to observe in their journey, he sent them into different parts of the country, to those particular places whither he himself intended to follow them, and preach the doctrines of the Gospel to the inhabitants. Our Lord, according to his own declaration, dispatches these disciples on the same-important message as he had done the twelve before.

The harvest was plenteous in Judea and Perea, as well as in Galilee, and the laborers also few; and being never more to preach in Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, the cities wherein he had usually resided, he reflected on the reception he himself had met with from the inhabitants of those cities. He foresaw the terrible consequences that would flow from their rejecting his doctrine, and the many kind offers he had made them. He was grieved for their obstinacy; and, in the overflowing tenderness of his soul, he lamented the hardness of their hearts. "Woe," said he, "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 judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell." Luke x. 13-15. To which our Saviour added, as some consolation to his disciples, "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me." Luke x. 16.

Such a token of heavenly regard could not fail of comforting the seventy, and alleviating their minds when thinking of the ill-usage they expected to meet with during the course of their mission. They well knew that the preaching of Christ himself had been often despised, and often unsuccessful, with respect to many of his hearers; and therefore they had no very great reason to expect that they should find a more welcome reception than their Master.

The seventy disciples having received their instructions, and the power of working miracles from the Messiah, departed to execute their important commission in the cities and villages of Judea and Perea. And after visiting the several places, publishing the glad tidings of salvation, and working many miracles in confirmation of their mission, they returned to their Master with great joy, saying, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name!"

From this appeal, it seems that they knew not the extent of their delegated power; and were pleasingly surprised to find the apostate spirits tremble at their command. To which their great Master replied, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." You will be no longer astonished that the devils are subject to the power I have given you, when I tell you that their prince is not able to stand before me; and, accordingly, when I first put on the vail of human nature to destroy him and his works, I saw him, with the swiftness of the lightning's flash, fall from heaven. Adding, in order to increase their joy, and prove that he had really cast Satan down from the seats of heaven, that he would enlarge their power. "Behold," says he, "I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you." Luke x. 19.

Lest they should exult beyond measure in the honors thus conferred on them, which was merely temporary, our Lord adds, "Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you;

but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." Luke x. 20.

Nor could the blessed Jesus reflect on the unsearchable wisdom and goodness of the divine dispensations to mankind, without feeling extraordinary joy; so that his beneficent heart overflowed with strains of gratitude: "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 unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Luke x. 21.

When the disciples had executed their commission, Jesus left Samaria and retired into Judea, and in the way was met by a certain lawyer, or Scribe, who, being desirous of knowing whether the doctrines preached by Jesus were the same with those before delivered by Moses, asked him, What he should do to inherit eternal life? It is really amazing that any mortal should ask a question like this, with a view to tempt, not to be instructed! This was, however, the case; but the blessed Jesus, though no stranger to the most secret thoughts of the heart, did not reply as he had before done to the Pharisees, "Why temptest thou me, thou hypocrite?" He turned the Scribe's weapons against himself: What, said he, is written in the law, of which thou professest thyself a teacher? "How readest thou?" That law will teach thee what thou must do to be saved; and happy will it be for thee if thou compliest with its precepts. The Scribe answered, it is there written, "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. Our Lord then shows the strength and spirituality of the law: "Thou hast answered right; this do, and thou shalt live." Perform these commands, and thou hast fulfilled the duties of an Israelite: for on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Where is the man that can fulfill the law? The lawyer, who in all probability expected no such answer, being conscious of his defects, and, consequently, of the impossibility of obtaining eternal life on those conditions, was willing, as the sacred historian informs us, "to justify himself:" was willing to stifle the rising suggestions of his own conscience, and at the same time to make a show of his own devotion; and in order to this, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" A question very natural to be asked by a bigoted Jew, whose narrow notions led him to despise all who were not of his own fold; all who were not the natural descendants of his father Abra-

ham. To remove their obstinate attachment to their own principles, open their hearts to a more generous and noble way of thinking, and show them the only foundation of true love, and the extensive relation they and all mankind stand in to each other, our Saviour delivered the following most beautiful and instructive parable:—

A certain person, in his journey from Jerusalem to Jericho, had the misfortune to fall into the hands of robbers, who, not content with taking his money, stripped him of his raiment, beat him in a deplorable manner, and left him for dead. While he continued in this miserable condition, utterly incapable of assisting himself, a certain priest happened to travel the same road; “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.” So little compassion had these ministers of religion for a brother in the most deplorable circumstances of distress, that they continued their journey without offering to assist so miserable an object, notwithstanding their sacred characters obliged them to perform, on every occasion, the tender offices of charity and compassion. It was a brother, a descendant of Abraham, in distress; and therefore those hypocrites could offer no reasons to palliate their inhumanity. Their stony hearts could behold the affecting object, of an unfortunate Israelite lying on the road, naked and cruelly wounded, without being the least affected with his distress. Though these teachers of religion were hypocrites, and wholly destitute of grace and charity, compassion glowed in the heart of a Samaritan, who, coming to the spot where this helpless object lay, ran to him; and though he found him to be a person of a different nation, and one who professed a religion opposite to his own, yet the hatred which had been instilled into his mind from his earliest years, and every objection arising from the animosity subsisting between the Jews and Samaritans, were immediately silenced by the tender sensation of pity, awakened by the sight of such complicated distress; his bowels yearned towards the miserable object: though a Jew, he flew to him, and assisted him in the most tender manner.

It was the custom in these Eastern countries for travelers to carry their provisions with them; so that this compassionate Samaritan was enabled, though in the desert, to give the wounded man a little wine to recruit his spirits. He also bound up his wounds, pouring into them wine and oil, placed him on his own beast, and walked himself on foot to support him. In this manner he conducted him to an inn, took care of him during the night; and in the morn-

ing when business called him to pursue his journey, recommended him to the care of the host, left what money he could spare, and desired that nothing might be denied him; for whatever was expended he would repay at his return.

Having finished the parable, Jesus turned himself to the lawyer, and asked him, "Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor to him that fell among the thieves?" The lawyer, struck with the truth and evidence of the case, replied, without the least hesitation, "He that showed mercy unto him." Upon which Jesus replied, "Go and do thou likewise." Perform all the good offices in thy power, extend thy kindness to every one who stands in need of thy assistance, whether he be an Israelite, a heathen, or a Samaritan. Consider every man as thy neighbor in respect to works of charity, and make no inquiry with regard to his country or religion, but only with regard to his circumstances.

On examination of the particulars of this beautiful parable, we shall find that it is composed in the finest manner to work the conviction designed; so that the lawyer, however desirous of considering those of the Jewish religion only as his neighbors, it was impossible for him to do it on this occasion. The Jews had long considered the favors of a Samaritan as a more detestable abomination than eating swine's flesh; yet, notwithstanding this prepossession, the lawyer was obliged to acknowledge that neither the priest nor the Levite, but the traveling Samaritan, by discharging the great office of humanity to the Jew in distress, was truly his neighbor; that the like humanity was due from an Israelite to a Samaritan in the like distressing circumstances; and, consequently, that men are neighbors, without any regard to country, kindred, language, or religion.

Mankind are intimately connected by their common wants and their common weakness. Providence has formed them in such a manner, that they cannot subsist without the assistance of each other; and, consequently, the relation subsisting between them is as extensive as their natures, and their obligation to assist each other by mutual good offices, as strong as the necessities of every individual. Our blessed Saviour hath therefore, by this admirable parable, shown that the heart is the seat of genuine grace, and that good principles will ever produce good actions.

CHAPTER XX.

THE HUMBLE JESUS RESIDES WITH MARTHA AND MARY, TWO OBSCURE WOMEN OF BETHANY — IMPROVES A CIRCUMSTANCE WHICH OCCURRED AT THE FEAST OF DEDICATION — PRESCRIBES A MODE OF PRAYER TO HIS DISCIPLES AND FUTURE FOLLOWERS — REVISITS SOME OF THE PHARISAICAL TRIBE.



HE feast of the dedication approaching, Jesus turned his course towards Jerusalem, and in the evening came to the house of Martha and Mary, the sisters of Lazarus, at Bethany. Martha was desirous of expressing her regard for the divine guest, by providing for him and his disciples the best entertainment in her power. But her sister, who was of a more contemplative disposition, sat

quietly at the feet of Jesus, listening with the utmost attention to his doctrine. For the great Redeemer of mankind never omitted any opportunity of declaring the gracious offers of the Almighty, and his unspeakable love for the children of men. Martha, being greatly fatigued with the burden of the service, complained to Jesus of the little care Mary took to assist her. "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's officiousness incurred our Lord's reproof, who commended Mary for her attentive application to his doctrine. "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.

When Jesus repaired to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of dedication, he was informed that the beggar he had restored to sight had been, by the council, cast out of the synagogue. This information excited the pity of the Son of God; and he resolved to make him full amends for the injury he had suffered. It was not long before he met the suffering person, and said to 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 with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshiped him." John ix. 35-38.

We have hinted, that the beggar was thoroughly convinced the person who opened his eyes was a messenger from heaven; it is therefore no wonder, that as soon as he knew Jesus was the person who had performed so great a work, he readily believed him to be the Son of God.

Our Saviour having thus given the poor man ample proof of his Messiahship, directed his discourse to the people, and said unto them: "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. 39. The meaning of our Saviour, though he alluded to the blind man, was spiritual. He did not intend to represent the design of his coming, but the effect it would have on the minds of men; as it would demonstrate what character and disposition every person possessed. The humble, the docile, and the honest, though they were immersed in the night of darkness with regard to religion and the knowledge of the Scriptures, should be enlightened by his coming, as the blind man had enjoyed the invaluable gift of sight from his hands; but those who were wise, learned, and enlightened, in their own opinion, should appear in their true character, absolutely ignorant, foolish, and blind. The Pharisees, who happened to be present when he spake these words to the people, imagined that he intended to throw a reflection on their sect, which the common people, from their skill in the law, held in great veneration. Accordingly they asked him with disdain, "Are we blind also?" Dost thou place us, who are teachers, and have taken such pains to acquire the knowledge of the Scriptures, on a level with the vulgar? To which Jesus answered, "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye say, We see, therefore your sin remaineth." If ye had not enjoyed the faculties and opportunities of discerning the proofs of my mission, you might have been considered as blind; but as ye are superior to the vulgar in point of learning, and at the same time your hearts averse from acknowledging the truth, your enlightened understanding will only aggravate your guilt.

Having condemned the obstinacy and prejudice of the sect in rejecting the most evident tokens of the divinity of his mission, he continued the reproof, by describing the characters of a true and false teacher. It was our Lord's custom always to allude to objects before him; and being now in the outer court of the temple, near the sheep, which were there exposed to sale for sacrifice, he com-

pared the teachers among the Jews to shepherds, and the people to sheep: a metaphor often used by the old prophets. He considered two kinds of bad shepherds, or teachers; the one, who, instead of entering in by the door to lead the flocks to the richest pastures, entered some other way, with an intention only to kill, to steal, and to destroy; the other, who, though they entered by the door to feed their flocks with the dispositions of hirelings, yet when the wolf appeared, they deserted the sheep, having no love for any but themselves. By the former he plainly alluded to the Pharisees, who had cast the man born blind out of the synagogue, for no other reason than because he would not act contrary to the dictates of his conscience, and agree with them in declaring Jesus to be an impostor. But though they had cast him out of their church, Christ received him into his, which is the true church, the spiritual enclosure, where the sheep go in and out and find pasture.

To illustrate the allusion, it should be observed, that the sheep which were brought to be folded, were enclosed in little folds within the outer court of the temple; so that the shepherd himself could not enter till the porter had opened the door. And from this circumstance, the following parabolical discourse may be easily understood. "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." John x. 1. Believe me, that whosoever, in any age of the church, assumed the office of a teacher, without a commission from me, was a thief and a robber: and in the present age, he is no better who assumes that office without my commission, and particularly without believing on me. "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." John x. 2-4.

The doctrine here inculcated is, that good men are obedient to the instructions of true and faithful teachers, who, in every case, show them their duty with the greatest plainness, not concealing it because it may be disagreeable to their inclinations. On the contrary, "A stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers." John x. 5. The people of God will not hearken to impostors and false teachers, who neither preach nor love the truth, but flee from them, like sheep from the

voice of a stranger; for they can easily distinguish them from the messengers of God, by their fruits, their doctrines, and their lives.

Thus did the great Redeemer of mankind, by this instructive parabolical discourse, explain to the Pharisees the difference between true and false teachers; but they being ignorant of his meaning, he added, by way of explication: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep:" I am not only the door by which the shepherd must enter, but I am also the door of the sheep: it is by me that men enter into the spiritual enclosure of the true church. "All that ever came before me,"—all those who have presumed to assume the characters of teachers of religion without commission from me,—“are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.” John x. 8. "I am the door" through which alone any one can come acceptably unto God: "By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture." If any man believeth on me, he shall become a true member of the church of God upon earth, and shall from time to time receive such instruction as shall nourish his soul unto eternal life. Our blessed Saviour seems to change the image in the last particular, and instead of the outer court of the temple, where the sheep were kept, represented an enclosure where cattle were fed.

"The thief cometh not but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy; I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." John x. 10. You may easily know that I am neither a thief nor a robber, by considering that the intention of such is only to steal, to kill, and to destroy the flock. They assume the characters of teachers, who have received their commission from heaven, for no other reason than to promote their own interest at the expense of the souls of men; but I am come merely to give you life, and even much more abundantly than it was given under the dispensation of the law.

Nor am I an hireling shepherd appointed by the owner to take care of the flock: I am the good Shepherd promised by the prophets; the true proprietor of the sheep. This is sufficiently evident from my laying down my life for the safety of the flock: whereas an hireling, who purposes nothing but his own advantage, when he sees the wolf approaching, deserts the sheep: his whole care is for his own safety, and therefore he will not expose himself to any danger on their account; so that the wolf, without resistance, tears some to pieces, and disperses the rest. "I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth his life for the 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. 11-13. And as I am the good Shepherd, and so earnest in tending them; so I know every particular sheep, am able to claim it, in whose possession soever it be, and know every thing relating to the sheep. I know the circumstances wherein they are placed, am well acquainted with their wants, and can judge what assistance they need. Besides, I love them all with the greatest sincerity, and approve of their faith in, and obedience to me; because it is sincere, and springs from a right principle. For they have just notions of my dignity and character; they know that I am their Shepherd and Saviour sent from God; and that I am able to feed them with knowledge, deliver them from sin, and the punishment of it, and bestow on them eternal life, and procure them a place in the blissful mansions of my Father's house. "I am the good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine." John x. 14. And this mutual knowledge and love of each other is like that subsisting between me and my Father. "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep." John x. 15. I will give a convincing proof of the love I bear the sheep; I will lay down my life for them: an instance of regard that will never be given by an hireling.

But I have other sheep besides those of the seed of Abraham; numbers of my flock are among the Gentiles. These also I must bring into my church, and they will cheerfully submit to my laws. There shall be then but one fold, and they shall know me, shall distinguish my voice from that of a stranger; and though consisting of Jews and Gentiles, yet they shall have but one shepherd to feed and govern them; for the middle wall of partition shall be broken down. "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." John x. 16. And because I lay down my life to save the world, therefore my heavenly Father loveth me. But though I lay down my life, I will take it again; for I will in due time rise from the dead. I do not, however, either lay down my life, or rise from the dead, without the appointment of the Almighty. I act in both according to the divine wisdom, and agreeably to the will of my heavenly Father. "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. 17, 18.

Various were the effects produced by this discourse upon the minds of the Jews. Some of them cried out that he was mad, and possessed with a devil, and that it was the highest folly to hear him; while others, who judged more impartially of him and his doctrine, declared that his discourses were not those of a lunatic, nor his miracles the works of a devil: asking those who were enemies to Jesus, if they imagined any devil was able to confer the faculty of sight on one that was born blind? 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. 19-21.

Soon after, as Jesus was standing in Solomon's porch, the Jews came to him, desiring that he would tell them plainly, whether he was the expected Messiah or not. But Jesus, knowing that they did not ask this question for information, but to gain an opportunity of accusing him to the Romans, as a seditious person who endeavored to deceive the people, by pretending to be the great Son of David promised by the prophets, in order to usurp the kingdom, told them, that they must form a judgment of him from his actions—"I told you, and ye believed not; the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believed not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you." John x. 25, 26. Your unbelief is the effect of your attachment to this world, being unwilling to receive the doctrine of the kingdom of heaven; because you must then renounce all your fond hopes of temporal power and advantage. But, on the contrary, those who are of a meek and humble disposition, and their minds free from worldly passions, easily perceive the truth of my doctrine and miracles, and consequently are readily disposed to become my disciples. Nor shall such persons lose their reward; for I will willingly receive them, and make them partakers of eternal life in my Father's kingdom. And however assiduous malicious men may be in endeavoring to hinder men from believing on me, they shall never be able to effect their purpose, though assisted by all the powers of darkness. For my heavenly Father, who hath given them to me, is far greater than they all, nor is any able to contend with him. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them

eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." John x. 27, etc.

The Jews were so incensed at this declaration, which they considered as blasphemous, that they took up stones to cast at him, in conformity to the law, which commands all blasphemers to be stoned. But Jesus asked them, Which of the beneficent miracles he had wrought, in confirmation of his mission, deserved such treatment? "Many good works have I showed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?" John x. 32. As if he had said, I have fed the hungry in the desert, I have healed the lame, I have cleansed the lepers, I have cured the sick, I have given sight to the blind, I have cast out devils, and I have raised the dead: For which of these works are ye going to stone me? Do these miracles indicate that the author of them is an impostor? Or can you be so stupid, as to think that the Almighty would suffer any person to perform such works, with no other intention than to deceive the human race? The Jews answered, We are far from thinking that thou deservest punishment for any good work thou hast done in favor of the afflicted and distressed: the punishment is intended to chastise thee for thy blasphemous speeches; for thou, though a weak mortal, a being of a day like ourselves, arrogantly assumest the power and majesty of the Most High, and by claiming the incommunicable attributes of the Deity, makest thyself God. "For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God." John x. 33. Jesus replied, Have not the Scriptures expressly called those "gods," and the "sons of God," who were commissioned to govern God's people on account of their high office, and the inspiration of the Spirit which was, though sparingly, bestowed upon them? Can you therefore impute to that person, whom the Almighty hath sanctified, and sent into the world to save lost mankind, and pay the price of redemption for all the sons of men; can you, I say, impute blasphemy unto him, for taking on himself the title of the Son of God? If my own assertion be not sufficient to convince you of my personal dignity, you must surely think, that the many miracles I have wrought abundantly prove that they are the works of the Most High, as Omnipotence alone could perform them; and therefore, that the Father and I are so united, that whatever I say or do, is approved of by the Almighty. "Is it

not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods unto whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him." John x. 34, etc. But this reply, instead of satisfying the Jews, rather tended to enrage them the more; and Jesus, seeing it was of no good result to reason with so headstrong a people, withdrew himself in an extraordinary manner, and so escaped from them; "Therefore they sought again to take him; but he escaped out of their hand." John x. 39.

What prudence, mingled with spirit and sweetness, runs through the answers of Christ to the Jews! What inestimable blessings does he propose to invite them into "his fold!" May we never forget those gracious words! May we ever be entitled to all the comfort of them! "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." Lord, may we be found in the number of those secure and happy souls, even of those who "know thee," and who obey thy voice, and follow thee whithersoever thou leadest them by thine example, thy providence, thy word, and Spirit!

The feast of the dedication being now over, Jesus departed from Jerusalem, and retired into the parts of Perea beyond Jordan. Here his ministry was attended with great success; for the inhabitants of the country, remembering what had been told them by John the Baptist concerning Jesus, and being sensible that the doctrine and miracles of our blessed Saviour were fully equal to what the Baptist had foretold, firmly believed him to be the Messiah.

According to this supposition, which seems the most agreeable to reason, the inhabitants of these countries enjoyed the doctrines and miracles of the Son of God for a very considerable time. But however this be, the evangelist tells us, that while he was executing his ministry beyond Jordan, he happened to pray publicly, with such fervency, that one of his disciples, who was exceedingly affected both with the matter and manner of his address, begged he would teach them to pray. "And it came to pass, that as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven;

hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins: for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil." Luke xi. 1-4.

Soon after, our blessed Saviour cast out a devil; when some, who were present, ascribed the miracle to Beelzebub. "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 strange this argument may seem, and however weak and absurd it must appear to impartial judges, yet it had a considerable effect on illiterate persons, especially on those whose prejudices and interests it favored. The Pharisees pretended, that as Jesus had all along been at great pains to oppose the traditions, which most of the teachers of that age considered as the essentials of religion, and the principal branches of piety, they concluded that he must be a very wicked person. They also supposed, that a false prophet had the power of working signs and wonders; and thence concluded that our Saviour performed all his miracles by the assistance of evil spirits, with an intention to turn the people from the worship of the true God.

Another pretended reason for ascribing his miracles to evil spirits, was that the demons themselves, when they departed out of the persons possessed, honored him with the title of the Messiah. Their arguments, though so evidently founded on falsehood, contributed largely to the infidelity of the Jews; and however we may be surprised that such weak reasons should have any effect, considering what multitudes were witnesses of the many miracles the blessed Jesus performed on the sick of all sorts, on the blind, the deaf, the dumb, the maimed, the lame, on paralytics, lunatics, demoniacs, and the other miserable objects: nay, on the dead, whom he raised again to life; on the winds and the seas; in a word, on every part of nature; yet experience hath abundantly convinced us, that, notwithstanding all these evidences, their own superstitious opinions fixed that headstrong people in their infidelity.

Though part of the multitude were content with ascribing this miracle to the power of evil spirits, others went still further, desiring him to prove himself the Messiah, by giving them a sign from heaven. But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, refused to grant them this request; telling them that they were a wicked race of mortals, and

discovered a very perverse disposition, by seeking, after so many miracles had been performed, a sign from heaven; and therefore that no greater sign should be given them, than the sign of the prophet Jonas. "This is an evil generation; they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet." Luke xi. 29. "No man," added the Saviour of the world, "when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it into a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light." No man, endued with the Spirit of God, concealeth the blessed gift; but holdeth forth the glorious doctrines of salvation as it were like a candle, that the light of the same may shine upon the souls of men who hear them. "The light of the body is the eye; therefore, when thine eye is single, thy whole body 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." Luke xi. 34, etc. Take care, therefore, that thy soul be so completely enlightened by the Spirit, that the emanation of its light be not in the least interrupted by an evil passion or affection; that all the faculties of the soul may be as much enlightened and assisted, as the members of the body are by the bright shining of a candle. "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. 36.

Thus did our blessed Saviour prove the truth of his mission against the cavils and sophistical reasoning of his malicious enemies. And when he had done speaking, one of the Pharisees present desired he would dine with him. The Redeemer of mankind accepting the invitation, though probably given, as some think, with an insidious design, accompanied the Pharisee to his house, and sat down to meat, but without performing the ceremony of washing observed by all the other guests. An omission of this kind could not fail of surprising the Pharisee, as he had thereby shown an open contempt of their traditions. Jesus, who well knew the thoughts of this bigoted Pharisee, said to him, Your sect are remarkably careful to keep every thing clean that touches your food, lest by eating it your body should be polluted; but you take no pains to cleanse your minds from the pollution of rapine, covetousness, and wickedness. You must surely be convinced, that he who created the body formed also the soul; and can you imagine that the Almighty, who requires purity of body, because it is the work of his hands, will not also insist upon a greater purity of soul, which is undoubtedly the far

nobler part of human nature? Instead, therefore, of that scrupulous solicitude of washing your hands when you sit down to meat, ye should be careful to apply yourselves to the great duty of benevolence; a duty that will render it impossible for any external things to defile you, but will be at all times acceptable to your Maker. "Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without, make that which is within also? But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you." Luke xi. 39, etc. But the Pharisees, obstinate and perverse, withstood every mean made use of by the benign Redeemer of mankind to conquer their prejudices, and bring them to the knowledge of the truth; and therefore our blessed Saviour treated them, on this occasion, with a kind and wholesome severity, denouncing against them the most dreadful woes, for regarding so zealously the ceremonial parts of religion, and at the same time utterly neglecting the very precepts of their own religion. "Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue, and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God; these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. 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. 42-44.

A certain lawyer who sat at the table, thinking that this rebuke, though leveled principally against the Scribes and Pharisees, affected his order also, was greatly displeased. But our blessed Saviour, who had never any regard to the persons of men, despised his resentment, and told him freely what he thought of their character. "Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers." Luke xi. 46. You pervert in a very erroneous manner the interpretation of Scripture, for no other reason than to favor the tradition of the elders, and by that means lay so heavy a burden on the shoulders of the descendants of Jacob, that neither you nor they will touch with one of your fingers.

The blessed Jesus also condemned them for building the sepulchres of the prophets whom their fathers had murdered; because they did not do it from the respect which they had for the memory of these holy men, but from a secret approbation of their fathers' actions, as

too evidently appeared from their whole conduct. "Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers; for they indeed killed them, and ye build 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, might be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple; verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation." Luke xi. 47, etc.

Our Lord also reprov'd the lawyers for filling the minds of the people with notions founded on wrong interpretations of Scripture, whereby they were prejudic'd against the Gospel; not being contented with rejecting it themselves, but took care to hinder others from receiving it. "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.

Such honest reprimands highly provok'd the Pharisee and his guests. They were conscious of being guilty of the crimes laid to their charge, but unwilling the people should think them guilty; and therefore, out of revenge, urg'd him to speak on a variety of topics, hoping they should be able by these means to find occasion of rendering him obnoxious either to the government or 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.

CHAPTER XXI.

EXPLANATION OF THE ORIGIN AND OPINIONS OF THE DIFFERENT SECTS AMONGST THE JEWS—
OUR LORD TEACHES THE MULTITUDE BY PLAIN DISCOURSE, AND ALSO BY PARABLES.



As we have undertaken to write the History of the Life of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we cannot omit a distinct account of the different sects of the Jews, a people with whom he was most intimately concerned; both as a necessary elucidation of many circumstances, as well as an important verification of many things foretold concerning the Messiah.

Josephus reckons four principal sects among the Jews; namely, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, called also Herodians, the Essenes, and the Galileans. The evangelists mention only two, the Pharisees and Sadducees.

The rise of the Pharisees is unknown. They claim, indeed, the celebrated Hillel for their founder, as he is by some supposed to have lived during the pontificate of Jonathan, about a hundred and fifty years before the birth of Christ; but others, with more reason, suppose that he was contemporary with the famous Someas, who lived about the time of Herod, long before whom the sect of the Pharisees was in high repute. It is therefore probable that they claim Hillel rather as an ornament than as the author of the sect.

One of the most famous tenets of the Pharisees, was that of an oral tradition handed down from Moses, and to which they attributed the same divine authority as to the sacred books. This being strenuously opposed by the Sadducees and Samaritans, rendered these equally detested by them. But none more incurred their hatred than the blessed Jesus, who embraced every occasion of reproving them for the unjustifiable preference they gave this pretended tradition to the written word of God, and for condemning those as apostates, worthy of death, who did not pay the same, or even a greater regard, to the former than to the latter. Another tenet they embraced, in opposition to the Sadducees, was that of the

existence of angels, the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection of the dead, and future rewards. But with regard to the last, they excluded all who were notoriously wicked from having any share in the happiness of eternity; supposing that, as soon as death had put a period to their lives, their souls were conveyed into everlasting punishment. A third tenet was, that all things were subject to fate; or, as some expressed it, to the heavens. It is not easy to conceive what they meant by this; Josephus, indeed, will have it, that they designed to reconcile the fatality or predestination of the Essenes with the free will of the Sadducees.

If so, this is not the only absurdity, or even contradiction, which they held: but a certain learned prelate seems to have proved, that they attributed all to fate, or to that chain of causes to which the Creator had subjected all things from the beginning; among which the influence of the heavenly bodies was considered the principal. This seems to be hinted at by St. James, in the beginning of his epistle to the new converts, where he explodes that Pharisaical leaven, by the most beautiful opposition of the immutability of God, the giver of all good, to the mutability of the planets, which, according to that notion, must necessarily vary their aspects from a malign to a benevolent one, and the contrary, even by their natural motions a change of position. This tenet of the Pharisees was therefore a source of dislike to the doctrines delivered by the blessed Jesus; as these affirm that men are the authors of their own unbelief, disobedience, and obstinacy; and consequently answerable for that, and all the train of evils these vices draw after them.

But the most distinguishing character of the Pharisees, and that which rendered them more obnoxious to the just censures of our blessed Saviour, was their supererogatory attachment to the ceremonial law, their frequent washings, fastings, and prayings, their giving alms publicly, seeking for proselytes, scrupulous tithings, affected gravity of dress, gesture, and mortified looks; their building the tombs of the prophets, to tell the world that they were more righteous than their ancestors who murdered them, though they were themselves plotting the death of one greater than all the prophets; their over scrupulous observance of the Sabbath, to the exclusion of the works of the greatest charity; and many others of the like nature; while they were wholly negligent of the moral and eternal law of mercy and justice, of charity and humility, and the like indispensable virtues. The very best of them contented themselves with abstaining from the actual committing any enormous act, while they indulged

themselves in the most wicked thoughts and desires. Nay, some, more hardened in their vices, made no scruple, not only of coveting, but destroying poor widows' houses; of committing the vilest oppressions, injustice, and cruelties, and of encouraging these enormities in their followers, under the specious cloak of religion and sanctity. Well, therefore, might the great Redeemer of mankind compare them to whited sepulchres, beautiful indeed without, but within full of rottenness and corruption.

The last erroneous opinion we shall mention of the Pharisees, common indeed to all the other sects, but more exactly conformable to their haughty, rapacious, and cruel temper, was their expectation of a powerful, a conquering Messiah, who was to bring the whole world under the Jewish yoke; so that there was scarce an inhabitant of Jerusalem, however mean, that did not expect to be made a governor of some opulent province under that wonderful Prince. How unlikely was it, then, that the preaching of the meek, the humble Jesus, whose doctrine breathed nothing but humility, peace, sincerity, contempt of the world, and universal love and beneficence, should ever be relished by that proud, that covetous, that hypocritical sect, or even by the rest of the people, while these their teachers so strenuously opposed it!

The sect of Sadducees is said to have been founded by one Sadoc, a disciple of Antigonus of Socho. Their chief tenet was, that our serving God ought to be free either from slavish fear or punishment, or from selfish hope of reward; that it should be disinterested, and flow only from the pure love and fear of the Supreme Being. They added, that God was the only immaterial being; in consequence of which, they denied the existence of angels, or any spiritual substances, except the Almighty himself. It is therefore no wonder that the Sadducees should take every opportunity of opposing and ridiculing the doctrine of the resurrection.

Another of their tenets, equally opposite to the Pharisees and to the doctrine of Christ, was, that man was constituted absolute master of all his actions, and stood in no need of any assistance to choose or act; for this reason, they were always very severe in their sentences when they sat as judges. They rejected all the pretended oral traditions of the Pharisees, admitting only the texts of the sacred books, and preferred those of Moses to all the rest of the inspired writings. They are charged with some other erroneous tenets by Josephus and the Talmudists; but those already mentioned are abundantly sufficient for the purpose. The notions of a future life, uni-

versal judgment, eternal rewards and punishments, to men whom a contrary doctrine had long soothed into luxury, and an overgrown fondness for temporal happiness, which they considered as the only reward for their obedience, must of necessity appear strange and frightful; and, as such, could not fail of meeting with the strongest opposition from them; especially if we add, what Josephus observes, that they were in general men of the greatest quality and opulence, and consequently too apt to prefer the pleasures and grandeur of this life to those of another.

The sect of Galileans, or Gaulonites, so called from Judas the Galilean or Gaulonite, appeared soon after the banishment of Archelaus, when his territories were made a Roman province, and the government given to Coponius. For the Jews, considering this as an open attempt to reduce them to slavery, Judas took advantage of their discontent; and, to ripen them for an insurrection, Augustus furnished them with a plausible pretence, by issuing, about this time, an edict for surveying the whole province of Syria, and laying on it a proportional tax. Judas therefore, who was a man of uncommon ambition, took occasion from this incident, to display all his eloquence, in order to convince the Jews that such a submission was nothing less than base idolatry, and placing men on a level with the God of Jacob, who was the only Lord and Sovereign that could challenge their obedience and subjection. The party which he drew after him became in a short time so considerable, that they threw every thing into confusion, laid the foundation for those frightful consequences that ensued, and which did not end but with the destruction of Jerusalem.

The Essenes, though not mentioned by the evangelists, made a very considerable sect among the Jews, and are highly celebrated by Josephus, Philo, Pliny, and several Christian writers, both ancient and modern. It is impossible to trace their origin, or even the etymology of their name. This however is certain, that they were settled in Judea in the time of Jonathan, the brother and successor of Judas Maccabeus, about a hundred and fifty years before Christ.

The Essenes distinguished themselves, by their rules and manner of life, into laborious and contemplative. The former divided their time between prayer and labor; such as exercise of some handicraft, or the cultivation of some particular spot of ground, where they planted and sowed such roots, corn, etc., as served for their food; and the latter, between prayer, contemplation, and study. In this last, they confined themselves to the sacred books and morality,

without troubling themselves with any branch of philosophy. But the contemplative and laborious had their synagogues, their stated hours for prayer, for reading, and expounding the sacred books. The latter was always performed by the elders, who were seated at the upper end of the synagogue, according to their seniority; while the younger, who were permitted to read the lessons, were placed at the lower. Their expositions were generally of the allegorical kind, in which they seem to have excelled all their Jewish brethren. But they paid the greatest regard to the five books of Moses, and considered that lawgiver as the head of all the inspired penmen; they even condemned to immediate death whoever spoke disrespectfully either of him or his writings. Upon this account they studied, read, and expounded him more than all the rest, and seem to have drawn their religion chiefly from the Pentateuch. The doctrines and expositions of the elders were received with implicit faith, and in their practice they conformed with an entire submission to all their sect.

With respect to their faith, they believed the existence of angels, the immortality of the soul, and a future state of rewards and punishments, like the Pharisees; but seem to have had no notion of the resurrection. They considered the souls of men as composed of a most subtle ether, which immediately after their separation from the body, or from the cage or prison, as they called it, were adjudged to a place of endless happiness or misery: that the good took their flight over the ocean, into some warm and delightful regions prepared for them; while the wicked were conveyed to some cold and intemperate climates, where they were left to groan under an inexpressible weight of misery. They were likewise entirely averse to the Sadducean doctrine of free will, attributing all to an eternal fatality, or chain of causes. They were averse to all kinds of oaths; affirming, that a man's life ought to be such that he may be credited without them. The contemplative sort placed the excellency of their meditative life in raising their minds above the earth, and placing their thoughts on heaven: when they had attained this degree of excellency, they acquired the character of prophets.

In their practice they excelled all the other sects in austerity. If we may credit Philo, it was a fundamental maxim with them, upon their entrance into the contemplative life, to renounce the world, and to divide among their friends and relations their properties and estates. They never ate till after sunset, and the best of their food was coarse bread, a little salt, and a few stomachic herbs. Their clothing was made of coarse wool, plain, but white: they condemned

all sorts of unctions and perfumes as luxurious and effeminate. Their beds were hard, and their sleep short. Their heads or superiors were generally chosen according to seniority, unless there started up among the brotherhood some more conspicuous for learning, piety, or a prophetic spirit. Some of them indeed were so contemplative, that they never stirred out of their cell, or even looked out of their window, during the whole week, spending their time in reading the sacred books, and writing comments upon them. On the Sabbath-day they repaired to their synagogues early in the morning, and continued there the whole day in prayer, singing of psalms, or expounding the sacred books.

Having endeavored to explain the origin and tenets of the several sects among the Jews, we now return to the history of our blessed Saviour, whom we left preaching in the country beyond Jordan, when he was surrounded by an innumerable multitude of people.

In the audience of this vast assembly he gave his disciples, in general, a charge to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, namely, hypocrisy; because all their actions would be brought to light, either in this world or in that which is to come; and therefore exhorted them to be very careful never to do any thing which could not bear the light, but to let the whole of their behavior be honest, just, and good. "Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore 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. 1-3.

This argument against hypocrisy he improved as a reason for their acquiring another quality, which would much better serve all the ends they could propose; namely, an undaunted resolution in the performance of their duty, founded on a firm confidence in God, who would bring to light the most secret word and thought, publicly condemn the wicked, and justify his faithful servants and children. Fear not, said he, the malice of the human race: it can extend no further than the destruction of the body; your soul may bid defiance to their impotent rage. But dread the displeasure of that almighty Being, who, after he has destroyed the body, is able to confine the soul in eternal torments. Remember all things are in his power, and that nothing happens without his permission; he provides for the meanest of his creatures: and surely you may think yourselves under his protection, who numbers the very hairs of your head; nor

can your enemies touch one of them without his permission. "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 before 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, etc.

Our Lord, to animate his followers to perseverance, admonishes them to look forward unto the general judgment, when he would acknowledge them as his servants, provided they acknowledged him in this world as their Master, and cheerfully and constantly obeyed his commands. But if they were ashamed of him and his doctrine before the sons of men, he would disown them before the celestial host. And that those who reviled the Spirit, by whom they performed their miracles, should be punished by the Almighty in proportion to the malignity of their crime, which is greater than that of reviling the Son of God himself; because it will be impossible for them to repent. "Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God. But he that denieth me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven." Luke xii. 8, etc.

He also cautioned his disciples not to be perplexed with regard to an answer when they should be brought before the rulers of the people, because they should be inspired by the Spirit of God. "And when they bring you into the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing 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 blessed Saviour was delivering these exhortations to his disciples, a certain person among the multitude begged him that he would interpose his authority with his brother, in order to oblige him to divide their paternal inheritance between them. But as this decision properly belonged to the magistrates, our blessed Saviour, who came into the world to redeem the souls of men, and to purchase for them an eternal, not a temporal inheritance, declined the office. He, however, embraced the opportunity of giving his hearers the most solemn caution against covetousness; declaring that neither

the length nor the happiness of human life had any dependence on the largeness of possessions. "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Luke xii. 15.

To excite their comparative negligence of the things of this life, he placed before them, in the strongest light, an example of the bewitching influence of wealth, in the parable of a rich man who was cut off in the midst of his projects, and became a remarkable example of the folly of amassing the goods of this life, without having any regard to the commands of the Almighty. This wretched man, forgetting his own mortality, made preparations for a long and luxurious life, pleasing himself with the thoughts of possessing an inexhaustible fund of sensual enjoyments. But alas! while he was providing repositories for his riches, the inexorable king of terrors seized him, and that very night hurried him before the awful tribunal of Omnipotence. 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 where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall these things be which thou hast provided?" Luke xii. 16, etc.

How solemn the appeal! While he lay waking on his bed, in anxious solicitude what he should do with his abundance; while his heart was dilated with the hopes of a variety of pleasures and indulgences; in that very moment the golden dream vanishes at once; all his thoughts perish, and in their stead a horrid account stares him in the face; a scene of judgment presents itself to his terrified imagination; a dark night of horror in an instant overwhelms that soul to which he had promised so much ease, so much pleasure; and instead of ease, instead of eating, drinking, and making merry, eternal tortures, unspeakable thirst, weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, must be the portion of this miserable soul to all eternity! "So is he," added our blessed Saviour, "that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God." Thus shall he be taken away from all his soul desireth; thus shall he be torn from all his temporal prospects and pleasures. None of his beloved enjoyments shall follow him; naked as he came shall he depart out of the world,

nor shall all his riches be able to procure him the least comfort or respite in these scenes of terror. How should this reflection awaker us to a due care of our immortal part! how should it alarm us, when planning fancied schemes of worldly pleasures, without the least regard to the great Disposer of all events! Without his assistance, all our promises of security are vain and foolish; he will surely render all our labors abortive; and in a moment, when we think ourselves secure, the summons shall arrive swift as the forky lightning's flash, convey us to the boundless regions of eternity, and present us, clothed in all our guilt, before the just, the mighty Author of our being!

This awakening parable exhibits a striking picture of the egregious folly of those who live only for themselves, laying up treasures for sensual enjoyments, but neglect the grace of God, and the immense treasures of salvation laid up in Jesus Christ.

And yet, alas! how many are there, who are now as deeply engaged in their worldly schemes as this "rich fool" in the parable, to whom God will, in a few weeks or days, if not "this very night," say, by the awful voice of his irresistible providence, "Thy soul is required of thee!" And then, what will all these treasures do to purchase life, or to allay the agonies of death? So far will they be found from being capable of this, that they will rather serve to increase and embitter the surprise and anguish of those agonies. Let it then be our labor and care that we may be rich towards God; rich in works of piety and charity. So shall we safely consign over our treasure to the bank of heaven, and shall be enriched by it, when we leave the world as naked as we entered into it, and lose all but what has been so wisely and happily spent.

Having spoken this parable, our Lord proceeded to caution his disciples against anxious cares for the things of this world, from a consideration that the care of God's providence extends to every part of the creation. The fowls of heaven are fed by his bounty, and the lilies that adorn the valleys are supplied with rain from the clouds of heaven. If therefore, said the blessed Jesus, Omnipotence so carefully provides for the inferior parts of the creation, the children of men have surely reason to rely on his bounty, and depend for subsistence on his merciful hand. He added, that as God had called them to everlasting happiness in a future life; he would surely provide for them all the necessaries of the present. "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." At the same time he gave his disciples another precept, pe-

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cularly calculated for those times in which the profession of the Gospel exposed men to the loss of their substance: "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 thus recommended to them the disengagement of their affections from the things of this world, he exhorted them to labor after improvement in grace. "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he shall return from the wedding; that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately." Luke xii. 35, 36.

This was spoken in allusion to the customs of the east, where anciently great entertainments were made in the evening; and on these occasions servants demonstrated their diligence by watching, and keeping their loins girded, and their lamps burning, that they might be ready, on the first knock of their master, to open the door. Nor was it uncommon for the master, in order to reward such a servant, to order him refreshment, and sometimes even give it him with his own hand. In allusion to which custom, our blessed Saviour added, "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching. Verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." Luke xii. 37.

Our Saviour enforced this constant watchfulness, and habitual preparation, by reminding them of the uncertainty of his coming: telling his disciplès, that as every master of a family, if he knew the coming of the thief, would make some preparation against a surprise; so it would be highly requisite for them to make some preparation for the approach of their Master, and be always ready to receive him, as the time of his coming was uncertain.

CHAPTER XXII.

FOR LORD REPROVES THE IGNORANCE OF THE PEOPLE IN NOT UNDERSTANDING THE SIGNS WHICH PRECEDED HIS APPEARANCE—PERTINENTLY REPLIES TO AN IGNORANT QUESTION AND INFERENCE CONCERNING THE GALILEANS—TEACHES BY PARABLE—RELIEVES A DISTRESSED WOMAN—AND IS WARNED TO DEPART THE COUNTRY, IN ORDER TO ESCAPE THE RESENTMENT OF HEROD.



ISRAEL'S great Preacher having delivered these salutary admonitions to his disciples and followers, directed his discourse to the unbelieving crowd. You can, said he, by the signs that appear in the sky and on the earth, form a judgment of the weather; and why can ye not also discover the time of the Messiah's appearance by the signs which have preceded it? "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, etc.

The prediction of the Son of man coming to punish the Jews for their rebellion and infidelity, delivered under the similitude of one who cometh secretly and unexpectedly to plunder a house, was a loud call to a national repentance. In order therefore to improve that prediction, he exhorted them to a speedy reformation, telling them that the least degree of reflection would be sufficient to point out to them the best methods they could possibly make use of for averting the impending judgments of the Almighty; illustrating what he had said by the punishments commonly inflicted on the man who refuses to make reparation for the injuries he has done his neighbor. "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.

Some of his hearers thought proper to confirm his doctrine, by

giving what they considered as an example of it: "There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices," thinking that Providence, for some extraordinary crime, had suffered these Galileans to be murdered at the altar.

But our Lord showed them the error of their opinion and inference concerning this point, it being no indication that these Galileans were greater sinners than their countrymen, because they had suffered so severe a calamity; and, at the same time, exhorted them to improve such instances of calamity as incitements to their own repentance: assuring them, that if they neglected so salutary a work, they should all likewise perish. "And Jesus answering, said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Luke xiii. 2, etc.

He illustrated this doctrine, by putting them in mind of the eighteen persons on whom the tower of Siloam fell; showing them, by this instance, the folly of interpreting the dispensations of Providence in that manner; for though this calamity seemed to flow immediately from the hand of God, yet, in all probability, it had involved people who were remarkable for their piety and goodness. "Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt at Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Luke xiii. 4, 5.

To rouse them from their indolence, and to induce them to seek the aid of God's grace and Spirit, he added the parable of the fig-tree, which the master of the vineyard, after finding it three years barren, ordered to be destroyed; but was spared one year longer at the earnest solicitation of the gardener. "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 vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." Luke xiii. 6, etc.

By this parable our blessed Saviour represented the goodness of the Almighty towards the Jews, in choosing them for his people, giving them the outward dispensations of religion, and informing them of the improvements he expected they should make of these ad-

vantages, and the punishments he would inflict upon them in case they slighted such benevolent offers. He also represented by it, in a very beautiful manner, the unbounded mercies of the Almighty in sparing them at the intercession of his Son, and giving them a farther time of trial, and still greater advantages by the preaching of the blessed Jesus and his apostles; concluding with an intimation, that if they neglected this last opportunity, they should perish without remedy.

During Jesus' abode in the country of Perea, he observed, while he was preaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath-day, a woman, who, during the space of eighteen years, had been unable to stand upright. A daughter of Abraham laboring under so terrible a disorder, could not fail of attracting the compassion of the Son of God. He beheld this affecting object, he pitied her deplorable condition, he removed her complaint. She, who came into the synagogue bowed down with an infirmity, was, by the all-powerful word of the Son of God, restored to her natural health, and returned to her house upright and full of vigor.

Such a display of divine power and goodness, instead of exciting the gratitude, so highly offended the master of the synagogue, that he openly testified his displeasure, and reproved the people as Sabbath-breakers, because they came on that day to be healed. "There are six days," said this surly ruler to the people, "in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath-day." Luke xiii. 14. But our blessed Saviour soon silenced this hypocritical Pharisee, by showing that he had not deviated from their own avowed practice. They made no scruple of loosing their cattle, and leading them to water on the Sabbath-day, because the mercy of the action sufficiently justified them in performing it. And surely his action of loosing, by a single word, a woman, a rational creature, a daughter of Abraham, that had been bound by an incurable distemper during the tedious space of eighteen years, was abundantly justified, nor could this bigoted ruler have thought otherwise, had not his reason been blinded by his superstition. "The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath-day? And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed; and all the

people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him." Luke xiii. 15, etc.

From this instance we may form some idea of the pernicious effects of superstition, which is capable of extinguishing reason, banishing compassion, and of eradicating the most essential principles and feelings of the human breast.

Our Lord having reproved the superstition of the ruler of the synagogue, and observing the acclamations of the people, then proceeded to demonstrate the reason and truth which so effectually supported his kingdom. For he repeated the parables of the grain of mustard-seed and of the leaven, to show the efficacious operations of the Gospel upon the minds of the children of men, and its rapid progress through the world, notwithstanding all the opposition of its most inveterate enemies.

The great Redeemer having now planted the seeds of the Gospel in the country of Perea, crossed the Jordan, and traveled by slow journeys towards Jerusalem, preaching the Gospel in every village, and declaring the glad tidings of salvation to all the inhabitants of those countries. While he was thus laboring for the salvation of mankind, one of the persons who accompanied him asked him, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" In all probability, the person who proposed this question, had heard the Son of God describe the success of the Gospel by the parables of the mustard-seed and leaven; and his notions of the kingdom of the Messiah being those that were then entertained by the Jews in general, he meant a temporal salvation. But Jesus, to convince him that he never intended to erect a secular kingdom, answered the question in a spiritual manner, and told him that a small number only of the Jews would be saved; exhorting them to embrace the offers of mercy before it was too late, for that many, after the period of their trial was concluded, and their state finally and irreversibly determined, should earnestly desire these benevolent offers, but should be denied their request. "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 to the door, and ye begin to stand without and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer, and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are." Luke xiii. 24, 25. He also repeated, on this occasion, what he had before delivered in his famous sermon on the mount; and what he had observed to the multitude in commendation of the centurion's faith. "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 you not whence ye are : depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last." Luke xiii. 26, etc.

Immediately after Jesus had thus preached the kingdom of God to the multitude, certain of the Pharisees came to him, and told him, that unless he departed thence Herod would destroy him : but this concern for his safety was altogether feigned, and their real design was no other than to intimidate him, hoping by that means to induce him to leave the country, and retire into Judea, where they did not doubt but the chief priests would find some method of putting him to death. Perhaps Herod himself was privy to this message, and desired that Jesus should leave his territories, though the agonies he had suffered on account of John the Baptist hindered him from making use of force. That this was really the case, seems evident from the answer our blessed Saviour made to the Pharisees. "Go ye," said he to these hypocritical Israelites, 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 given this answer to the Pharisees, he reflected on the treatment the prophets had received from the inhabitants of Jerusalem ; pathetically lamented their obstinacy, and the terrible desolation that would in a short time overtake them. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee ; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not ! Behold your house is left unto you desolate : and verily, I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Luke xiii. 34, 35.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE BLESSED JESUS ACCEPTS THE PHARISEE'S INVITATION A THIRD TIME - DELIVERS DIVERS PARABLES, REPRESENTING THE REQUISITES FOR ADMITTANCE INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD, THE CARE OF THE REDEEMER FOR EVERY ONE OF HIS PEOPLE, THE RECEPTION OF A PENITENT SINNER, AND THE PUNISHMENT OF MISUSING THE BENEFITS OF THE GOSPEL.



OUR Saviour having finished this awful exclamation and prediction, was invited by one of the Pharisees to his house. Though he knew that this invitation arose not from a generous motive, yet, as he never shunned any opportunity of doing good, even to his most implacable enemies, he accepted it. At his entering the Pharisee's house, they placed before him a

man that had a dropsy, doubtless with an intention to accuse him of healing on the Sabbath-day; being persuaded that he would work a miracle in favor of so melancholy an object. Jesus, who knew the secret thoughts of their hearts, asked the lawyers and Pharisees, whether it was "lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day?" But they refusing to give any answer to the question, Jesus laid his hand on the diseased person, and immediately his complexion returned, his body was reduced to its ordinary dimension, and his former health and strength renewed in an instant. So surprising a miracle might surely have convinced the Pharisees, that the author must have been endued with power from on high; but, instead of being persuaded that he was a person sent from God, and labored only for the benefit of the children of men, they were contriving how they might turn this miracle to his disadvantage. Our Lord, however, soon disconcerted their projects, by proving that, according to their own avowed practice, he had done nothing but what was truly lawful. "Which of you," said he, "shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the Sabbath-day?" If a calamity happens to one of your beasts, you make no scruple of assisting it on the Sabbath, though the action may be attended with considerable labor: and surely I may relieve a descendant of Abraham, when nothing more is requisite than touching him with

my hand. This argument was conclusive, and so plain, that the grossest stupidity must feel its force, and the most virulent malice could not contradict it.

As the entertainment approached, our blessed Saviour had an opportunity of observing the pride of the Pharisees, and remarking what an anxiety each of them expressed to obtain the most honorable place at the table. Nor did he let their improper behavior pass without a proper animadversion; in which he observed, that pride generally exposed a person to many affronts, and that humility is the surest method of gaining respect. "When thou art bidden," said he, "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 unto thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Luke xiv. 8, etc.

Having thus addressed the guests in general, he turned to the master of the house and said unto him, "When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich 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." Luke xiv. 12, 13. Be very careful not to limit thy hospitality to the rich, but let the poor also partake of thy bounty. "And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee; for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." Luke xiv. 14.

One of the Pharisees, ravished with the delightful prospect of the happiness good men enjoyed in the heavenly Canaan, cried out, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!" Blessed is he who, being admitted into the happy regions of Paradise, shall enjoy the conversation of the inhabitants of those heavenly countries; as those spiritual repasts must regale and invigorate his mind beyond expression. In answer to which, our blessed Saviour delivered the parable of the marriage supper, representing, by the invitation of the guests, the doctrine of the Gospel, and the success those beneficent invitations to the great feast of heaven should meet with among the Jews; foretelling that, though it was attended with

every inviting circumstance, they would disdainfully reject it, and prefer the pleasures of a temporal existence to those of an eternal state; while the Gentiles, with the greatest cheerfulness, would embrace the beneficent offer, and thereby be prepared to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the happy mansions of the kingdom of heaven. But as this parable was afterwards spoken by our blessed Saviour in the temple, we shall defer our observations on it till we come to the history where it was again delivered.

When Jesus departed from the Pharisee's house, great multitudes of people thronged him to hear his doctrine; but mistook the true intention of it, expecting he was going to establish the Messiah's throne in Jerusalem, and render all the nations of the world tributary to his power. The benevolent Jesus therefore took this opportunity to undeceive them; and to declare, in the plainest terms, that his kingdom was not of this world; and consequently that those, who expected by following him to obtain temporal advantages, would find themselves wretchedly mistaken; as, on the contrary, his disciples must expect to be persecuted from city to city, and hated of all men for his name's sake: though it was requisite, for those who would be his true followers, to prefer his service to the riches, grandeur, and pleasure of the world; and to show, by their conduct, that they had much less respect and value for the dearest objects of their affections, than for him. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and his wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever does not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." Luke xiv. 26, 27.

And, in order to induce them to weigh this doctrine attentively in their minds, he elucidated it with two opposite cases, that of an unthinking builder, and that of a rash warrior. The former was obliged to leave the structure unfinished, because he had foolishly begun the building before he had computed the cost; and the latter, reduced to the dilemma of being ingloriously defeated, or meanly suing for peace previous to the battle, having rashly declared war before he had considered the strength of his own and his enemy's army. "So likewise, whosoever he be of you," added the blessed Jesus, "that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." Luke xiv. 33.

The publicans and sinners, roused by the alarming doctrine of our Lord, listened to it attentively. This opportunity was readily embraced by the great Redeemer of mankind, who not only conde-

scended to preach to them the happy tidings of eternal life, but even accompanied them to their own houses; that, if possible, the seeds of the Gospel might take root in their hearts. But this condescension of the meek and humble Jesus, was considered by the haughty Pharisees as an action too mean for the character of a prophet. They murmured, and were highly displeased at the condescension which ought to have given them the greatest joy. But Jesus soon showed them their mistake, by repeating to them the parables of the lost sheep and piece of money. Intimating thereby, the great care all prophets and pastors ought to take of those committed to their care, and the obligation they lay under of searching diligently for every wandering sinner, whose conversion is a grateful offering to the Almighty. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Lukè xv. 10.

To illustrate this doctrine still further, and to show to the greatest sinner the willingness of God to receive him into his grace and favor, if convinced of his unworthy and lost condition in himself, and imploring forgiveness through the merits of Jesus Christ, and the renewal of his heart by the efficacious influences of his Spirit, he delivered the expressive parable of the prodigal son.

A certain man had two sons, the younger of whom, not content to live in his father's house, safe under his protection, and happy under his eye, desired his father to give him the portion of goods which fell to his share. The indulgent father did not hesitate to grant his request; but the ungrateful son had no sooner obtained what he asked of his parent, than he left the presence and neighborhood of so kind a father, and retired into a far country, where he had an opportunity of indulging, without restraint, his wicked inclinations; and there he wasted his substance in riotous living. Having thus consumed the portion given him by his indulgent parent, he began to feel the miseries of want, and, to add to his misfortunes, a terrible famine arose in that land; so that he soon became acquainted with the sharp stings of hunger. In this distressed condition he joined himself to a citizen of that country, willing to try every expedient rather than return to his kind, his merciful father, and humbly confess his faults. His master, from a just contempt of his former prodigality, employed him in the meanest and most contemptible offices; he sent him into his field to feed swine. Behold here, ye sons of extravagance, a change indeed! Behold this thoughtless prodigal, reduced at once from a life of voluptuousness and gayety, a life of pleasure and excess, to a life of the most abject

slavery, a life of penury and want! Nay, so great was his hunger, so prodigious his distress, that he would even have been contented, in this miserable state, to have satisfied the cravings of hunger with the husks eaten by the swine: but no man relieved him, no man showed the least compassion for him; so that the very swine were in a better condition than this miserable prodigal!

Thus miserably reduced, he was brought to himself: he had hitherto been in a state of utter forgetfulness, but now began to reflect on his happy condition while he continued with his father, before he had deviated from the paths of virtue, and to compare it with his present deplorable condition. "How many hired servants of my father," said he to himself, "have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger?" I will therefore, undeserving as I am, have recourse to his mercy and favor. "I will arise and go to my father," for such he still is; and I, though wretched and lost, am yet his son: I will therefore say unto him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son;" that happiness is too great for me to expect or desire. I have, by my behavior, forfeited all right to so endearing, so valuable a title: make me as one of thy hired servants. I desire nothing more than that thou wouldst mercifully "receive me as one of thy hired servants."

Having thus taken a firm resolution of throwing himself at the feet of his father, and imploring forgiveness for his past offences, he did not delay to put it immediately into execution; he arose, and with the utmost expedition came to his father.

A scene of tenderness and affection, amazingly pathetic, now presents itself to our view. His kind, his affectionate father, saw him while he was yet afar off: his bowels yearned towards him, he had compassion on his lost, his ruined child: paternal fondness would not suffer him to forbear; he ran to meet him, he fell on his neck, he kissed him. Encouraged by this kind reception, the son fell down at his father's feet, and began to make confession of his faults, to plead his own unworthiness, to request his father's pardon: "Father," said he, "I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." He was not suffered to proceed any further, the love of his parent prevented the rest; he commanded his servants to bring the best robe and put it on him; to put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and to kill the fatted calf, that they might eat and be merry. "For this my

son," said he, "was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

During this transaction, the elder brother was in the field properly employed in his father's business; but returning from thence, and hearing the sound of mirth, music, and dancing, he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant? The servant replied, that his younger brother was returned, and that his father had killed the fatted calf, because he had received him safe and sound. This news greatly displeased the elder son; he was very angry, and refused to go in; upon which his father came out, and entreated him; but he replied, "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." Luke xv. 29, etc.

His father, with the most amiable condescending tenderness, replied, "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." Though he hath devoured my living with harlots, yet he is both thy brother and my son; thou shouldest not therefore be angry because he has repented, and is returned, after we thought him irrecoverably lost.

Thus beautifully did our Lord represent the work of grace on the heart of man, from the first conviction of sin to the absolute confession of it; showing, at the same time that there can be no true confession without a thorough consciousness of guilt, a sense of our lost state, and an entire reliance on the mercy of God through Christ our Lord.

There are three expositions given of this instructive representation, each of which seems to have some place in the original design; for it should be observed, and carefully remembered, that the parables and doctrines of our Saviour are by no means to be confined absolutely to one single point of view, since they frequently have relation to different objects, and consequently prove the riches and depth of the manifold wisdom of God.

In this parable, for instance, the great and principal doctrine intended to be particularly inculcated is, that sinners, upon their repentance and faith, are gladly received into favor; or, that there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth. There are, however, two other expositions of this parable; the first is that of the

greatest part of the ancients, who expound it of Adam. He was made in the image of God, and endowed with many other excellent gifts, which he might have used happily, had he been content to stay in his Father's house; but like this younger brother, who foolishly desired his portion of goods to himself, that he might be his own master, and under no confinement or restriction, he was unwilling to remain under the obedience of the divine precept; he was desirous of having a free use of things in Paradise, and by the devil's instigation effected a wretched independency, which caused him to break the divine command, and eat of the forbidden tree, to obtain the knowledge of good and evil. Thus he lost, for himself and his posterity, the substance put at first into his possession; but his heavenly Father, on his and his posterity's return, hath provided such grace and compassion for them, that they may be reinstated in their former place and favor. And the same grace not being granted to the higher order of intellectual beings, the fallen spirits, is the cause of their murmuring against God and men, represented by the answer of the elder brother in this parable.

Others, secondly, with a much greater show of probability, expound this parable of the two people, the Jews and Gentiles, who have both one Father, even God. And while they both continued in their Father's house, the true church, they wanted for nothing; there was plenty of food for the soul, there was substance enough for them both. But the latter, represented by the younger brother, possessed of his share of knowledge, went into a strange country, left God, and spent his substance, the evidence and knowledge of the Almighty, fell into idolatry, and wasted all he had in riotous living; all his knowledge of God, in the loose and absurd ceremonies of idolatry. Then behold a mighty famine arose in that land; the worship of the true God was banished the country. In this dreadful dearth and hunger he joined himself to the devil, and worked all "uncleanness with greediness." But finding nothing to satisfy his spiritual hunger, this prodigal, long estranged from his Father, reflecting on his spiritual famine, and his own severe wants, humbly confessed his faults, returned to his offended Father, was re-admitted into favor, and blessed with the privileges of the Gospel. But the elder brother, the Jewish church, daily employed in the field of legal ceremonies, and who had long groaned under the yoke of the law, seeing the Gentiles received into the covenant of the Gospel, obtain the remission of sins, and the hopes of everlasting life, murmured against the benevolent acts of the Almighty. God, however, out of

his great compassion, pleaded pathetically the cause with the elder brother; offered him all things, upon supposition of his continuing in his obedience, and declared that he had delivered the nation from the heavy yoke of the ceremonial law.

Thus the parable has a very clear and elegant exposition; the murmuring of the elder brother is explained to us without the least difficulty; and as the offence of receiving the Gentiles to pardon and peace through Jesus Christ was so great a stumbling-block to the Jews, it is natural to imagine that our Saviour intended to obviate and remove it by this excellent parable. It is however evident, both from the context and the occasion of delivering it, that the third interpretation is the first in design and importance. The publicans and sinners drew near to hear Jesus. This gave occasion to a murmuring among the Pharisees; and upon their murmuring, our Saviour delivered this and two other parables, to show that, if they would resemble God and the celestial host, they should, instead of murmuring, rejoice at seeing sinners willing to embrace the doctrines of the Gospel, because there is joy in the presence of God and his angels over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance.

The obstinacy and malicious temper of the Pharisees, who opposed every good doctrine, made a deep impression on the spirit of the blessed Jesus; he did not therefore content himself barely with justifying his receiving sinners in order to their being justified and saved through him, but, in the presence of the Scribes and Pharisees, turned himself to his disciples, and delivered the parable of the artful steward, as an instance of the improvements made by the children of this world, in embracing every opportunity and advantage for improving their interests. "There was," said he, "a certain rich man which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward." Luke xvi. 1, 2.

This reprimand of his lord, and the inward conviction of his own conscience that the accusation was just, induced him to reflect on his own ill-management of his lord's affairs, and in what manner he should support himself when he should be discharged from his service: "What shall I do?" said he, "for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship; I cannot dig, to beg I am ashamed." Luke xvi. 3. In this manner he deliberated with himself, and at last resolved on the following expedient in order to make himself friends who would succor him in his distress: "I am resolved what to do, that when I am put

out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill and write fourscore." Luke xvi. 4, etc.

To illustrate this parable, we beg leave to observe, that the riches and trade of the Jews originally consisted principally in the products of the earth: they were, if we may be allowed the expression, a nation of farmers and shepherds; so that their wealth chiefly arose from the produce of their flocks and herds, and the fruits of the earth; their corn, their wine, and their oil.

Thus the steward, to secure the friendship of his lord's tenants, bound them to him under a lasting obligation: and his master, when he heard of the proceeding of the steward, commended him, not because he acted honestly, but because he had acted wisely; he commended the art and address he had shown in procuring a future subsistence; he commended the prudence and ingenuity he had used with regard to his own private interest, and to deliver him from future poverty and distress. "For the children of this world," added the blessed Jesus, "are in their generation wiser than the children of light." They are more prudent and careful, more anxious and circumspect to secure their possessions in this world, than the children of light are to secure in the next an eternal inheritance. "And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." Luke xvi. 9.

This advice of our Saviour is worthy our most serious attention; the best use we can make of our riches being to employ them in promoting the salvation of others. For if we use our abilities and interests in turning sinners from the evil of their ways; if we spend our wealth in this excellent service from pure motives, and to the glory of God; we shall have the good-will of all the heavenly beings, who will greatly rejoice at the conversion of sinners, and with open arms receive us into the mansions of felicity.

But this is not the whole application our Saviour made of this parable. He added, that if we made use of our riches in the manner he recommended, from a principle of love to God and men, we should be received into those everlasting habitations where all the friends of virtue and religion reside; because, by our fidelity in managing the small trust of temporal advantages committed to

our care, we show ourselves capable of a much greater trust in heavenly employments. But if, on the contrary, we do not apply our riches to the glory of God and the good of mankind, we shall be forever banished from the abode of the blessed; because, in behaving unfaithfully in the small trust committed to us here, we render ourselves both unworthy and incapable of a share in this everlasting inheritance. "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 faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust 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, etc.

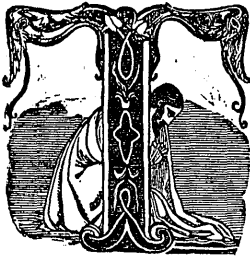
And if, while you are God's stewards and servants, ye desert your trust, and become slaves to the desire of riches, you can expect no other than to be called to a strict account of your stewardship; covetousness being as absolutely inconsistent with a true concern for the cause of Christ, as it is for a man to undertake at one and the same time to serve two masters of contrary dispositions and opposite interests. "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.

The hypocritical Pharisees treated this observation with derision. To which our Lord replied, "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." Luke xvi. 15.

Such is the parable, and such is our Lord's application of it; from whence the main intention and design of it is very evident. It was intended to incite us to a zealous concern for our future and eternal state, by making a due use of the means of grace, and working out our own salvation with fear and trembling; yet remembering, that it is God who worketh in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure: and if we thus employ our spiritual talents, we shall, through the merits of Jesus Christ, joyfully stand at the right hand of the great Judge of all the earth, and receive from him a public testimony of our faith and love—"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me." Mat. xxv. 34, etc.

CHAPTER XXIV.

JESUS REBUKES THE INSOLENT DERISION OF THE PHARISEES—DESCRIBES, BY A PARABLE, THE NATURE OF FUTURE REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS; AND ENFORCES THE DOCTRINE OF MUTUAL FORBEARANCE.



THE doctrines lately delivered by our Lord, being so repugnant to the avaricious principles of the Pharisees, they attended to the doctrine of our Saviour with regard to the true use of riches, and the impossibility of men serving God and mammon; but at the same time they derided him as a visionary speculatist, who despised the pleasures of this world, for no other reason than because he was not able to procure them. It is therefore no wonder that men, who had shown such a complication of the very worst dispositions, should receive a sharp rebuke from the meek and humble Jesus: accordingly he told them, that they made indeed specious pretences to extraordinary sanctity, by outwardly shunning the company of sinners; while in private they made no scruple of having society with them, or even of joining with them in their wickedness. “Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts.” Ye may indeed cover the foulness of your crimes with the painted cloak of hypocrisy, and in this disguise deceive those who look no farther than the outside: but ye cannot screen your wickedness from the penetrating eye of Omnipotence, to whom all things are naked and exposed, and who judges of things, not by their appearances, but according to truth; it is therefore no wonder that he often abhors both persons and things that are held by men in the highest estimation: “for that which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God.”

This affected sanctity, while the mind is unrenewed, is an abomination to the God of purity and truth. Jesus Christ detested hypocrisy, and frequented the company of publicans and sinners to bring about their conversion; the Mosaic dispensation, which made a difference between men, ceasing when John the Baptist first preached the doctrine of repentance; and the Gospel dispensation,

which admits all repenting sinners without distinction, then commenced. "The law and the prophets were until John; since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it." Luke xvi. 16. Think not that I mean to destroy, but to fulfill, the law, which is of essential obligation; for till the law is abrogated, the least of its precepts ought not to be neglected. "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail." Luke xvi. 17.

After treating of these particulars, he proceeded to consider the love of pleasure, so highly valued by the Pharisees, whose lust discovered itself by their frequent divorces; a practice which our blessed Saviour justly condemned: "Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband, committeth adultery." Luke xvi. 18. These reasons were clear and unanswerable; but the Pharisees, stupified and intoxicated with sensual pleasures, were deaf to every argument, how powerful soever, provided it was leveled against their lusts. In order to illustrate this truth, confirm his assertion, and rouse these hypocritical rulers from their lethargy, he delivered the awakening history of the rich man and the beggar.

"There was a certain rich man which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate, full of sores and desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table: moreover," so great was his affliction, so extreme his distress, that "the dogs came and licked his sores." Thus afflicted in life, the Almighty at last released him; "the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." Nor could the rich man's wealth exempt him from the stroke of death: "the rich man also died, and was buried." But behold now the great, the awful change! "In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off," and the late despised and afflicted Lazarus in his bosom. In this agony of pain and distress, he cried to Abraham, his earthly father, begging that he would take pity on him, and send Lazarus to give him even the least degree of relief, that of dipping the tip of his finger in water to cool his tongue, for his torment was intolerable. "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is com-

forted, and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed; so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us that would come from thence." Luke xvi. 24, etc.

The miserable wretch, finding it impossible to procure any relief for himself, was desirous of preserving his thoughtless relations from the like distress. "Then said he, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment." Luke xvi. 27, 28. This also was a petition that could not be granted. It is too late to hope for relief, when the soul is cast into the bottomless pit. They may learn, said Abraham, the certainty of the immortality of the soul from the books of Moses and the prophets, if they will give themselves the trouble to peruse them attentively. To which the miserable object replied, that the books of Moses and the prophets had been ineffectual to him, and he feared would be so to his brethren. But if one actually arose from the dead, and appeared to them, they would certainly repent, and embrace those offers of salvation they had before slighted. "Nay, father Abraham; but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent." But Abraham told him, that in this he was greatly mistaken, for that if they refused to believe the evidence of a future state contained in the writings of Moses and the prophets, the testimony of a messenger from the dead would not be sufficient to convince them. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

This truth, asserted by Abraham, has been abundantly proved by undeniable facts; from whence it has appeared, that those who will not be convinced by a standing revelation, will not be convinced though one rose from the dead. These very Jews to whom our Saviour spoke, were remarkable instances of this truth: they were fully assured that another Lazarus was, by the power of Christ, raised from the dead after he had lain several days in the tomb: a fact which they were so far from being able to disprove, that they attempted to kill Lazarus; as if, by this wicked action, they could have destroyed his evidence. Nay, they still had a more lively proof in the resurrection of Jesus himself, which they were so far from being able to deny, that they bribed the soldiers to spread that senseless tale, that his disciples came by night and stole him away while they slept. So true were Abraham's words, that they who believe

not Moses and the prophets, which testify of Christ and his eternal redemption, would not be persuaded though one rose from the dead.

There is not a more awakening and alarming example than this parable through the whole Gospel: it is drawn in such lively colors, that many, in all ages of the church, have considered it not as a parable, but as a real history: but however this be, the important truths delivered in it are equally clear and equally certain. They are designed to describe the difference between this state and a future, between the children of this world and the children of light; the former having had their portion of happiness here, but that of the latter being reserved to a glorious one hereafter.

Jesus Christ shows us the period of all the prosperity of the wicked, and of all the calamities with which good men may be exercised. And what availed the luxuries of life, or the magnificence of burial, to a wretch tormented in flames? Surely the fierceness of those flames would be proportionable to the luxury in which he had formerly lived, and the sense of his torment be heightened by the delicacy he had once indulged. May those unhappy persons, who place their happiness and glory in being clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day, take warning from one greater than Moses and the prophets, from one that came from the dead to enforce it, that they pass not into that place of torment!

Having thus reprimanded the Pharisees, our Lord took occasion to speak of affronts and offences, described their evil nature, and their dreadful punishment. "It is impossible," said he, "but that offences will come: but woe unto him through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones." Luke xvii. 1, 2. That is, the children of God, the followers of the Lamb, must meet with disgrace, reviling, and persecution here: but woe unto those who revile and persecute them, they had better undergo the worst of temporal judgments than the awful one that shall ensue.

He spake also against a quarrelsome temper in his servants, especially in the ministers and teachers of religion, prescribed a reasonable and prudent reprehension of the fault, accompanied with forgiveness on the part of the persons injured, as the best means of disarming the temptation that may arise from thence. "Take heed to yourselves: if thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee

seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him." Luke xvii. 3, 4.

It should be observed, that this discourse on forgiveness, uttered at a time when the Pharisees had just accused him falsely, by calling him a false teacher, sufficiently proves how truly he forgave them all the personal injuries they had committed against him; and should be a powerful recommendation of that amiable disposition, which leads to the forgiveness of injuries.

But however beautiful these discourses of our Saviour appear when examined with attention, they seem to have staggered the faith of his disciples and followers; perhaps they still imagined that he would shortly erect a temporal kingdom, and distribute among them the rewards they expected for their services. If so, they might well desire their Master "to increase their faith;" as discourses like these had a very different tendency from what might naturally have been expected from one, who was going to establish the throne of David, and extend his sceptre over all the kingdoms of the earth; but however this be, our Saviour told them, that if they had the smallest degree of true faith, it would be sufficient for overcoming all temptations, even those which seem as difficult to be conquered, as the plucking up trees, and planting them in the ocean. "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye might say unto this sycamore-tree, Be thou plucked up by the roots, and be thou planted in the sea, and it should obey you." Luke xvii. 6.

CHAPTER XXV.

OUR LORD IS APPLIED TO IN BEHALF OF LAZARUS—CURES TEN PERSONS OF THE LEPROSY IN SAMARIA; AND RESTORES LAZARUS TO LIFE.



SOON after our blessed Saviour had finished these discourses, Lazarus, one of his friends, fell sick at Bethany; a village about two miles from the countries beyond Jordan, where Jesus was now preaching the Gospel. The sisters of Lazarus, finding his sickness was of a dangerous kind, thought proper to send an account of it to Jesus; being firmly persuaded that he who had cured so many strangers, would readily come and give health to one whom he loved in so tender a manner. "Lord," said they, "behold, he whom thou lovest is sick;" they did not add, Come down and heal him, make haste and save him from the grave; it was sufficient for them to relate their necessities to their Lord, who was both able and willing to help them in their distress.

"When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death." This declaration of the benevolent Jesus being carried to the sisters of Lazarus, must strangely surprise them, and exercise both theirs and his disciples' faith; since it is probable, that before the messenger arrived at Bethany, Lazarus had expired. Soon after, Jesus positively assured his disciples that "Lazarus was dead."

The evangelist, in the beginning of this account, tells us that Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus; and also, that after he had received the message, he abode two days in the same place where he was. His design in this might be to intimate, that his lingering so long after the message came, did not proceed from a want of concern for his friends, but happened according to the counsels of his own wisdom. For the length of time which Lazarus lay in the grave, put his death beyond all possibility of doubt, removed every suspicion of fraud, and consequently afforded Jesus a fit opportunity of displaying the love he bore to Lazarus, as well as his own divine power in his undoubted resurrection from the dead. His sisters, indeed, were by this means kept a while in painful

anxiety, on account of their brother's life, and at last pierced by the sorrows of seeing him die; yet they must surely think themselves abundantly recompensed by the evidence, according to the Gospel, from this astonishing miracle, as well as by the inexpressible surprise of joy they felt, when they again received their brother from the dead.

Two days being thus expired, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us go into Judea again." John xi. 7. His disciples were astonished at this proposal, and the recollection of his late danger in that country alarmed them: "Master," said they, "the Jews of late sought to stone thee: and goest thou thither again?" Wilt thou hazard thy life among those who desire nothing more than to find an opportunity of killing thee? "Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world; but if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him." John xi. 9, 10.

By this he intended to inform his disciples, that those who lived by faith, and acted under the infallible influence of the divine Spirit, could not stumble; whereas, those who followed the directions of unenlightened reason were liable to perpetual error.

Jesus, having removed their groundless apprehensions, and strengthened their faith, that he might clearly explain to them the cause of his going to Judea again, told them, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go that I may wake him out of sleep." The disciples, understanding his discourse in a literal sense, replied, "Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well;" his distemper is abated, and he in all probability is recovering. It would be therefore highly unseasonable in us, to take two days' journey only to awake him out of his sleep. Thus they discovered their fears, and hinted to their Master that it would be far safer to continue where they were, than to take a hazardous journey into Judea.

They were however mistaken; for the evangelist informs us that he "spake of his death; but they thought he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep." Jesus therefore, to remove any doubt, said plainly to them,—"Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there; to the intent ye may believe." I am glad for your sakes that I was not in Judea before he died; for had I been there, and restored him to his health, your faith in me as the Messiah, must have wanted the great confirmation it shall now receive, by your beholding me raise him again from the dead.

Having thus given his disciples a proof of his divine knowledge, and of the designs of Providence in the death of Lazarus, our blessed Saviour added, "Nevertheless let us go unto him." Thus Jesus, who could have raised Lazarus without opening his lips, or rising from his seat, leaves his place of retirement beyond Jordan, and takes a journey into Judea, where the Jews lately attempted to kill him; because his being present in person, and raising Lazarus again to life before so many witnesses at Bethany, where he died, and was so well known, would be the means of bringing the men of that place, as well as others who should hear of it, even in future ages, to receive the doctrine of a resurrection to eternal life; an admirable proof of which, and as an emblem of it, he gave them this great miracle.

Jesus having thus declared his resolution of returning into Judea, Thomas, conceiving nothing less than destruction from such a journey, yet unwilling to forsake his Master, said, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." Let us not forsake our Master in this dangerous journey, but accompany him into Judea, that if the Jews, whose inveteracy we are well acquainted with, should take away his life, we may also expire with him.

The journey to Judea being thus resolved on, Jesus departed with his disciples, and in his way to Bethany passed through Samaria and Galilee. "And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: and they lifted up their voices and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them he said unto them, Go, show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that as they went they were cleansed." Luke xvii. 12, etc.

Among these miserable objects, one of them was a native of the country; who, perceiving that his cure was completed, came back, praising God for the great mercy he had received. He had kept at a distance from our Saviour, but being now sensible that he was entirely clean, he approached his benefactor, that all might have an opportunity of beholding the miracle; and fell on his face at his feet, thanking him, in the most humble manner, for his condescension in healing him of so terrible a disease. Jesus, in order to intimate that those who were enlightened with the knowledge of the truth, ought at least to have shown as great sense of piety and gratitude as this Samaritan, asked, "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger." Luke xvii. 17.

Jesus and his disciples now continued their journey towards Bethany, where he was informed, by some of the inhabitants of that village, that Lazarus was not only dead, as he had foretold, but had now lain in the grave four days. The afflicted sisters were overwhelmed with sorrow: so that many of the Jews from Jerusalem came to comfort them concerning their brother.

It seems the news of our Lord's coming had reached Bethany before he arrived at the village; for Martha, the sister of Lazarus, being informed of his approach, went out and met him; but Mary, who was of a more melancholy and contemplative disposition, sat still in the house. No sooner was she come into the presence of Jesus, than in an excess of grief she poured forth her complaint: "Lord," said she, "if thou hadst been here my brother had not died." If thou hadst complied with the message we sent thee, I well know that thy interest with Heaven had prevailed: my brother had been cured of his disease, and preserved from the chambers of the grave.

Martha doubtless entertained a high opinion of our Saviour's power; she believed that death did not dare to approach his presence; and consequently, if Jesus had arrived at Bethany before her brother's dissolution, he had not fallen a victim to the king of terrors. But she imagined it was not in his power to heal the sick at a distance; though, at the same time, she seemed to have some dark and imperfect hopes that our blessed Lord would still do something for her. "But I know," said she, "that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." She thought that Jesus could obtain whatsoever he desired by prayer; and therefore did not found her hopes on his power, but on the power of God through his intercession. She doubtless knew that the great Redeemer of mankind had raised the daughter of Jairus, and the widow's son at Nain, from the dead; but seems to have considered her brother's resurrection as much more difficult; probably because he had been longer dead.

But Jesus, who was willing to encourage this imperfect faith of Martha, answered, "Thy brother shall rise again." As these words were delivered in an indefinite sense with regard to time, Martha understood them only as an argument of consolation, drawn from the general resurrection; and accordingly answered, "I know that he shall rise again at the resurrection at the last day." She was firmly persuaded of that important article of the Christian faith, the "resurrection of the dead;" at which important hour she believed her brother would rise from the dust. And here she seems to have terminated all her hopes, not thinking that the Son of God would call

her brother from the sleep of death. Jesus therefore, to instruct her in the great truth, replied, "I am the resurrection and the life." I am the author of the resurrection, the fountain and giver of that life they shall then receive; and therefore can, with the same ease, raise the dead now as at the last day. "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die. Believest thou this?" To which Martha answered, Yea, Lord; I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world. I believe that thou art the true Messiah, so long promised by the prophets, and therefore believe that thou art capable of performing every instance of power that thou art pleased to claim.

Martha now seemed to entertain some confused expectations of her brother's immediate resurrection; and leaving Jesus in the field, ran and called her sister, according to his order, being willing that both Mary and her companions should be witnesses of this stupendous miracle.

Mary no sooner heard that Jesus was come, than she immediately left her Jewish comforters, who only increased the weight of her grief, and flew to her Saviour. And the Jews, who suspected she was going to weep over the grave of her brother, followed her to that great Prophet, who was going to remove all her sorrows. Thus the Jews, who came from Jerusalem to comfort the two mournful sisters, were brought to the grave of Lazarus, and made witnesses of his resurrection.

As soon as Mary approached the great Redeemer of mankind, she fell prostrate at his feet, and in a flood of tears poured out her complaint; "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." No wonder the compassionate Jesus was moved at so affecting a scene: on this side stood Martha, pouring forth a flood of tears; at his feet lay the affectionate Mary, weeping and lamenting her dear departed brother; while the Jews, who came to comfort the afflicted sisters, unable to confine their grief, joined the common mourning, and mixed their friendly tears in witness of their love for the departed Lazarus, and in testimony to the justice of the sisters' grief for the loss of so amiable, so deserving a brother. Jesus could not behold the affliction of these two sisters and their friends without having a share in it himself; his heart was melted at the mournful scene,— "he groaned in spirit, and was troubled."

To remove the doubts and fears of these pious women, he asked

them where they had buried Lazarus? not that he was ignorant where the body of the deceased was laid: he, who knew that he was dead, when so far distant from him, and could raise him up by a single word, must have known where his remains were deposited: to which they answered, "Lord, come and see." The Son of God, to prove that he was not only God, but a most compassionate man, and to show us that the tender affections of the human heart, when kept in due bounds, and that friendly sorrow, when not immoderate and directed to proper ends, are consistent with the highest sanctity of the soul, joined in the general mourning. He wept, even to the time that he was going to give the most ample proof of his divinity.

By his weeping, the Jews were convinced that he loved Lazarus exceedingly; but some of them interpreted this circumstance to his disadvantage; or, according to their mean way of judging, they fancied he had suffered him to fall by the stroke of death, for no other reason in the world, but for want of power and affection to rescue him. And thinking the miracle, said to have been wrought on the blind man at the feast of tabernacles, at least as difficult as the curing an acute distemper, they rather called the former in question, because the latter had been neglected. "Could not this man," said they, "which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?"

Our Lord, regardless of their question, but grieving for the hardness of their hearts and blindness of their infidelity, groaned again within himself as he walked towards the sepulchre of the dead. At his coming to the grave, he said, "Take ye away the stone." To which Martha answered, "Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days;" or hath lain in the grave part of four days. She meant to intimate, that her brother's resurrection was not now to be expected: but Jesus gave her a solemn reproof, to teach her that there was nothing impossible with God; and that the power of the Almighty is not to be circumscribed within the narrow bounds of human reason. "Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" That is, Have but faith, and I will display before thee the power of Omnipotence.

The objections of Martha being thus obviated, she, with the rest, waited the great event in silence; and, in pursuance of the command of the Son of God, took away the stone from the place where the

dead was laid. Jesus had, on many occasions, publicly appealed to his own miracles as the proofs of his mission, though he did not generally make a formal address to his Father before he worked those miracles. But being now to raise Lazarus from the dead, he prayed for his resurrection, to convince the spectators that it could not be effected without an immediate interposition of the divine power. "Father," said he, "I thank thee that thou hast heard me, and I know that thou hearest me always; but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me." John xi. 41, etc. I entertain no doubt of thy empowering me to do this miracle, and therefore did not pray for my own sake; I well know that thou hearest me always. I prayed for the sake of the people, to convince them that thou lovest me, hast sent me, and art continually with me.

After returning thanks to his Father for this opportunity of displaying his glory, "he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth!" This loud and efficacious call of the Son of God awakened the dead: the breathless clay was instantly re-animated; and he, who had lain four days in the tomb, obeyed immediately the powerful sound! "And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin: Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go." John xi. 44. It would have been the least part of the miracle, had Jesus by his powerful word unloosed the napkin wherewith Lazarus was bound; but he brought him out in the same manner as he was lying, and ordered the spectators to loose him, that they might be the better convinced of the miracle; for in taking off the grave-clothes, they had the fullest evidence both of his death and resurrection. For, on the one hand, the manner in which he was swathed must soon have killed him, if he had been alive when buried; which consequently demonstrated, beyond all exception, that Lazarus had been dead several days before Jesus called him again to life; besides, in stripping him, the linen probably offered, both to their eye and smell, abundant proofs of his putrefaction; and by that means convinced them that he had not been in a swoon, but was really dead. On the other hand, by his lively countenance appearing when the napkin was removed, his fresh color, and his active vigor, those who came near and handled him must be convinced that he was in perfect health, and had an opportunity of proving the truth of the miracle by the closest examination. There is something exceedingly beau-

tiful in our Lord's behavior on this occasion ; he did not utter one upbraiding word, either to the doubting sisters or the malicious Jews, nor did he let fall one word of triumph or exultation : " Loose him, and let him go," were the only words we have recorded. He was in this, as on all other occasions, consistent with himself ; a pattern of perfect humility and modesty.

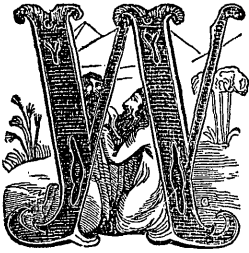
Such was the astonishing work wrought by the Son of God at Bethany : and in the resurrection of Lazarus, thus corrupted, and thus raised by the powerful call of Jesus, we have a striking emblem, and a glorious earnest, of the resurrection of our bodies from the grave at the last day, when the same powerful mandate, which spoke Lazarus again into being, shall collect the scattered particles of our bodies, and raise them to immortality.

Such an extraordinary power displayed before the face of a multitude, and near to Jerusalem, even overcame the prejudices of some of the most obstinate among them. Many believed that Jesus could be no other than the great Messiah so long promised ; though others, who still expected a temporal prince, and therefore unwilling to acknowledge him for their Saviour, were filled with indignation, particularly the chief priests and elders. But this miracle, as well as all the rest he had wrought in confirmation of his mission, was too evident to be denied ; and therefore they pretended that his whole intention was to establish a new sect in religion, which would both endanger their church and nation. " Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we ? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him, and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation." John xi. 47, etc. The common people, astonished at his miracles, will, if we do not take care to prevent it, certainly set him up for the Messiah ; and the Romans, under pretence of a rebellion, will deprive us both of our liberty and religion. Accordingly they came to a resolution to put him to death. This resolution was not, however, unanimous ; for Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, and other disciples of our Saviour, then members of the council, urged the injustice of what they proposed to do, from the consideration of his miracles and innocence. But Caiaphas the high priest, from a principle of human policy, told them that the nature of government often required certain acts of injustice, in order to procure the safety of the state. " Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." John xi. 49, 50.

The council having thus determined to put Jesus to death, deliberated for the future only upon the best methods of effecting it; and, in all probability, agreed to issue a proclamation, promising a reward to any person who would deliver him into their hands. For this reason our blessed Saviour did not now go up to Jerusalem, though he was within two miles of it; but went to Ephraim, a city on the borders of the wilderness, where he abode with his disciples, being unwilling to go too far into the country, because the passover, at which he was to suffer, was now at hand.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE GREAT PROPHET OF ISRAEL FORETELLS THE RUIN OF THE JEWISH STATE, AND ENFORCES MANY IMPORTANT DOCTRINES BY PARABLE — BLESSES THE CHILDREN, AS EMBLEMS OF THE HEAVENLY AND CHRISTIAN TEMPER AND DISPOSITION.



WHILE the blessed Jesus remained in the retirement on the borders of the wilderness, he was desired by some of the Pharisees, to inform them when the Messiah's kingdom would commence. Nor was their anxiety on that account a matter of surprise; for as they entertained very exalted notions of his coming in pomp and magnificence, it was natural for them to be very desirous of having his empire speedily erected. But our Saviour, to correct this mistaken notion, told them, that the Messiah's kingdom did not consist in any external form of government, erected in some particular country by the terror of arms and desolation of war; but in the subjection of the minds of men, and in rendering them conformable to the laws of the Almighty, which was to be effected by a new dispensation of religion, and this dispensation was already begun. It was therefore needless for them to seek in this or that place, for the kingdom of God, as it had been already preached among them by Christ and his apostles, and confirmed by innumerable miracles. "The kingdom of God," said he, "cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say, Lo here! or lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you." Luke xvii. 20, 21.

Having thus addressed the Pharisees, he turned himself to his disciples, and, in the hearing of all the people, prophesied the destruction of the Jewish state; whose constitution, both religious and civil, was the chief difficulty that opposed the erection of his kingdom. But because love and compassion were eminent parts of our Saviour's temper, he mentioned that dreadful catastrophe in such a manner, as might tend to the reformation and profit of his hearers. He informed them that the prelude to this final destruction would be an universal distress; when they should passionately wish for the personal presence of the Messiah to comfort them, but would be

denied their request. "The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it." Luke xvii. 22. He next cautioned them against those who should recommend different ways of escaping the awful catastrophe, but be utterly unable: "And they shall say to you, See here! or see there! go not after them, nor follow them. For as the lightning that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day. But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation." Luke xvii. 23, etc.

The coming of the son of man shall be sudden and unexpected. He will come in his own strength, and with great power; he will throw down all opposition, destroy his enemies with swift destruction, and establish his religion and government upon the face of the earth, as suddenly as lightning darts from one part of the heaven to the other. But before these things come to pass, he must suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.

Notwithstanding this sudden destruction and calamity that was to overwhelm the Jews, he told them, their stupidity would be equal to that of the old world at the time of the deluge, or that of Sodom before the city was destroyed: "And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that 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 bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. In that day, he which shall be upon the house-top, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife." Luke xvii. 26, etc.

A more proper example than that of Lot's wife could not have been produced: for if any of his hearers, through an immoderate love of the world, should be prevailed on, in order to save their goods, after they were admonished from heaven of their danger, by the signs which prognosticated the destruction of Jerusalem; or if any of them, through want of faith, should think that the calamities predicted to fall on the nation would not either be so great or so sudden as he had declared, and did not use the precaution of a speedy flight; they might behold in Lot's wife an example both of

their sin and of their punishment. He added, that those who were anxiously desirous of preserving life, from an attachment to its pleasures and vanities, should lose it; whereas those who were willing to lay down their lives in his cause, should preserve them eternally. "Whosoever shall seek to save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life, shall preserve it." Luke xvii. 33.

Having foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, our blessed Saviour spoke the following parable, in order to excite them to a constant perseverance in prayer, and not to be weary and faint in their minds. There was in a city, said the Saviour of the world, a judge, who, being governed by atheistical principles, had no regard to the precepts of religion, and, being very powerful, did not regard what was said of him by any man; so that all his decisions were influenced merely by passion or interest. In the same city was also a widow, who, having no friends to assist her, was absolutely unable to defend herself from injuries, or procure redress for any she had received. In this deplorable situation, she had recourse to the unjust judge, in order to obtain satisfaction for some oppressive wrong she had lately received: but the judge was so abandoned to pleasure, that he refused, for a time, to listen to her request; he would not give himself the trouble to examine her case, though the crying injustice pleaded so powerfully for this distressed widow. She was not, however, intimidated by his refusal; she incessantly importuned him, till, by repeated representations of her distress, she filled his mind with such displeasing ideas, that he was obliged to do her justice merely to free himself from her importunity. "Though," said he to himself, "I fear not God, nor regard man; yet, because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me." Luke xviii. 4, 5.

The sentiment conveyed by our blessed Saviour in this parable is very beautiful. We hence learn, that the cries of the afflicted will, by being incessantly repeated, make an impression even on the stony hearts of wicked men, who glory in their impiety, and laugh at all the precepts of justice, virtue, and religion; and therefore cannot fail of being regarded by the benevolent Father of the universe, who listens to the petitions of his faithful servants, and pours on their heads the choicest of his blessings.

"Hear," said the blessed Jesus, "what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily" Luke xviii. 6, etc. As if he had said, If

this judge, though destitute of the fear either of God or man, was thus prompted to espouse the cause of the widow, shall not a righteous God, the Father of his people, avenge on the wicked the many evils they have done unto them, though he bear long with them? Certainly he will, and that in a most awful manner.

Our blessed Saviour having thus enforced the duty of prayer in this expressive parable, asked the following apposite question: "Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" As if he had said, Notwithstanding all the miracles I have wrought, and the excellent doctrines I have delivered, shall I find, at my coming again, that faith among the children of men there is reason to expect? Will not most of them be found to have abandoned the faith, and wantonly to ask, "Where is the promise of his coming?" The blessed Jesus next rebuked the self-righteous Pharisees. But as these particulars are better illustrated by their opposites, he placed the characters of this species of men in opposition to those of the humble; describing the reception each class met with from the Almighty, in a parable of the Pharisee and publican, who went up together to the temple, at the time when the sacrifice was offered, to direct their petitions to the God of their fathers.

The Pharisee, having an high opinion of his own righteousness, went far, it is thought, into the court of the temple, that he might be as near the place of the divine residence as possible. Here he offered his prayer, giving God the praise of his supposed righteousness; and had he been possessed of any, he would have acted properly. "God," said he, "I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in a week, I give tithes of all that I possess." Luke xviii. 11, 12.

Having thus commended himself to God, he wrapt himself up in his own righteousness: and giving the poor publican a scornful look, walked away, perhaps to transgress some of the weightier matters of the law, judgment, justice, and truth, and to devour the houses of distressed widows and helpless orphans. But how different was the behavior of the humble publican! Impressed with a deep sense of his own guilt and unworthiness, he would not even enter the courts of the temple; but stood afar off, and smote upon his breast, and, in the bitterness of his soul, earnestly implored the mercy of Omnipotence. "And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful unto me a sinner." Luke xviii. 13.

Specious as the Pharisee's behavior may seem, his prayer was an

abomination to the Lord; while the poor publican, who confessed his guilt, and implored mercy, was justified in the sight of God rather than this arrogant boaster.

This parable sufficiently indicates, that all the sons of men stand in need of mercy. Both the strict Pharisee, and the despised publican, with the whole race of mankind, are sinners; and consequently all must implore pardon of their gracious Creator. We must all ascend to the house of God, and there pour forth our prayers before the throne of grace; for there he has promised ever to be present, to grant the petitions of all, who ask in sincerity and truth through the Son of his love.

These parables were spoken in the town of Ephraim; and during his continuance in that city, the Pharisees asked him, whether he thought it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? Our Saviour had twice before declared his opinion of this particular, once in Galilee, and once in Perea: it is therefore probable, that the Pharisees were not ignorant of his sentiments, and that they asked that question then, to find an opportunity of incensing the people against him, well knowing that the Israelites held the liberty, which the law gave them of divorcing their wives, as one of their chief privileges. But however that be, Jesus was far from fearing the popular resentment, and accordingly declared the third time against arbitrary divorces. The Pharisees then asked him, Why they were commanded by Moses to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? insinuating, that Moses was so tender of their happiness, that he gave them liberty of putting away their wives when they saw occasion. To which Jesus answered, Because of the hardness of your hearts, Moses suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so. As divorce was not permitted in the state of innocence, so neither shall it be under the Gospel dispensation, unless in case of adultery or fornication. "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whoso marrieth her which is put away, doth commit adultery." Mat. xix. 9.

The disciples were greatly surprised at their Master's decision; and though they held their peace while the Pharisees were present, yet they did not fail to ask him the reason on which he founded his determination, when they were returned home. "And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter: and he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her

husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery." Mark x. 12.

The practice of unlimited divorces which prevailed among the Jews, gave great encouragement to family quarrels, were very destructive of happiness, and hindred the education of their common offspring. Besides, it greatly tended to make their children lose that reverence for them that is due to parents, as it was hardly possible for the children to avoid engaging in the quarrel. Our Lord's prohibition, therefore, of these divorces, is founded on the strongest reasons, and greatly tends to promote the welfare of society.

Our Saviour having, in the course of his ministry, performed innumerable cures in different parts of the country, several persons, who earnestly desired that his blessing might rest upon their offspring, as well as themselves, brought their children to him, desiring that he would put his hands upon them and bless them. The disciples, however, mistaking the intention, were angry with the persons, and rebuked them for endeavoring to give this trouble to their Master. But Jesus no sooner saw it, than he was greatly displeased with his disciples, and ordered them not to hinder parents from bringing their children to him. "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God." Luke xviii. 16.

Such are those, in a spiritual light, who are brought to a sense of their sins, are humbled for them in the sight of God, and depend on Christ alone for salvation.

CHAPTER XXVII.

OUR LORD DEPARTS FROM HIS RETIREMENT—DECLARES THE ONLY WAY OF SALVATION—SHOWS THE DUTY OF IMPROVING THE MEANS OF GRACE, BY THE PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD—PREDICTION OF HIS SUFFERINGS, AND CONTENTION OF THE DISCIPLES ABOUT PRECEDENCE IN HIS KINGDOM.



AS the period of our blessed Saviour's passion now approached, he departed from Ephraim, and repaired by the way of Jericho towards Jerusalem : but before he arrived at Jericho, a ruler of the synagogue came running to him, and kneeling down before him, asked him, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" Mat. xix. 16.

Though this young ruler pretended to pay great honor to our Redeemer, yet the whole was no more than a piece of raillery. For though he styled him "good," yet he did not believe that he was sent from God, as sufficiently appears from his refusing to observe the counsel given him by Jesus : nor could his artful insinuations escape the piercing eye of the great Saviour of the world. He well knew his secret intentions, and beheld the inmost recesses of his soul ; and accordingly rebuked him for his hypocritical address, before he answered his question. "Why callest thou me good? There is none good, but one, that is God." Mat. xix. 17. But as he had desired the advice of our blessed Jesus, who never refused it to any of the sons of men, he readily answered his question ; by telling him, that he must observe all the moral precepts of the law ; there being a necessary connection between the duties of piety towards the Almighty, and of justice and temperance towards men, the latter of which were much more difficult to counterfeit than the former. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus saith, Thou shalt do no murder; Thou shalt not commit adultery; Thou shalt not steal; Thou shalt not bear false witness: Honor thy father and thy mother: And, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept, from my youth up: what lack I yet?" Mat. xix. 17, etc.

These commandments, perhaps, he had obeyed, in the vague sense put upon them by the doctors and interpreters of the law; and therefore, the character he gave of himself, might be very just. For, though he was far from being one who feared God from his heart, he might have appeared in the light of men, as a person of a very fair character. And having maintained that character, notwithstanding his great riches, he certainly deserved commendation; and therefore might be loved by that benevolent person, who left the bosom of his Father, to redeem lost mankind. But he was, at the same time, very faulty, with regard to his love of sensual pleasures: a sin, which might have escaped even his own observation, though it could not escape the all-seeing eye of the Son of God. Our blessed Saviour, therefore, willing to make him sensible of this secret desire of possessing the riches of this world, told him, that if he aimed at perfection, he should distribute his possessions among the poor and indigent, and become his disciple. "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give it to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me."

His heart being set upon his possessions, he had no inclination to a religion that enjoined self-denial, and parting with our darling sins. "But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions." Mat. xix. 22.

This melancholy instance of the pernicious influence of riches over the minds of the children of men, induced our blessed Saviour to caution his disciples against fixing their minds on things of such fearful tendency, by showing how very difficult it was for a rich man to procure a habitation in the regions of eternal happiness. "Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. When his disciples heard it they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible." Mat. xix. 23, etc. If man be not assisted by the grace of God, it will be impossible for him to obtain the happy rewards of the kingdom of heaven; but, by the assistance of grace, which the Almighty never refuses to those who seek it with their whole heart, it is very possible. This answer of the blessed Jesus was however far from satisfying his disciples, who had, doubtless, often reflected with pleasure on the high posts they were to enjoy in their Master's kingdom. Peter seems par-

ticularly to have been disappointed; and therefore addressed his Master, in the name of the rest, begging him to remember that his apostles had actually done what the young man had refused. They had abandoned their relations, their friends, their possessions, and their employments, on his account; and therefore desired to know what reward they were to expect for these instances of their obedience? To which Jesus replied, that they should not fail of a reward even in this life; for immediately after his resurrection, when he ascended to his Father, and entered on his mediatorial office, they should be advanced to the honor of judging the twelve tribes of Israel; that is, of ruling the church of Christ, which they were to plant in different parts of the earth; and, after this life, to a proportionate degree of glory in heaven. "Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye shall also sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Mat. xix. 28.

Having given this answer to Peter, he next mentioned the rewards his other disciples should receive, both in this world and in that which is to come. They, said he, who have forsaken all for my sake, shall be no losers in the end: their benevolent Father, who intends to give them possessions in the heavenly Canaan, will not fail to support them during their long and painful journey to that happy country, and raise them up friends, who shall assist them with those necessaries they might have expected from their relations, had they not left them for my sake. Divine Providence will take care they have every thing valuable that can be given them by their relations, or they could desire from large possessions. They shall indeed be fed with the bread of sorrow, but this shall produce joys to which all earthly pleasures bear no proportion; and, in the end, obtain everlasting life. They shall leave this vale of tears, with all its pains and sorrows, behind them, and fly to the bosom of their Almighty Father, the fountain of life and joy, where they shall be infinitely rewarded for all the sufferings they have undergone for his sake in this world. Things shall then be reversed, and those who have been reviled and contemned on earth for the sake of the Gospel, shall be exalted to honor, glory, and immortality; while the others shall be consigned to eternal infamy. "But many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first." Mat. xix. 30. These words seem also to have been spoken to keep the disciples humble; for, in all probability, they at first understood the promise of their sitting on twelve thrones in a literal sense; as they were ready to construe every ex-

pression to a temporal kingdom, which they still expected their Master would erect upon earth. Our blessed Saviour, therefore, to remove all thoughts they might entertain of this kind, told them, that though he had described the rewards they were to expect for the ready obedience they had shown to his commands, and the pains they were to take in propagating the Gospel among the children of men; yet those rewards were spiritual, and not confined to the Jews alone, but extended also to the Gentiles, who, in point of time, should excel the Jews, and universally embrace the Gospel before that nation was converted.

To excite their ardent pressing forward in faith and good works, our Lord relates the parable of the householder, who, at different hours of the day, hired laborers to work in his vineyard: "The kingdom of heaven," says our blessed Saviour, "is like unto a man that is an householder, which went early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard: And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market-place, and said unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hours, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. So, when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the laborers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, saying, these last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst thou not agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen." Mat. xx. 1-3, etc.

Such is the parable of the householder as delivered by our Sa-

viour ; and from the application he has made of it, it will not be difficult to interpret it. The dispensations of religion which God gave to mankind, in different parts of the world, are represented by the vineyard. The Jews, who were early members of the true church, and obliged to obey the law of Moses, are the laborers which the householder hired early in the morning. The Gentiles, who were converted at several times, by the various interpositions of Providence, to the knowledge and worship of the true God, are the laborers hired at the third, sixth and ninth hours. And the invitation given at the eleventh hour, implies the calling of persons in the evening of life to the knowledge of the Gospel. The law of Moses was a heavy yoke ; and therefore the obedience to its precepts was very elegantly represented by bearing the heat and burden of the whole day. But the proselyted Gentiles paid obedience only to some particular precepts of the law, bore but part of its weight, and were therefore represented by those who were hired at the third, sixth, and ninth hours : while those heathens, who regulated their conduct by the law of nature only, and esteemed the works of justice, piety, temperance, and charity, as their whole duty, are beautifully represented as laboring only one hour in the cool of the evening. When the evening was come, and each laborer was to receive his wages, they were all placed on an equal footing ; these rewards being the privileges and advantages of the Gospel. The Jews, who had borne the grievous yoke of the Mosaic ceremonies, murmured when they found the Gentiles were admitted to its privileges, without being subject to the ceremonial worship. But we must not urge the circumstance of the reward, so far as to fancy that either Jews or Gentiles merited the blessings of the Gospel, by their having labored faithfully in the vineyard, or having behaved well under their several dispensations. The glorious Gospel, with all its blessings, was bestowed entirely by the free grace of God, and without any thing in men to merit it : besides, it was offered promiscuously to all, and embraced by persons of all characters. The conclusion of the parable deserves our utmost attention ; we should meditate upon it, and take care to make our calling and election sure.

After Jesus had finished these discourses, he continued his journey towards Jerusalem, where, it is said, the chief priests and elders, soon after the resurrection of Lazarus, issued a proclamation, promising a reward to any one who should apprehend him. In all probability, this was the reason why the disciples were astonished at the alacrity of our Lord during this journey, while they themselves

followed him trembling. Jesus therefore thought proper to repeat the prophecies concerning his sufferings, in order to show his disciples that they were entirely voluntary; adding, that though the Jews should put him to death, yet, instead of weakening, it should increase their faith, especially as he would rise again on the third day from the dead. "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: and they shall scourge him, and put him to death; and the third day he shall rise again." Luke xviii. 31-33.

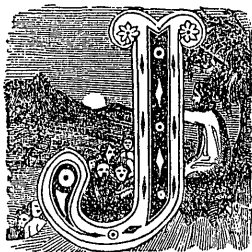
As this prediction manifestly tended to the confirmation of the ancient prophecies, it must have given the greatest encouragement to his disciples, had they understood and applied it in a proper manner: but they were so ignorant of the Scriptures, that they had no idea what he meant. "And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them; neither knew they the things which were spoken." The sons of Zebedee were so blinded by prejudice, that they thought their Master, by his telling them he would rise again from the dead, meant that he would then erect his empire; and accordingly begged that he would confer on them the chief posts in his kingdom; which they expressed, by desiring to be seated, the "one on his right hand, and the other on his left;" in allusion to his placing the twelve apostles upon twelve thrones, judging the tribes of Israel. But some writers think that this ignorant request was made at some other time. This race of mortals, ever since our Saviour's transfiguration, had conceived very high notions of his kingdom, and possibly of their own merit also, because they had been permitted to behold that miracle. But Jesus told them, that they were ignorant of the nature of the honor they requested; and since they desired to share with him in glory, asked them, If they were willing to share with him also in his sufferings? "Ye know not what ye ask: are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" Mat. xx. 22. The two disciples, ravished with the prospect of the dignity they were aspiring after, replied, without hesitation, that they were both able and willing to share any hardship their Master might meet with in the way to the kingdom. To which he answered, that they should certainly share with him in his troubles and afflictions; but that they had asked a favor which was not his to give. "Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism

I am baptized with : but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give ; but it shall be given unto them for whom it is prepared of my Father." Mat. xx. 23.

This ambitious request of the two brothers raised the indignation of the rest of the disciples, who, thinking themselves equally deserving the principal posts in the Messiah's kingdom, were highly offended at the arrogance of the sons of Zebedee. Jesus therefore, in order to restore harmony among his disciples, told them, that his kingdom was very different from those of the present world ; and the greatness of his disciples did not, like that of secular princes, consist in reigning over others in an absolute and despotic manner. "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you : but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister ; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant : even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Mat. xx. 25, etc. Ye know that rank and precedence denote merit of character here ; but Christian greatness and spiritual precedence consist in humility, of which Christ your Saviour was made an eminent pattern.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE BENEVOLENT SAVIOUR RESTORES SIGHT TO THE BLIND—KINDLY REGARDS ZACCHEUS THE PUBLICAN—DELIVERS THE PARABLE OF THE SERVANTS ENTRUSTED WITH THEIR LORD'S MONEY—ACCEPTS THE KIND OFFICES OF MARY—MAKES A PUBLIC ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM.



ESUS, with his disciples and the multitude that accompanied him, were now arrived at Jericho, a famous city of Palestine, and the second in the kingdom. Near this town Jesus cured two blind men, who sat by the road-side begging, and expressed their belief in him as the Messiah. "And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him.

And behold, two blind men, sitting by the way-side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David. And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David." Mat. xx. 29, etc. This importunate request had its desired effect on the Son of God. He stood still, and called them to him, that by their manner of walking the spectators might be convinced they were really blind. As soon as they approached him, he asked them, What they requested with such earnestness? To which the beggars answered, That they might receive their sight. "What will ye that I shall do unto you? They say, Lord, that our eyes may be opened." This request was not made in vain: their compassionate Saviour touched their eyes, and immediately they received sight, and followed him, glorifying and praising God.

After conferring sight on these beggars, Zaccheus, chief of the publicans, having often heard the fame of our Saviour's miracles, was desirous of seeing his person; but the lowness of his stature preventing him from satisfying his curiosity, "he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore-tree to see him; for he was to pass that way." As Jesus approached the place where he was, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, "Zaccheus, make haste, and come

down; for to-day I must abide at thy house." Luke xix. 5. The publican expressed his joy at our Lord's condescending to visit him, took him to his house, and showed him all the marks of civility in his power. But the people, when they saw he was going to the house of a publican, condemned his conduct as not conformable to his character of a prophet. Zaccheus seems to have heard these unjust reflections; and therefore was willing to justify himself before Jesus and his attendants. "And Zaccheus stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forso much as he also is a son of Abraham." Luke xix. 8, etc:

Our Saviour, further to convince the people, that the design of his mission was to seek and to restore life and salvation to lost and perishing sinners, adds, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

While Jesus continued in the house of Zaccheus the publican, he spake a parable to his followers, who supposed, at his arrival in the royal city, he would erect the long-expected kingdom of the Messiah. "A certain nobleman," says he, "went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass, that, when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. And another came, saying, Lord, behold here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man; thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: Wherefore then gavest thou not my money into the bank, that at

my coming I might have required mine own with usury? And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say unto you, that unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me." Luke xix. 12, etc.

In this parable we have the characters of three sorts of men delineated by our blessed Saviour himself: namely, the truly faithful disciples of the Messiah, who improve their every talent well; those who fear and love the Lord, but either begin late, or are less diligent, and therefore are not so holy and useful as the first; and the slothful servant, who buries his talent, or, which is much the same, neglects to improve it to the honor of God. And the treatment these servants met with, represents the final sentences that will be passed upon them, by the awful Judge of the whole earth. The true disciples shall be rewarded with the honors and pleasures of immortality; the slothful stripped of all the advantages they so often boasted, and loaded with eternal infamy; and shall suffer punishment, severe in proportion to the degree of their guilt. But though this is the general sense of the parable, yet it has also a particular relation to the time when it was spoken: and was intended to teach the disciples, that though they might imagine the Messiah's kingdom was speedily to be erected, and they were soon to partake of its happiness, yet this was not to happen before the death of their Master; and they themselves must perform a long and laborious course of services before they received their eternal reward. That after his resurrection, when he had obtained the kingdom, he would return from his seat of majesty, and reckon with all his servants, and reward every one according to the improvements he had made in the trust committed to his care; and that he would execute, in an exemplary manner, his vengeance on those who refused to let him reign over them, and did all in their power to hinder the erection of his kingdom among others.

After speaking this parable, Jesus left the house of Zaccheus the publican, and continued his journey toward Jerusalem, where he purposed to celebrate the passover: he was earnestly expected by the people, who came up to purify themselves, and who began to doubt whether he would venture to come to the feast. This delay, however, was occasioned by the proclamation issued by the chief

priests, promising a reward to any who would discover the place of his retirement. "Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that if any man knew where he were, he should show it, that they might take him." John xi. 57.

Six days before the passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, and repaired to the house of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. "There they made him a supper; and Martha served; but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment. Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always." John xii. 2, etc.

As Bethany was not above two miles from Jerusalem, the news of his arrival was soon spread through the capital, and great numbers of the citizens came to see Lazarus, who had been raised from the dead, together with the great Prophet who had wrought so stupendous a miracle: and many of them were convinced, both of the resurrection of the former and the divinity of the latter: but the news of their conversion, together with the reason of it, being currently reported in Jerusalem, the chief priests were soon sensible of the weight so great a miracle must have on the minds of the people; and therefore determined, if possible, to put Jesus and Lazarus to death. Our blessed Lord, though he knew the design of the Jews upon him, also knew that it became him to fulfill all righteousness; and was so far from declining to visit Jerusalem, that he even entered it in a public manner. "When they were come to Bethphage, unto the Mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me. And if any man say aught unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them. All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. And the disciples went, and did as

Jesus commanded them, and brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strewed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest. And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee." Mat. xxi. 1, etc.

Some of the most strenuous of the deistical tribe have endeavored to turn this circumstance into ridicule; but in this they manifest the height of ignorance, because they judge by the prejudices of their own times and country. And when those, who look no farther than the manners and the customs before them, examine this part of the sacred history by the standard of modern prejudices, they see, or think they see, something quite inconsistent with the gravity and dignity of the person pretending to be king of the Jews, when Christ is represented entering in triumph into Jerusalem sitting on an ass. But however contemptible an ass, or a man riding on that creature, may be at present, it was not so from the beginning. In many countries, and particularly in Judea, persons of the highest distinction usually rode upon asses. The governors of Israel are described, in the song of Deborah, as "riding on white asses." Judges v. 10. "And the thirty sons of Jair, who was judge and prince over Israel twenty-two years, are said to ride on thirty ass-colts." Judges x. 4. "And another judge is recorded to have had forty sons, and thirty nephews, that rode on seventy ass-colts." Judges xii. 14.

It may, however, be asked, supposing it was an unusual thing to ride on an ass, Why should this common practice be mentioned in relation to the Messiah as a mark of distinction? Might not the prophet, upon this supposition, as well have said, He shall come walking on foot? And would he not have been as well known by one character as by the other? Besides, if we turn to the book of Zechariah where this prophecy is to be found, we shall see the person there described to be a king, a just king, and one having salvation. And what is there in this character, of riding on the foal of an ass, that is peculiar to a king, to a just king, and to one who was to bring salvation and deliverance to his people? These questions, however difficult they at first sight may appear, are easily answered; not by considering the state and condition of things in general, but

that peculiar to a king of Israel, on which the propriety of this character is founded.

If we look into the history of the rise and fall of nations, we shall generally find, that their prosperity and success were proportioned to the force and power, and to the conduct and abilities, of their leaders. But with the Jews, who from slaves in Egypt became a powerful people, the case was very different. The best and greatest of their kings, and he who carried their empire to its greatest height, has left us another account of their affairs: "The people," says he, "got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them; but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favor unto them." Ps. xlv. 3, etc.

When we read these, and other similar passages, we are apt to ascribe them to the piety and devotion of the Psalmist, to consider them only as acknowledgments of God's general providence in the affairs of the world; and hence are apt to overlook, or not sufficiently consider, the historical truth they contain. It is true, indeed, that all success, in the strictest sense, should be ascribed to God; that it is he who giveth victory unto kings: but he generally makes use of natural means; and it is no offence to his providence, that kings list their thousands of horse and foot to secure themselves and their dominions. But with the Jews it was very different: they were never so weak, as when they made themselves strong; never so certainly ruined, as when their force was great enough to create a confidence in themselves. For God hath taken the defence of Israel upon himself; and whenever the people took it out of his hands to place it in their own, they were sure to be undone. Nay, so tender was God of his honor in this respect, and so concerned to justify his promise to protect Israel, in the eyes of the world, that he would not always permit natural causes to interfere in their deliverance, lest the people should grow doubtful to whom they ought to ascribe their victories; and for the same reason it was, that he commanded the people to have neither horses nor chariots of war for their defence. Not because they were thought useless in war, for it is well known they were the strength of the ancient kingdoms; but because God himself had undertaken their defence, and he wanted neither horse nor foot to fight their battles.

This law, as is evident from the Jewish history, was observed for near four hundred years; namely, till about the middle of Solomon's reign. And while David swayed the sceptre of Israel, when the

kingdom was carried to its utmost height, he himself rode upon a mule, and provided no better equipage for his son on the day of his coronation. "Cause Solomon, my son," said David, "to ride upon my own mule, and bring him down to Gihon. And let Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, anoint him their king over Israel." Kings i. 33, 34. And when that pious prince looked back, and contemplated this state of things, he might well say, "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God." Ps. xx. 7.

In the reign of Solomon things quickly changed their aspect. He married the daughter of the king of Egypt, and opened a commerce between that country and his own, by which means he soon acquired an immense number of horses and chariots; and all his successors, when they had it in their power, followed his example. But what did the kingdom gain by this change? They were before a rich and flourishing people: but after breaking the law of the Most High, their wealth and power gradually declined; till at last their habitations were laid waste, their temple and cities burned with fire, and they themselves carried captive into a strange land. It may perhaps be asked, Wherein the guilt of having the country full of horses consisted? There is certainly no moral crime in purchasing and keeping those creatures; but the kings of Israel were exalted to the throne, on condition that they should renounce the assistance of chariots and horses, and depend upon God for success in the day of battle.

Having thus considered this law, and the consequences that resulted from the breach of it, let us now look back to the prophecy relating to the Messiah. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem." Zech. ix. 9, etc.

Such is the king who was to save the descendants of Jacob. And what sort of a king could be expected? Is it possible to imagine, that God would send a king to save them who would be like the kings which had undone them? Is it not more reasonable to think, that he would resemble those who had been deliverers of their country? kings who feared God, and therefore feared no enemy; who, though mounted on asses, and colts the foals of asses, were able to put to flight the thousands and ten thousands of chariots and horses that came against them.

The king foretold by the prophet was also to be just, meek, and

lowly. But how could he have deserved that character, had he appeared in the pride and pomp of war, surrounded with horses and chariots, in direct opposition to the law of God? or, as he was to bring salvation to the people, could he make use of those means which God never had prospered, and which he declared he never would? It appears then that it was essential to the character of a king of Israel who was to be just and lowly, and to bring salvation with him, that he should come riding on an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. But if any doubt can yet remain, let the prophet himself explain it, who, immediately after the description of the promised King, adds, "And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem:" plainly intimating, that the character given of the Messiah, that he should ride on an ass, was in opposition to the pride of their warlike kings, who, by their great strength in chariots and horses, had ruined themselves and their people.

Thus have we undeniably shown the intention of the prophet when he foretold that the Messiah should ride on an ass; and from hence it appears, that the enemies of revelation have not the least reason for turning this transaction into ridicule. Was it any reproach to Christ to ride into Jerusalem on the foal of an ass, when David, the greatest of his ancestors, and Solomon, the wisest, as long as he was wise, rode in the same manner? Can the Jews object to this circumstance, and yet talk of the glories of David, and the magnificence of Solomon, who, in the midst of all that glory and magnificence, did the very same thing? Or can they stumble at this character of the Messiah, without forgetting by what princes their ancestors were saved, and by what princes they were undone?

But to leave this digression. The prodigious multitudes that now accompanied Jesus, filled the Pharisees and great men with malice and envy, because every method they had taken to hinder the people from following Jesus had proved ineffectual. "The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after him." John xii. 19.

But when our blessed Saviour drew near the city of Jerusalem, surrounded by the rejoicing multitude, notwithstanding the many affronts he had there received, he beheld the city with a divine generosity and benevolence which nothing can equal, wept over it, and, in the most pathetic manner, lamented the calamities which he foresaw were coming upon it, because its inhabitants were ignorant of the time of their visitation. "If," said he, "thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!

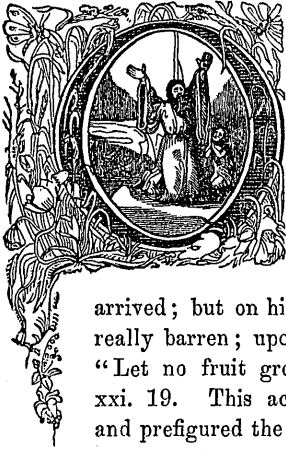
but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee ; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." Luke xix. 42, etc.

Behold here, ye wondering mortals, behold an example of generosity infinitely superior to any furnished by the heathen world—an example highly worthy for them to imitate and admire !

When Jesus, surrounded by the multitude, entered Jerusalem, the whole city was moved on account of the prodigious concourse of people that accompanied him, and their continual acclamations. Jesus rode immediately to the temple : but it being evening, he soon left the city, to the great discouragement of the people, who expected he was immediately to have taken into his hands the reins of government. " And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple : and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the even tide was come, he went unto Bethany with the twelve." Mark xi. 11.

CHAPTER XXIX.

JESUS PRONOUNCES A CURSE UPON THE FIG-TREE—EXPELS THE PROFANERS OF THE TEMPLE—ASSERTS HIS DIVINE AUTHORITY, AND DELIVERS TWO PARABLES.



OUR blessed Saviour left Bethany at the earliest dawn, to visit again the capital of Judea. And as he pursued his journey, he saw at a distance a fig-tree, which, from its fulness of leaves, promised abundance of fruit. This inviting object induced him to approach it in expectation of finding figs, for he was hungry, and the season for gathering them was not yet

arrived; but on his coming to the tree, he found it to be really barren; upon which the blessed Jesus said to it, "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforth forever." Mat. xxi. 19. This action, which was purely emblematical, and prefigured the speedy ruin of the Jewish nation, on account of its unfruitfulness, under all the advantages it then enjoyed, has, by the enemies of revelation, been represented as an action unbecoming the Redeemer of mankind. But if they had fully considered its intention, they would have been clearly convinced, that, like the rest of his miracles, it was done with a gracious intention; namely, to awaken the Jews from their lethargy, and, by timely repentance, prevent the total ruin of their church and nation.

Being disappointed in finding fruit on the fig-tree, our blessed Saviour pursued his journey to Jerusalem; and, on his arrival, went straightway to the temple, the outer court of which he found full of merchandise. A sight like this grieved his holy and righteous soul, so that he drove them all out of the temple, overturned the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and would not suffer any vessel to be carried through the temple; "saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves." Luke xix. 45.

St. Jerome considers this as one of the greatest of our Saviour's

miracles. And it must be owned, that the circumstances are very extraordinary: that one man should undertake so bold, and execute so hazardous a task; one man, without a commission from Cæsar; without any countenance from the Jewish rulers; without any arms, either to terrify the multitude or defend himself. That he should cast out the whole tribe of mercenary traffickers, wrest from those worshipers of wealth their darling idol, and trample it under foot: and all this without tumult or opposition; not one of the sacrilegious rabble daring to move the hand or open the mouth. Whosoever, I say, reflects on the fierce and ungovernable nature of an enraged populace, and considers the outrageous zeal of Demetrius and the craftsmen on a less irritating occasion, may possibly find himself almost, if not altogether, of the Latin father's opinion.

There is a tradition, that a certain bright and dazzling lustre flamed from his eyes, which they were unable to bear, as the people could not behold the face of Moses for the glory that surrounded him. But as the Scriptures take no notice of this transcendent lustre, we must only adore the greatness of the fact, and, at the same time, so improve this miracle to our spiritual advantage, as to secure, by accepting his grace, the power of this mighty Reformer in our favor; that, when he shall come in glory, we may be safe under the shadow of his divine wings, while he takes fearful vengeance on those who prostitute the most sacred places to mercenary purposes.

Having dispersed this venal tribe, the people brought unto him the blind, the lame, and the diseased, who were all healed by the Son of God; so that the very children, when they saw the many miraculous cures he performed, proclaimed him to be the great Son of David, the long-expected Messiah. Such behavior not a little incensed the Pharisees; but they feared the people, and therefore only asked him, If he heard what the children said? insinuating, that he ought to rebuke them, and not suffer them thus to load him with the highest praises. But Jesus, instead of giving a direct answer to their question, repeated a passage out of the eighth Psalm: "Have ye never read," said the blessed Jesus, "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength?" Giving them to understand, that the meanest of God's creatures have been made instrumental in spreading his praise.

The evening being now come, Jesus, with his disciples, left the city, and retired to Bethany, where his benevolent miracle, in raising Lazarus from the dead, had procured him many friends, among whom

he was always in safety. The next morning, as they were returning to Jerusalem, the disciples were astonished at beholding the fig-tree, that had been but the morning before declared barren, "dried up from the roots:" they had, in all probability, forgotten what our Saviour had said to this fig-tree, till its dry and withered aspect brought it again to their memory. Peter, on seeing this astonishing phenomenon, said unto Jesus, "Master, behold the fig-tree which thou cursedst is withered away!" To which Jesus answered, that whoever had faith in the Almighty, or thoroughly believed in his miracles, should be able to do much greater things than the withering of the fig-tree. "And Jesus answering, saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith." Mark xi. 22, 23. Our Lord added, that whatsoever they should ask by faith, they should receive; and concluded by giving them directions concerning prayer, which was necessary to increase the faith he mentioned. "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses." Mark xi. 25, 26.

During the time the blessed Jesus remained in the temple, certain proselyted Greeks, who came up to worship at Jerusalem, desired to see him, having long cherished expectations of beholding the promised Messiah. Accordingly they applied to Philip, a native of Bethsaida, who mentioned it to Andrew, and he told it to Jesus. Upon which our blessed Saviour told his disciples, that he should soon be honored with the conversion of the Gentiles: "The hour is come," said he, "that the Son of man should be glorified." But declared, that before this glorious event happened, he must suffer death; illustrating the necessity there was of his dying, by the similitude of casting grain into the earth. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." John xii. 24. Adding, that since it was absolutely necessary for him, their Lord and Master, to suffer the pains of death before he ascended the throne of his glory; so they, as his followers, must also expect to be persecuted and spitefully used for his name's sake; but if they persevered, and even resolved to lose their lives in his service, he would

reward their constancy with a crown of glory. At the same time he intimated to the strangers, that if their desire of conversing with him proceeded from a hope of obtaining from him temporal preferences, they would find themselves sadly disappointed. "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honor." John xii. 26.

Our blessed Lord was now so affected, that he uttered, in a very pathetic manner, his grief, and addressed his heavenly Father for succor in his distress. "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour." John xii. 27. This should teach us, that prayer is the only proper method of easing the mind overwhelmed with distress; but at the same time to be always resigned to the divine will; for though the weakness of human nature may shrink when persecution or sufferings of any kind appear, yet, by reflecting on the wisdom, goodness, and power of God to deliver us, we ought to support every trial, however severe, with patience, as he doubtless purposes some happy ends by these afflictions.

Our blessed Lord having made a short prayer to his Father, begged him to demonstrate the truth of his mission by some token which could not be resisted. "Father, glorify thy name." Nor had he hardly uttered these words, before he was answered by an audible voice from heaven, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." The miracles thou hast already performed have glorified my name; and I will still continue to glorify it, by other miracles to be wrought before the sons of men. This voice was evidently supernatural, resembling thunder in loudness, but sufficiently articulate to be understood by those who heard our blessed Saviour pray to his heavenly Father. And Jesus told his disciples, that it was not given for his sake, but to confirm them in their faith of his mission. "This voice," said he, "came not because of me, but for your sakes." It came to confirm what I have told you relating to my sufferings, death, resurrection, and the conversion of the Gentile world to the Christian religion. Accordingly he communicated this comfortable reflection to his disciples, telling them that the time was at hand, when the kingdom of Satan should be destroyed, and that of the Messiah exalted. "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." John xii. 31, 32. The people, not understanding the force of this affirmation, replied, "We

have heard out of the law that Christ abideth forever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up?" John xii. 34. Our Lord, in answer, told them that they should soon be deprived of his presence and miracles: and therefore they would do well to listen attentively to his precepts, firmly believe the doctrines he delivered, and wisely improve them to their eternal advantage; for otherwise they would be soon overtaken with spiritual blindness, and rendered incapable of inheriting the promises of the Gospel. That while they enjoyed the benefit of his preaching and miracles, which sufficiently proved the truth of his mission from the Most High, they should believe on him; for by that means alone they could become the children of God. "Yet a little while is the light with you: walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you; for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light." John xii. 35, etc.

Having thus addressed the multitude, he retired privately. But notwithstanding the many miracles our great Redeemer had wrought in the presence of these perverse and stiff-necked people, the generality of them refused to own him for the Messiah; being filled with the vain expectations of a temporal prince, who was to rule over all the kingdoms of the earth, and place his throne in Jerusalem. Some indeed, even of the rulers, believed on him, though they thought it prudent to conceal their faith, lest they should, like the blind man, be excommunicated, or put out of the synagogue; valuing the good opinion of men above the approbation of the Almighty. Nevertheless, to inspire such as believed on him with courage, he cried in the temple, "He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me." John xii. 44. He that acknowledges the divinity of my mission, acknowledges the power and grace of God, on whose special errand I am thus sent. Adding, he that seeth the miracles I perform, seeth the operations of that Omnipotent Power by which I act. I am the Sun of righteousness, whose beams dispel the darkness of ignorance in which the sons of men are involved; and I am come to deliver all who believe on me out of that palpable darkness. You must not, however, expect that I will at present execute judgment upon those who refuse to embrace the doctrines of the Gospel; for I am not come to condemn and punish, but to save the world, and consequently to try every gentle and winning method to reclaim the wicked from the error of their ways, and turn their feet into the paths of life and salvation. They shall not, however, es-

cape unpunished who neglect the instructions and offers of salvation now made to them; for the doctrines I have preached shall bear witness against them at the awful tribunal of the last day; and as it has aggravated their sin, so it shall then heighten their punishment.

While Jesus was thus preaching in the temple, a deputation of priests and elders was sent from the supreme council, to ask him concerning the nature of the authority by which he acted, whether he was a prophet, priest, or king, as no other person had a right to make any alterations, either in church or state; and, if he had laid claim to either of those characters, from whom had he received it? But our blessed Saviour, instead of giving a direct answer to the questions of the Pharisees, asked them another; promising, if they resolved his question, he would also answer theirs. "I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?" Mat. xx. 24, etc. This question puzzled the priests. They considered, on the one hand, that if it was from God, it would oblige them to acknowledge the authority of Jesus, John having more than once publicly declared him to be the Messiah; and, on the other, if they peremptorily denied the authority of John, they would be in danger of being stoned by the people, who in general considered him as a prophet. They therefore thought it the most eligible method to answer, that they could not tell from whence John's baptism was. Thus, by declining to answer the question asked them by Jesus, they left him at liberty to decline giving the council the satisfaction they had sent to demand. At the same time they plainly confessed, that they were unable to pass any opinion on John the Baptist, notwithstanding he claimed the character of a messenger from God, and they had sent to examine his pretensions. This was, in effect, to acknowledge that they were incapable of judging of any prophet whatsoever. Well, therefore, might the blessed Jesus say, "Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things." You have no right to ask, since you have confessed you are unable to judge; and therefore I shall not satisfy your inquiry. But because this deputation had said that they were ignorant from whence the baptism of John was, our blessed Saviour sharply rebuked them, conveying his reproof in the parable of the two sons commanded to work in their father's vineyard; and, asking their opinion of the two, made them condemn themselves.

"A certain man," said he, "had two sons; and he came to the

first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard." But this ungracious youth very roughly answered the kind command of his father, and without the least preface or appellation of respect, answered, "I will not." However, after reflecting on the impropriety and indecency of such behavior to his kind and indulgent father, he repented of what he had done, and went to work in the vineyard. The father, having met with so sharp a reply from the former son, had recourse to the other, and in the same manner ordered him to work that day in his vineyard. This son was very different from the former, and, in a very dutiful manner, said, "I go, sir." But notwithstanding this seeming obedience, he delayed to do as his father desired; he did not go to work in the vineyard. The temper and behavior of the second son were exactly conformable to those of the Pharisees. They gave the Almighty the most honorable titles, and professed the utmost zeal for his service, in their prayers and praises; but at the same time refused to do any part of the work that he enjoined them. In the character of the other son, the disposition of the publicans and harlots is well described. They neither professed nor promised to do the will of their Creator; but when they came to reflect seriously on their conduct, and the offers of mercy which were so kindly made them, they submitted to our Saviour, and, in consequence of their faith, amended their lives.

Having thus finished the parable, our Lord asked the Pharisees, "Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first." They did not immediately perceive, that by this answer they condemned themselves, till our Saviour made a just application of the parable in this sharp but just rebuke: "Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not," nor entered into your Father's vineyard, though, like the second son, you promised in the most fair and candid manner; "but the publicans and harlots believed him," repented of their former disobedience, and entered into the vineyard. The blessed Jesus did not only rebuke them for rejecting the preaching of the Baptist, but represented the crime of the nation, in rejecting all the prophets which had been sent since they became a nation, and, among the rest, the only begotten Son of the Most High: warning them, at the same time, of their danger, and the punishment that would inevitably ensue if they continued in their rebellion. The outward economy of religion in which they gloried, would be taken from them; their relation to God as his people can-

celled, and the national constitution destroyed: but because these topics were extremely disagreeable, he delivered them under the veil of the following parable: "There was," said he, "a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a wine-press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country." Mat. xxi. 33.

The comparison of the church to a vineyard is frequent in the sacred Scripture; but this particular parable, for the fuller conviction of the Jews, is expressly taken from the fifth chapter of the prophet Isaiah, with which they could not fail of being well acquainted, nor ignorant of its meaning, as the prophet at the end of it adds, "The vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant; and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry." Our Saviour therefore continued the metaphor, telling them, that "when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another." The Almighty sent the prophets to exhort the Jews to entertain just sentiments of religion, and tread in the paths of virtue; but the Jews, irritated at the prophets for the freedom they used in reproving their sins, persecuted and slew them with unrelenting fury. Their wickedness, however, in killing these messengers, did not instantly provoke the Almighty to pour down his vengeance upon them; he sent more prophets to exhort and reclaim them, but they met with no better fate than the former. His mercy, however, still continued; and that no means might be left untried, he sent unto them his own Son, whose authority being clearly established by undeniable miracles, ought to have been acknowledged cheerfully by these wicked men. But how different was the consequence! "When the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the Lord, therefore, of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons." Shocked at this awful representation, the Pharisees exclaimed, and said, "God forbid!" surely these husbandmen will not proceed to such desperate iniquity: surely the vineyard will not thus be taken from them. But to confirm the truth of this, our

Saviour added a remarkable prophecy of himself, and his rejection, from Psalm cxviii. "Did ye never," said he, "read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders refused is become the headstone of the corner: this is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes?" This rejection of the Messiah by the Jews, and the reception he met with among the Gentiles, all brought to pass by the providence of God, are wonderful events; and therefore I say unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

The chief priests and Pharisees being afraid to apprehend Jesus, he was at liberty to proceed in the offices of his ministry. Accordingly he delivered another parable, wherein he described, on the one hand, the bad success which the preaching of the Gospel was to meet with among the Jews; and, on the other, the cheerful reception given it among the Gentiles. This gracious design of the Almighty, in giving the Gospel to the children of men, our blessed Saviour illustrated by the behavior of a certain king, who, in honor of his son, made a great feast, to which he invited many guests. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son." This marriage supper, or great feast, signifies the joys of grace and glory, which are properly compared to an elegant entertainment, on account of their exquisiteness and duration; and are here said to be prepared in honor of the Son of God, because they are bestowed on men in consequence of his sufferings in their stead and behalf.

Some time before this supper was ready, the servants went forth to call the guests to the wedding; that is, when the fulness of time approached, the Jews, as being the peculiar people of God, were first called by John the Baptist, and afterwards by Christ himself; but they refused all these benevolent calls of mercy, and rejected the kind invitations of the Gospel, though pressed by the preaching of the Messiah and his forerunner. After our Saviour's resurrection and ascension, the apostles were sent forth to inform the Jews that the Gospel covenant was established, mansions in heaven prepared, and nothing wanting but the cheerful acceptance of the honor designed them. "Again he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage." But these messengers were as unsuccessful as the former. The Jews, undervaluing the favor offered them, mocked at the message: and some of them, more rude than the rest, insulted, beat, and

slew the servants that had been sent to call them to the marriage supper of the Lamb. "But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies and destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city." This part of the parable plainly predicted the destruction of the Jews by the Roman armies, called here the armies of the Almighty, because they were appointed by him to execute vengeance on that once favorite, but now rebellious people.

The parable is then continued as follows: The king again sent forth his servants into the countries of the Gentiles, with orders to compel all that they met with to come in to the marriage. This was immediately done, and the wedding was furnished with guests; but when the king came into the apartment, "he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment; and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen." Mat. xxii. 11, etc.

By the conclusion of the parable, we learn that the profession of the Christian religion will not save a man, unless he be saved by grace, and act from Christian principles. Let us therefore, who have obeyed the call, and are by profession the people of God, think often on that awful day, when the King will come in to see his guests; when the Almighty will, with the greatest strictness, view every soul that lays claim to the joys of heaven. Let us think of the speechless confusion that will seize such as have not on the wedding garment, and of the inexorable anxiety with which they will be consigned to weeping and gnashing of teeth; and let us remember, that to have seen for a while the light of the Gospel, and the fair beamings of an eternal hope, will add deeper and more sensible horrors to these gloomy caverns. On the other hand, to animate and encourage us, let us anticipate the joyful hour which will consign us to bliss immortal.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE BLESSED JESUS WISELY RETORTS ON THE PHARISEES AND HERODIANS, WHO PROPOUND AN INTRICATE QUESTION TO HIM — SETTLES THE MOST IMPORTANT POINT OF THE LAW — ENFORCES HIS MISSION AND DOCTRINE — AND FORETELLS THE JUDGMENT THAT WOULD FALL UPON THE PHARISAICAL TRIBE.



S this representation of the state of the finally impenitent, appeared to be leveled at the Pharisees, they immediately concerted with the Herodians and Sadducees, on the most proper method of putting Jesus to death. It is sufficiently evident, that their hatred was now carried to the highest pitch, because the most violent enmity which had so long subsisted between the two sects was on this occasion suspended, and they joined together to execute their cruel determination on the Son of God. They however thought it most eligible to act very cautiously, and endeavor if possible to catch some hasty expression from him, that they might render him odious to the people, and find something against him that might serve as a basis for a prosecution. Accordingly, they sent some of their disciples to him, with orders to feign themselves just men, who maintained the greatest veneration for the divine law, and dreaded nothing more than the doing any thing inconsistent with its precepts; and, under this specious cloak of hypocrisy, to beg his determination of an affair that had long lain heavy on their consciences; namely, the paying tribute to Cæsar, which they thought inconsistent with their zeal for religion. This question was, it seems, furiously debated in our Saviour's time; one Judas, a native of Galilee, having implanted in the minds of the people, a notion that taxes to a foreign power were absolutely unlawful. A doctrine so pleasing to the worldly-minded Jews could not fail of friends, especially among the lower class, and therefore must have had many partisans among the multitude that then surrounded the Son of God. The priests therefore imagined, that it was not in his power to decide the point, without rendering himself obnoxious to some of the

parties. If he should say it was lawful to pay the taxes, they believed that the people in whose hearing the question was proposed, would be incensed against him, not only as a base pretender, who, on being attacked publicly, renounced the character of the Messiah, which he had assumed among his friends, but also a flatterer of princes, and a betrayer of the liberties of his country; one who taught a doctrine inconsistent with the known privileges of the people of God—but if he should affirm that it was unlawful to pay tribute, they determined to inform the governor, who, they hoped, would punish him as a framer of sedition. Highly elated with their project, they accordingly came; and, after passing an encomium on the truth of his mission, his courage, and impartiality, they proposed this famous question—“Master,” said they, “we know that thou art true, and carest for no man; for thou regardest not the persons of men, but teachest the way of God in truth. Tell us, therefore, what thinkest thou, Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not?” Mark xii. 14, 15. But the blessed Jesus saw their secret intentions, and accordingly called them hypocrites; to signify that though they pretended to make conscience of, and show a regard for, the will of God, in proposing this question, he saw through the thin veil that concealed their design from the eyes of mortals, and knew that their intention was to ensnare him. He, however, did not decline answering their question, but previously desired to see a piece of the tribute-money. The piece was accordingly produced, and proved to be coined by the Romans: upon which our blessed Saviour answered them—Since this money bears the image of Cæsar, it is his: and by making use of it, you acknowledge his authority. But at the same time that you discharge your duty to the civil magistrate, you should never forget the duty you owe to your God; but remember, that as you profess to bear the image of the great, the omnipotent King, you are his subjects, and ought to love him with all your heart, and serve him to the very utmost of your power. The Pharisees and their followers, under a pretence of religion, often justified sedition: but the Herodians, in order to ingratiate themselves with the reigning powers, made them a compliment of their consciences, complying with whatever they enjoined, however opposite their commands might be to the divine law. Our Lord therefore adapted his answer to them both, exhorting them, in their regards to God and the magistrate, to give each his due; there being no inconsistency between their rights, when their rights only are insisted on. So unexpected an answer quite dis-

concerted and silenced these crafty enemies. They were astonished both at his having discovered their design, and his wisdom in avoiding the snare they had so artfully laid for him. "When they had heard these words they marveled, and left him, and went their way." Mat. xxii. 22.

Though our Lord thus wisely obviated their crafty designs, enemies came against him from every quarter. The Sadducees, who denied the doctrine of a future state, together with the existence of angels and spirits, came forward to the charge; proposing to him their strongest argument against the resurrection, which they deduced from the law given by Moses with regard to marriage. "Master," said they, "Moses wrote unto us, If any man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. There were, therefore, seven brethren; and the first took a wife, and died without children. And the second took her to wife, and he died childless. And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also. And they left no children, and died. Last of all, the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife." Luke xx. 28, etc.

The Sadducees, who believed the soul to be nothing more than refined matter, were persuaded that, if there were any future state, it must resemble the present; and being in that state material and mortal, the human race could not be continued, nor the individuals rendered happy, without the pleasures and conveniences of marriage. And hence considered it as a necessary consequence of the doctrine of the resurrection, or a future state, that every man's wife should be restored to him. But this argument our blessed Saviour soon confuted, by telling the Sadducees they were ignorant of the power of God, who had created spirit as well as matter, and who can render man completely happy in the enjoyment of himself. He also observed, that the nature of the life obtained in a future state made marriage altogether superfluous, because, in the world to come, men being spiritual and immortal like the angels, there was no need of natural means to propagate or continue the kind. "Ye do err," said the blessed Jesus, "not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage." Mat. xxii. 29, 30. "Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." Luke xx. 36. Hence we may observe, that good men are called the children of the Most

High from their inheritance at the resurrection, and particularly on account of their being adorned with immortality. Having thus shown their folly and unbelief, he proceeded to show that they were also ignorant of the Scriptures, and particularly of the writings of Moses, from whence they had drawn their objection, by demonstrating, from the very law itself, the certainty of a resurrection, at least that of just men; and consequently quite demolished the opinion of the Sadducees, who, believing the materiality of the soul, affirmed that men were annihilated after their death, and that their opinion was founded on the writings of Moses. "Now," said our Saviour, "that the dead are raised even Moses showed at the bush, when he called the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto him." Luke xx. 37, 38. As if he had said, The Almighty cannot properly be called the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, unless they exist; for "he is not a God of the dead, but of the living." Since, therefore, Moses called him the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, long after these venerable patriarchs were dead, the relation denoted by the word of God still subsisted between them; consequently they were not annihilated, as you pretend, but are still in being, and continue to be the servants of the Most High.

This argument effectually silenced the Sadducees, and agreeably surprised the people, to see the objection, hitherto thought impregnable, totally abolished, and the sect they had long abominated fully confuted. "And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine." Mat. xxii. 33. Nor could even the Pharisees refrain from giving the Saviour of mankind the praise due to his surperlative wisdom; for one of the Scribes desired him to give his opinion on a question often debated among their teachers; namely, Which was the great commandment of the law? The true reason for their proposing this question was, to try whether he was as well acquainted with the sacred law, and the debates that had arisen on different parts of it, as he was ready in deriving arguments from the inspired writers, to destroy the tenets of those who denied a future state. In order to understand the question proposed to our blessed Saviour by the Scribe, it is necessary to observe, that some of the most learned rabbis had declared, that the law of sacrifice was the great commandment; some that it was the law of circumcision; and others, that the law of meats and washings had merited that title. Our blessed Saviour, however, showed that they were all

mistaken, and that the great commandment of the law, is the duty of piety; and particularly mentioned that comprehensive summary of it given by Moses: "Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment." Mark xii. 29, 30. The first and chief commandment is, to give God our hearts. The divine Being is so transcendently amiable in himself, and has, by the innumerable benefits conferred upon us, such a title to our utmost affection, that no obligation bears any proportion to that of loving him. The honor assigned to this precept, proves that piety is the noblest act of the human mind; and that the chief ingredient in piety is love, founded on a clear and extensive view of the divine perfections, harmonizing in our redemption by Christ, a permanent sense of his benefits, and a deep conviction of his being the sovereign good, our portion, and our happiness. But it is essential to love, that there be a delight in contemplating the beauty of the object beloved, whether that beauty be a matter of sensation or reflection; that we frequently, and with pleasure, reflect on the benefits conferred on us by the object of our affections; that we have a strong desire of pleasing him, great fear of doing any thing to offend him, and a sensible joy in thinking we are beloved in return. Hence the duties of devotion, prayer, and praise, are the most natural and genuine exercise of the love of God.

Nor is this grace so much any single affection, as the continual bent of all the affections and powers of the soul: consequently, to love God is, as much as possible, to direct the whole soul towards him, and to exercise all its faculties on him as its chief object. Accordingly, the love of God is described in Scripture by the several operations of the mind, a following hard after God; namely, by intense contemplation; a sense of his perfections, gratitude for his benefits, trust in his goodness, attachment to his service, resignation to his providence, the obeying his commandments, admiration, hope, fear, etc., not because it consists in any of those singly, but in them altogether; for to content ourselves with partial regards to the Supreme Being, is not to be affected towards him in the manner we ought to be, and which his perfections claim. Hence the words of the precept are, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength;" that is, with the joint force of all thy faculties; and therefore no idol whatsoever must partake of the love and worship

that is due to him. But the beauty and excellency of this state of mind is best seen in its effects: for the worship and obedience flowing from such a universal bent of the soul towards God, is as much superior to the worship and obedience arising from partial considerations, as the brightness of the sun is to any picture that can be drawn of that luminary. For example, if we look upon God only as a stern lawgiver, who can and will punish our rebellion, it may indeed force an awe and dread of him, and as much obedience to his laws as we think will satisfy him; but can never produce that constancy in our duty, that delight in it, and that earnestness to perform it in its utmost extent, which are produced and maintained in the mind by the sacred fire of divine love, or by the bent of the whole soul turned towards God as a reconciled father; a frame the most excellent that can be conceived, and the most to be desired, because it constitutes the highest perfection and real happiness of the creature.

Again, this commandment requires us to fear God; and certainly we cannot love the Lord our God, unless we fear and reverence him: for as the love, so the fear of God is the sum of all the commandments, and indeed the substance of all religion. Prayer and praise are the tribute and homage of religion: by the one we acknowledge our dependence upon God; by the other we confess that all our blessings and comforts are from him. Such, therefore, as neither pray to God, nor praise him, cannot be said to have a God; for they acknowledge none, but are gods to themselves. And as the love and fear of God are often used in Scripture, for his whole worship and service, so is this invocation of his name—"Pour out thy fury upon the heathen, and upon the families that have not called upon thy name;" that is, those who do not worship or serve him.

But to return. Our blessed Saviour having thus answered the question put to him by the Scribe, added, that the second commandment was that which enjoined the love of our neighbor. This had indeed no relation to the lawyer's question concerning the first commandment; yet our blessed Lord thought proper to show him which was the second, probably because the men of this sect did not acknowledge the importance and precedency of love to their neighbor; or because these were remarkably deficient in the practice of it, as Jesus himself had often found in their attempts to kill him. "And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." This principle of love to God will be also fruitful of every good work. It will make us really perform the duties of all the relations

in which we stand. And because love worketh no ill to his neighbor, therefore it is the fulfilling of the law; for it will prompt us to a cheerful and ready performance of every office, whether of justice or charity, that we owe to our neighbor. All the best things we can do, if destitute of this principle, will appear either to be the effect of hypocrisy, or done to procure the esteem of men. Without love, a narrowness of soul will shut us up within ourselves, and make all we do to others only as a sort of merchandise, trading for our own advantage. It is love only that opens our hearts to consider other persons, and to love them on their own account, or rather on account of God, who is love.

Those who possess such a temper of mind, have a constant calm within, and are not disturbed with passion, jealousy, envy, or ill-nature. They observe and rejoice in the happiness of others; they are glad to see them easy, and share with them in their joy and felicity; not fretting or complaining, though they enjoy less than their neighbors. It is true, love has a very different effect; for the same temper will render many so considerate of the misfortunes of others, as to sympathize with them in their distress, and be greatly affected with such objects of compassion as it is not in their power to assist. But there is a real pleasure even in this compassion, as it melts us to the greatest tenderness, and proves us to be men and Christians. The good man, by the overflowings of his love, is sure that he is in favor with his Maker, because he loves his neighbor. His soul dwells at ease; there is sweetness in all his thoughts and wishes. This makes him clear in his views of every kind, and renders him grateful to all good men around him.

This charitable temper also maintains in him a constant disposition for prayer. A charitable man, who has occasion to forbear and forgive others, and to return good for evil, dares, with an humble assurance, to lay claim to mercy and pardon through the alone merits of his blessed Redeemer.

But we return to the Scribe, who was astonished at the justness of our Saviour's decisions, and answered, That he had determined rightly, since there is but one supreme God, whom we must all adore; and if we love him above all temporal things, and our neighbor as ourselves, we worship him more acceptably, than if we sacrifice to him "all the cattle upon a thousand hills."

Our blessed Lord highly applauded the piety and wisdom of this reflection, by declaring that the person who made it was not far from the kingdom of God.

As the Pharisees, during the course of our Saviour's ministry, had proposed to him many difficult questions, with an intention to prove his prophetic gifts, he now, in his turn, thought proper to make a trial of their skill in the sacred writings. For this purpose, he asked their opinion of a difficulty concerning the Messiah's pedigree. "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is he? They say unto him the Son of David." Mat. xxii. 42. I know, answered Jesus, you say Christ is the Son of David; but how can they support their opinion, or render it consistent with the words of David? who himself calls him Lord; and "how is he his Son?" It seems that the Jewish doctors did not imagine that their Messiah would be indued with any perfections greater than those that might be enjoyed by human nature; for though they called him the Son of God, they had no idea that he was God, and therefore could not pretend to solve the difficulty.

The latter question, however, might have convinced them of their error; for if the Messiah was only to be a secular prince, as they supposed, and to rule over the men of his own time, he never could have been called, "Lord," by persons who died before he was born; far less would so mighty a prince as David, who was also his progenitor, have conferred on him that title. Since, therefore, he rules over not only the vulgar dead of former ages, but even over the kings from whom he was himself descended, and his kingdom comprehends the men of all countries and times, past, present, and to come; the doctors, if they had thought accurately upon the subject, should have expected in their Messiah a king different from all other kings. Besides, he is to sit at God's right hand, "till all his enemies are made his footstool." Numbers of Christ's enemies are subject to him in this life; and they who will not bow to him willingly, shall, like the rebellious subjects of other kingdoms, be reduced by punishment.

Such solid reasoning, gave the people an high opinion of his wisdom. And showed them, how far superior he was to their most renowned rabbis, whose arguments to prove their opinions and answers to the objections which were raised against him, were, in general, very weak and trifling. Nay, his foes themselves, from the repeated proofs they had received from the prodigious depth of his understanding, were impressed with such an opinion of his wisdom, that they judged it impossible to entangle him in his talk. Accordingly, they left off attempting it, and from that day forth troubled him no more with their insidious questions.

But having mentioned the final conquest and destruction of his enemies, who were to be made his footstool, agreeably to the prediction of the royal psalmist, he turned towards his disciples; and, in the hearing of the multitude, solemnly cautioned them to beware of the Scribes and Pharisees; insinuating thereby who the enemies were whose destruction he had mentioned. "The Scribes and the Pharisees," said he, "sit in Moses' seat. All, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do: but do not ye after their works; for they say, and do not." Mat. xxiii. 2, 3. While they teach the doctrines before delivered by Moses, observe all they say; but by no means imitate their practices, for they impose many precepts on their disciples which they never perform themselves. "For they bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen of men." Mat. xxiii. 4, 5. The difficult precepts they impose on others are never regarded by these hypocrites; and any good action they may happen to perform, is vitiated by the principle from whence it proceeds. They do it only with a view to gain popular applause, and not from a regard to God; far less from a love of goodness. They are proud and arrogant to excess, as is plain from their affected gravity in their clothes; from the anxiety they discover lest they should not obtain the principal seats in the public assemblies; and from their affecting to be saluted in the streets with the sounding titles of rabbi and father. "They make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, rabbi, rabbi." Mat. xxiii. 5-7.

The word rabbi signifies, properly, my master, and was given to those men who had rendered themselves remarkable for the extent of their learning; it is therefore no wonder that the proud and supercilious Pharisees were fond of a title, which so highly complimented their understandings, and gave them great authority with their followers. But the disciples of the blessed Jesus were to decline this title, because the thing signified by it belonged solely to their Master, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; and because they owed no part of their knowledge to themselves, but derived it entirely from him who came down from heaven.

"But be not ye called rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the

earth : for one is your Father, which is in heaven." Mat. xxiii. 8, 9. Life, with all its blessings, comes from God, and men wholly depend upon him ; all praise and thankfulness, therefore, should ultimately be referred to him ; so that if any one teacheth rightly, not the teacher, but the wisdom of the Almighty, is to be praised, which exerts and communicates itself by him. Nor were the disciples of our blessed Saviour to accept of the title of master, or leader, which the Jewish doctors also courted ; because, in point of commission and inspiration, they were all equal ; neither had they any title to rule the consciences of men, except by virtue of the inspiration which they had received from their Master, to whom alone the prerogative of infallibility belonged. "Neither be ye called masters ; for one is your Master, even Christ." Mat. xxiii. 10. The divine Teacher, however, did not intend by this to intimate that it was sinful to call men by the stations they held in the world : he only intended to correct the simplicity of the common people, who loaded their teachers with praises, and forgot to ascribe any thing to God ; and to root out of the minds of the apostles the Pharisaical vanity, which decked itself with honor belonging solely to the Creator of the Universe. Accordingly, that he might instill into their hearts humility to dispose them to do good offices to each other, as occasion offered, he assured them it was the only road to true greatness ; for by assuming what did not properly belong to them, they would be despised both by God and men. Whereas, those who did not disdain to perform the meanest offices of love to their brethren, should enjoy a high degree of the divine favor.

This discourse greatly incensed the Scribes and Pharisees, as it was pronounced in the hearing of many of that order ; it is, therefore, no wonder, that they watched every opportunity to destroy him. But this was not a time to put their cruel designs in execution ; the people set too high a value on his doctrine, to suffer any violence to be offered to his person ; and as this was the last sermon he was ever to preach in public, it was necessary that he should use some severity, as all his mild persuasions proved ineffectual.

He therefore denounced, in the most solemn manner, dreadful woes against them, not on account of the personal injuries he had received from them, but on account of their excessive wickedness.

They were public teachers of religion ; and therefore should have used every method in their power to recommend its precepts to the people, and to have been themselves shining examples of every duty it enjoined ; but, on the contrary, they abused every mark and cha-

acter of goodness for all the purposes of villany, and under the cloak of a severe and sanctified aspect, they were malicious, implacable, lewd, covetous, and rapacious. In a word, instead of being reformers, they were the corrupters of mankind, and consequently their wickedness deserved the greatest reproof that could be given by the great Redeemer of mankind. "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer them that were entering to go in. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye devour widows' houses and for a pretence make long prayers; therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves." Mat. xxiii. 13, etc.

The punishment you shall suffer will be terribly severe, because you have given a wrong interpretation of the ancient prophecies concerning the Messiah, and done all that is in your power to hinder the people from repenting of their sins, and believing the Gospel: because you have committed the grossest iniquities, and under the cloak of religion have devoured the substance of widows and orphans, hoping to hide your villainies by long prayers: because ye have expressed the greatest zeal imaginable in making proselytes, not with a view to render the Gentiles more wise and virtuous, but to acquire their riches, and a command over their consciences; and instead of teaching them the precepts of virtue, and the great duties of religion, you confine them to superstitious and ceremonial institutions; and hence they often relapse into their old state of heathenism, and become more wicked than before their conversion; and consequently liable to a more severe sentence.

He also exposed their doctrine concerning oaths; and declared, in opposition to their abominable tenets, that every oath, if the matter of it be lawful, is obligatory; because, when men swear by any part of the creation, it is an appeal to the Creator himself; for in any other light an oath of this kind is absolutely foolish, the object having neither knowledge of the fact, nor power to punish the perjury. "Woe unto you, ye blind guides! which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor. Ye fools and blind! for whether is greater the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? And, whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. Ye fools, and

blind, for whether is greater the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon." Mat. xxiii. 16, etc. He likewise reprehended their superstitious practices, in observing the minutest parts of the ceremonial precepts of the law, and at the same time utterly neglecting the eternal and indispensable rules of righteousness. "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees! hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin; and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel." Mat. xxiii. 23, etc. Their hypocrisy did not escape the censure of the Son of God; they spared no pains to appear virtuous in the eyes of the world, and maintain an external conduct that should acquire the praises of men; but at the same time neglected to adorn their souls with the robe of righteousness, which is the only ornament that can render them dear in the sight of their Maker. "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee! cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also." Mat. xxiii. 25. Cleanse first thy mind, the inward man, from evil dispositions and affections, and the outward behavior will of course be virtuous and praiseworthy.

Moreover, he animadverted upon the success of their hypocrisy. They deceived the simple and unthinking part of mankind with their pretended sanctity, appearing like whited sepulchres, beautiful on the outside, while their inward parts were full of uncleanness. "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." Mat. xxiii. 27, 28. He also reproved the pains they had taken in adorning the sepulchres of the prophets; because they pretended a great veneration for their memories, and even condemned their fathers who killed them; saying, that if they had lived in the days of their fathers, they would have opposed such monstrous wickedness; while, at the same time, all their actions

abundantly proved that they still cherished the same spirit they condemned in their fathers, persecuting the messengers of the Most High, particularly his only begotten Son, whom they were determined to destroy. "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets." Mat. xxiii. 29, etc. He added, that the Divine Being was desirous of trying every method for their conversion, though all these instances of mercy were slighted, and that they must expect such terrible vengeance as should be a standing monument of the divine displeasure against all the murders committed by the sons of men from the foundation of the world.

Having thus laid before them their heinous guilt and dreadful punishment, he was, at the thought of the calamities which were so soon to fall upon them, exceedingly moved; and his breast filled with sensations of pity to such a degree, that, unable to contain himself, he broke forth into tears, bewailing the hard lot of the city of Jerusalem; for, as its inhabitants had more deeply imbrued their hands in the blood of the prophets; they were to drink more deeply of the punishment due to such crimes. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killedst the prophets, and stonedst them which were sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." Mat. xxiii. 37, etc. This benevolent, as well as pathetic exclamation of our blessed Lord, cannot fail to excite in the pious mind the warmest emotions of love to the gracious Saviour of mankind, as well as pity for that once chosen, but since degenerate race. How often had the Almighty called upon them to return from their evil way, before he sent his only begotten Son into the world! How often, how emphatically, did the compassionate Jesus entreat them to embrace the merciful terms now offered them by the Almighty: and with what unconquerable obstinacy did they refuse the benevolent offers, and resist the most winning expressions of the divine love! By the word "house" our blessed Saviour meant the temple, which was from that time to be left unto them desolate; the glory of the Lord, which Haggai had prophesied should fill the second house, was now departing from it. Adding, "I say unto you, ye shall not see me hence-

forth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Mat. xxiii. 39. As if he had said: As ye have killed the prophets, and persecuted me, whom the Father hath sent from the courts of heaven, and will shortly put me, who am the Lord of the temple, to death, your holy house shall be left desolate, and your nation totally deserted by me; nor shall ye see me any more, till ye shall acknowledge the dignity of my character, and the importance of my mission, and say with the whole earth, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Thus did the blessed Jesus strip the Scribes and Pharisees of their hypocritical mask. He treated them with severity, because their crimes were of the blackest dye: and hence we should learn to be really good, and not flatter ourselves that we can cover our crimes with the cloak of hypocrisy, from that piercing eye from which nothing is concealed.

The people could not fail being astonished at these discourses, as they had always considered their teachers as the most righteous amongst the sons of men. Nay, the persons themselves against whom they were leveled, were confounded, because their own consciences convinced them of the truth of every particular laid to their charge. They therefore knew not what course to pursue; and in the midst of their hesitation, they allowed Jesus to depart, without making any attempt to seize him, or inflict on him any kind of punishment.

CHAPTER XXXI.

OUR SAVIOUR COMMENDS EVEN THE SMALLEST ACT PROCEEDING FROM A TRULY BENEVOLENT MOTIVE—PREDICTS THE DEMOLITION OF THE MAGNIFICENT TEMPLE AT JERUSALEM—AND DELIVERS SEVERAL INSTRUCTIVE PARABLES.



ESUS, the infallible Preacher of righteousness, having thus exposed the secret actions of the Scribes and Pharisees, repaired with his disciples into the court of the women, called the treasury, from several chests being fixed to the pillars of the portico surrounding the court, for receiving the offerings of those who came to worship in the temple. While he continued in this court, “he beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury. For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.” Mark xii. 41, etc.

Though the offering given by this poor widow was in itself very small, yet, in proportion to the goods of life she enjoyed, it was remarkably large: for it was all she had, even all her living. In order, therefore, to encourage charity, and show that it is the disposition of the mind, not the magnificence of the offering, that attracts the regard of the Almighty, the Son of God applauded this poor widow, as having given more, in proportion, than any of the rich. Their offerings, though great in respect of hers, were but a small part of their estates; whereas her offering was her whole stock. And from this passage of the Gospel we should learn, that the poor, who in appearance are denied the means of doing charitable offices, are encouraged to do all they can. For how small soever the gift may be, the Almighty, who beholds the heart, values it, not according to what it is in itself, but according to the disposition with which it is given.

On the other hand, we should learn from hence, that it is not enough for the rich that they exceed the poor in the gifts of charity; they should bestow in proportion to their income; and they would do well to remember, that a little given, where a little only is left, appears a much nobler offering in the sight of the Almighty, and discovers a more benevolent and humane temper of mind, than sums much larger bestowed out of a plentiful abundance.

The disciples now remembered that their Master, at the conclusion of his pathetic declaration over Jerusalem, had declared that the temple should not any more be favored with his presence, till they should say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." A declaration of this kind could not fail of greatly surprising his disciples; and therefore, as he was departing from that sacred structure, they desired him to observe the beauty of the building; insinuating, that they thought it strange he should intimate an intention of leaving it desolate; that so glorious a fabric, celebrated in every corner of the earth, was not to be deserted rashly; and that they should think themselves supremely happy, when he, as the Messiah and descendant of David, should take possession of it, and erect his throne in the midst of Jerusalem. And as they went out of the temple, one of his disciples said unto him, "Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!"

The eastern wall of the temple, which fronted the Mount of Olives, whither the disciples with their Master were then retiring, was built from the bottom of the valley to a prodigious height, with stones of an incredible bulk, firmly compacted together, and therefore made a very grand appearance at a distance. The eastern wall is supposed to have been the only remains of Solomon's temple, and had escaped when the Chaldeans burnt it. But this building, however strong or costly it appeared, our Saviour told them should be totally destroyed. "Seest thou," said he, "these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down." Mark xiii. 2. That noble edifice, raised with much labor, and at a vast expense, shall be razed to the very foundation. The disciples, therefore, when they heard their Master affirm, that not so much as one of these enormous stones, which had withstood the fury of Nebuchadnezzar's army, and survived the destructive hand of time; was to be left one upon another, they perceived that the whole temple was to be demolished, but did not suspect that the sacrifices were to be taken away, and a new mode of religion introduced, which rendered the temple unnecessary. They therefore

flattered themselves, that the fabric then standing, however glorious it might appear, was too small for the numerous worshipers who would frequent it, when all the nations of the world were subject to the Messiah's kingdom; and was therefore to be pulled down in order to be erected on a more magnificent plan, suitable to the idea they had conceived of his future empire. Filled with these pleasing imaginations, they received the news with pleasure, meditating, as they walked to the mountain, on the glorious things which were shortly to come to pass. When they arrived on the Mount of Olives, and their Master had taken his seat on some eminence, from whence they had a prospect of the temple, and part of the city, his disciples drew near, to know when the demolition of the old structure was to happen, and what were to be the signs of his coming, and of the end of the world. "And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Mat. xxiv. 3. The disciples, by this request, seemed desirous of knowing what signs should precede the erection of that extensive empire over which they supposed the Messiah was to reign; for they still expected he would govern a secular kingdom. They therefore connected the demolition of the temple with their Master's coming, though they had not the least idea that he was to destroy the nation, and change the form of religious worship. They therefore meant, by the "end of the world," or, as the words should have been translated, "the end of the ages," the period of the political government then executed by the heathen procurators; and considered their Master's coming to destroy the constitution then subsisting, as a very desirable event. They also thought the demolition of the temple proper, as they expected a larger and more superb building, proportioned to the number of the Messiah's subjects, would be erected in its stead. That this is the real sense of the disciples' question, will sufficiently appear, if we consider that the disciples were delighted with the prospect; whereas, if they had meant, by the end of the world, the final period of all things, the destruction of the temple would have exhibited to them, in their present temper of mind, a melancholy prospect, which they could not have beheld without a deep concern. Our blessed Saviour, therefore, was careful to convince them of their mistake, by telling them that he was not come to rule a secular empire, as they supposed, but to punish the Jews for their perfidy and rebellion, by destroying both their temple and nation.

“Take heed,” said he, “that no man deceive you: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many.” This caution was far from being unnecessary, because, though the disciples were to see their Master ascend into heaven, they might take occasion from the prophecy, to think that he would appear again on earth, and therefore be in danger of seduction by the false Christs that should arise. “And when ye shall hear of wars, and rumors of wars, see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass; but the end is not yet.” Before this nation and temple are destroyed, terrible wars will happen to the land: “For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.” Mat. xxiv. 7. These are the preludes of the important event, forerunners of the evils which shall befall this nation and people. At the same time you shall meet with hot persecutions; walk therefore circumspectly, and arm yourselves both with patience and fortitude, that ye may be able to perform your duty through the whole course of these persecutions; for ye shall be brought before the great men of the earth for my sake. “But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate; but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye; for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.” Mark xiii. 11.

During this time of trouble and confusion, he told them the perfidy of mankind should be so great towards one another, that “the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death.” The unbelieving Jews, and apostate Christians, shall commit the most enormous and inhuman crimes. It is therefore no wonder that the perfidy and wickedness of such pretended Christians should discourage many disciples, and greatly hinder the propagation of the Gospel. But he who lives by faith during these persecutions, and is not led away by the seduction of false Christians, shall escape that terrible destruction, which, like a deluge, will overflow the land. And when Jerusalem shall be surrounded with armies, pagan armies, bearing in their standards the images of their gods, the “abomination of desolation” mentioned by the prophet Daniel; then let him who readeth the predictions of that prophet understand, that the end of the city and sanctuary, together with the ceasing of sacrifices and oblations there predicted, is come, and consequently the final period of the Jewish polity.

“Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out.” Luke xxi. 21. “Let him which is on the house-top not come down to take any thing out of his house; neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.” Mat. xxiv. 17, 18. Then shall be fulfilled the awful predictions of the prophet Daniel, and the dreadful judgments denounced against the impenitent and unbelieving. In those days of vengeance, the women who are with child, and those who have infants hanging at their breasts, shall be particularly unhappy, because they cannot flee from the impending destruction. “But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter,” when the badness of the roads, and the rigor of the season, will render speedy traveling very troublesome, if not impossible; “neither on the Sabbath-day,” when you shall think it unlawful. “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.” This is confirmed by what Josephus tells us, that no less than eleven hundred thousand perished in the siege. The heavenly Prophet added, that except the days of tribulation should be shortened, none of the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judea, of whom he was speaking, should escape destruction: in confirmation of which, Josephus tells us, that the quarrels which raged during the siege were so fierce and obstinate, that both within the walls of Jerusalem, and without in the neighboring country, the whole land was one continued scene of horror and desolation; and had the siege continued much longer, the whole nation of the Jews had been totally destroyed, according to our Lord’s prediction. “But,” added our blessed Saviour, “for the elect’s sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.” By the elect are meant such of the Jews as had embraced the doctrines of the Gospel, and particularly those who were brought in with the believing Gentiles.

As it is natural, in time of trouble, to look with eager expectation for a deliverer, our blessed Saviour cautioned his disciples not to listen to any pretences of that kind, as many false Christs would arise, and deceive great numbers of the people. A prediction that was fully accomplished during the terrible siege of Jerusalem by the Romans: so Josephus tells us, that many arose, pretending to be the Messiah, boasting that they would deliver the nation from all its enemies. And the multitude, always too prone to listen to deceivers who promise temporal advantages, giving credit to those deceivers, became more obstinate in their opposition to the Romans, and thereby rendered their destruction more severe and inevitable. And

what still increased the infatuation of the people, was their performing wonderful things during the war; and accordingly, Josephus calls them magicians and sorcerers. Hence we see the propriety of the caution given by the Son of God, who foretold that "they should show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they would deceive the very elect. But take heed; behold, I have foretold you all things." And as the partisans of the false Christs might pretend that the Messiah was concealed a while for fear of the Romans, and the weaker sort of Christians, without this warning, have imagined that Christ was actually returned to deliver the nation in its extremity, and to punish their enemies who now so cruelly oppressed them, and that he would show himself as soon as it was proper, the blessed Jesus thought proper to caution them against this particular: "Wherefore, if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Mat. xxiv. 26, etc. The coming of the Son of man shall be like lightning, swift and destructive. But he will come, not personally; his servants only shall come, the Roman armies; who, by his command, shall destroy this nation, as eagles devour their prey.

Having thus given them a particular account of the various circumstances which should precede the destruction of Jerusalem, he next described that catastrophe itself, in all the pomp of language and imagery made use of by the ancient prophets when they foretold the destruction of cities and kingdoms. "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light; and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken." Mark xiii. 24. "And upon the earth, distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." Luke xxi. 25, etc. By these lofty and figurative expressions, the decaying of all the glory, excellency, and prosperity of the nation, and the introduction of universal sadness, misery, and confusion, are beautifully described. The roaring of the sea and the waves, may justly be considered as metaphorical; as the signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars, are plainly so; and by the powers of heaven, are meant the whole Jewish polity, government, laws, and religion, which were the work of heaven; these, our Lord tells us, should be

shaken, or rather dissolved. As the disciples had, in conformity to the repeated questions of the Pharisees during his ministry, asked what should be the sign of his coming? Our blessed Saviour told them, that after the tribulation of those days, when the sun should be darkened, and all the enemies of the Messiah should mourn, they should see the accomplishment of what Daniel foretold by the figurative expression of the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven; for they should behold the signal punishment inflicted on the Jewish nation by the Roman armies sent for that purpose, and by the decree and permission of heaven. "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn; and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." Mat. xxiv. 30. Then were the followers of Christ to be delivered from the oppression under which they had long groaned, and openly honored before the whole earth: and on this may true believers rest; because it is founded on eternal truth. "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." Mat. xxiv. 34, 35.

Whoever shall compare the prediction of our Saviour with the history Josephus wrote of the war, cannot fail of being struck with the wisdom of Christ, and acknowledge that his prediction was truly divine: for as the Jewish nation was at this time in the most flourishing state, the event here foretold appeared altogether improbable. Besides, the circumstances of the destruction are very numerous, and surprisingly great; and the whole delivered without any ambiguity. It is therefore a prophecy of such a kind, as could never have been uttered by any impostor; and consequently, the person who delivered it was acquainted with the secret councils of heaven, and was truly divine.

Many cavilers against the Christian religion, have asked, Why Christ should order his disciples not to flee from Jerusalem till they saw it encompassed with the Roman army, when it would then be impossible for them to make their escape? But persons, before they propose such questions, would do well to read attentively the history Josephus has given us of these terrible calamities; because they would there find a solution of the difficulty. That historian tells us, that Cestus Gallus surrounded the city with his army; and, at a time when he could easily have taken the city, suddenly withdrew his forces without any apparent reason. He adds, that as soon as the siege was raised, many eminent persons fled from it as from a sinking

ship. In all probability many of these were Christians, who, being warned by this prophecy of their great Master, saved themselves by flight as he had directed. Thus we see what frivolous objections are made by the free-thinkers of our age against the truth of the sacred writings, and how easily they are answered.

Having thus beautifully but awfully described this important and striking event, the blessed Jesus assured his disciples that it would be very unexpected, and thence urged the necessity of a watchful vigilance, lest they should be surprised, and have a share in those calamities. "But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Mat. xxiv. 37. "Watch ye, therefore, for ye know not when the master of the house cometh; at even, or at midnight, or at the cock crowing, or in the morning: lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping." Mark xiii. 35, 36. It was natural, as men were to undergo at the destruction of Jerusalem nearly the same miseries, and as the passions which its approach would raise in their minds were similar to those which will happen at the destruction of the world and the general judgment, it was natural, I say, for our blessed Saviour, on this occasion, to put his disciples in mind of that judgment, and to exhort them to the faithful discharge of their duty, from the consideration of the suddenness of his coming to call every individual to account after death. "Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods." Mat. xxiv. 44, etc. As if he had said, You, who are the ministers of religion, ought to be particularly attentive in discharging the important trust committed to your care; you are the stewards to whom is intrusted the whole household of the church; and you would do well to remember, that your example will have a great effect upon the minds of those employed under you. It is your duty to be well acquainted with the stores of evangelical truths, and to understand how they may be applied to the best advantage; you should be also careful to know the characters of the different persons under your directions, that you may be able to give every one of them his portion of meat in due season: and if I find you thus employed at my coming, I will reward you with the joys of my kingdom, even as an earthly master bestows particular marks of respect on such servants as have been remarkably faithful in any important trust. But, on the other

hand, if you are not true to the trust reposed in you; if you pervert your office, and watch not over the souls committed to your care, I will come to you unexpectedly, and make you dreadful examples of mine anger, by the severe punishments which I will inflict upon you. "But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Mat. xxiv. 48, etc.

Having thus generally described the future state of retribution, our Lord passed to the consideration of the general judgment, when those rewards and punishments should be distributed to their utmost extent. This could not fail of animating his disciples to a vigorous discharge of their duty; and by the striking representation of the last judgment he has here given, must greatly tend to rouse the consciences of men from their lethargy, and consider, before it be too late, "the things which belong to their peace."

Then shall the kingdom of heaven, the Gospel kingdom, in the last dispensation of it, when the kingdom of grace is going to be swallowed up in the kingdom of glory, "be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish." They that were foolish took their lamps, but put no oil in their vessels; while the wise, as an instance of their prudence and foresight, took both their lamps, and oil in their vessels; knowing that it was uncertain when the bridegroom would arrive, and that they might in all probability wait long for his coming. Nor were they mistaken; for the bridegroom did not come so soon as they expected. "And while he tarried, they all slumbered and slept: and at midnight there was a great cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps: and the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you; but go you rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterwards came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us. But he answered, and said, Verily I say unto

you, I know you not. Watch, therefore; for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." Mat. xxv. 6.

In order to understand this parable, we must remember that it alludes to the custom of the eastern people. It was usual with them for the bridegroom to bring his bride home in the evening, sooner or later, as circumstances might happen; and that they might be received properly at his house, his female acquaintance, especially those of the younger sort, were invited to come and wait with lamps, till some of his retinue, dispatched before the rest, informed them that he was near at hand; upon which they trimmed their lamps, went forth to welcome him, and conduct him with his bride into the house; for which they were honored as guests at the marriage feast, and shared in the usual festivities. To ten such virgins our blessed Saviour compares those to whom the Gospel is preached; because this was the general number appointed to wait on the bridegroom: and to these all Christian professors may be likened, who, taking their lamp of Christian profession, go forth to meet the bridegroom; that is, consider themselves as candidates for the kingdom of heaven, and desire to be admitted with Christ, the celestial bridegroom, into the happy mansions of immortality.

We must remember, that there always was, and always will be, a mixture of good and bad in the church till the great day of separation arrives. The weakness of the foolish is represented by their taking no oil in their vessels with their lamps; that is, the foolish professors content themselves with the bare lamp of a profession, and never think of furnishing it with the oil of divine grace, the fruit of which is a life of holiness. Whereas the wise, well knowing that a lamp, without the supply of oil, would be speedily extinguished, that faith without love or holiness will be of no consequence, take care to secure for themselves a supply of divine grace, and to display in their lives the works of love and charity. While those virgins, though differently supplied, waiting the coming of the bridegroom, all slumbered and slept; that is, as some think, all Christians, both good and bad, the sincere and the hypocrite, lie down together in the sleep of death, and while the bridegroom delays his coming, slumber in the chambers of the dust. But others suppose, that this argues the want of vigilance and care, even in the wise as well as the foolish; that few, if any, are so attentive as they ought to be to the coming of their Lord.

The Jews have a tradition, that Christ's coming to judgment will be at midnight; which agrees with that particular in the parable,

“At midnight there was a cry made, Go ye out to meet him.” But however this be, whether he will come at midnight or in the morning, it will be awfully sudden and alarming. The great cry will be heard to the end of the earth, the trumpet shall sound, and the mighty archangel’s voice pierce even the bowels of the earth and the depths of the ocean: “Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.” The graves, both earthly and watery, must surrender their human tenants, and all will then begin to think how they may prepare themselves to find admittance to the marriage supper of the Lamb. “Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.” But the foolish soon perceived their folly; their lamps were gone out, totally extinguished, and they had no oil to support the flame: in like manner the hypocrite’s hope shall perish. But the wise were in a much happier condition; they had oil in their vessels sufficient for themselves, but none to spare; for, when the foolish virgins would have procured some from them, they denied their request, fearing there would not be enough for both.

There are here beautifully represented, nominal and sincere Christians. The former, having only the bare lamp of a profession, and who have not been solicitous to gain the oil of divine grace, by a constant use of the means assigned, will fare like the foolish virgins. While the latter, whose hearts are filled with divine oil, will, like the wise virgins, enter into the joy of their Lord. But the foolish, going to purchase oil, missed the bridegroom, and behold “the door was shut.” They at last, however, reached the gate, and with great importunity cried, “Lord, Lord, open unto us.” But he answered, and said, “Verily I say unto you, I know you not.” As you denied me on earth, I deny you now. Depart from me; I know you not! How justly therefore did our blessed Saviour bid us all “watch,” that we may be found ready whenever he cometh, or commands, by the king of terrors, our attendance before his judgment-seat! Let us not refuse this kind invitation of being constantly prepared to meet the heavenly Bridegroom; let us get our lamps filled with oil, that we may be ready to follow our great Master into the happy mansions of the heavenly Canaan.

But as this duty was of the utmost importance, our blessed Saviour, to show us more clearly the nature and use of Christian watchfulness, to which he exhorts us at the conclusion of the parable of the ten virgins, he added another, wherein he represented the different characters of a faithful and slothful servant, and the difference of their future acceptation. This parable, like the former, is

intended to stir us up to a zealous preparation for the coming of our Lord, by diligence in the discharge of our duty, and by a careful improvement of our souls in holiness; and at the same time to expose the vain pretences of hypocrites, and to demonstrate that their fair speeches and outward forms, without the power of godliness, will be of no service whatever in the last day of account.

The Son of man, said he, may, with respect to his final coming to judge the world, be likened unto "a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every one according to his several ability: and straightway took his journey." Mat. xxv. 14, 15. Immediately on his master's departure, he that had received the five talents lost no time, but went and traded with the same, and his increase was equal to his industry and application; he made them other five talents. He that had received two talents did the same, and had equal success. But he that received one, very unlike the conduct of his fellow-servants, went his way, digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money, idle, useless, unemployed, and unimproved. After a long time, and at an hour when they did not expect it, the lord of those servants returned, called them before him, and ordered them to give an account of their several trusts. Upon which, he that had received five talents, as a proof of his fidelity, produced other five talents, saying, "Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained besides them five talents more." Mat. xxv. 20. His lord, highly applauding his industry and fidelity, said to him, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." Mat. xxv. 21. In like manner also, he that had received two talents, declared that he had gained two other; upon which he was honored with the same applause, and admitted into the same joy with his fellow-servant: their master having regard to the industry and fidelity of his servants; not to the number of the talents only, but the greatness of their increase.

After this, he that had received the one talent came, and with a shameful falsehood, to excuse his vile indolence, said: "Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth; lo, there thou hast that is thine." Mat. xxv. 24, 25. The perversion of even the smallest portion of grace greatly excited the resentment of his lord, who

answered, "Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed; thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then, at my coming, I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Mat. xxv. 26, etc.

Such is the parable of the talents as delivered by our blessed Saviour; a parable containing the measures of our duty to God, and the motives that enforce it, all delivered in the plainest and simplest manner. But its views are so extensive and affecting, that while it instructs the meanest capacity, it engages reverence and attention from the greatest, and strikes an impression on the most improved understanding. We are to consider God as our Lord and Master, the author and giver of every good gift, and ourselves as his servants or stewards, who, in various instances and measures, have received from his goodness such blessings and abilities, as may fit us for the several stations and offices of life to which his providence appoints us. But then we are to observe, that these are committed to us as a trust or loan, for whose due management we are accountable to the donor. If we faithfully acquit ourselves of this probationary charge, we shall receive far greater instances of God's regard and favor; but if we are remiss and negligent, we must expect to feel his resentment and displeasure. A time will come, and how near it may be none of us can tell, when our great Master will demand a particular account of every talent he hath committed to our care. This time may indeed be at a distance; for it is uncertain when the king of terrors will receive the awful warrant to terminate our existence here below: yet it will certainly come, and our eternal happiness or misery depends upon it; so that we should have it continually in our thoughts, and engraven, as with the point of a diamond, on the tables of our hearts.

We learn, from this instructive parable, that infinite Wisdom hath intrusted men with different talents, and adjusted them to the various purposes of human life. But though the gifts of men are unequal, none can with justice complain; since whatever is bestowed, be it more or less, is a favor entirely unmerited. Each then should be thankful, and satisfied with his portion; and instead of

envying the more liberal endowments of others, apply himself to the improvement of his own. And it should be attentively observed, that the difficulty of the task is in proportion to the number of talents committed to each. He who had received five, was to gain other five; and he who had received two, was to account for other two. Surely then we have no reason to complain if our Master has laid on us a lighter burden, a more easy and less service, than what he has on others. Especially as our interest in the favor of the Almighty does not depend on the number of our talents, but on our diligence and application in the management of them: so that the moral design of this parable is, to engage our utmost attention to improve such talents as our heavenly Father has thought proper to bestow upon us.

By these talents are principally meant, the communication and graces of the Holy Spirit, which God bestows in different measures, "dividing to every man severally as he will." And subordinate to these are all the means, opportunities, and abilities, which men have to exercise or improve their graces; all the advantages of station, fortune, education, and whatever may enable us to do good; for we, having received all we enjoy from God, are strictly obliged to promote the wise ends for which he bestows his favors. And here let us take a short and imperfect view of what God has done for us. He has given us reason and understanding to discern good from evil, and inquire into the causes, relations, and consequences of things, to collect from them proper rules of judgment and action. Indeed, since the fall, this faculty has been much obscured; but still it remains a universal gift of God to men, and though not equal in all, yet it is given to every man in such measure as is sufficient for their direction. In the knowledge of our duty, and the pursuit of our happiness, God has by the Gospel so graciously supplied the defect of reason, that the weakest understanding, enlightened by grace, may know how to be happy; such assistances of divine grace attend every Christian, if he will apply to God for them, as may enable him to direct his inclinations, govern his passions, and subdue his corrupt affections. These talents are in some degree common to all men; and by the improvement of that grace which is conferred on every one, all may have sufficient to conduct them through the several stages of life, if they will use but proper diligence and application. But regard must be had to all the means for cultivating those gifts of nature and grace; such as all opportunities of instruction, the ministry and ordinances of religion, the reproofs and ex-

amples of good men, the occasions offered, and the abilities given, for the exercise of religion. All these are talents or gifts of God, deposited with us to be diligently made use of, and for which we are accountable to him.

We shall therefore proceed to show, what duty is required from us in the improvement of these talents. It is here supposed that these talents are improvable, or otherwise they would be of no use or value; and indeed we are bound, by the command of God, who has threatened to inflict severe penalties if we neglect it, to improve them. And if they are not improved, they will not continue long with us, but be lost; the finest parts and capacities, without proper culture, will make but a mean and contemptible figure. No knowledge can be preserved without use and exercise, and the same holds with regard to moral accomplishments. It requires great care and attention to form a religious habit, but much more to preserve it in its vigor. Unless we co-operate with the motion of God's grace, and cultivate it by use and application, its impressions will gradually wear out and be lost. "The Spirit of God will not always strive with man." He gives us a talent to manage, equal to the service he expects from us; but if we are slothful and negligent, and will not apply it to the purposes for which it was given, he will recall the useless gift. "Take from him," says he, "the talent, and give it to him that hath ten talents." Let us therefore diligently improve every talent committed to us, because this will be required of us in the day of accounts. Happy the man who has improved his talents on earth!

What this improvement implies, and how we may discharge this duty, is an inquiry of the nearest concern to us. The proper improvement of all God's gifts, is the employing them so as may best promote his glory. This is the end the Almighty has proposed in our creation; in all the powers he hath endued us with, and in all the aids of grace he hath vouchsafed us. Whatever other improvements we make of them will not profit us, nor be admitted as any proof of our fidelity in the day of reckoning. We may cultivate our understanding by learning and study, and extend our knowledge through all the subjects of human inquiry; but if our end be only to gratify our curiosity or our vanity, we are not serving God, but ourselves; we may increase our portion of God's outward gifts, but if we only apply them to enlarge our own conveniences, we are not making the improvements our Master expects: we may take pleasure in our knowledge and wealth, rejoice in them as our portion and

instrument in our present situation ; but we must still remember, that in our reckoning with God, all these improvements of our capacities and abilities will be added to our account. And the only use God will admit us to set in balance of our debt to him, is to employ them as means of increasing and multiplying our graces, or as instruments of exercising them in the work of piety and religion.

From hence we may infer, that there will be degrees of future glory and happiness proportioned to our eminence in the divine life, and the service we have done to the cause of Christ. Dreadful will be his case, who has squandered away the talent itself ; suffered his gifts to perish for want of use ; or, by abusing them to the service of sin, has provoked the Almighty to take them from him. How shall the prodigal recall the property he has spent, and appease the anger of his Judge ? The terrors of the Lord may justly affright him, but it should not extinguish his endeavors in despair. He has lost many excellent talents ; but he who gave can restore. Indeed, the most circumspect person has much to be forgiven ; and must expect his reward from the mercy of his Judge, not from the merit of his service. Let us then do all in our power to bring forth fruits meet for repentance. For though the awful day of the Lord may be at a great distance, yet the time allotted to us to prepare for it is limited by the short space of human life. The night of death cometh when no man can work. To-day, therefore, while it is called to-day, let us be diligent in the work of the Lord, correct our errors, and put away all evil, and finish our course well, that we may obtain his approbation, and make our calling and election sure.

We shall now proceed to the third parable, or rather description, delivered at the same time by the blessed Jesus ; namely, that of the last judgment. "When the Son of man," said he, "shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations ; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats : and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left." Mat. xxv. 31, etc. It is common in the Old Testament to compare good men to sheep, on account of their innocence and usefulness ; and wicked men to goats, for their exorbitant lusts. Our blessed Saviour, however, does not pursue the allegory further, but describes the remaining, and indeed the greatest part of this awful scene, in terms perfectly simple ; so that though the sense be profound, it is obvious.

Here the judgment of all nations, Gentiles as well as Christians,

is exhibited; and the particulars on which these awful trials are to proceed, are displayed by the great Judge himself. Here we learn, that we shall be condemned or acquitted according as we have neglected or performed works of charity; works which flow from the great principles of faith and love, and which the very heathens are, by the light of reason and aid of grace, invited to perform. But we must not understand that such works merited this favor from the Judge; no, all who are acquitted at that day, whether heathens or Christians, shall be acquitted solely on account of the life and death of Christ, the true, the only meritorious cause.

Good men can at best but consider their present state as an absence from their native country. A state in which they are often exposed to innumerable temptations, to persecutions, to poverty, to reproach, to contempt. But a proper consideration, that they are traveling towards the heavenly Jerusalem, a city prepared for them before the foundations of the world were laid, will be abundantly sufficient to support their spirits, and render them "more than conquerors." The glory laid up for them in the mansions of eternity, and which the great Judge will, at the awful day of accounts, confer upon them, will animate them to bear the violence of their oppressors, and even defy the malice of men and devils. Nay, they will behold without envy the flourishing prosperity of the wicked, and look forward to that glorious and immortal crown, which will be given to the righteous by their great Redeemer. "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me." Mat. xxv. 34, etc.

These enraptured and amazed souls shall then ask, with great reverence and humility, when they performed these services? as they never saw him in want, and therefore could not assist him. "Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the king shall answer, and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Mat. xxv. 37, etc. This is truly astonishing! The united wisdom of men and angels could never have discovered a more proper

method to convey an idea of the warmth and force of the divine benevolence to the sons of men, or offer a more forcible motive to charity, than that the Son of God should, from his seat of judgment, in presence of the whole race of mankind, and all the hosts of the blessed spirits from the courts of heaven, declare that all good offices done to the afflicted for his sake, are done to himself. During the time of his dwelling with human nature in this vale of tears, he suffered unspeakable injuries and afflictions; and therefore he considers all the righteous who are distressed as members of his body, loves them with the utmost tenderness, and is so greatly interested in their welfare, that he rejoices when they are happy, and, humanly speaking, grieves when they are distressed.

Perhaps the true reason why the grand inquiry shall rest solely on the performance of duties, is, that men, generally speaking, consider the neglect of duties as a matter of no great consequence, but dread the commission of crimes. And hence it happens, that while they keep themselves free from the latter, they easily find excuses for the former. And as there is not a more pernicious error, with regard to religion and morality than this, the blessed Jesus thought proper to give such an account of the judgment, as should prove the most solemn caution against it.

But as the inquiry turns wholly on the performance of the duties of charity, it has been asked, why these duties only are mentioned, and no notice taken of the duties of piety; though the Judge himself, upon another occasion, declared these to be of more importance than the duties of charity, so highly applauded in this description of the last day? But those who ask this question would do well to remember, that piety and Christian charity cannot subsist separately: piety, and its origin, faith, always producing charity; and charity, wherever it subsists, necessarily pre-supposing piety. The connection between piety and genuine charity will evidently appear, if it be considered, that no man can be truly benevolent and merciful, without loving those dispositions. Consequently he must love benevolence in God, that is, he must love God; for piety, or the love of God, is nothing else but the regard we cherish towards God on account of his benefits and perfections.

Piety and charity being thus essentially connected together, it is abundantly sufficient to examine the conduct of men with regard to either of those graces. In the above description, the inquiry is represented as turning upon the duties of charity, perhaps because in this branch of goodness there is less room for self-deceit than in the

other. It is common for hypocrites, by a pretended zeal in the externals of religion, to make specious pretences to extraordinary piety, and at the same time they are totally deficient in charity; are covetous, unjust, rapacious, and proud, and consequently destitute of all love to their Creator. But none can assume the appearance of charity, but by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, relieving the distressed, and performing other benevolent offices to their brethren. The works of charity in alms-giving, may indeed, in some particular cases, flow from other principles than those of pious and benevolent dispositions, as from vanity, or even views of interest; but then it should be remembered, that a common degree of hypocrisy will hardly engage men to undertake them; they are by far too weighty duties to be sustained by those false principles, and therefore are seldom counterfeited. Consequently, wherever a genuine, extensive, and permanent charity is found, we may hope that there the love of God reigns in reality. Hence we learn, that all pretences to goodness, without a principle of grace wrought in the heart, avail nothing in point of eternal salvation. At the same time, if we consider it in its full light, it will give us no reason to think well of ourselves, if we are wanting in our duty to God; and that we should not only be charitable, but grateful also, just, temperate, and blameless in all our dealings with mankind. For we should remember, that the duty we owe to the Almighty is no way inconsistent with what is due to men, and which it would be unjust in us to neglect. It consists in dispositions and actions, the same in kind, but different in degree, proportionate to the perfection of the object.

He who from right motives loves and admires holiness, justice, and truth, in men, cannot but love these perfections in God; that is, he must love God; so likewise, he that is truly grateful from a right principle to any earthly benefactor, cannot be ungrateful to one from whose bounty he receives all the good things he enjoys: and since ingratitude in men is nothing more than forgetting the benefit received, and the benefactor who conferred the favor; how can we acquit ourselves from the charge of ingratitude to God, if we forget the obligations we lie under to him, and are at no pains to return him thanks; that is, if we wholly neglect the external and internal exercises of devotion? Since therefore the duty we owe to God is the same in kind with that we owe to man, where there is any resemblance of circumstances, it will undeniably follow that true morality can never exist where piety is wanting; and that those who pretend to morality, and are destitute of piety, render themselves

ridiculous. The awful Judge himself has told us, that after he has passed the happy sentence on the righteous, he will pronounce the following sentence of condemnation upon the wicked: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." Mat. xxv. 41, etc.

It is remarkable, that our blessed Saviour has told us, that the fire of hell was not prepared for the wicked among men, but for the devil and his angels: but that the kingdom of heaven was prepared for the righteous. Perhaps he intended to teach us, that the original design of Omnipotence was to render man happy, not miserable: a state of consummate felicity for the human race, at the time they were created; but the fire of hell was prepared for the devil and his angels immediately after their fall. And as wicked men join with devils in their sin of rebellion against the Almighty, they are doomed to share with them in their punishment; a punishment of the heaviest kind; a punishment of devils. After having represented the sentences that are to be passed on the righteous and the wicked, our Saviour closed the parable in the following manner: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." Mat. xxv. 46.

Let us now behold, with an attentive eye and a solicitous heart, the end of all the living; that awful scene in which the various dispensations of God to mankind shall terminate, in the solemn day "when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and sit on his" magnificent "throne." All nations and people shall be assembled before him, and we must make a part of that assembly. The sheep and the goats must then be separated: and, O my soul, amongst which wilt thou then be numbered? Is there an inquiry, is there a care, of greater, of equal, of comparable importance?

CHAPTER XXXII.

JESUS BLESSED LORD IS ANOINTED BY A POOR, BUT PIOUS WOMAN—THE PERFIDIOUS JUDAS CONSENTS TO BETRAY HIS MASTER—THE HUMBLE JESUS WASHES THE FEET OF HIS DISCIPLES—AND FORETELLS THAT DISCIPLE WHO WAS TO BETRAY HIM INTO THE HANDS OF HIS ENEMIES.



FROM the city to the Mount of Olives, the blessed Jesus used frequently to retire in the evening, and there spend the night in some village or the gardens, either to avoid falling into the hands of his enemies, or for the sake of a little retirement. They did not, indeed, presume to attack him while he was surrounded by his followers in the daytime; but, in all probability, had he lodged within the city, they would have apprehended him during the darkness and silence of the night.

When our blessed Saviour had finished these parables, he added a short account of his own death, in order to fortify his disciples against a greater trial than they had yet met with; namely, the sufferings of their Master. "And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples, Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified. Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas. And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him. But they said, Not on the feast-day, lest there be an uproar among the people." Mat. xxvi. 1, etc.

When the evening approached, our blessed Saviour with his disciples repaired to Bethany, and entered the house of Simon the leper, probably one who had experienced the healing efficacy of his power. But while he sat at meat, a woman, who had also doubtless been an object of his mercy, poured a box of precious ointment upon his head. This action displeased his disciples, who knew that their Master was not delighted with luxuries of any kind; and therefore they rebuked the woman, imagining that it would have been

more acceptable to the Son of God, if the ointment had been sold, and the money distributed among the sons and daughters of poverty and affliction. To reprove the disciples, Jesus told them that it had pleased divine Providence to order that there should always be persons in necessitous circumstances, that the righteous might never want occasions for exercising their charity; but that those who did not now testify their love to him, would never more have the opportunity of doing it, as the time of his ministry was near its period, when the king of terrors should enjoy a short triumph over his body; and therefore this woman had seasonably anointed him for his burial. And to make them sensible of their folly in blaming the woman for this her expression of love to him, he assured them that she should be highly esteemed for this action in every part of the world, and her memory live to the latest period of time.

Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, having been more forward than the rest in condemning the woman, thought the rebuke was particularly directed to him, stung with the guilt of his own conscience, arose from the table, and went immediately into the city to the high priest's palace, where he found the whole council assembled. His passion would not suffer him to reflect on the horrid deed he was going to commit: he immediately promised, for the reward of thirty pieces of silver, to betray into their hands his Lord and Master. Having thus engaged with the rulers of Israel, to put into their hands a person who had been long laboring for their salvation, who had often invited them, in the most pathetic manner, to embrace the benevolent terms of the Gospel offered by the Almighty, he sought an opportunity to betray him in the absence of the multitude. Our Lord, who well knew that the time of his suffering drew nigh, desired therefore to celebrate the passover with his disciples. He was now going to finish the mighty work for which he came into the world; and therefore would not neglect to fulfill the smallest particular of the law of Moses. He therefore sent two of his disciples into the city to prepare a lamb, and make it ready, for eating the passover; telling them that they should meet a man bearing a pitcher of water, who would conduct them to his house, and show them a large upper room furnished, where they were to make ready for him. He was willing, in this last transaction, to convince his disciples that he knew every thing that should befall him; that his sufferings were all foretold by the Almighty; and that they were all, on his own account, submitted unto voluntarily.

When night approached Jesus left Bethany; and every thing be-

ing ready for him at the time he entered into the city, he sat down at the appointed hour. But knowing that his sufferings were now near, he told his disciples, in the most affectionate manner, that he had greatly longed to eat the passover with them before he suffered, in order to show them the strongest proofs of his love. These proofs were, to give them a pattern of humility and love, by washing their feet; instructing them in the nature of his death; and a propitiatory sacrifice; instituting the sacrament in commemoration of his sufferings; comforting them by the tender discourses recorded, (John xiv., xv., xvi.,) in which he gave them a variety of excellent directions, together with many gracious promises; and recommending them to the kind protection of his heavenly Father. "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer. For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

Having thus spoken, he arose from the table, laid aside his garments like a servant, and with all the officiousness of an humble minister, washed the feet of his disciples, without distinction, though one of them, Judas Iscariot, was a monster of impiety; that they might at once behold a conjunction of love and humility, of self-denial and indifference, represented by a person glorious beyond expression—their great Lord and Master. He washed their feet, according to a custom which prevailed in those hot countries, both before and after meat, in order to show them an example of the utmost humility and condescension. The omnipotent Son of the Father lays every thing aside, that he may serve his followers: heaven stoops to earth, one abyss calls upon another, and the miseries of man, which were almost infinite, are exceeded by a mercy equal to the immensity of the Almighty. He deferred this ceremony, which was a customary civility paid to honorable strangers at the beginning of their feast, that it might be preparatory to the second, which he intended should be a feast to the whole world, when all the followers of the blessed Jesus should have an opportunity, in a spiritual manner, of feeding on his flesh, and drinking his blood.

When our blessed Saviour came to Peter, he modestly declined it; but his Master told him, if he refused to submit implicitly to all his orders, he could have no part with him. On which Peter cried out, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." But Jesus told him that the person who was washed had no reason to wash any part of the body except his feet, which he might have soiled by walking from the bath. And added, Ye are all clean as to

the outward laver, but not as to the inward and spiritual laver; I well know that one of you will betray me.

When our gracious Lord had finished this menial service, he asked his disciples if they knew the meaning of what he had done, as the action was purely emblematical? You truly, added he, style me Master and Lord, for I am the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. But if I, your Master and your Lord, have condescended to wash your feet, you surely ought to perform, with the utmost pleasure, the humblest offices of love one to another. I have set you a pattern of humility, and I recommend it to you.

And certainly nothing can more effectually show us the necessity of this heavenly temper of mind, than its being recommended to us by so great an example; a recommendation which, in the present circumstances, was particularly seasonable; for the disciples having heard their great Master declare that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, their minds were filled with ambitious thoughts. And therefore our blessed Saviour added, Ye need not be ashamed to follow my example in this particular; for no servant can think it beneath him to condescend to perform those actions his Lord had done before him. And therefore, if he knows his duty, he will be happy if he practices it. He moreover added, that though he had called them all to the apostleship, and well knew the secret dispositions of every heart before he chose them, they need not be surprised that one among them should prove a traitor, as thereby the Scripture would be fulfilled, "He that eateth bread with me, hath lift up his heel against me."

As our blessed Saviour was now to be but a short time with his disciples, he thought proper to take his farewell of them, which he did in a most affectionate manner. These melancholy tidings greatly troubled them. They were unwilling to part with so kind a friend, so dear a master, so wise a guide, and so profitable a teacher; especially, as they thought they should be left in a forlorn condition, a poor and helpless prey to the rage and hatred of a blind and malicious generation. They seemed willing to die with their Lord, if that might be accepted. Why cannot I follow thee? I will lay down my life for thee! was the language of one, and even all of them; but they could not support the thoughts of a disconsolate separation. Their great and compassionate Master, seeing them thus dejected, endeavored to cheer their drooping spirits: "Let not your hearts be troubled." Listen attentively to what I am going to deliver for your consolation: "I am going to prepare a place for

you; I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am, there you may be also." A reviving word of promise! They were one day to meet again their dear, their affectionate Master, in a place where they should live together to eternity.

But death makes so vast a distance between friends, and the disciples then knew so little of a future state, that they seemed to doubt whether they should, after their parting, meet their great Redeemer. They neither knew the place where he was going, nor the way that led to his kingdom: "Lord," said they, "as we know not whither thou goest, how can we know the way?" In answer to this question, he told them that he was "the way, the truth, and the life:" as if he had said, Through the propitiatory sacrifice I am about to offer, the sacred truths I have delivered, and the divine assistance which I shall hereafter dispense, you are to obtain that happiness which I go to prepare for you. But lest all these arguments should not be sufficient to quiet their minds, he had still another, which could not fail of success: "If ye love me," says he, "ye will rejoice because I said, I go to the Father." Intimating, that he would consider it as a proof of their love to him, if they ceased to mourn. They doubtless thought that, by grieving for his death, they expressed their love to their Master; and it might seem strange that our Saviour should put so contrary an interpretation on their friendly sorrow, or require so unnatural a thing of them, as to rejoice at his departure. What! (might they think) shall we rejoice at so amiable a friend's removal from us? or can we be glad that he retires, and leaves us in this vale of misery? No, it is impossible; the human heart, on so melancholy an occasion, can have no disposition to rejoice.

Our blessed Saviour, therefore, adds this reason to solve the seeming paradox—"because he was going to his Father:" that is, he was going to ascend to the right hand of infinite Power, from whence he would send them all the assistance they could desire. It must not however be supposed that he meant, by these words, that his disciples should not be concerned at his death, or that they could not love him unless they expressed a visible joy on this occasion. That would indeed have been a hard interpretation of their grief; he knew their grief flowed from love; and that if their love had not been strong, their sorrow had been much less. Indeed, their Master was fully convinced that love was the occasion of their sorrow; and therefore he used these arguments to mitigate it, and direct it in a proper course. Nor did our Lord intend to intimate that all sorrow

for so worthy a friend was unlawful, or an unbecoming expression of their love: doubtless he was not displeased to see his disciples so tenderly affected at his removal from them. He who shed tears at the grave of Lazarus, blended with sighs and groans, cannot be thought to forbid them wholly at his own. He therefore did not chide his disciples with angry reproaches, as though they had been entirely in the wrong, but gently reasoned with them by kind persuasions: "Let not your hearts be troubled;" as rather pitying than condemning their sorrow.

Soon after Jesus had spoken these things, his heart was greatly troubled to think that one of his disciples should prove his enemy: he complained of it at the table, declaring that one of them should betray him. This moving declaration greatly affected the disciples; and they began every one of them to say to their Master, "Lord, is it I?" But Jesus, giving them no decisive answer, John, the beloved disciple, whose sweet disposition and other amiable qualities are perpetuated in the peculiar love his great Master bore him, and who was now reclining on his bosom, asked him, who among the disciples could be guilty of so detestable a crime? Jesus told him, that the person to whom he should give the sop, when he had dipped it, was he who should betray him. Accordingly, as soon as he had dipped the sop in the dish, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, saying to him at the same time, "That thou doest, do quickly." Judas received the sop, without knowing any thing of what his Master had told the beloved disciple: nor did any of the disciples, except John, entertain the least suspicion that Judas was the person who would betray their Master.

The innocent disciples were indeed so deeply affected with his declaration, that one of them should betray him, that they did not remark the words of Jesus to his apostate disciple, but continued to ask him who was the person that should be guilty of so base a crime? Willing at last to satisfy their importunity, the blessed Jesus declared, that the person who dipped his hand with him in the dish, should betray him. This to the eleven was a joyful declaration, but confounding in the highest degree to Judas. Impudent as he was, it struck him speechless, pointing him out plainly, and displaying the foulness of his heart. While Judas continued mute with confusion, the blessed Jesus declared that his death should be brought about according to the decrees of Heaven, though that would not in the least mitigate the crime of the person who betrayed him; adding, "it had been good for that man if he had not been born."

Judas having now recovered himself a little, asserted his innocence by a question which implied a denial of the charge. But his Master soon silenced him, by positively affirming that he was really the person.

As various conjectures have been formed concerning the motives which induced the perfidious Judas cruelly to deliver up his innocent Master into the hands of his enemies, it may not be improper to cite those which appear to be most probable, though the decision must be entirely left to the reader.

Some are of opinion, that he was induced to commit this villany by the resentment of the rebuke given him by his Master, for blaming the woman who came with the precious ointment, and anointed the head of Jesus as he sat at meat in the house of Simon the leper. But though this had doubtless its weight with the traitor, yet it could not I think be his only motive; because the rebuke was given in general to all the disciples, who had certainly been forward with him in censuring the woman. Nor can we imagine, even if he had been rebuked alone, that so mild a reproof could provoke any person, however wicked, to the horrid act of murdering his friend; much less Judas, whose covetous disposition must have disposed him to bear every thing from his Master, from whom he expected the highest preferment, if he should openly declare himself the Messiah, and take the reins of government into his own hands. Others think that Judas betrayed his Master through covetousness. But if we understand by covetousness, the reward given by the priests, this opinion is equally defective; for the sum was too small for the most sordid wretch to think equivalent to the life of a friend, especially when he expected from him the highest posts and advantages. Others attribute the perfidy of Judas to his doubting whether his Master was the Messiah; and that he betrayed him in a fit of despair. But of all the solutions, this is the worst founded. For if Judas believed his Master to be an impostor, he must have observed something in his behavior which led him to form such an opinion of him; and in that case he would doubtless have mentioned it to the chief priests and elders, when he made the contract with them; which it is plain he did not, as they would have reminded him of it when he came back and expressed his remorse for what he had done. It should also be observed, that had Judas given them any intimations of this kind, they would doubtless have urged them against our blessed Saviour himself, in the course of his trial, when they were at so great a loss for witnesses to support their accusation; and against the

apostles, afterwards, when they reproved them for speaking in the name of Jesus. Besides, had Judas thought his Master an impostor, and proposed nothing by his treachery but the price he put upon his life, how came he to sell him for such a trifle, when he well knew that the chief priests and rulers would have given him any sum, rather than not have got him into their hands? In fine, the supposition that Judas believed his Master to be an impostor, is directly confuted by the solemn declaration he made to the priests, when he declared the deepest conviction of the innocence of our great Redeemer: "I have sinned," says he, "in betraying the innocent blood." It must be remembered, that the remorse he felt for this crime, when he saw his Master condemned, was too bitter to be endured; so that he fled even to the king of terrors for relief.

The evangelist John tells us, that he was of so covetous a disposition, as to steal money out of our Lord's bag; and hence we have sufficient reason to believe, that he first followed Jesus with a view of obtaining riches, and other temporal advantages, which he expected the Messiah's friends would enjoy. It likewise authorizes us to think, that as he had hitherto reaped none of these advantages, he might grow impatient under the delay; and the rather, as Jesus had lately discouraged all ambitious views among his disciples, and neglected to embrace the opportunity of erecting that kingdom which was offered him by the multitude, who accompanied him into Jerusalem with shouts, and crying, Hosannah to the Son of David. His impatience therefore becoming excessive, suggested to him the thought of delivering his Master into the hands of the council, firmly persuaded that he would then be obliged to assume the dignity of the Messiah, and consequently be able to reward his followers. For as this court was composed of the chief priests, elders, and scribes, that is, the principal persons of the sacerdotal order, the representatives of the great families, and the doctors of the law; the traitor did not doubt that his Master, when brought before so august an assembly, would assert his pretensions to the title of Messiah, prove his claim to their full conviction, gain them over to his interest, and immediately enter on his regal dignity. And though he must be sensible that the measures he took to compass his intention were very offensive to his Master, yet he might think the success of it would procure his pardon from so compassionate a Master, and even recommend him to favor. In the mean time, his project, however plausible it may appear to one of his turn, was far from being free from difficulty; and therefore, while he revolved it in his

own mind, many things might occur to stagger his resolution. At length, thinking himself affronted by the rebuke of Jesus, at the time when the woman anointed the head of his Master, he was provoked to execute the resolution he had formed of obliging him to alter his measures. Rising therefore directly from the table, he went immediately into the city to the palace of the high priest, where he found the council assembled, consulting how they might take Jesus by subtlety in the absence of the multitude. To them he made known his proposal of delivering his Master into their hands; and undertook, for a small sum of money, to conduct a band of armed men to the place where the Saviour of the world usually spent the night with his disciples, where they might apprehend him without the least danger of a tumult.

Some reasons may be offered in support of this opinion concerning the motives which induced Judas to betray his Master. First, from the nature of the contract: "What will ye give me," said he, "and I will deliver him unto you?" He did not mean that he would deliver him up to be put to death; for though the priests had consulted among themselves how they might destroy Jesus, they had not been so abominably wicked as to declare their intention publicly; they only proposed to bring him to trial for assuming the character of the Messiah, and to treat him as it should appear he deserved. The offer therefore, which Judas made them, of delivering him up, was in conformity to their declared resolutions. Nor did they understand it in any other light; for had the priests thought that his design in this was to get his Master punished with death, they must also have thought he believed him to be an impostor; in which case, they would doubtless have produced him as one of their principal evidences, no person being more proper. Also, when Judas returned to them with the money, declaring that he had sinned in betraying the innocent blood, instead of replying, "What is that to us? see thou to that;" it was the most natural thing in the world, to have upbraided him with the stain he had put upon his Master's character by the contract they had made with him. It is true, they called the money they gave him "the price of blood;" but they did not mean this in the strictest sense, as they had neither hired Judas to assassinate his Master, nor can they be supposed to have charged themselves with the guilt of murdering him. It was only the price of blood consequent on being the reward they had given to the traitor, for putting it in their power to take away the life of Christ under the color and form of public justice. Now, it

may be doubted whether Judas asked the money as a reward of his service. He covetously, indeed, kept it; and the priests, for that reason, called it the price of blood.

In short, Judas knew that the rulers could not take away the life of any person whatsoever, the Romans having deprived them of that power, and therefore some think he could have no design of this kind in delivering him up; not to mention, that it was a common opinion among the Jews that the Messiah could never die; an opinion that Judas might easily embrace, having seen his Master raise several persons, and among the rest, one who had been in the grave no less than four days.

Another reason which may be assigned in confirmation of this opinion, is the traitor's hanging himself when he found him condemned, not by the governor, but by the council, whose prerogative it was to judge prophets. Had Judas proposed to take away the life of his Master, the sentence of condemnation passed upon him, instead of filling him with despair, must have gratified him, being the accomplishment of his project; whereas, the light wherein we have endeavored to place his conduct, shows this circumstance to have been perfectly natural.

He knew him to be perfectly innocent, and expected that he would have wrought such miracles before the council as should have constrained them to believe. Therefore, when he found that nothing of this kind was done, and that the priests had passed the sentence of condemnation upon him, and were carrying him to the governor to get it executed, he repented of his rash and covetous project, came to the chief priests and elders, the persons to whom he had betrayed him, offered them their money again, and solemnly declared the deepest conviction of his Master's innocence, hoping that they would have desisted from the prosecution. But they were obstinate, and would not relent, upon which his remorse arose to such a pitch, that, unable to support the torments of his own conscience, he went and hanged himself.

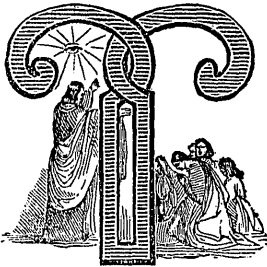
Thus it is probable, that the traitor's intention in delivering up his Master was not to get him punished with death, but only to lay him under a necessity of proving his pretensions before the grandees, whom he had hitherto shunned; thinking that if they had yielded, the whole nation would immediately have been raised forthwith to the summit of their expectations.

This account of Judas's conduct is by no means calculated to lessen the foulness of his crime, which was the blackest imaginable.

For even in the light above mentioned, it implied both an insatiable avarice, and a willful opposition to the counsels of Providence, and rendered the actor of it a disgrace to human nature. But it is calculated to set the credibility of the traitor's action in a proper light, and to show that he was not moved to it by any thing suspicious in the character of his Master; because, according to his view of it, his perfidy, instead of implying that he entertained suspicions of his Master's integrity, plainly proves that he had the fullest conviction of his being the Messiah. Nor was it possible for any one who had been present at the miracles which Jesus wrought, and the doctrines which he delivered, to admit of a doubt of his being the Son of God, the Saviour of mankind, unless blinded by the most obstinate prejudice.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

JESUS INSTITUTES THE SACRAMENT, IN COMMEMORATION OF HIS SUFFERINGS AND DEATH—
SETTLES A DISPUTE WHICH AROSE AMONG HIS DISCIPLES—PREDICTS PETER'S COWARDICE
IN DENYING HIS MASTER—FORTIFIES HIS DISCIPLES AGAINST THE APPROACHING SHOOK
—FORETELLS PETER'S COWARDICE AGAIN—PREACHES TO AND PRAYS WITH HIS DIS-
CIPLES FOR THE LAST TIME—PASSIONATE ADDRESS OF OUR LORD TO HIS FATHER IN
THE GARDEN.



HE great Redeemer, ever mindful of the grand design of his mission, even the salvation of lost and perishing sinners, was not in the least affected by the treachery of his apostate disciple. For, knowing that he must become a sacrifice for sin, he instituted the sacrament of his supper, to perpetuate the memory of it throughout all ages. Accordingly, as they were eating the paschal supper, "Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body." Mat. xxvi. 26. Observe this rite no longer in remembrance of your deliverance from Egypt, but in remembrance of me, who, by dying for you, will bring you out of the spiritual bondage, a bondage far worse than the Egyptian, under which your fathers groaned, and will establish you in the glorious liberty of the children of God. Do it in remembrance of me, who by laying down my life, will ransom you from sin, from death, from hell, and will set open the gates of heaven to you, that you may enter immortality in triumph.

Having given the bread to his disciples, he also took the cup, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Mat. xxvi. 27, 28. All of you, and all of my disciples, in all ages, must drink of this cup, because it represents my blood, shed for the remission of the sins of mankind; my blood, by which the new covenant between God and man is ratified. It is therefore my blood of the new covenant: so that this institution exhibits to your joyful meditation, the grand basis of the hopes of the children of men, and perpetuates the memory of it to the end of the world.

He added, "I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." Mat. xxvi. 29.

The manifestation of the Son of God is the most illustrious, the most momentous event that is possible to engage the meditations of men. To his life and death, his resurrection and ascension into glory, we are indebted for our hopes and assurances of pardon, for our peace, for our happiness. To procure our salvation, he made the most amazing condescension from the dignity he enjoyed with his Father, by putting on the vail of flesh: he poured divine instruction from his lips, and shone forth with an all-perfect and all-lovely example. For our benefit, he submitted to a course of the most cruel treatment from his bitter enemies, to the agonies of the cross, and to the stroke of the king of terrors. For our happiness, he arose again with power and lustre, ascended into the mansions of eternal happiness, manages our affairs with the Father, and holds the reins of government. With the greatest wisdom and goodness, therefore, this beneficent Jesus instituted a rite that should recall his love to our memories, and awake each pious passion in our breast; a rite which, by the breaking of bread and the pouring out of wine, should represent to us, in a striking manner, that most signal proof of the affection both of him and his heavenly Father, when his tender frame was exposed to wounds and bruises, when streams of the most precious blood issued from his sacred veins. The more we reflect on this instance of divine love, the more we shall perceive that there was a peculiar propriety in pointing out, by a particular ordinance, a fact of such immense importance in the system of revelation. Nay, we may venture to conjecture, that in some dark and corrupt ages, when the Scriptures were but little known by the common people, and hardly studied by the priests, the death of our Saviour would have been almost forgotten, had not the remembrance of it been renewed by the celebration of this sacred ordinance.

It should also be remembered, that the vanities of the world, the allurements of sensual pleasure, the charms of ambition, the splendor of riches, in short, temptations from present objects of every kind, have often too powerful an influence on our temper and conduct. They have a fatal aptitude to draw the soul aside to folly, and to obliterate the impressions of things divine. It was therefore a wise, a kind intention, of our great Redeemer, by a frequent repetition of the sacramental feast, to call back the wandering heart of man to a sense of his duty, and obligations as a Christian.

Besides, though the religion of the immaculate Jesus is altogether gentle, generous, and beneficent; though its whole tendency is to correct the passions, sweeten the dispositions, and enlarge the affections of men; and though it enforces all this upon us by motives surprisingly powerful and affecting, yet such is the perverseness of the human heart, that jealousies and contentions, envy, wrath, and malice, too often find admittance there. Was it not then an instance of our Saviour's wisdom and benevolence, by uniting us together at the sacrament of his body and blood, to urge the putting away of all bitterness, anger, evil-speaking, and revenge; and to inspire us with condescension, compassion, and love? How careful therefore ought we to be in performing this duty appointed by our dying Saviour! We should, in order to receive it worthily, employ our meditation on the design and excellency of the Gospel; on the noble system of the doctrines and duties it contains; on the illustrious, divine, and complete example of the blessed Jesus; on the important privileges, the valuable promises, and the ravishing prospects his revelation affords; and on the bright and convincing evidence with which it is attended. We should contemplate that essential and unparalleled benevolence of the Father in appointing the means of our redemption; on the readiness manifested by the Son of God in undertaking our cause; and on his wonderful transactions in the prosecution of this grand, this amazing work. Above all, we should get impressed upon our souls a strong sense of the special and immediate purposes for which this sacrament was appointed.

When we actually join in communion, we should be careful that our affections are properly directed and warmly engaged. To have our hearts fixed upon the vanities, the profits, and the cares of this world, is a direct violation of the ordinance; and therefore we should be extremely careful to maintain a right temper and behavior at that time. We should study to abstract our thoughts as much as possible from every foreign, every terrestrial consideration, and to have our passions fervently employed in the solemn service. "Retire, O my soul," each of us should say, "from this inferior scene of things, from all its pleasures and all its pursuits, and hold communion with the Almighty through his Son, the immaculate Jesus. Meditate upon the infinite grace of Omnipotence, which formed the amazing plan that displayed pardon, peace, and endless happiness, to so undeserving a creature as thou art. Recollect that surprising condescension and tenderness of thy compassionate Redeemer, which induced him to bring down from heaven salvation to the sons of men.

Call to mind the admirable instructions he offered, the charming pattern he exhibited, the hard labors and sufferings he endured in the course of his ministry; especially call to mind the ignominy, the reproaches, the agonies he endured when he hung upon the cross, and purchased for thee eternal mercy. Think upon these affecting subjects, till thine heart is filled with sorrow for thine iniquities, till thy faith becomes lively, active, and strong; till thy gratitude and love are elevated to the highest pitch; till thy obedience is rendered uniform, steady, and complete. Hast thou, O my God, the parent of universal nature! hast thou so illustriously manifested thy compassion for sinners, as not to spare thine own Son! hast thou sent the Saviour into the lower world, in order to raise the children of men to immortality, perfection, and glory? and am I now in thy presence on purpose to celebrate this institution, which requireth me to commemorate the death of the great Messiah, to declare my public acceptance of his excellent revelation, and my regard to my Christian brethren? May then the remembrance of his beneficence dwell upon my mind, and upon my tongue, forever and ever! May I consider and comply with the intention of his Gospel; and may the sentiments of kindness and charity towards all my fellow mortals and fellow disciples, reign in my breast with increasing purity, with increasing zeal!"

Such are the views that should possess our souls when we partake of this sacred ordinance; but it will signify little to entertain these views at that time, unless the effects of them are apparent in our future conduct and conversation; for a transient glow of affection, or sallies of immediate delight, were not principally intended in this institution.

The blessed Jesus did not ordain it as a ceremony or charm, but as a proper method of establishing our hearts in the fear and love of God, who gave his only beloved Son to die for wretched sinners. Though ye have therefore, O Christians! obeyed the Redeemer's command in this appointment, and found your passions greatly moved, yet this is not the whole required at your hands: it will justly be expected that you should live to the honor of your divine Master. As you have solemnly professed your faith in him, and your love towards him, the reality of your faith and love should be demonstrated by walking more strictly in the way of his precepts, and by abounding in that heavenly character and temper which his spotless example so engagingly recommends. Thus only will the sacrament become subservient to the most beneficial purposes. Thus only will it be

instrumental in making us meet for sharing in the dignity and felicity possessed by our exalted Saviour. May therefore all the followers of the immaculate Jesus, by uniting together at his sacred table, advance from holiness to holiness, till they arrive at the regions of eternal felicity!

Our blessed Saviour, after delivering the sacramental cup, and telling them that his blood was shed for them, mentioned the treachery of Judas a second time: "Behold, he is at hand that doth betray me." Mat. xxvi. 45. This second declaration was made very properly after the institution of the sacrament, which exhibits the highest instance of our great Redeemer's love to mankind, his dying to obtain the remission of their sins; for it abundantly proves, that the person who could be deliberately guilty of such an injury to so kind a friend, must have been a monster, the foulness of whose ingratitude cannot be described by the force of language.

It is thought that some of the disciples, particularly struck with horror at the thought of Judas' treachery, rebuked him, by asking him with surprise, how he could betray his Master? This accusation Judas no doubt repelled, by impudently denying the fact: but consciousness of guilt giving edge to the reproaches of his brethren, and to every circumstance of the affair, he immediately left the company, exceedingly displeased at thinking himself insulted and affronted.

The important, the awful scene now approached, when the great work was to be finished. The traitor Judas was gone to the chief priests and elders for a band of soldiers to apprehend him; but this did not discompose the Redeemer of mankind; he took occasion to meditate on the glory that would accrue both to himself and to his Almighty Father, from those sufferings, and spake of it to his disciples. "Now," said he, "is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." He told them that, having already done honor to his Father by the past actions of his life, and being about to honor him still further by his sufferings and death, which would display his perfections, particularly his infinite love to the human race, in the most astonishing and amiable light, he was in his turn to receive honor from his Father; intimating, that his human nature was to be exalted to the right hand of Omnipotence, and that his mission from God was to be supported by irrefragable attestations. But his disciples imagining that he spake of the glory of a temporal kingdom, their ambition was again revived, and they began to dispute with as much keenness as ever, which of them should be greatest in that kingdom. This contention Jesus suppressed by the arguments he

had formerly used for the same purpose. Among the Gentiles, said he, they are reckoned the greatest who have the greatest power, and have exercised it in the most absolute manner: but your greatness shall be very different from theirs; it shall not consist in being unlimited with regard to tyrannical power, even though it should be joined with an affectation of titles, which denote qualities truly honorable; but whosoever desires to be great, or chief among you, let him be so by his humility, and the service he renders to the rest, in imitation of me, your Master, whose greatness consists in this, that I am become the servant of you all. Adding, as they had continued with him in his temptation, he would bestow upon them such a kingdom as his Father had appointed for him. At the same time, to check their ambition, and lead them to form a just notion of his kingdom, he told them that he was soon to leave them: and that whither he was going, they could not at that time follow him; for which reason, instead of contending with one another which of them should be the greatest, they would do well to be united among themselves in the happy bond of love. For by loving one another sincerely and fervently, they would prove themselves his disciples, to the conviction of mankind, who could not be ignorant that love was a distinguishing part of his character. This is termed a new commandment, not because mutual love had never been enjoined to mankind before, but because it was a precept of peculiar excellency; for the word translated "new," in the Hebrew language denotes excellency and truth; he also called this a new commandment, because they were to exercise it under a new relation, according to a new measure, and from new motives. They were to love one another in the relation of his disciples, and in that degree of love which he had shown to them; for they were to lay down their lives for their brethren.

This excellent doctrine, however, did not make such an impression on Peter, as the words which Jesus had spoken concerning a place whither his disciples could not come. He therefore replied by asking, Where he was going? To which Jesus answered, "Whither I go thou canst not follow me now, but shalt follow me afterward."

In order to make his disciples further humble, watchful, and kindly affectionate one towards another, he assured them that Satan was seeking to ruin them all by his temptations: "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he might sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

Peter was greatly offended that his Master should have singled him out as the weakest: for so he interpreted his praying for him particularly; and supposing that he mentioned Satan's seeking to sift him, as the thing which would hinder him from following his Master, replied, Why cannot I follow thee now? Is there any road more terrible than the dark valley of the shadow of death? Yet through these black and gloomy shades I am willing this moment to accompany thee.

Jesus, knowing his weak though sincere resolution, answered, Art thou so very confident of thine own strength? I tell thee that this very night, before the cock crows, thou wilt thrice deny me to be thy Master.

Our blessed Saviour having finished what he had to say to Peter in particular, turned himself to his other disciples, and put them in mind, that when they were first sent out he directed them to rely wholly upon the Almighty for assistance. When I sent you formerly, said he, to preach the Gospel, you may remember I ordered you to go without any provision, either for your sustenance or defence, assuring you that though you would indeed meet with great opposition, yet Providence would dispose some men in all places to be your friends, and to furnish you with all necessaries; and accordingly you found that you wanted for nothing, but were wonderfully supported, without any care or provision of your own, in the whole journey, and finished your work with success. But now the case is very different; the time of that greatest trial and distress, whereof I have often forewarned you, is just at hand: and you may now make all the provision in your power, and arm yourselves against it as much as you are able. I have finished the work for which I was sent into the world: and nothing now remains for me, but to undergo those sufferings which the prophets have foretold concerning me, and to complete this whole dispensation of Providence, by submitting at last to a cruel and ignominious death.

The disciples, thinking their great Master meant that they should arm themselves in a literal sense, and endeavor to oppose the assaults that would shortly be made upon them by the Jews, answered, "Lord, here are two swords:" but the blessed Jesus, who only intended to convey an idea of their approaching distress and temptations, and to arm them against the surprise, replied, "It is enough;" you need not trouble yourselves about any more weapons of this nature for your defence. Be not terrified and disconsolate, added the compassionate Jesus, because I have told you that I must undergo great sufferings,

and be taken away from you for a time. You have always been taught to believe in God, who is the almighty preserver and governor of all things; and to rely on him for deliverance in every affliction and distress. Learn now, in like manner, to believe in me, who have all power committed to me, as the preserver and Head of my church: and trust in me to accomplish fully all things that I have promised you. If you do this, and persist steadfastly in the belief of my doctrine, and in the obedience of my commands, nothing in this vale of misery, not even persecution or death itself, shall be able to hinder you from attaining the happiness I have proposed to you. For in heaven, my Father's house, there is abundant room to receive you; otherwise I would not have filled your minds with the hopes and expectation of happiness. But as there are mansions sufficient for you in another state, you may with confidence and assurance hope for the full accomplishment of my promises, notwithstanding all this present world may contrive or act against you. And ye ought also to bear patiently my departure from you at this time; since I only leave you to prepare a place, and open the portals of those eternal habitations where I shall be ever with you. When I have prepared a place for you in that eternal state, I will again return, and take you to myself. Nor shall you evermore be separated from me, but continue with me to all eternity, in full participation of my eternal glory and happiness in the blissful regions of the heavenly Canaan. You must now surely know whither I am going, and the way that leads to these happy seats of immortality.

But the disciples, whose minds were not yet fully weaned from the expectation of a temporal power and glory, did not understand this discourse of their great and beloved Master. Accordingly, Thomas replied, Lord, we cannot comprehend whither thou art going; and therefore must needs be ignorant of the way.

To which the blessed Jesus answered, I myself, as I have often told you, am the true and only way to life; nor can any man go thither by any other way. If ye say ye do not know the Father, I tell you, that no man who knoweth me can be ignorant of my Father, of his will, and the manner of pleasing him: if ye know me, ye must know that all my actions have been directed by the will of the Father, and for the glory of his name.

Philip answered, Lord, show us but once the Father, and we shall be fully satisfied.

Jesus replied, Have I been so long with you, Philip, and yet art thou a stranger to him who sent me? I tell you, that to know one,

is to be acquainted with both. What then can you mean by desiring to see the Father, as if you could be still ignorant of him, after being so long acquainted with me? Be assured, Philip, that whatsoever I speak is the declaration of his will, and whatsoever I do is the operation of his power. And if you refuse to believe my own affirmation, yet, at least, let my works convince you: for they carry in them undeniable evidences of a divine power. "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father." John xiv. 12. Surely then you have matter sufficient to comfort and support your spirits, under the thoughts of my departure from you. Ye have abundant reason to believe that I have power to perform all the promises I have made you; and the design of my departure is actually to perform them. When I am returned to my Father, ye shall soon receive sufficient pledges of my care and remembrance of you. You shall be endued with power not only to perform the same works ye have seen me do, as healing diseases, giving sight to the blind, casting out devils, and the like, for the conviction of the Jews, but even to do greater things than these; to speak with all kinds of tongues, and to propagate my religion among the Gentiles, even through all the nations of the earth. And whatsoever ye shall ask my Father in my name, as being my disciples, and in order to promote the work of the Gospel, shall certainly be granted you. That God may be greatly glorified by the extraordinary success and spreading of the religion of his Son, I say, that whatsoever ye shall ask, I will take care, after my return to the Father, that it shall be granted you. Only ye must remember, as the necessary condition upon which all depends, that ye be careful above all things to continue steadfast and immovable in your obedience to my commands; this is the only true mark you can give of the sincerity of your love towards me; it is more than your grieving at my departure, or any other external indication of zeal whatsoever. The Father, I say, shall send you another advocate and comforter, even the Holy Spirit, the author and teacher of truth, who shall guide and direct, assist and comfort you, in all cases. This Spirit the sensual and corrupt world cannot receive, having no knowledge of the divine truths, or disposition to be governed by them. But ye know them, and are disposed to entertain them. The Spirit of the Father is already within you by his secret and invisible efficacy; and shall hereafter appear in you openly, by great and visible manifestations. Thus, though I must depart from you, yet I do by no means leave you

comfortless. I leave you with a promise of the Holy Spirit ; and I leave you in expectation also of my own return. For though after a very little while I shall appear no more to the world, yet to you I will appear again ; for I shall live again, and ye also shall live with me. When therefore I have conquered and triumphed over death, ye shall understand more fully, and it shall appear more visible by great and manifest effects, that I act in all things agreeably to my Father's will, and am perfectly invested with his power ; and that ye in like manner have my power and commission communicated to you ; so that there is a perfect unity and communion between us. Only ye must remember, that the one necessary condition on which all depends, is, that ye continue steadfast and immovable in your faith in me, and in your obedience to my commands. He, and he only, who embraces my doctrine, and obeys and practices it, shall be judged to be sincere in his love towards me. And he who loves me in that manner, shall be loved by my Father ; and I myself also will love him, and manifest myself to him.

Here Judas Thaddeus interrupted his Master, saying, Lord, how wilt thou choose to manifest thyself to us, a few particular persons, and not to the generality of the world ?

Jesus replied, I have already told you the reason for my acting in this manner ; because the generality of the world are not disposed to obey my commandments, the only way of maintaining communion with me. But ye are disposed to embrace my doctrine, and to obey it ; and therefore I manifest myself to you. And whoever else will so love me as to keep my commandments, him also will I and my Father love, and will maintain communion with him, and all spiritual blessings shall be poured down upon him, and he shall be made a partaker of happiness and eternal life. On the contrary, whoever loves me not, that is, obeys not my commandments, shall have no intercourse or communion with me. Neither will my Father love or honor him, or make any manifestations of himself to him ; for as my commandments are not my own, but the Father's commandments ; therefore whoever dishonors me, my Father will look upon him as dishonoring himself. These things have I briefly spoken to you now, according to the shortness of the time I am to continue with you, and to comfort you for the present against my departure. But when the Comforter whom I promised you is come, even the Holy Spirit, whom my Father shall send you on my account, he shall instruct you more fully, recalling to your remembrance what you have for-

gotten, explaining what is yet obscure, and supplying what is further necessary to be taught you, and to be understood by you.

In the mean time, I take my leave of you, and my blessing I leave with you; not formally, and after the common fashion of the world, but affectionately and sincerely retaining a careful remembrance of you, and with an earnest desire and intention of returning again speedily to you. Wherefore be not overmuch grieved for me and my departure, nor fearful of what may then befall yourselves. I go away from you, but it is with an intention, as I have already told you, to return to you again. If you loved me with a wise and understanding affection, ye would rejoice instead of grieving at my present departure; because I am going to my Father, the supreme Author of all glory and happiness. These things I have now told you before they come to pass, that when ye see them happen, your faith in me, and your expectation of the performance of all my promises, may be confirmed and strengthened. The time will not allow me to say much more to you at present; my end draweth near; the ruler of this world, the prince of the power of darkness, is at this instant employing all his wicked instruments to apprehend and destroy me. Not that either the power of the devil, or the malice of man, can at all prevail over me, but because the time of my suffering, according to the appointment of Divine Wisdom, is arrived; and that I may demonstrate to the world my love and obedience to my Father, I willingly submit myself to be put to death by the hands of sinful and cruel men. Rise up, let us be going, that I may enter on my sufferings.

Having thus spoken, they finished the passover with singing a hymn, and went out to the Mount of Olives. On their arrival at the place which was to be the scene of his sufferings, he desired them to fortify themselves by prayer, and forewarned them of the terrible effects his sufferings would have upon them; they would make them all stumble that very night, agreeably to the prophecy of Zechariah: "I shall smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered abroad." To strengthen their faith, therefore, he not only mentioned his own resurrection, but told them they should see him in Galilee, after he was risen from the dead.

On our blessed Saviour's mentioning the offence that his disciples would take at his suffering, Peter recollected what had been said to him in particular before they left the house. Grieved therefore afresh to find his Master entertain such thoughts of him, and being now armed with a sword, the vehemence of his temper urged him to

boast a second time of his courageous and close attachment to his Master. "Though all men," said he, "should be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended." But Jesus, knowing that human confidence and security were weak and frail, thought proper to forewarn him again of his danger, and told him that the cock should not crow before he had denied him. Peter, however, still continued to repeat his confidence—I will die with thee, but never deny thee. The disciples all joined with Peter in professing their fixed resolution of suffering death, rather than that they would deny their Master; but the event fully confirmed the prediction of our Saviour. From hence we may learn, how ignorant men are of their own hearts, and that the strongest resolutions in their own strength avail nothing. The compassionate Redeemer of mankind, not willing to lose one single moment of the short time of his ministry that yet remained, continued to instruct his disciples in the great truths he came into the world to explain; and, from the vines which were growing round him on the Mount of Olives, he began his excellent discourse with the parable of the vine, to the following import:—

Hitherto, said the blessed Jesus, the Jewish church and nation have been the peculiar care of Providence; as a choice and goodly vine, likely to bring forth much fruit, is the special care of the husbandman. But from henceforth my church, my disciples, and the professors of my religion, of what country or nation soever they be, shall become the people of God, and the peculiar care of divine providence. I will be to them as the root and stock of a vine, of which they are the branches, and my Father the husbandman and vine-dresser. As in the management of a choice vine, the skillful vine-dresser cuts off all barren and superfluous branches, that they may not burden nor exhaust the tree; and prunes and dresses the fruitful branches, that they may grow continually, and so bear more fruit: thus, in the government of my church, all useless, wicked, and incorrigible members, my Father, sooner or later, by his judgments cuts off and destroys: but those who are sincerely pious and good, he, by the various and merciful dispensations of his providence towards them, tries, purifies, and amends, that they may daily improve, and be more and more abundant in all good works. Now ye, my apostles, are such members as these, being purified in heart and mind, and prepared for every good work by your lively faith in me, and sincere resolutions to obey my commands. Continue steadfastly in this state, and then you may be sure of deriving all spiritual bless-

ings from me, as the branches receive sap and nourishment from the vine. But as a branch, without continuing in the vine, cannot bear any fruit, but presently dries up and perishes; so ye, unless ye continue steadfast in your communion with me, by a lively faith and sincere obedience, so as to receive grace and spiritual blessings, can never bring forth any good fruit of true holiness and righteousness, but will fall into vanity, superstition, and wickedness, and at last utterly perish. I am as it were, I say, the root and stock of the vine, whereof ye are the branches. He that continues to adhere to me, by a constant faith in me, shall bring forth much fruit unto everlasting life; even as a branch which continues to grow in a vine, and receives sap and nourishment from it. But he that does not continue his relation to me in this manner, becomes a false and useless professor, and shall be cast out from me, and perish forever; even as a fruitless branch is cut off from the vine, and left to wither and dry, and is at last burned in the fire. If you continue in me, by believing my words, and holding fast what ye believe, and obeying and practicing it accordingly, no power or malice, either of man or of devils, shall be able to hurt you, or oppose your doctrines. For though I be absent from you in body, yet I will hear your prayers, and my Father himself also will hear you: and whatsoever ye shall ask, for the glory of the Almighty, and the propagation of my true religion in the world, shall certainly be granted you. But above all things, carefully remember to demonstrate your continuance in me, by abounding in all good works of holiness, righteousness, and charity. This is the honor which my Father desires and expects from you; even as it is the glory and desire of a vine-dresser, that his vine should bring forth much fruit. And this is the honor that I myself expect from you, that ye shall prove yourselves to be really and indeed my disciples, by imitating my example, and obeying my commands. This ye are bound to do, not only in duty, but in gratitude also; for as my Father hath loved me, so have I also loved you; and ye in like manner ought to love me again, that you may continue to be loved by me. But the way to express your love towards me, and to continue to be loved by me, is to keep my commandments; even as I, by keeping my Father's commandments, have expressed my love towards him, and continue to be loved by him.

These things have I spoken to you before my departure, that the comfort ye have taken in my presence may be continued in my absence, and even increase until the coming of the Holy Spirit; as

it will be upon this condition, which I have so often repeated to you, that you keep my commandments. And the principal of these commandments is, that ye love one another; not after the common fashion of the world, but in such a manner as I have loved you: nor can you be ignorant what sort of love that is, when I tell you that I am now going to lay down my life for you. This is the highest instance in which it is possible for a man to express his love towards his greatest friends and benefactors; but this I am now going to do for you, and for all mankind. I do not consider you as my benefactors, but as my friends, upon this easy condition only, that ye keep my commandments. I might indeed justly call you servants, considering the infinite distance between me and you, and the obligations ye have to obey my commandments; but I have not treated you as servants, who are not admitted into their Master's counsels, but as friends, revealing to you the whole will of my Father with all freedom and plainness.

I have, I say, behaved myself to you as to the nearest friends. Not that you first obliged me, or did any acts of kindness for me; but I have freely, and of my own good pleasure, chosen you to be my apostles, and the preachers of my Gospel, that you may go and declare the will of God to the world, and bring forth much and lasting fruit, in the conversion of men to the knowledge of the truth, and to the profession and practice of true religion. In the performance of this work, whatsoever ye shall ask of my Father in my name, in order to enable you to perform it effectually and with full success, shall certainly be granted you.

Now all these things which I have spoken unto you concerning the greatness of my love towards you, in choosing you to be my apostles, in revealing unto you the whole will of my Father, and in laying down my life for you, I have urged and inculcated upon you for this reason chiefly, as I at first told you, that ye may learn, after my example, to love one another. The world indeed, you must expect, will hate and persecute you on my account. But this you ought not to be surprised or terrified at, knowing that it is no worse treatment than I myself have met with before you. Be not therefore surprised when ye meet with opposition; nor think to find better treatment in the world than I myself have done. Remember what I have already told you, that the disciple is not above his Master; nor is he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If men had generally and readily embraced my doctrine, you might indeed have had some reason to expect that they would willingly

have received yours also. But since I myself have suffered great indignities and persecutions from wicked and perverse, from obstinate and incorrigible, men, only for opposing their vices, it is highly reasonable that you should expect to undergo the like treatment upon the like account. In all which sufferings you will, moreover, have this further comfortable consideration to support you, that the justice of your own cause, and the injustice of your persecutors, will by that means most evidently appear; seeing ye are persecuted only for professing and preaching in my name the doctrine of true religion, and they persecute you only because they know not God, and out of mere malice will not bear to be instructed in his commands. Indeed, had I not appeared to the world with all possible demonstrations of authority and truth, teaching them a most holy and undeniable doctrine, sufficient to reform their manners and amend their lives, and, moreover, demonstrated my divine commission by such proofs as ought to satisfy and convince the most doubting and suspicious minds—they might have had some plea and excuse of ignorance for their unbelief. But now, since all reasonable evidence has been offered them, and proper methods used for their conversion and salvation, and yet they willfully and obstinately reject these means of grace, it is plain they have no excuse for their sin; but they oppose and persecute you only because they will not forsake their worldly lusts, and out of mere malice will not bear to be instructed in the commands of the Almighty. So that they who oppose and persecute you, as they have before persecuted me, show plainly that they are haters of God, and of his most holy commandments. Which is, as I have already told you, a plain evidence of the justice of your own cause, and of the injustice of your persecutors. If I had not, I say, done such works among them as no man ever did, they might indeed have had some appearance of excuse for their sin. But now, having seen abundant proofs of my authority, and undeniable evidence of the truth of my doctrine, and yet willfully and obstinately persisting to oppose it, because inconsistent with their lusts, it is plain that their dishonoring me is a dishonor done to my Father himself, and a direct contempt of his commands; so that they are utterly inexcusable. But it is no wonder, when men have given themselves wholly up to be governed by worldly affections, passions, and vices, they should act contrary to all the reason and evidence in the world. For this is but the natural consequence of obstinate and habitual wickedness; and hereby is only fulfilled in me what holy David long since prophetically com-

plained of, that they hated him without a cause. But notwithstanding all the opposition that wicked and incorrigible men will make against my doctrine, there will not be wanting powerful promoters of it, who shall effectually overcome all opposition. For the Comforter, whom I said I will send you from heaven, even that "Spirit of truth" which cometh forth and is sent from the Father, shall, when he cometh, with wonderful efficacy bear testimony to the truth of my doctrine, and cause it to be spread through the world with incredible success. Nay, and ye yourselves also, though now so weak, fearful, and doubting, shall then very powerfully bear testimony to the truth of all the things whereof ye, having been all along present with me, have been eye-witnesses from the beginning.

Thus have I warned you beforehand, of the opposition and persecution ye must expect to meet with in the world, that when it cometh, ye may not be surprised and terrified, so as to be discouraged thereby from persisting in the performance of your duty. Ye must expect, particularly, that the chief priests and rulers of the Jews, men of great hypocrisy and superstition, zealous for their ceremonies and ritual traditions, but careless to know and obey the will of the Almighty in matters of great and eternal obligation, and invincibly prejudiced against the spiritual holiness and purity of my doctrine; these, I say, you must expect will excommunicate you as apostates, and cast you out of all their societies, as the vilest of malefactors. Nay, to such an absurd height of malice will their superstition carry them, that they will even fancy they promote the service of God and the cause of religion, when they most barbarously murder and destroy you. But I have warned you of all this beforehand, that ye may prepare and fortify yourselves against it; and that when it cometh to pass, ye may remember I foretold it to you, and your faith in me may thereby be strengthened. It was needless to acquaint you with these scenes of sufferings while I was with you; but now, being about to leave you, I think it necessary to acquaint you with what things are likely to come on you after my departure, and also, at the same time, what comfort you may expect to support you under them.

Now I must mention the melancholy part, namely, that I am going from you, and that great temptations will befall you in my absence; this indeed ye readily apprehend, and suffer your hearts to be overwhelmed with grief at the thoughts of it. But the comfortable part of my discourse, namely, that my departure is only in order to return to Him that sent me, and that I will soon after send

you the Holy Spirit, and the other advantages that will thence result to you, are neither considered, nor are you solicitous about them. Nevertheless, if ye will listen, I will plainly tell you the truth. Ye are so far from having reason to be dejected at the thoughts of my departure, that, on the contrary, it is really profitable and expedient for you that I should now depart: for such is the order and dispensation of Providence towards you, and the appointment of my Father's eternal and all-wise counsel, that before I go and take possession of my kingdom, the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, cannot be sent unto you; but when I am departed from you, and have all power in heaven and in earth committed unto me, then I will send him unto you. And when he cometh, he shall abundantly support and comfort you under all your troubles; shall powerfully plead your cause against your adversaries; and shall, with wonderful efficacy, cause the doctrine of the Gospel to spread and prevail in the world against all opposition.

He shall particularly, and in the most extraordinary and convincing manner, make the world sensible of the greatness and heinousness of a sin of which they were not aware; of the righteousness and justice of a dispensation they did not understand; and of the execution of a most remarkable judgment they did not expect. First, by wonderfully attesting and confirming the truth of my doctrine by the gift of tongues, and other wonderful signs, he shall convince the world of the greatness and heinousness of their sin in disbelieving and rejecting me. Secondly, by demonstrating that my departure out of the world was not perishing and dying, but only a returning to my Father, in order to be invested with all power both in heaven and earth, he shall convince the world of the righteousness and justness of my cause, and of the excellency of that dispensation which I preach and declare to mankind. Lastly, by mightily destroying the power of the devil and the dominion of sin, and propagating the doctrine of true religion in the world with wonderful efficacy and success, he shall convince men of my power and authority to execute judgment upon mine enemies, for the establishment of my kingdom upon earth. There are yet many other things hereafter to be done, in relation to the settling and establishing of my church, which, if it were proper, I would now acquaint you with; but ye are not yet prepared to understand and receive them. Howbeit, when the Spirit of truth, whom I promised you, is come, he shall enlarge your understandings, remove your prejudices, and instruct you in all necessary and divine truths, to enable

you to go through that great work which I have begun in person, and which I will carry on by your ministry; for the Spirit is not to begin any new work, or to found any new doctrine of himself. But as I have taught, and will teach you, only in my Father's name: so the Spirit shall instruct you only in mine and my Father's will, and in things necessary to promote and carry on the same design. Every thing that he does shall be only in order to manifest my glory, and establish my religion in the world; even as every thing that I have done has been only to manifest my Father's glory, and reveal his will to mankind. For as all that I have taught is only what I received from my Father, so all that the Spirit shall teach you is only what he receives from me. Whatsoever, I say, the Spirit shall teach you is only what he receives from me; for receiving from my Father, I call receiving from me, and teaching his will is teaching mine; seeing all things that the Father hath are common to me, and all power and dominion by him committed to me. And now be careful to remember what matter for comfort I have given you, and support yourselves with it under the approaching distress. It is now, indeed, but a very little while before I shall be taken away from you; nevertheless, let not this cause you to despair; for, after I am departed, it will be also a little while before I appear to you again; forasmuch as my being taken away from you is not perishing, but only returning to my Father.

At these last words of Jesus the disciples were greatly disturbed and troubled, not understanding his true meaning, that in a very short time he should be taken from them by death; and that after having overcome death, by a glorious resurrection, he would appear to them again before his ascension into heaven. Not understanding this, I say, they inquired one of another, What can he mean, by telling us that in a very little time he shall be taken out of our sight; and that in a very little time more we shall see him again, and this because he goeth to the Father? We cannot understand the meaning of all this.

Jesus observing their perplexity, and knowing that they were desirous of asking him, replied, Why are ye thus disturbed and perplexed about what I told you? Is it a thing so very hard to be understood, that I said, within a very little time I should be taken away from you, and that within a very little time more I should appear to you again? Verily, verily, I tell you, I must very soon depart out of this world. Then the world, who are your enemies, will rejoice and triumph over you as if they had destroyed me, and wholly sup-

pressed you; and ye, for your parts, will be overwhelmed with grief and sorrow. But within a short time I will return to you again, and then your sorrow shall be turned into exceeding great joy. Even as a woman when she is in labor, hath great pain and sorrow for the present; but as soon as she is delivered, forgets all her sufferings, and rejoices greatly at the birth of her son; so ye, while ye are under the immediate apprehensions of my departure from you, and during that time of distress and temptation which shall befall you in my absence, will be full of sorrow and anxiety of mind; but when I return to you again, then shall ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory, and no power or malice of man shall ever be able to take from you any more the cause or continuance of it. But though I shall return to you again, and your hearts will thereupon be filled with inexpressible joy, and which never shall be taken from you any more; yet there will be no necessity that I should then continue long with you in person, to instruct you upon every occasion, as I have now done with my own mouth. For, besides that the Holy Spirit will be sent to instruct you in all things necessary, my Father himself also will hear your petitions, and be ready to grant you whatsoever you shall desire of him in my name, as being my disciples. Hitherto ye have asked nothing of God in my name; but from henceforth put up your petitions in my name; and whatsoever ye shall so ask for the glory of God, and in order to enable you to go through the work of your ministry successfully, shall certainly be granted you: that your joy, which will begin at my appearing to you again after my death, may be completed by the wonderful success and efficacy of your own ministry.

These things I have told you at present imperfectly and obscurely, according as your capacities are able to bear them. But the time is coming, when I will speak to you with more openness, freedom, and plainness, the whole will of my Father concerning the nature and establishment of my kingdom, and for what things and in what manner, ye ought to pray unto him. At that time ye shall with firm assurance pray to my Father in my name for what ye want. And I need not tell you that I will intercede with the Father on your behalf; for besides the love he has borne for me, and the power and authority my prayers have with him, he has moreover of himself a great love for you, and a ready disposition to grant your prayers, because ye are become grateful and acceptable to him, by your love towards me, which ye have shown in embracing willingly that holy doctrine which I have revealed to you from him.

To conclude : The sum of what I have told you is briefly and plainly this : I came down from heaven from God my Father, and have lived upon earth in the state of frail and mortal man, that I might reveal to mankind the will of my heavenly Father, and the way to attain eternal life and happiness ; and now, having finished this great work, I am about to leave this world and return again to my Father from whence I at first came.

These last words of Jesus being more plain and express than any he had before spoken, so that now the disciples clearly perceived, that the departure he had so often mentioned was no other than his actual going out of this world ; they replied, Now, Lord, you speak plainly, and without any figure ; so that we apprehend fully what you mean. And now that our curiosity is satisfied, you have likewise greatly confirmed our faith ; having given us a certain token whereby we are assured that you know all things, even the hearts and secret thoughts of men ; since you have answered us a question which gave us great perplexity, and were desirous to ask your opinions, but were afraid ; but now we are convinced that you are endued with a truly divine power, and did indeed come forth from God. To which Jesus answered, And do you now at length firmly believe in me ? Are ye resolved to continue steadfast in this faith ? Do you think yourselves able to persevere immovably in the profession of it ? Be not confident of your own strength ; but pray that ye may be delivered from temptation in the time of distress, such as will come upon you much sooner than ye expect. For I tell you, that ye will all of you within a few hours utterly forsake me, and fly in hopes to secure yourselves, leaving me alone. And yet I should not say alone, since my Father is with me, who is more than all. I have therefore acquainted you with these things beforehand, that your minds may be furnished with sufficient matter of comfort and strength to bear up under all temptations, from the consideration of my having foretold both what distress will befall you, and how ye shall terminate your victory over all your enemies. You must indeed expect to meet with much affliction ; but let not this discourage you, I have subdued the world ; follow my example, and partake of my reward.

Having thus finished his discourse, "Jesus lifted up his eyes to heaven, and prayed" with great fervency to his Father. The prayer itself is recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John, the substance and import of it is as follows : "O Almighty Father, now the time of my suffering, for which I was sent into the world, is arrived ; I entreat thee, support me under it, and make me triumph over death

by a glorious resurrection and ascension into heaven; that by these means the glory may redound to thee, and cause thy will to be believed and obeyed through all the world, to the salvation of mankind, according to the full intent of that office and power with which thou didst originally invest me. In order to the bringing about this great design of salvation, I have declared thy will to mankind; I have published thy precepts, and discharged the great mission intrusted to me; I have preached thy doctrine of repentance to salvation, and have finished the work which thou sentest me to do, to the glory of thy name upon earth; and now, to complete the great design, do thou, O Almighty Father, likewise glorify me with thine own self. Support me under my sufferings: let me prevail and triumph over death, by a glorious resurrection, and exalt me again to the same glory in heaven which I had with thee before the creation of the universe. I have manifested thy will to the disciples, the men that thou gavest me out of the world; to those persons thou didst in thine infinite wisdom appoint that thy truth should be made known. Therefore to them I have revealed the mysteries of thy kingdom, the precepts of thy Gospel, and the doctrine of thy salvation. And this doctrine they have willingly embraced, steadfastly adhered to, and sincerely obeyed: as they are fully satisfied and convinced that what I taught them, as from thee, was really a divine doctrine, taught by thine immediate appointment and command; and that I did not preach any human invention or institution of men, but was really sent by thy divine authority and commission. For these persons therefore, I now pray, that, as thou hast begun the work of their salvation by my preaching and revealing to them thy will, while I have been present with them here upon earth; so also that thou wouldst preserve them, when I am departed from this world, and complete the work of their redemption by my resurrection and ascension into heaven after my death. I do not pray for the unbelieving impenitent world, but for those who have embraced that most holy doctrine, which thou hast taught them through me by my preaching; for those who have glorified, and will glorify my name by their ministry, and who consequently are to be esteemed as thine own in common with me. I am now about to leave the world in order to return to thee; but these my disciples, who shall continue after me, I recommend to thy divine protection when I shall be gone: endue them with powers to persevere in preaching and practicing the truth, and to deliver the same holy doctrines which I have given to them, that so they may remain inseparably united to me, as I am to thee.

So long as I have been with them in the world, I have watched over them, and kept them from falling away, by my example, preaching, and continual admonition, according to the power and authority which thou didst commit to me; nor has any one of my apostles miscarried under my care, except that perfidious traitor, who, as the Scriptures foretold, has ungratefully conspired with my enemies to destroy me, and will perish according to his deserts. While I have continued with my disciples, I have watched over them, and preserved them under mine own eye; but now, as I am going to leave the world, I beseech thee to keep and assist them by thy good Spirit, and let the expectation of their continuing under thy special care and protection, be their comfort and support in my absence. The world indeed will persecute and hate them on this account, as my doctrine is repugnant to the lusts and affections, the passions, designs, and inclinations of worldly men; it must necessarily be that the vicious and incorrigible world will oppose and persecute them, as it has before persecuted me. I beseech thee therefore to take them under thy particular care, to support them against the violence and oppression of an evil world. I do not desire that thou shouldst take them out of thy world, but preserve them in it, to be instruments of thy word, thy glory, and to be teachers of thy truth: nor suffer them to be either destroyed by the malice and violence, or corrupted by the evil customs and opinions of a perverse and wicked generation. They are of a temper and spirit very different from the current affections and common dispositions of the world, according to the example of purity which I have set before them. Do thou preserve and increase in them that moderation and candor of mind, cause them to be thoroughly affected and impressed with that true doctrine so frequently recommended to them from my mouth, so as to express it visibly in their lives and practice, and to promote it zealously in their preaching, that they may both by their word and good example become worthy and successful ministers of my Gospel.

“For as thou hast sent me into the world to reveal thy will to mankind, so send I these my apostles to continue preaching the same doctrine begun by me. And the principal design of my exemplary life, constant teaching, and now voluntary offering of myself to death, is to atone for sins, and enable these my servants to preach my doctrines with success and efficacy for the salvation of men. Neither pray I for these my apostles only, but for all others who shall, by their preaching and practice, promote thy true religion: and being converted from the world, may by their sincere endeavors, go on to

reform others, convincing the world of the excellency of their religion, and consequently enforcing men to acknowledge the truth and divine authority thereof. For promoting which great end, I have communicated to my apostles the same power and authority of doing mighty works, for the confirmation of their doctrine and the evidence of thy truth, as thou didst communicate to me; that so I working in them, as thou hast done in me, and thus confirmed with great efficacy and demonstration of the Spirit, they may declare the same doctrine which I published in person: the world may, by this evidence, be convinced that I was really sent by thee, and that my disciples act by the same divine commission.

“Holy and Almighty Father, all those whom thou hast given me, who have heartily embraced my doctrine, and sincerely obeyed it, I desire that thou wouldest make them partakers of the same happiness with myself, and exalt them to behold the incomprehensible glory which I had with thee, in thy eternal love, before the foundation of the world. The generality of mortals, O righteous Father! have not known thee, nor been willing to embrace and obey the revelation of thy will. But I have known thy will, and have made it known to my disciples, men of simplicity and honesty; and they have embraced and obeyed it. And I will continually make it known to them more and more, that they may grow up and improve in faith, in holiness, and in all good works, so as finally to arrive, and cause others to arrive, at that eternal happiness which is the effect of thy infinite love towards me, and through me towards them.”

This pious and benevolent prayer being ended, Jesus and his disciples came down from the Mount of Olives into a field below called Gethsemane, through which the brook Cedron ran; and in it, on the other side of the brook, was a garden called the Garden of Gethsemane. Here he desired his disciples to sit down till he should retire to pray, taking with him Peter, James, and John, those three select disciples, whom he had before chosen to be witnesses of his transfiguration, and now to be eye-witnesses of his passion, leaving the other disciples at the garden-door to watch the approach of Judas and his band.

The sufferings he was on the point of undergoing were so great, that the very prospect of them excited this doleful exclamation: “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here and watch.” On this great occasion he sustained those grievous sorrows in his soul, by which, as well as dying on the cross, he became a sin-offering, and accomplished the redemption of mankind. He

now withdrew from them about a stone's cast, and his human nature being overburdened beyond measure, he found it necessary to retire and pray, that if it was possible, or consistent with the salvation of the world, he might be delivered from the sufferings which were then lying on him. It was not the fear of dying on the cross which made him speak or pray in such a manner. To suppose this, would infinitely degrade his character. Make his sufferings as terrible as possible, clothe them with all the aggravating circumstances of distress; yet the blessed Jesus, whose human nature was strengthened by being connected with the divine, could not but shrink at the prospect of such sufferings as he had to endure. He addresses his divine Father with a sigh of fervent wishes that the cup might, if possible, be removed from him. In the Greek it is, "O that thou wouldest remove this cup from me!" And having first kneeled and prayed, he fell prostrate on his face, accompanying his address with due expressions of resignation, adding immediately, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt."

Having prayed, he returned to his disciples, and finding them asleep, he said to Peter, "Simon, sleepest thou? couldest thou not watch one hour?" Thou, who so lately didst boast of thy courage and constancy in my service, canst thou so soon forget thy Master? But in his great distress he never lost sight of the kind concern he had for his disciples. "Watch ye," said he, and pray "lest ye enter into temptation." Neither was he, on those extraordinary occasions, in the least chagrined with the offences which they had committed through frailty and human weakness; on the contrary, he was always willing to make excuses for them, alleging in their defence, "that the spirit truly was willing, but the flesh was weak." It seems from these particulars, that he spent some considerable time in his addresses; because his disciples fell asleep in his absence, and he himself retired again to pray; for the sorrows of our Lord continuing to increase upon him, affected him to such a degree, that he retired a second time, and prayed to the same purpose, saying, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, thy will be done:" after which he returned again to them, and found them asleep, "for their eyes were heavy." He returned thus frequently to his disciples, that they, by reading his distress in his countenance and gesture, might be witnesses of his passion; which proves that his pains were beyond description intense and complicated; for he went away the third time to pray, and notwithstanding an angel was sent from heaven to comfort and strengthen him,

yet they overwhelmed him and threw him into an agony; upon which he still continued to pray more earnestly.

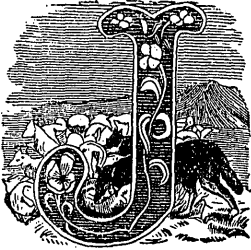
But the sense of his sufferings still increasing, they strained his whole body to so violent a degree, that his blood as it were was pressed through the pores of his skin, which it pervaded, together with his sweat, and fell down in large drops on the ground. "And he left them, and went away again. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down on the ground." Thus did he suffer unspeakable sorrows in his soul, as long as Divine Wisdom thought proper.

At length he obtained relief, being heard on account of his perfect and entire submission to the will of his heavenly Father. "And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow." This circumstance shows how much the disciples were affected with their Master's sufferings. The sensations of grief which they felt on seeing his unspeakable distress, so overpowered them that they sank into a sleep.

Our blessed Saviour, for the last time, came to his disciples, and seeing them still asleep, he said, "Sleep on now, and take your rest; behold the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; behold, he is at hand that doth betray me." Mat. xxvi. 45, etc. The event will soon be over which causes your sorrow: I am betrayed, and ready to be delivered unto death.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE BLESSED REDEEMER IS TAKEN BY A BAND OF SOLDIERS, AT THE INFORMATION OF THE TRAITOR JUDAS—HEALS A WOUND GIVEN THE HIGH PRIEST'S SERVANT BY SIMON PETER.



UDAS, who had often resorted to the garden of Gethsemane with the disciples of our Redeemer, knowing the spot and the usual time of his Master's repairing thither, informed the chief priests and elders that the proper time for apprehending Jesus was now come. They therefore sent a band of soldier's with him, and servants carrying lanterns and torches to

show them the way; because, though it was always full moon at the passover, the sky might be dark with clouds, and the place whither they were going was shaded with trees. At the same time a deputation of their number accompanied the band to see that every one did his duty.

Judas having thus received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, they went thither with lanterns, and torches, and weapons; for they were exceedingly anxious to secure and get him into their hands; and the soldiers, having perhaps never seen Jesus before, found it necessary that Judas should distinguish him, and point him out to them by some particular sign. The treacherous Judas went before the band at a small distance, to prepare them for the readier execution of their office, by kissing his Master, which was the token agreed upon, that they might not mistake him and seize a wrong person. "And he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him." Stung with remorse at the horrid engagement into which he had entered, and not being now able to retract from the execution of it, he determined to make use of art in his vile proceedings, and weakly imagined he could deceive him whom he was about to betray, on a supposition that when he should give the kiss, it might be considered by his Master as a singular mark of his affection. When therefore they approached near the spot, Judas, who was at the head of the band, suddenly ran forward, and coming up to Jesus, said,

“Hail, Master! and kissed him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?” Before, however, Judas could make any reply, the band, who had fixed their eyes on the person he had kissed, arrived immediately, and surrounded Jesus.

The artifice and wicked designs of the base and perfidious Judas are here manifestly displayed. In order to conceal his villany from his Master and his disciples, he walked hastily; and, without waiting for the band, went up directly and saluted him; wishing, perhaps, to have that considered as a token of apprizing him of his danger. But Jesus did not fail to convince him that he knew the meaning and intent of his salutation, saying, “Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?” Judas certainly concealed his treachery so well that Peter did not suspect him, or it is probable he would have struck at him rather than at Malchus, the high priest’s servant.

The appointed time of our Lord’s sufferings being now come, he did not, as formerly, avoid his enemies; but, on the contrary, on their telling him they sought Jesus of Nazareth, he replied, “I am he:” thereby intimating to them that he was willing to put himself into their hands. At the same time, to show them that they could not apprehend him without his own consent, he, in an extraordinary manner, exerted his divine power; he made the whole band fall back, and threw them to the ground. “Jesus, therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus said unto them, I am he. And Judas also, who betrayed him, stood with them. As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.” But the soldiers and the Jews, imagining perhaps that they had been thrown down by some demon or evil spirit, with whom the Jews said he was in confederacy, advanced towards him a second time. “Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I told you that I am he;” expressing again his willingness to fall into their hands. “If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way.” If your business be with me alone, suffer my disciples to pass: for the party had surrounded them also. He seems to have made this request to the soldiers, that the saying might be fulfilled which he spake, “Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.” For as he always proportioned the trials of his people to their strength; so here he took care that the disciples should escape the storm, which none but himself could sustain.

At length one of the soldiers, more daring than the rest, rudely caught Jesus and bound him, upon which Peter drew his sword, and smote off the ear of the high priest's servant, who probably was showing greater forwardness than the rest in this business. "Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear; the servant's name was Malchus." The enraged disciple was on the point of singly attacking the whole band, when Jesus ordered him to sheathe his sword; telling him that this unseasonable and imprudent defence might prove the occasion of his destruction. "Then said Jesus unto him, put up again thy sword into his place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." Mat. xxvi. 52. He told him likewise, that it implied both a distrust of God, who can always employ a variety of means for the safety of his people, and also his ignorance of the Scriptures: "Thinkest thou," said he, "that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" Mat. xxvi. 53.

The word "legion" was a Roman military term, being a name which they gave to a body of five or six thousand men; wherefore, in regard that the band, which now surrounded them was a Roman cohort, our Lord might make use of this term by way of contrast, to show what an inconsiderable thing the cohort was, in comparison of the force he could summon to his assistance; more than twelve legions, not of soldiers, but of angels. He yet was tenderly inclined to prevent any bad consequences which might have followed from Peter's rashness, by healing the servant, and adding, in his rebuke to him, a declaration of his willingness to suffer. "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"

The circumstance of his healing the ear of Malchus by touching it, evidently implies that no wound or distemper was incurable in the hand of Jesus; neither was any injury so great that he could not forgive. It seems somewhat surprising that this evident miracle did not make an impression upon the chief priests, especially as our Lord put them in mind, at the same time, of his other miracles: for having first said, "Suffer ye thus far;—and he touched his ear, and healed him:" he added, "Be ye come out as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour and the power of darkness." Luke xxi. 51, etc. The priests had kept at a distance for some time, but drew near when they understood that

Jesus was in their power; for they were proof against all conviction, being obstinately bent on putting him to death. And the disciples, when they saw their Master in the hands of his enemies, forsook him and fled, according to his prediction; notwithstanding they might have followed him without any danger, as the priests had no design against them. "Then all the disciples forsook him and fled. Then the band, and the captain, and officers, took Jesus, and bound him." But it was not the cord which held him; his infinite love was by far the stronger bond. He could have broken those weak ties, and exerted his divinity in a more wonderful manner; he could have stricken them all dead with as much ease as he had before thrown them on the ground: but he patiently submitted to this, as to every other indignity which they chose to offer him; so meek was he under the greatest injuries. Having thus secured him, they led him away. "And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked." This, perhaps, was the proprietor of the garden; who being awakened by the noise, came out with the linen cloth in which he had been lying, cast round his naked body; and having a respect for Jesus, followed him, forgetting the dress he was in.

They first led Jesus to Annas, father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was the high priest that year. Annas having himself discharged the office of high priest, was consequently a person of distinguished character, which, together with his relation to the high priest, made him worthy of the respect they now paid him. But he refused singly to meddle in the affair; they therefore carried Jesus to Caiaphas himself, at whose palace the chief priests, elders, and scribes, were assembled, having stayed there all night to see the issue of their stratagem. This Caiaphas was he that advised the council to put Jesus to death, even admitting he was innocent, for the safety of the whole Jewish nation. He seems to have enjoyed the sacerdotal dignity during the whole course of Pilate's government in Judea; for he was advanced by Valerius Gracchus, Pilate's predecessor, and was divested of it by Vitellius, governor of Syria, after he had deposed Pilate from his procuratorship.

CHAPTER XXXV.

FULFILLMENT OF OUR BLESSED LORD'S PREDICTION CONCERNING PETER.



HE apprehension of their dear Lord and Master, could not but strike his disciples with horror and amazement; though he had forewarned them of that event, such was their consternation that they fled different ways; some of them, however, recovering out of the panic that had seized them, followed the band at a distance, to see what the issue would be. Of this number was Peter and another disciple, whom John has mentioned without giving his name, and who therefore is supposed to have been John himself. This disciple being acquainted at the high priest's, got admittance for himself first, and soon after for Peter, who had come with him. "And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. That disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest: but Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto them that kept the door, and brought in Peter. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were sat down together, Peter sat down amongst them." The maid-servant who kept the door, concluding Peter to be a disciple also, followed after him to the fire, and looking earnestly at him, charged him with the supposed crime. "Then said the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art thou not also one of this man's disciples?" This blunt attack threw Peter into such confusion, that he flatly denied his having any connection with Jesus, replying, "I am not," and adding, "I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest." As if he had said, I do not understand any reason for your asking me such a question.

Thus the very apostle, who had before acknowledged his Master to be the Messiah, the Son of the living God, and had so confidently boasted of his fortitude and firm attachment to him in the greatest dangers, proved himself an arrant deserter of his cause upon trial.

His shameful fears were altogether inexcusable, as the enemy who attacked him was one of the weaker sex, and the terror of the charge was in a great measure taken off, by the insinuation made in it, that John was likewise known to be Christ's disciple; for, as he was known at the high priest's, he was consequently known in that character. "Art not thou also one of this man's disciples?" Art not thou one of them as well as he who is sitting with you? Nothing can account for this conduct of Peter, but the confusion and panic which had seized him on this occasion. As his inward perturbation must have appeared in his countenance and gesture, he did not choose to stay long with the servants at the fire. He went out therefore into the porch, where he was a little concealed. "And he went into the porch: after he had been some time there, another maid saw him, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them; and again he denied with an oath, I know not the man;" adding perjury to falsehood. After Peter had been thus attacked without doors, he thought proper to return and mix with the crowd at the fire. "And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself." From this circumstance, it is clear that the ensuing was the third denial; and that Peter left the porch where the second denial happened, and was come again into the hall. "Here one of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Peter then denied again, and immediately the cock crew." The words of Malchus' kinsman, bringing to Peter's remembrance what he had done to that man, threw him into such a panic, that when those that stood by repeated the charge, he impudently denied it: "He even began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom you speak." For when they heard Peter deny the charge, they supported it by an argument drawn from the accent with which he pronounced his answer. Surely thou art one of them; for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto: so that being pressed on all sides, to give his lie the better color, he profaned the name of God, by imprecating the bitterest curses on himself if he was telling a falsehood. Perhaps he hoped, by these acts of impiety, to convince them effectually that he was not a disciple of the holy Jesus.

Thus the apostle denied his Master three distinct times, with oaths and asseverations, entirely forgetting the vehement protestations he had made, a few hours before, that he would never deny him. He was probably permitted to fall in this manner, to teach us two lessons: first, that the strongest resolutions formed in our own

strength, cannot withstand the torrent of temptation ; secondly, that the true disciples of Christ, though they fall, may be brought to a conviction of their sin ; for he no sooner denied his Master the third time, than the cock crew, and first awakened in him a consciousness of his sin. “ And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter ; and Peter remembered the words of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.” Luke is the evangelist who particularly mentions this beautiful circumstance of Christ turning and looking on Peter. The members of the council who sat on Jesus were placed at the upper end of the hall ; at the other were the servants with Peter at the fire : so that Jesus, being probably placed on some eminence, that his judges, who were numerous, might see and hear him, could easily look over towards Peter, and observe him denying him ; and in passionate terms, loud enough to be heard perhaps over all the place. The look pierced him, and, with the crowing of the cock, brought his Master’s prediction fresh into his mind. He was stung with deep remorse, and being unable to contain himself, he covered his face with his garment to conceal the confusion he was in, and going out into the porch, wept very bitterly. All this passed while the priests examined Jesus, with many taunts and revilings ; and while the most zealous of Christ’s disciples was denying him with oaths and imprecations, the people insulted him in the most inhuman manner. Thus a complication of injuries, insults, and indignities, was at one time heaped upon the blessed Redeemer, the meek and mild Jesus, in order to fulfill the prophecies concerning him, and teach his followers a lesson of humility.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE SAVIOUR ARRAIGNED AT THE BAR OF THE SANHEDRIM, AND TRIED BY THE JEWISH COUNCIL.



ON the arrival of the band of soldiers with Jesus, at the high priest's, they found there all the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders assembled. "And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people, and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him into their council. And the high priest asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine." He inquired of him what his disciples were? for what end he had gathered them? whether it was to make himself a king, and what the doctrine was which he taught them? In these questions there was a great deal of art: for as the crime laid to our Saviour's charge was, that he had set up for the Messiah, and deluded the people, they expected that he would claim that dignity in their presence, and so would, on his own confession, have condemned him without any farther progress. This was as unfair as it was artful and ensnaring. To oblige a prisoner on his trial to confess what might take away his life, was a very iniquitous method of proceeding; and Jesus expressed his opinion thereof with very good reason, and complained of it, bidding them prove what they had laid to his charge with witnesses. "Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world, I ever taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort, and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? Ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them; behold, they know what I said." It was greatly to the honor of our blessed Redeemer that all his actions were done in public, under the eye even of his enemies; because, had he been carrying on any imposture, the lovers of goodness and truth had thus abundant opportunities of detecting him with propriety: he therefore in his defence appealed to that part of his character; but his answers were construed to be disrespectful; "for when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck

Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so." To which he meekly replied, with the greatest serenity, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?" Show me, prove before this court wherein my crime consists, or record it on the evidence on the face of my trial; which if you cannot, how can you answer this inhuman treatment to a defenceless prisoner, standing on his trial before the world, and in open court?

Thus Jesus became an example of his own precept, "Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Mat. v. 39); bearing the greatest injuries with a patience that could not be provoked.

When the council found that Jesus declined answering the questions, whereby they expected to have drawn from him an acknowledgment of his being the Messiah, they proceeded to examine many witnesses, to prove his having assumed that character; as they considered such a pretension as blasphemy in his mouth, who, being only a man according to their opinion, could not, without the highest affront of the Divine Majesty, pretend to the title of the Son of God, as it belonged only to the Messiah. But in this examination they acted like interested and enraged persecutors, rather than as impartial judges, forming their questions in the most artful manner, in order, if possible, to draw expressions from him which they might pervert into suspicions of guilt, as some foundation for condemning Jesus, who had so long and faithfully labored for their salvation.

Their witnesses however disappointed them; some of them disagreeing in their story, and others mentioning things of no manner of importance. At last two persons agreed in their depositions, namely, in hearing him say that he was able to destroy the temple of God, and to raise it in three days. But this testimony was absolutely false; for our great Redeemer never said he could destroy and build the temple of Jerusalem in three days, as they affirmed. It is true, that after banishing the traders from the temple, when the Jews desired to know by what authority he undertook to make such a reformation, he referred them to the miracle of his resurrection; bidding them "destroy this temple," pointing probably to his body, "and in three days he would raise it up." The witnesses therefore, either through malice or ignorance, perverted his answer into an affirmation that he was able to destroy and build the magnificent temple of Jerusalem in three days; and the judges considered this

assertion as blasphemy, because it could only be done by the divine power.

Our Saviour made no reply to the evidences that were produced against him, which greatly provoked the high priest; who, supposing that he intended by his silence to put an affront on the council, rose from his seat, and with great perturbation demanded the reason for so remarkable a conduct. "Answerest thou nothing?" said he: "What is it which these witness against thee?" And some of the council added, "Art thou the Christ?" To which our blessed Saviour answered, If I should tell you plainly, you would not believe me; and if I should demonstrate it to you by the most evident and undeniable arguments, ye would neither be convinced nor let me go. The high priest finding all his attempts to trepan our Saviour in vain, said to him, I adjure you solemnly, by the dreadful and tremendous name of God, in whose presence you stand, that you tell me plainly and truly, whether you are the Messiah, the Son of God.

The consequence attending the confession of the truth, did not intimidate the blessed Jesus; for being adjured by the chief magistrate, he immediately acknowledged the charge; adding, ye shall shortly see a convincing evidence of this truth, in that wonderful and unparalleled destruction which I will send upon the Jewish nation; in the quick and powerful progress which the Gospel shall make upon the earth; and, finally, in my glorious appearance in the clouds of heaven at the last day, the sign you have so often demanded in confirmation of my mission.

Upon our blessed Saviour's making this answer, a number of them cried out at once, "Art thou the Son of God?" To which our great Redeemer replied, "Ye say that I am;" a manner of speaking among the Jews, which expressed a plain and strong affirmation of the thing expressed. When the high priest heard this second assertion, he rent his clothes with great indignation, and said unto the council, Why need we trouble ourselves to seek for any more witnesses? Ye yourselves, nay, this whole assembly are witnesses, that he hath spoken manifest and notorious blasphemy: what think ye? To which they all replied, that for assuming to himself the character of the Messiah, he deserved to be put to death.

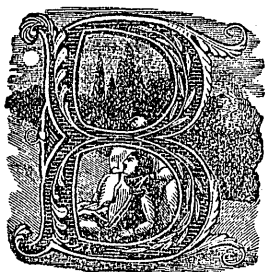
Then began the servants and common people to fall upon him, as a man already condemned; spitting upon him, buffeting him, and offering him all manner of rudeness and indignities. They blindfolded him; and some of the council, in order to ridicule him for

having professed to be the great Prophet, bid him exercise his prophetic gift, in declaring who had smitten him.

Such was the treatment of the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners, which, though derogatory to his character, he bore with patience and resignation, leaving his people an example to follow his steps, and submit to the will of God in all things, nor murmur at any of the dispensations of his Providence.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

OUR BLESSED SAVIOUR IS CARRIED BEFORE THE ROMAN GOVERNOR—THE TRAITOR, JUDAS, BECOMES HIS OWN EXECUTIONER—PILATE PUBLICLY ACQUITS JESUS, AND REFERS HIS CASE TO THE DECISION OF HEROD.



BEING thus condemned by the unanimous voice of the grand assembly, it was resolved to carry the blessed Jesus before the governor, that he likewise might pass sentence on him. The Roman governors of Judea generally resided at Cesarea: but at the great feast they came up to Jerusalem, to prevent or suppress tumults, and to administer justice: it being a custom for the Roman

governors of provinces to visit the principal towns under their jurisdiction on this latter account. Pilate being accordingly come to Jerusalem some time before the feast, had been informed of the great ferment among the rulers, and the true character of the person on whose account it was raised; for he entertained a just opinion of it: "he knew that for envy they had delivered him." He knew the cause of their envy, was impressed with a favorable opinion of Jesus, and wished, if possible, to deliver him from his vile persecutors.

Early in the morning the Jewish counsel brought Jesus to the hall of judgment, or governor's palace. They themselves, however, went not into the hall, but stood without, lest they should be defiled, and rendered incapable of eating the passover.

Now Judas Iscariot, who had delivered his Master into the hands of the council, finding his project turn out very different from what he expected, was filled with the deepest remorse for what he had done. He saw all his golden dreams of temporal honors and advantages sunk at once to nothing; he saw his kind, his indulgent Master, condemned and forsaken by all his followers. He saw all this, and determined to make all the satisfaction in his power for the crime he had committed. Accordingly, he came and confessed openly his sin before the chief priests and elders, offered them the money they had given him to commit it, and earnestly wished he

could recall the fatal transaction of the preceding night. It seems he thought this was the most public testimony he could possibly give of his Master's innocence and his own repentance. I have, says he, committed a most horrid crime, by betraying an innocent man to death. But this moving speech of Judas had no effect on the callous hearts of the Jewish rulers. They affirmed, that however he might think the prisoner innocent, and for that reason had sinned in bringing the sentence of death upon his head, they were not to blame; because they knew him to be a blasphemer who deserved to die. "What is that to us?" said they, "see thou to that." Nay, they even refused to take back the money they had given him as a reward for performing the base act of betraying his Master. The deepest remorse now seized upon the wretched Judas, and his soul was agitated by the horrors of despair. The innocence and benevolence of his Master, the many favors he himself had received from him, and the many kind offices he had done for the sons and daughters of affliction, crowded at once into his mind, and rendered his torments intolerable. Racked with these agonizing passions, and unable to support the misery, he threw down the wages of his iniquity in the temple, and confessing at the same time his own sin, and the innocence of his Master, went away in despair and hanged himself.

Thus perished Judas Iscariot, the traitor, a miserable example of the fatal influence of covetousness, and a standing monument of divine vengeance, to deter future generations from acting in opposition to the dictates of conscience, through a love of the things of this world; for which this wretched mortal betrayed his Master, his friend, his Saviour, and accumulated such a load of guilt on himself, as sunk his soul into the lowest pit of perdition.

The pieces of silver cast down by Judas, were gathered up and delivered to the priests; who, thinking it unlawful to put them into the treasury, because they were the wages of a traitor, agreed to lay them out in purchasing the potter's field, and to make it a common burial-place for strangers.

This, the evangelist tells us, was done that a particular prophecy relating to the Messiah might be fulfilled: "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value, and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me." This prophecy is found in Zechariah; but, by a mistake of some copyist, the word Jeremiah is inserted in the Greek manuscripts of St. Matthew's Gospel;

unless we suppose, with the learned Grotius, that this remarkable prophecy was first made by Jeremiah, and afterwards repeated, by the immediate direction of the Spirit, by Zechariah; and that therefore the evangelist has only ascribed the prophecy to its original author. But however this be, the prophecy is remarkable, and was remarkably fulfilled. And the evangelist, by thus appealing to a public transaction, puts the truth of this part of the history beyond all manner of exception.

We have already observed, that the chief priests and elders refused to go themselves into the judgment-hall lest they should contract some pollution in the house of a heathen, which would have rendered them unfit for eating the passover. The same reason also hindered them from entering the governor's palace on other festivals, when that magistrate attended in order to administer justice: a kind of structure was therefore erected, adjoining to the palace, which served instead of a tribunal or judgment-seat. This structure, called in the Hebrew "Gabbatha," was finally paved with small pieces of marble of different colors, being always exposed to the weather. One side of this structure joined to the palace, and a door was made in the wall, through which the governor passed to the tribunal. By this contrivance the people might stand round the tribunal in the open air, hear and see the governor when he spake to them from the pavement, and observe the whole administration of justice, without danger of being defiled either by him or any of his retinue.

Before this tribunal the great Redeemer of mankind was brought, and the priests and elders having taken their places round the pavement, the governor ascended the judgment-seat, and asked them what accusation they had to bring against the prisoner. Though nothing could be more natural than for the governor to ask this question, yet the Jews thought themselves highly affronted by it, and haughtily answered, If he had not been a very great and extraordinary malefactor, we should not have given you this trouble at all, much less at so unseasonable an hour.

Pilate then examined Jesus; and finding he had not been guilty either of rebellion or sedition, but that he was accused of particulars relating to the religion and customs of the Jews, grew angry, and said, What are these things to me? Take him yourselves and judge him according to your own law. Plainly insinuating, that, in his opinion, the crime they laid to the prisoner's charge was not of a capital nature; and that such punishments as they were per-

mitted by Cæsar to inflict, were adequate to any misdemeanor that Jesus was charged with. But this proposal of the Roman governor was absolutely refused by the Jewish priests and elders, because it condemned the whole proceeding, and therefore they answered, We have no power to put any one to death, as this man certainly deserves, who has attempted not only to make innovations in our religion, but also to set up himself for a king.

The eagerness of the Jews to get Jesus condemned by the Roman governor, who often sentenced malefactors to be crucified, tended to fulfill the saying of our great Redeemer, who, during the course of his ministry, had often mentioned what kind of death he was, by the counsel of his Father, appointed to die.

Pilate finding it impossible to prevent a tumult, unless he proceeded to try Jesus, ascended again the judgment-seat, and demanded his accusers to produce their accusations against him. Accordingly they accused him of seditious practices, affirming that he had used every method in his power to dissuade the people from paying taxes to Cæsar, pretending that he himself was the Messiah, the great king of the Jews so long expected. But they brought no proof of these assertions. They only insinuated that they had already convicted him of this assertion, which was absolutely false. Pilate however asked him, Is it true what these men lay to your charge, that you have indeed attempted to set up yourself as king of the Jews? To which Jesus replied, Have you ever, during your stay in this province, heard any thing of me that gave you reason to suspect me guilty of secret practices and seditious designs against the government? or do you found your question only on the present clamor and tumult that is raised against me? If this be the case, be very careful lest you be imposed on merely by the ambiguity of a word: for to be "King of the Jews," is not to erect a temporal throne in opposition to that of Cæsar, but a thing of a very different nature; the kingdom of the Messiah is a heavenly kingdom. To which Pilate replied, Am I a Jew? Can I tell what your expectations are, and in what sense you understand these words? The rulers and chiefs of your own people, who are the most proper judges of these particulars, have brought you before me as a riotous and seditious person; if this be not the truth, let me know what is, and the crime thou hast been guilty of. Jesus answered, I have indeed a kingdom, and this kingdom I have professed to establish. But then it is not of this world, nor have my endeavors to establish it any tendency to cause disturbances in the government. For had that been the case,

my servants would have fought for me, and not suffered me to have fallen into the hands of the Jews. But I tell you plainly, my kingdom is wholly spiritual. I reign in the hearts of my people, and subdue their wills and affections into a conformity to the will of God. You acknowledge then in general, answered Pilate, that you have professed to be a king? To which the blessed Jesus replied, In the sense I have told you, I have declared, and do now declare myself to be a king. For this very end I was born, and for this purpose I came into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth; and whosoever sincerely loves, and is always ready to embrace the truth, will hear my testimony, and be convinced by it. Pilate answered, "What is truth?" and immediately went out to the Jews, and said unto them, I have again examined this man, but cannot find him guilty of any fault, which according to the Roman law is worthy of death.

This generous declaration, made by the governor of the innocence of our blessed Saviour, had no effect on the superstitious and bigoted Jews. They even persisted in their accusations with more vehemence than before, affirming that he had attempted to raise a sedition in Galilee: "He stirreth up, said they, the people, beginning from Galilee to this place."

Jesus however made no answer at all to this heavy charge. Nay, he continued silent, notwithstanding the governor himself expressly required him to speak in his own defence. A conduct so extraordinary, in such circumstances, astonished Pilate exceedingly; for he had great reason to be persuaded of the innocence of our dear Redeemer. The truth is, he was altogether ignorant of the divine counsel by which the whole affair was directed.

There were many reasons which induced the blessed Jesus not to make a public defence. He came into the world purely to redeem lost and undone sinners, by offering up himself a sacrifice for them; but had he pleaded with his usual force, the people had, in all probability, been induced to ask his release, and consequently his death had been prevented. Besides, the gross falsehood of the accusation, known to all the inhabitants of Galilee, rendered any reply absolutely needless.

In the mean time the chief priests continued to accuse him with great noise and tumult. And the meek and humble Jesus still continuing silent, Pilate spake again to him, saying, Wilt thou continue to make no defence? Dost thou not hear how vehemently these men accuse thee? But Pilate, recollecting what the chief priests

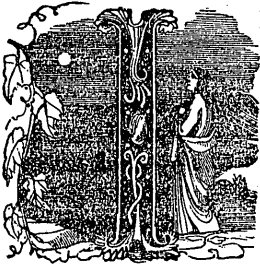
had said with regard to a sedition in Galilee, asked if Jesus came out of that country? and on being informed he did, he immediately ordered him to be carried to Herod, who was also then at Jerusalem. The governor supposed that Herod, in whose dominion the sedition was said to have been raised, must be a much better judge of the affair than himself; besides, his being a Jew, rendered him more versed in the religion of his own country, and gave him greater influence over the chief priests and elders; he therefore considered him as the most proper person to prevail on the Jewish council to desist from their cruel prosecution. But if, contrary to all human probability, he should at their solicitation condemn Jesus, Pilate hoped to escape the guilt and infamy of putting an innocent person to death. He might also propose, by this action, to regain Herod's friendship, which he had formerly lost, by encroaching in all probability on his privileges. But however that be, or whatever motive induced Pilate to send our great Redeemer to Herod, the latter greatly rejoiced at this opportunity of seeing Jesus, hoping to have the pleasure of beholding him perform some great miracle: In this he was however disappointed: for as Herod had apostatized from the doctrine of John the Baptist, to which he was once probably a convert, and had even put his teacher to death, the blessed Jesus, however liberal of his miracles to the sons and daughters of affliction, would not work them to gratify the curiosity of a tyrant, nor even answer one of the many questions he proposed to him.

Herod finding his expectation thus cut off, ordered our blessed Saviour to be clothed with an old robe, resembling in color those worn by kings, and permitted his attendants to insult him. From Herod's dressing him in this manner, it evidently appears that the chief priests and elders had accused him of nothing but his having assumed the character of the Messiah; for the affront put upon him was plainly in derision of that profession.

The other head of accusation, namely, his having attempted to raise a sedition in Galilee on account of tribute paid to Cæsar, they did not dare to mention, as Herod could not fail of knowing it to be a gross and malicious falsehood. And no crime worthy of death being laid to his charge, Herod sent him again to Pilate. It seems, that though he was displeased with the great Redeemer of mankind for refusing to work a miracle before him, yet he did not think proper to comply with the wishes of his enemies.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE ROMAN GOVERNOR, FOR WANT OF EVIDENCE, PROPOSES TO ACQUIT AND RELEASE JESUS, THREE SEVERAL TIMES: BUT AT LENGTH, AT THE PRESSING INSTIGATION OF THE INVETERATE JEWS, HE CONDEMNS AND DELIVERS HIM UP TO BE CRUCIFIED.



IN order to acquire popular applause, the Roman governor used generally at the feast of the passover to release a prisoner nominated by the people. At this feast there was one in prison, named Barabbas, who, at the head of a number of rebels, had made an insurrection in the city, and committed murder during the confusion. The multitude being now again assembled before the governor's palace, began to call aloud on him to perform the annual office of mercy customary at that festival. Pilate, glad of this opportunity, told them that he was very willing to grant the favor they desired; and asked them whether they would have Barabbas or Jesus released unto them? But without waiting for an answer, he offered to release Jesus, knowing that the chief priests had delivered him through envy; especially as Herod had not found him guilty of the crimes laid to his charge.

While these particulars were transacting, Pilate received a message from his wife, then with him at Jerusalem, and who had that morning been greatly affected by a dream which gave her great uneasiness. The dream had so great an effect on this Roman lady, that she could not rest till she had sent an account of it to her husband, who was then sitting with the tribunal on the pavement, and begged him to have no hand in the death of the righteous person he was then judging. The people had not yet determined whether they would have Jesus or Barabbas released to them; therefore, when Pilate received the message from his wife, he called the chief priests and rulers together, and in the hearing of the multitude, made a speech to them, in which he gave them an account of the examination which Jesus had undergone, both at his own and Herod's tribunal, declaring that in both courts it had turned out honorably to his character; for which reason he proposed to them that he should be

the object of the people's favor. Pilate did the priests the honor of desiring to know their inclinations in particular, perhaps with a design to soften their stony hearts, and, if possible, to move them for once to pity an injured, but innocent man. But he was persuaded, that if pity was absolutely banished from their callous hearts, his proposal would have been acceptable to the people, who he expected would embrace the first opportunity of declaring in his favor. Yet in this he was disappointed. They cried out all at once, "Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas."

Apostate mortals! a few hours ago ye listened with rapture to his heavenly discourses, beheld with transport the many salutary miracles wrought by this benevolent Son of the Most High, and earnestly importuned him to take possession of the throne and sceptre of David! Now nothing will satiate your infernal malice but his precious blood! but remember, ye miscreants, ye monsters in human form, that this same Jesus, whom ye beheld with such contempt before the tribunal of the Roman governor; this Jesus, whose blood your infernal mouths so loudly requested; shall one day come in the clouds of heaven to take vengeance on his enemies! and how will ye be able to bear the sight of his appearance, when the very heavens themselves will melt at his presence, "the sun become black as sackcloth of hair," the moon be turned into blood, and the stars fly from their spheres? How will ye then repent of your unjust demand, and call to the mountains and rocks to fall on you, and hide you from the presence of that immaculate Lamb of God, the tremendous Judge of the whole earth?

Pilate himself was astonished at this determination of the multitude, and repeated his question; for he could hardly believe what he had himself heard. But on their again declaring that they desired Barabbas might be released, he asked them what he should do "with Jesus, which is called Christ?" as if he had said, You demanded that Barabbas should be released; but what shall I then do with Jesus? You cannot surely desire me to crucify him, whom so many of you have acknowledged as your Messiah! "But they cried, saying, Crucify him! crucify him! Then Pilate saith unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? and they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him." They were so resolutely determined to have him destroyed, that notwithstanding the governor urged them again and again to desire his release, declared his innocence, and offered several times to dismiss him, they would not hear it, uttering their rage, sometimes in hollow, distant, inarticulate murmurs,

and sometimes in furious outcries: to such a pitch were their passions raised by the craft and artful insinuations of the priests. Pilate, finding it therefore in vain to struggle with their prejudices, called for water, and washed his hands before the multitude, crying out, at the same time, that the prisoner had no fault, and that he himself was innocent of his blood.

By this action and declaration, Pilate seems to have intended to make an impression on the Jewish populace, by complying with the institution of Moses, which orders, in case of an unknown murder, the elders of the nearest city to wash their hands publicly, and say, "Our hands have not shed this blood." Deut. xxi. 7. And, in allusion to this law, the Psalmist says, "I will wash my hands in innocence." According, therefore, to this Jewish rite, Pilate made the most solemn and public declaration of the innocence of our dear Redeemer, and of his resolution of his having no hand in his death. But notwithstanding the solemnity of this declaration, the Jews continued inflexible, and cried out with one voice, "His blood be on us and on our children." Dreadful imprecation! it shocks humanity! An imprecation which brought on them the dreadful vengeance of Omnipotence, and is still a heavy burden on that perfidious people! The governor finding it impossible to alter their choice, released unto them Barabbas. And as it was a general practice of the Romans to scourge those criminals they condemned to be crucified, Pilate ordered the blessed Jesus to be scourged, before he delivered him to the soldiers to be put to death.

The soldiers having scourged Jesus, and received orders to crucify him, carried him into the pretorium, or common hall, where they added the shame of disgrace to the bitterness of his punishment; for sore as he was by reason of the stripes they had given him, they dressed him in a purple robe, in derision of his being King of the Jews. Having dressed him in this robe of mock-majesty, they put a reed in his hand instead of a sceptre, and after plating a wreath of thorns, they put it on his head for a crown; forcing it down in so rude a manner, that his temples were torn, and his face besmeared with his most precious blood. To the Son of God, in this condition, the rude soldiers bowed the knee, pretending to do it out of respect; but at the same time gave him severe blows on the head, which drove the points of the wreath afresh into his temples, and then spit on him, to express their highest contempt.

The governor, whose office obliged him to be present at this shocking scene of inhumanity, was ready to burst with grief. The sight of an innocent and eminently holy person treated with such

shocking barbarity, raised in his breast the most painful sensations of pity. And though he had given sentence that it should be as the Jews desired, and had delivered our dear Redeemer to the soldiers to be crucified, he was in hopes that if he showed him to the people in that condition, they must relent, and earnestly petition for him to be released. Filled with this thought, he resolved to carry him out, and exhibit to their view a spectacle capable of softening the most envenomed, obdurate, and enraged enemy. And in order to render the impression still more poignant, he went out himself, and said unto them, Though I have sentenced this man to die, and have scourged him as one that is to be crucified, yet I once more bring him before you, that I may again testify how fully I am persuaded of his innocence; and that ye may yet have an opportunity of saving his life. As soon as the governor had finished his speech, Jesus appeared on the pavement, his hair, his face, his shoulders, all clotted with blood, and the purple robe daubed with spittle of the soldiers. And that the sight of Jesus in this distress might make the greater impression on the people, Pilate, while he was coming forward, cried out, "Behold the man!" As if he had said, Will nothing make you relent? Have you lost all the feelings of humanity and bowels of compassion? Can you bear to see the innocent, a son of Abraham, thus injured? But all this was to no purpose; the priests, whose rage and malice had extinguished not only the sentiments of justice and feelings of pity natural to the human heart, but also that love which countrymen bear for each other, no sooner saw Jesus than they began to fear the fickle populace might relent; and therefore, laying decency aside, they led the way to the multitude, crying out with all their might, Crucify him! crucify him! Pilate, vexed to see the Jewish rulers thus obstinately bent on the destruction of a person from whom they had nothing to fear that was dangerous, either with regard to their church or state, passionately told them, that if they would have him crucified, they must do it themselves; because he would not suffer his people to murder a man who was guilty of no crime. But this they also refused, thinking it dishonorable to receive permission to punish a person that had been more than once publicly declared innocent by his judge. Besides, they considered with themselves that the governor might afterwards have called it sedition, as the permission had been extorted from him. Accordingly, they told him that even though none of the things alleged against the prisoner were true, he had committed such a crime, in presence of the council itself, as by the law deserved the most ignominious death. He had spoken

blasphemy, calling himself the Son of God, a title which no mortal could assume without the highest degree of guilt: "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God."

When Pilate heard that Jesus called himself the Son of God, his fear was increased. Knowing the obstinacy of the Jews in all matters of religion, he was afraid they would make a tumult in earnest; or perhaps he was himself more afraid than ever to take away his life, because he suspected it might be true. He doubtless remembered the miracles said to have been performed by Jesus, and therefore suspected that he really was the Son of God. For it was well known, that the religion which the governor professed directed him to acknowledge the existence of demigods and heroes, or men descended from the gods. Nay, the heathens believed that their gods themselves appeared upon earth in the form of men. Reflections of this kind induced Pilate to go again to the judgment-hall, and ask Jesus from what Father he sprung, and from what country he came? But our blessed Saviour gave him no answer, lest the governor should reverse his sentence, and absolutely refuse to crucify him. Pilate marveled greatly at his silence, and said unto Jesus, Why dost thou refuse to answer me? You cannot be ignorant that I am invested with absolute power either to release or crucify you. To which Jesus answered, I well know that you are Cæsar's servant, and accountable to him for your conduct. I forgive you any injury which, contrary to your inclination, the popular fury constrains you to do unto me. Thou hast thy power "from above," from the emperor; for which cause the Jewish high priest, who hath put me into thy hands, and by pretending that I am Cæsar's enemy, forces thee to condemn me; or, if thou refusest, will accuse thee as negligent of the emperor's interest, is more guilty than thou. "He that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin."

This sweet and modest answer made such an impression on Pilate, that he went out to the people, and declared his intention of releasing Jesus whether they gave their consent or not. Upon which the chief priests and rulers of Israel cried out, "If thou let this man go thou art not Cæsar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar." If thou releasest the prisoner, who hath set himself up for a king, and has been accused of endeavoring to raise a rebellion in the country, thou art unfaithful to the interest of the emperor thy master. This argument was weighty, and shook Pilate's resolution to the very basis. He was terrified at the thought of being accused to the emperor, who, in all affairs of government,

always suspected the worst, and punished the most minute crimes relative thereto with death. The governor being thus constrained to yield contrary to his inclination, was very angry with the priests for stirring up the people to such a pitch of madness, and determined to offend them.

He therefore brought Jesus out a second time into the pavement, wearing the purple robe and the crown of thorns; and pointing to him, said, "Behold your King!" ridiculing their national expectation of a Messiah. This sarcastical expression stung them to the quick, and they cried out, "Away with him! away with him! crucify him!" To which Pilate answered with the same mocking air, "Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Cæsar." Thus did they publicly renounce their hope of the Messiah, which the whole economy of their religion had been calculated to cherish: they also publicly acknowledged their subjection to the Romans; and consequently condemned themselves when they afterwards rebelled against the emperor.

We cannot help observing here, that the great unwillingness of the governor to pass sentence of death upon Jesus has something in it very remarkable. For from the character of Pilate, as drawn by the Roman historians themselves, he seems to have been far from possessing any true principle of virtue. To what then could it be owing, that so wicked a man should so steadily adhere to the cause of innocence, which he defended with considerable resolution, and perhaps would never have abandoned it, had he not been forced by the threatenings of the chief priests and rulers of Israel; and when he did yield, and passed sentence of death upon our dear Redeemer, why did he still declare him innocent? This can certainly be attributed to no other cause than to the secret but powerful direction of the providence of the Almighty, who intended that, at the same time his Son was condemned and executed as a malefactor, his innocence should be made to appear in the most public manner, and by the most authentic evidence, even that of the judge himself. From the circumstances we have been relating, we may learn that though the Almighty, in the course of his providential government of the world, and for purposes beyond the comprehension of finite mortals, suffers the most virtuous characters to be exposed not only to the insults but the cruelty of the most abandoned of mankind; yet he will certainly, at a future period, vindicate the cause of innocence, and strike the guilty with horror and remorse for their impious conduct.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE IMMACULATE REDEEMER IS LED FORTH TO MOUNT CALVARY, AND IGNOMINIOUSLY CRUCIFIED BETWEEN TWO MALEFACTORS—REVEILED BY THE SPECTATORS—A PHENOMENON APPEARS ON THE IMPORTANT OCCASION—OUR LORD ADDRESSES HIS FRIENDS FROM THE CROSS, AND GIVES UP THE GHOST.



HE solemn, and the awful period now approached, when the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world, was to undergo the oppressive burden of our sins upon the tree, and submit unto death, even the death of the cross, that we might live at the right hand of God forever and ever.

Sentence being pronounced upon the blessed Jesus, the soldiers were ordered

to prepare for his execution, a command which they readily obeyed; and after clothing him in his own garments, led him away to crucify him. It is not said that they took the crown of thorns from his temples; probably he died wearing it, that the title placed over his head might be the better understood. It is not to be expected that the ministers of Jewish malice remitted any of the circumstances of affliction, which were ever laid on persons condemned to be crucified. Accordingly, Jesus was obliged to walk on foot to the place of execution, bearing his cross. But the fatigue of the preceding night, spent without sleep; the sufferings he had undergone in the garden; his having been hurried from place to place, and obliged to stand the whole time of his trial; the want of food, and the loss of blood he had sustained, and not his want of courage on this occasion—made him faint under the burden of his cross. The soldiers seeing him unable to bear the weight, laid it on one Simon, a native of Cyrene in Egypt, the father of Alexander and Rufus, well known among the first Christians, and forced him to bear it after the great Redeemer of mankind. The soldiers did not, however, do this out of compassion to the sufferings of Jesus, but to prevent his dying with the fatigue, and by that means eluding his punishment.

The blessed Jesus, in his journey to Calvary, was followed by an innumerable multitude of people, particularly of women, who lamented

bitterly the severity of his sentence, and showed all the tokens of sincere compassion and grief. Jesus, who always felt the woes of others more than he did his own, forgetting his distress at the very time when it lay heaviest upon him, turned himself about, and with a benevolence and tenderness truly divine, said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me; but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold the days are coming, in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" Luke xxiii. 28, etc. As if he had said, Dry up these tears, ye daughters of Jerusalem, which ye shed in compassion for me, and reserve them for the deplorable fate of yourselves and of your children; for the calamities that will soon fall on you and your offspring are truly terrible, and call for the bitterest lamentations. In those days of vengeance, you will passionately wish that you had not given birth to a generation whose wickedness has rendered them the objects of the wrath of the Almighty, to such a degree as never was before experienced in the world. Then shall they wish to be crushed under the weight of enormous mountains, and concealed from their enemies in the bowels of the hills. The thoughts of these calamities afflict my soul far more than the feeling of my own sufferings. For if the Romans are permitted to inflict such punishments on me, who am innocent, how dreadful must the vengeance be which they shall inflict on a nation whose sins cry aloud to heaven, hastening the pace of the divine judgments, and rendering the perpetrators as proper for punishment as dry wood is for the flames!

Being arrived at the place of execution, which was called Golgotha, or the Place of Skulls, from the criminals' bones which lay scattered there, some of our Redeemer's friends offered him a stupefying potion, to render him insensible to the ignominy and excruciating pain of his punishment. But as soon as he tasted the draught, he refused to drink it, being determined to bear his sufferings, however sharp, not by intoxicating and stupefying himself, but by the strength of patience, fortitude, and faith. Jesus having refused the potion, the soldiers began to execute their orders by stripping him quite naked, and in that condition began to fasten him to his cross. But while they were piercing his hands and his feet with nails, instead of crying out through the sharpness of the pain, he calmly, though fervently, prayed for them, and for all those who had any hand in his

death; beseeching his heavenly Father to forgive them, and excusing them himself by the only circumstance that could alleviate their guilt; I mean their ignorance. "Father," said the compassionate Redeemer of mankind, "forgive them; for they know not what they do." This was infinite meekness and goodness, truly worthy of the only begotten Son of God; an example of forgiveness, which, though it can never be equaled by any, should be imitated by all.

But behold, the appointed soldiers dig the hole in which the cross was to be erected!—the cross is fixed in the ground—the blessed Jesus lies on the bed of sorrows—they nail him to it—his nerves break—his blood distils—he hangs upon his wounds naked, a spectacle to heaven and earth! Thus was the only begotten Son of God, who came down from heaven to save the world, crucified by his own creatures; and to render the ignominy still greater, placed between two thieves! "Hear, O heavens! O earth, earth, earth, hear! The Lord hath nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against him."

It was usual for the crimes committed by malefactors to be written on a white board, with black, and placed over their heads on the cross. In conformity to this custom, Pilate wrote a title in the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin languages, that all foreigners, as well as natives, might be able to read it, and fastened it to the cross over the head of Jesus; and the inscription was, "THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS." But when the chief priests and the elders had read this title, they were greatly displeased; because, as it represented the crime for which Jesus was condemned, it insinuated that he had been acknowledged as the Messiah. Besides, being placed over the head of one who was dying by the most infamous punishment, it implied that all who attempted to deliver the Jews should perish in the same manner. The faith and hope of the nation therefore being thus publicly ridiculed, it is no wonder that the priests thought themselves highly affronted; and accordingly came to Pilate, begging that the writing might be altered. But as he had intended the affront in revenge for their forcing him to crucify Jesus, contrary both to his judgment and inclination, he refused to grant their request; "What I have written," said he, "I have written."

When the soldiers had nailed the blessed Jesus to the cross, and erected it, they divided his garments among them. But his coat or vesture, being without seam, woven from the top throughout, they agreed not to rend it, but to cast lots for it; by which the prediction of the prophet, concerning the death and sufferings of the Messiah,

was fulfilled: "They parted my garments among them, and for my vesture did they cast lots." A sufficient indication that every circumstance of the death and passion of the blessed Jesus was perfectly known long before in the court of heaven; and accordingly his being crucified between two malefactors was expressly foretold: "And he was numbered with the transgressors." Is. liii. 12. The common people "of the baser sort," whom the vile priests had incensed against the blessed Jesus, by the malicious falsehoods they had spread concerning him, and which they pretended to found on the deposition of witnesses; the common people, I say, seeing him hang in so infamous a manner upon the cross, and reading the inscription that was placed over his head, expressed their indignation at him by sarcaistical expressions: "Ah thou," said they, "that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself, and come down from the cross." But the common people were not the only persons who mocked and derided the blessed Jesus, while he was suffering to obtain the remission of sins for mankind..... The rulers, who now imagined they had effectually destroyed his pretensions to the character of the Messiah, joined the populace in ridiculing him, and with a meanness of soul which many infamous wretches would have scorned, mocked him, even while he was struggling with the agonies of death. They scoffed at the miracles by which he demonstrated himself to be the Messiah, and promised to believe on him on condition of his proving his pretensions by descending from the cross. "He saved others," said they, "himself he cannot save; if he be the king of Israel let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe on him."

In the mean time, nothing could be more false and hypocritical than this pretension of the stiff-necked Jews; for they afterwards continued in their unbelief, notwithstanding they well knew that he raised himself from the dead; a much greater miracle than his coming down from the cross would have been; a miracle attested by witnesses whose veracity they could not call in question. It was told them by the soldiers whom they themselves placed at the sepulchre to watch the body, and whom they were obliged to bribe largely to conceal the truth. It is therefore abundantly evident, that if the blessed Jesus had descended from the cross, the Jewish priests would have continued in their infidelity; and consequently, that their declaration was made with no other intention than to insult the Redeemer of mankind, thinking it impossible for him now to escape out of their hands. The soldiers also joined in this general scene

of mockery: "If thou be the King of the Jews," said they, "save thyself." If thou art the great Messiah expected by the Jews, descend from the cross by miracle, and deliver thyself from these excruciating torments. Nor did even one of the thieves forbear mocking the great Lord of heaven and earth, though laboring himself under the most racking pains, and struggling with the agonies of death. But the other exercised a most extraordinary faith, at the time when our great Redeemer was in the highest affliction, mocked by men, and hanged upon the cross, as the most ignominious of malefactors. This Jewish criminal seems to have entertained a more rational and exalted notion of the Messiah's kingdom than even the disciples themselves. They expected nothing but a secular empire: he gave strong intimations of his having an idea of Christ's spiritual dominion; for at the very time when Jesus was dying on the cross, he begged to be remembered by him when he came into his kingdom. "Lord," said he, "remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Nor did he make this request in vain: the great Redeemer of mankind answered him, "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

But let us attentively consider the history of our blessed Saviour's passion, as it offers to our view events absolutely astonishing. For when we remember the perfect innocence of our great Redeemer, the uncommon love he bore to the children of men, and the many kind and benevolent offices he did for the sons and daughters of affliction; when we reflect on the esteem in which he was held all along by the common people, how cheerfully they followed him to the remotest corners of the country, nay, even into the desolate retreats of the wilderness, and with what pleasure they listened to his discourses; when we consider these particulars, I say, we cannot help being astonished to find them at the conclusion rushing all of a sudden into the opposite extreme, and every individual, as it were, combined to treat him with the most barbarous cruelty.

When Pilate asked the people if they desired to have Jesus released, his disciples, though they were very numerous, and might have made a great appearance in his behalf, remained absolutely silent, as if they had been speechless or infatuated. The Roman soldiers, notwithstanding their general had declared him innocent, insulted him in the most inhuman manner. The Scribes and Pharisees ridiculed him. The common people, who had received him with hosannas a few days before, mocked him as they passed by, and railed at him as a deceiver. Nay, the very thief on the cross reviled

him. This sudden revolution in the humor of the whole nation may seem unaccountable. But if we could assign a proper reason for the silence of the disciples, the principles which influenced the rest might be discovered in their several speeches.—The followers of the blessed Jesus had attached themselves to him in expectation of being raised to great wealth and power in his kingdom, which they expected would have been established long before this time. But seeing no appearance at all of what they had so long hoped for, they permitted him to be condemned, perhaps because they thought it would have obliged him to break the Roman yoke by miracle.

With respect to the soldiers, they were angry that any one should pretend to royalty in Judea, where Cæsar had established his authority. Hence they insulted our blessed Saviour with the title of king, and paid him, in mockery, the honors of a sovereign.

As for the common people, they seem to have changed their opinion of him, probably because he had neither convinced the council, nor rescued himself when they condemned him. They began therefore to consider the assertion of his destroying the temple, and building it in three days, as a kind of blasphemy, because it required a divine power to execute such an undertaking.

The priests and scribes were filled with the most implacable and diabolical malice against him; because he had torn off their mask of hypocrisy, and showed them to the people in their true colors. It is therefore no wonder that they ridiculed his miracles, from whence he derived his reputation. In short, the thief also fancied that he might have delivered both himself and them, if he had been the Messiah; but as no such deliverance appeared, he upbraided him for making pretensions to that high character.

But now, my soul, take one view of thy dying Saviour, breathing out his spirit upon the cross! Behold his unspotted flesh lacerated with stripes, by which thou art healed! See his hands extended and nailed to the cross, those beneficent hands which were incessantly stretched out to unloose thy heavy burdens, and to impart blessings of every kind! Behold his feet riveted to the accursed tree with nails! those feet which always went about doing good, and traveling far and near to spread the glad tidings of everlasting salvation! View his tender temples encircled with a wreath of thorns, which shoot their keen afflicting points into his blessed head; that head which was ever meditating peace to poor lost and undone sinners, and spent many a wakeful night in ardent prayer for their happiness! See him laboring in the agonies of death! breathing out

his soul into the hands of his Almighty Father, and praying for his cruel enemies! Was ever love like this? Was ever benevolence so gloriously displayed?

Oh my soul, put thou thy trust in that bleeding, that dying Saviour! Then, though the pestilence walketh in darkness, and the sickness destroyeth at noon-day; though thousands fall beside thee, and ten thousands at thy right hand; thou needest not fear the approach of any evil! Either the destroying angel shall pass over thee, or dispense the corrections of a friend, not the scourges of an enemy, which, instead of hurting, will work for thy good. Then, though profaneness and infidelity, far more malignant evils, breathe their contagion, and taint multitudes around thee, thou shalt be safely hid in the hollow of his hand, and preserved in every danger.

Come then, my soul, and take sanctuary under that tree of life, the ignominious cross of thy bleeding Saviour: fly for safety to that city of refuge, opened in his bleeding wounds. These will prove a sacred hiding-place, not to be pierced by the flames of divine wrath, or the fiery darts of temptations. His dying merits, his perfect obedience, will be "as rivers of water in a dry place," or "as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

But particularly in that last tremendous day, when the heavens shall be rent asunder, and be wrapt up like a scroll; when his almighty arm shall arrest the sun in his career, and dash the structure of the universe to pieces; when the dead, both small and great, shall be gathered before the throne of his glory, and the fates of all mankind hang on the very point of a final irreversible decision; then, if thou hast faithfully trusted in him, and made his precepts thy constant directory, shalt thou be owned and defended by him. O! reader, may both thou that perusest, and him who hath written this for thy soul's advantage, be covered, at that unutterably important conjuncture, by the wings of his redeeming love; then shall we behold all the horrible convulsions of expiring nature with composure, with comfort! we shall even welcome the consummation of all things, as "the times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord."

But see, the sun, that glorious luminary of heaven, as it were hides his face from this detestable action of mortals, and is wrapt in the pitchy mantle of chaotic darkness! This preternatural eclipse of the sun continued for three hours, to the great terror and astonishment of the people present at the crucifixion of our dear Redeemer. And surely nothing could be more proper than this extraordinary alteration in the face of nature, while the Sun of

Righteousness was withdrawing his beams, not only from the promised land, but from the whole world; for it was at once a miraculous testimony, given by the Almighty himself, to the innocence of his Son, and a proper emblem of the departure of him who was the light of the world, at least till his luminous rays, like the beams of the morning, shone out anew with additional splendor in the ministry of his apostles. Nor was this darkness which now covered Judea and the neighboring countries, beginning about noon and continuing till Jesus expired, the effect of an ordinary eclipse of the sun. It is well known that this phenomenon can only happen at the change of the moon; whereas the Jewish passover, at which our great Redeemer suffered, was always celebrated at the full. Besides, the total darkness of an eclipse of the sun never exceeds twelve or fifteen minutes; whereas this continued three full hours. Nothing, therefore, but the immediate hand of that Almighty Being which placed the sun in the centre of the planetary system, could have produced this astonishing darkness. Nothing but Omnipotence, who first lighted this glorious luminary of heaven, could have deprived it of its cheering rays. Now, ye scoffers of Israel, whose blood ye have so earnestly desired, and wished it might fall upon you and your children, behold all nature is dressed in the sable vail of sorrow, and, in a language that cannot be mistaken, mourns the departure of its Lord and Master; weeps for your crimes, and deprecates the vengeance of heaven upon your guilty heads! Happy for you that this suffering Jesus is compassion itself, and even in the agonies of death prays to his heavenly Father to avert from you the stroke of his justice.

This preternatural eclipse of the sun was considered as a miracle by the heathens themselves; and one of them cried out, "Either the world is at an end, or the God of nature suffers." And well might he use the expression; for never since this planetary system was called from its primitive chaos, was known such a deprivation of light in the glorious luminary of day. Indeed, when the Almighty punished Pharaoh for refusing to let the children of Israel depart out of his land, the sable vail of darkness was for three days drawn over Egypt. But this darkness was confined to a part of that kingdom; whereas this, that happened at our Saviour's crucifixion, was universal. When the darkness began, the disciples naturally considered it as a prelude to the deliverance of their Master. For though the chief priests, elders, and people, had sarcastically desired him to descend from the accursed tree, his friends could not but be

persuaded, that he who had delivered so many from incurable diseases, who had restored limbs to the maimed, and eyes to the blind, who had given speech to the dumb, and called the dead from the chambers of the dust, might easily save himself even from the cross. When therefore his mother, his mother's sister, Mary Magdalene, and the beloved disciple, observed the vail of darkness begin to extend over the face of nature, they drew near to the foot of the cross, probably in expectation that the Son of God was going to shake the frame of the universe, unloose himself from the cross, and take ample vengeance on his cruel and perfidious enemies. The blessed Jesus was now in the midst of his sufferings. Yet, when he saw his mother and her companions, their grief greatly affected his tender breast, especially the distress of his mother. The agonies of death, under which he was now laboring, could not prevent his expressing the most affectionate regard, both for her and for them. For, that she might have some consolation to support her under the greatness of her sorrows, he told her the disciple whom he loved would, for the sake of that love, supply his place to her after he was taken from them, even the place of a son; and therefore he desired her to consider him as such, and expect from him all the duties of a child. "Woman," said he, "behold thy son." Nor was this remarkable token of filial affection towards his mother, the only instance the dying Jesus gave of his sincere love to his friends and followers; the beloved disciple had also a token of his high esteem. He singled him out as the only person among his friends to supply his place with regard to his mother. Accordingly, he desired him expressly to reverence her in the same manner as if she had been his own parent: a duty which the favorite disciple gladly undertook, carried her with him to his house, and maintained her from that hour to the day of her death; her husband Joseph having, it seems, been dead some time.

Thus, in the midst of the heaviest sufferings that human nature ever sustained, the blessed Jesus demonstrated a divine strength of benevolence. Even at the time when his own distress was at the highest pitch, and nature was dressed in the robe of mourning for the sufferings of the Redeemer of mankind, his friends had so large a share of his concern, that their happiness interrupted the sharpness of his pains, and for a short time engrossed his thoughts.

But now the moment, when he should resign his soul into the hands of his heavenly Father, approached, and he repeated part, at least, of the twenty-second Psalm, uttering with a loud voice these

remarkable words, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" That is, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Or, as the words may be rendered, "My God, my God, how long a time hast thou forsaken me?"

Some believe that our blessed Saviour repeated the whole Psalm; it having been the custom of the Jews, in making quotations, to mention only the first words of the psalm or section which they cited. If so, as this psalm contains the most remarkable particulars of our Redeemer's passion, being as it were a summary of the prophecies relative to that subject, by repeating it on the cross, the blessed Jesus signified that he was now accomplishing the things that were predicted concerning the Messiah. And as this psalm is composed in the form of a prayer, by pronouncing it at this time, he also claimed of his Father the performance of all the promises he had made, whether to him, or to his people.

Some of the people who stood by, when they heard our blessed Saviour pronounce the first words of the psalm, misunderstood him, probably from their not hearing him distinctly, and concluded that he called for Elias. Upon which one of them filled a sponge with vinegar, put it on a reed, and gave him to drink; being desirous to keep him alive as long as possible, to see whether Elias would come to take him down from the cross. But as soon as Jesus had tasted the vinegar, he said, "It is finished." That is, the work of man's redemption is accomplished; the great work which the only begotten Son of God came into the world to perform, is finished. In speaking these words, he cried with an exceeding loud voice; and afterwards addressed his Almighty Father, in words which form the best pattern of a recommendatory prayer at the hour of death: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." And having uttered these words, "he bowed his head and yielded up the ghost."

But, behold! at the very instant that the blessed Jesus resigned his soul into the hands of his heavenly Father, the vail of the temple was miraculously rent from the top to the bottom; probably in the presence of the priest who burnt incense in the holy place, and who, doubtless, published the account when he came out: for our blessed Saviour expired at the ninth hour, the very time of offering the evening sacrifice. Nor was this the only miracle that happened at the death of the great Messiah; the earth trembled from its very foundations, the flinty rocks burst asunder, and the sepulchres hewn in them were opened; and many bodies of saints deposited there

awakened after his resurrection from the sleep of death, left the gloomy chambers of the tomb, went into the city of Jerusalem, and appeared unto many.

And as the rending the veil of the temple intimated that the entrance into the holy place, the type of heaven, was now laid open to all nations; so the resurrection of a number of saints from the dead demonstrated that the power of death and the grave was broken; the sting was taken from death, and the victory wrested from the grave. In short; our dear Redeemer's conquests over the enemies of mankind were shown to be complete; and an earnest was given of the general resurrection of the dead.

Nor did the remarkable particulars which attended that awful period, when Jesus gave up the ghost, affect the natives of Judea only. The Roman centurion, who was placed near the cross to prevent disorders of any kind, glorified the Almighty, and cried out, "Truly this was the Son of God!" And others who were with them, when they beheld heaven itself bearing witness to the truth of our great Redeemer's mission, smote their breasts, and retired.

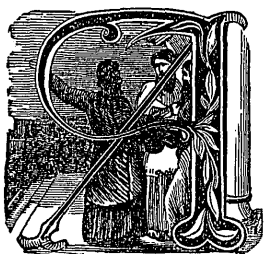
They had been incessant with loud voices to have him crucified; but when they saw the face of the creation wrapt in the gloomy mantle of darkness during his crucifixion, and found his death accompanied with an earthquake, as if nature had been in an agony when he died, they rightly interpreted these prodigies to be so many testimonies from the Almighty of his innocence; and their passions, which had been inflamed and exasperated against him, became quite calm, or exerted in his behalf. Some were angry with themselves for neglecting the opportunity the governor gave them of saving his life. Some were stung with remorse for having been active in procuring Pilate to condemn him, and even offering the most bitter insults while he labored under the most cruel sufferings. And others were deeply affected at beholding the pains he suffered, which were rigorously severe. These various passions being visibly painted in their countenances, afforded a melancholy spectacle; many of the multitude returning from the place of execution with their eyes fixed upon the earth, pensive and silent; their hearts ready to burst with grief, groaning deeply within themselves, shedding floods of tears, and smiting on their breasts. The grief they now felt for the blessed Jesus, was distinguished from their former rage against him by this remarkable particular, that their rage was entirely owing to the artful insinuations of the priests; whereas their grief was genuine, and the natural feelings of their own hearts, greatly

affected with the truth and innocence of him who was the object of their commiseration. And as flattery had no share in this mourning, so the expressions of their sorrow were such as became a real and unfeigned passion.

Thus were demonstrated, by many awful tokens, the truth, the divinity, the power, of our Redeemer's mission; and the blind, the obdurate Jews, were struck with horror, fully convinced that the person they had cruelly put to death, was no less than the Son of God, the promised Messiah, the Saviour of the world.

CHAPTER XL.

THE BLESSED JESUS IS TREATED WITH INDIGNITY AFTER HIS CRUCIFIXION—A PIOUS PERSON BEGS HIS BODY FROM PILATE FOR INTERMENT.



ACCORDING to the law of Moses, the bodies of those who were hanged were not allowed to remain all night on the tree. In conformity to this law, and because the Sabbath was at hand, the Jews begged the governor that the legs of the three persons crucified might be broken to hasten their death. To this request Pilate readily consented; and accordingly gave the necessary order to the soldiers to put it in execution. But on perceiving that Jesus was already dead, the soldiers did not give themselves the trouble of breaking his legs, as they had done those of the two malefactors who were crucified with him. One of them, however, either out of wantonness or cruelty, thrust a spear into his side, and out of the wound flowed blood and water.

This wound therefore was of the greatest importance to mankind, as it abundantly demonstrated the truth of our Saviour's death, and consequently prevented all objections that the enemies to our holy faith would otherwise have raised against it. The evangelist adds, that the legs of our great Redeemer were not broken, but his side pierced, that two particular prophecies might be fulfilled: "A bone of him shall not be broken;" and "they shall look on him whom they have pierced."

Among the disciples of our blessed Jesus, was one called Joseph of Arimathea; a person equally remarkable for his birth, fortune, and office. This man, who was not to be intimidated by the malice of his countrymen, went boldly to Pilate, and begged the body of his great Master. He had indeed nothing to fear from the Roman governor, who, during the whole course of our Saviour's trial, had shown the greatest inclination to release him; but he had reason to apprehend that this action might draw upon him the malice of the

rulers of the Jews, who had taken such great pains to get the Messiah crucified. However, the great regard he had for the remains of his Master, made him despise the malice of the Jews; being persuaded that Omnipotence would defend him, and cover his enemies with shame and confusion. And he well knew, that if no friend procured a grant of the body, it would be ignominiously cast out among the executed malefactors.

Pilate was at first surprised at the request of Joseph, thinking it highly improbable that he should be dead in so short a time. He had indeed given orders for the soldiers to break the legs of the crucified persons; but he knew it was common for them to live many hours after that operation was performed: for though the pain they felt must be exquisite to the last degree, yet as the vital parts remained untouched, life would continue some time in the miserable body. The governor therefore called the centurion, to know the truth of what Joseph had told him; and being convinced from the answer of that officer, that Jesus had been dead some time, he readily gave the body to Joseph. This worthy counsellor having obtained his request, repaired to Mount Calvary; and being assisted by Nicodemus, took the body down from the cross. The latter was formerly so cautious in visiting Jesus, that he came to him by night. But in paying the last duties to his Master, he used no art to conceal his design. He showed a courage far superior to that of any of his apostles, not only assisting Joseph in taking down the body of Jesus from the cross, but bringing with him a quantity of spices necessary in the burial of his Saviour. Accordingly they wrapt the body with the spices in fine linen, and laid it in a new sepulchre, which Joseph had hewn out of a rock for himself. The sepulchre was situated in a garden near Mount Calvary; and in which, having carefully deposited the body of the blessed Jesus, they fastened the door, by rolling to it a very large stone. "And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed." Mat. xxvii. 59, 60.

Oh! what a wonderful spectacle was now exhibited in this memorable sepulchre! He who clothes himself with light as with a garment, and walks upon the wings of the wind, was pleased to wear the habiliments of mortality, and dwell among the prostrate dead! Who can repeat the wondrous truth too often? Who can dwell upon the enchanting theme too long? He who sits enthroned in glory, and diffuses bliss among all the heavenly host, was once a

pale and bloody corpse, and pressed the floor of this little sepulchre! O Death! how great was thy triumph in that hour! never did thy gloomy realms contain such a prisoner before. Prisoner, did I say! No, he was more than conqueror. He arose far more mighty than Samson from a transient slumber; broke down the gates, and demolished the strongholds of those dark dominions. And this, O mortals, is your consolation and security. Jesus hath trod the dreadful path, and smoothed it for your passage. Jesus, sleeping in the chambers of the tomb, hath brightened the dismal mansion, and left an inviting odor in those beds of dust. The dying Jesus is your sure protection, your unquestionable passport through the territories of the grave. Believe in him, and they shall prove "a highway to Sion"—shall transmit you safe to paradise. Believe in him, and you shall be no losers, but unspeakable gainers by your dissolution: Death shall no longer be inflicted as a punishment, but rather vouchsafed as a blessing. The exit of saints is the end of their frailty, and their entrance upon perfection; their last groan is the prelude to life and immortality.

But to return. The women of Galilee, who had watched their dear Redeemer in his last moments, and accompanied his body to the sepulchre, observing that the funeral rites were performed in a hurry, agreed among themselves, as soon as the Sabbath was passed, to return to the sepulchre, and embalm the body of their dead Saviour, by anointing and swathing him in the manner then common among the Jews. Accordingly they retired to the city, and purchased the spices necessary for that purpose; Nicodemus having only furnished a portion of them.

During these transactions, the chief priests and Pharisees, remembering that Jesus had more than once predicted his own resurrection, came to the governor and informed him of it: begging, at the same time, that a guard might be placed at the sepulchre, lest his disciples should carry away the body, and affirm that he was risen from the dead. This happened a little before it was dark in the evening, called "the next day that followed," by the evangelist, because the Jewish day began at sunset.

This request being thought reasonable by Pilate, he gave them leave to take as many soldiers as they pleased out of the cohort, which at the feast came from the castle of Antonia, and kept guard of the porticos of the temple. For that they were not Jewish but Roman soldiers whom the priests employed to watch the sepulchre, is evident from their asking them of the governor. Besides, when

the soldiers returned with the news of our Saviour's resurrection, the priests desired them to report that his disciples had stolen him away while they slept; and to encourage them to tell the falsehood boldly, promised, that if their neglect of duty came to the governor's ears, proper methods should be used to pacify him, and deliver them from any punishment; a promise which there was no need of making to their own servants.

The priests having thus obtained a guard of Roman soldiers, men long accustomed to military duties, and therefore the most proper for watching the body, set out with them to the sepulchre; and to prevent these guards from combining with the disciples in carrying on any fraud, placed them at their post, and sealed the stone which was rolled to the door of the sepulchre.

Thus what was designed to expose the mission and doctrines of Jesus as rank falsehood and vile imposture, proved in fact the strongest confirmation of the truth and divinity of the same that could possibly be given; and placed what they wanted to refute, which was his resurrection from the dead, even beyond a doubt.

CHAPTER XLI.

TWO PIOUS WOMEN GO TO VIEW THE SEPULCHRE OF THEIR CRUCIFIED LORD—AN AWFUL PHENOMENON—A MINISTERING SPIRIT DESCENDS—THE REDEEMER RISES FROM THE TOMB.



ERY early in the morning after the Sabbath, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to visit the sepulchre, in order to embalm our Lord's body; for the performance of which they had, in concert with several other women from Galilee, brought ointments and spices. But before they reached the sepulchre, there was a great earthquake preceding the most

memorable event that ever happened among the children of men, the resurrection of the Son of God from the dead. "For the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and sat upon it; his countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men:" they fled into the city, and the Saviour of the world rose from the dead.

The angel, who had till then sat upon the stone, quitted his station, and entered into the sepulchre. In the mean time Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, were still on their way to the place, together with Salome, who joined them on the road. As they proceeded on their way, they consulted among themselves with regard to the method of putting their design of embalming the body of their Master in execution; particularly with respect to the enormous stone which they had seen placed there with the utmost difficulty two days before. "Who," said they, "shall roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? For it was very great." But in the midst of this deliberation about removing this great and sole obstacle to their design, for it does not appear they knew any thing of the guard, they lifted up their eyes, and perceived it was already rolled away.

Alarmed at so extraordinary and unexpected a circumstance, Mary Magdalene concluded that the stone could not have been rolled away without some design; and that those who rolled it away could have no other intention than that of removing our Lord's body.

Imagining by appearances that they had really done so, she ran immediately to acquaint Peter and John of what she had seen, and what she suspected, leaving Mary and Salome there, that if the other women should arrive during her absence, they might acquaint them with their surprise at finding the stone removed, and of Mary Magdalene's running to inform the apostles of it.

In the mean time the soldiers, who were terrified at seeing an awful messenger from on high roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and open it in quality of a servant, fled into the city, and informed the Jewish rulers of these miraculous appearances. This account was highly mortifying to the chief priests, as it was a proof of our Saviour's resurrection that could not be denied; they therefore resolved to stifle it immediately, and accordingly bribed the soldiers to conceal the real fact, and to publish everywhere that his disciples had stolen the body out of the sepulchre. "Now, when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken council, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you." Mat. xxviii. 11-14.

What! the body taken away while the place was guarded by Roman soldiers? Yes, according to these wise priests, the disciples stole the body while the soldiers slept! A story so inconsistent, and which so evidently carries the marks of its own confutation with it, that it deserves no answer.

The priests themselves could not be so stupid, as not to foresee what construction the world would put upon the account given by persons who pretended to know and tell what was done while they were asleep.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE ANGEL ADDRESSES THE PIOUS WOMEN—TWO DISCIPLES GO TO THE SEPULCHRE—
JESUS APPEARS TO MARY MAGDALENE—AFTERWARDS TO A COMPANY OF WOMEN—PETER
MEETS HIS LORD AND MASTER, AFTER HIS RESURRECTION.



WHILE Mary Magdalene was going to inform the disciples that the stone was rolled away from the mouth of the sepulchre, and the body taken away, Mary and Salome continued advancing towards the place, and at their arrival found what they expected, the body of their beloved Master gone from the sepulchre, where it had been deposited by Nicodemus and

Joseph of Arimathea; but at the same time beheld, to their great astonishment, a beautiful young man in shining raiment, very glorious to behold, sitting on the right side of the sepulchre. Matthew tells us that it was the angel who had rolled away the stone, and frightened away the guards from the sepulchre. It seems he had now laid aside the terrors in which he was then arrayed, and assumed the form and dress of a human being, in order that these pious women, who had accompanied our Saviour during the greatest part of the time of his public ministry, might be as little terrified as possible. But notwithstanding his beauty and benign appearance, they were greatly affrighted, and on the point of turning back, when the heavenly messenger, to banish their fears, told them in a gentle accent, that he knew their errand. "Fear not," said he, "for I know that ye seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he is risen, as he said:" and then invited them to come down into the sepulchre, and view the place where the Son of God had lain; that is, to look on the linen clothes, and the napkin that had been about his head, and which he had left behind him when he arose from the dead; for to look at the place in any other view, would not have tended to confirm their faith of his resurrection. The women, greatly encouraged by the agreeable news, as well as by the peculiar accent with which this sweet messenger from the heavenly Canaan delivered his speech, went down into the sepulchre, when, behold,

another of the angelic choir appeared. They did not, however, yet seem to give sufficient credit to what was told them by the angel; and therefore the other gently reproved them for seeking the living among the dead, with an intention to do him an office due only to the latter, and for not believing what was told them by a messenger from heaven; or rather, for not remembering the words which their great Master himself had told them with regard to his own resurrection. "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again."

When the women had satisfied their minds by looking at the place where the Lord had lain, and where nothing was to be found but the linen clothes, the angel who first appeared to them resumed the discourse, and bade them to go and tell his disciples, particularly Peter, the glad tidings of his Master's resurrection from the dead; that he was going before them to Galilee; and that they should there have the pleasure of seeing him.

The reason why the disciples were ordered to go into Galilee to meet their great and beloved Master, seems to be this: they were now most of them in Jerusalem celebrating the passover; and it may be easily imagined that, on receiving the news of their Lord's resurrection, many, if not all, would resolve to tarry in Jerusalem, in expectation of meeting him there; a thing that must have proved of great detriment to them at that time of the year, when the harvest was about to begin, the sheaf of first-fruits being always offered on the second day of the passover week. In order therefore to prevent their staying so long from home, the message was sent, directing them to return into Galilee, with full assurance that they should there have the pleasure of seeing their great Lord and Master, and by that means have all their doubts removed, and be fully convinced that he had patiently undergone all his sufferings for the sins of mankind. The women, highly elated with the news of their Lord's resurrection, left the sepulchre immediately, and ran to carry the disciples the glad tidings.

During these transactions at the sepulchre, Peter and John having been informed by Mary Magdalene, that the stone was rolled away, and the body of Jesus not to be found, were hastening to the grave, and missed the women who had seen the appearance of angels. The disciples being astonished at what Mary Magdalene had told them, and desirous of having their doubts cleared up, made all the

haste possible to the sepulchre ; and John being younger than Peter, arrived at the place first, but did not go in, contenting himself with stooping down, and seeing the linen clothes lying which had been wrapped about our Saviour's body. Peter soon arrived, and went to the sepulchre, where he saw the "linen clothes, and the napkin that was about his head not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapt together in a place by itself." Our Lord left the grave-clothes in the sepulchre, probably to show that his body was not stolen away by his disciples, who in such a case would not have taken time to have stripped it. Besides, the circumstances of the grave-clothes induced the disciples themselves to believe, when the resurrection was related to them. But at that time they had not any suspicion that he was risen from the dead. These two disciples having thus satisfied themselves that what Mary Magdalene had told them was really true, returned to their respective habitations ; but Mary, who had returned, continued weeping at the door of the sepulchre. She had, it seems, followed Peter and John to the garden, but did not leave it with them, being anxious to find the body. Accordingly, stepping down into the place to examine it once more, she saw two angels sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. They were now in the same position as when they appeared to the other women ; but had rendered themselves invisible while Peter and John were at the sepulchre. Mary, on beholding these heavenly messengers dressed in the robes of light, was greatly terrified. But they, in the most endearing accent, asked her, "Woman, why weepest thou?" To which she answered, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." On pronouncing these words, she turned herself about, and saw Jesus standing near her ; but the terror she was in, and the garments in which he was now dressed, prevented her from knowing him for some time. Jesus repeated the same question used before by the angel, "Woman, why weepest thou?" To which Mary, who now supposed him to be the gardener, answered, Sir, if his body be troublesome in the sepulchre, and thou hast removed him, tell me where he is deposited, and I will take him away. But our blessed Saviour, willing to remove her anxiety, called her by her name with his usual tone of voice : on which she immediately knew him, and falling down before him, would have embraced his knees, according to that modesty and reverence with which the women of the East saluted the men, especially those who were their superiors in station. But Jesus refused this compliment, telling her

that he was not going immediately into heaven. He was often to show himself to the disciples before he ascended; so that she would have frequent opportunities of testifying her regard to him. And at the same time said to her, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God."

Thus did the blessed Jesus contemplate, with a singular pleasure, the work of redemption he had just finished. The happy relation between God and man, which had been long cancelled by sin, was now renewed. The Almighty, who had disowned them on account of their disobedience, was again reconciled to them; he was become their God and Father; they were exalted to the honorable relation of Christ's brethren, and the sons of God; and their Father loved them with an affection far exceeding that of the most tender-hearted parent upon earth. The kindness of this message, sent by our dear Redeemer to his disciples, will appear above all praise, if we remember their late behavior. They had every one of them forsaken him in the greatest extremity: when he was scourged and mocked by the Roman soldiers, derided by his countrymen, and spitefully entreated by all, they hid themselves in some place of safety, and preferred their own security to the deliverance of their Master. When he fainted under the burden of his cross, none of them were there to assist him. Simon, a Cyrenian, was compelled by the Roman soldiers to ease him of his ponderous burden. But notwithstanding they had refused to assist their Master during his sufferings for the sins of the world, he graciously, he freely forgave them; he assured them of their pardon, and called them even by the endearing name of brethren.

There is something very remarkable in this part of the history. None of the apostles, or male disciples, were honored with the first appearance of the angels, or with the immediate news of the resurrection of the Son of God, much less with the appearance of Jesus himself. The angels in the sepulchre kept themselves invisible all the time that Pèter and John were observing the linen clothes, and satisfying themselves that the body of their Master was not there. Perhaps the male disciples in general were treated with this mark of disrespect, both because they had with shameful cowardice forsaken their Master when he was betrayed into the hands of his enemies, and because their faith was so weak that they had absolutely despaired of his being the Messiah when they saw him expire on the cross. But how different was the conduct of the women! Laying

aside the weakness and timidity natural to their sex, they showed an uncommon magnanimity on this melancholy occasion. For, in contradiction to those of the Jews, who so vehemently required Jesus to be crucified as a deceiver, they proclaimed his innocence by tears, cries, and lamentations, when they saw him led forth to suffer on Mount Calvary; accompanied him to the cross, the most infamous of all punishments; kindly waited on him in his expiring moments, giving him all the consolation in their power, though at the same time the sight of his sufferings pierced them to the heart; and when he expired, and his body was carried off, they accompanied him to his grave, not despairing, though they found he had not delivered himself, but to appearance was conquered by death, the universal enemy of mankind. Perhaps these pious women entertained some faint hopes that he would still revive. Or, if they did not entertain expectations of that kind, they at least cherished a strong degree of love for their Lord, and determined to do him all the honor in their power. A faith so remarkably strong, a love so ardent, and a fortitude so unshaken, could not fail of receiving distinguished marks of the divine approbation: and they were accordingly honored with the news of Christ's resurrection, before the male disciples had their eyes cheered with the first sight of their beloved Lord after he rose from the chambers of the grave; so that they preached the joyful tidings of his resurrection to the apostles themselves.

But there seem to have been other reasons why our great Redeemer showed himself first to the women. The thoughts of the apostles were constantly fixed on a temporal kingdom, and they had wrested all his words into an agreement with that favorite notion. And whatever they could not construe as consonant to that opinion, they seemed either to have disbelieved or disregarded. Hence, notwithstanding Jesus had repeatedly foretold his own sufferings, they were astonished above measure when they found he had expired on the cross. Immortality and terrestrial dominion were, according to their notion, the characteristics of the Messiah; for which reason, when they found that, instead of establishing himself in the possession of universal empire, he had neither delivered himself from a handful of enemies, nor even from death, they gave over the hopes of his being the Messiah. And as for the resurrection, they seem not to have entertained the least notion of it: so that when the news of this great event was brought to them, they doubted the truth of the information. Not so the women; they were more submissive to their Master's instructions, and consequently were much

better prepared for seeing him after his resurrection than the apostles: for though they did not expect that he would rise from the dead, yet they were not prejudiced against it. This cannot be said of the apostles: they not only absolutely rejected the matter at first as a thing incredible, but even after the accounts the soldiers had given of this great transaction; nay, after they had seen the blessed Jesus himself, some of them were so unreasonable as still to doubt. How much rather then would their incredulity have led them to suspect his appearing as an illusion, had he showed himself to them? These reports led him to point out the arguments proper for disposing them to believe; particularly the prophecies that had been so often delivered in their own hearing concerning his resurrection. Hence the angels, when they told this event to the women, and desired them to carry the news of it to his disciples, put them in mind of the prediction Jesus himself had made, as a confirmation of it. Hence we also see the reason why Jesus, before he had made himself known to the disciples at Emmaus, had prepared them for a discovery, by expounding to them on the road, the several prophecies concerning the Messiah contained in the Old Testament.

The women on their arrival told as many of the disciples as they could find, that they had seen at the sepulchre, the appearance of angels, who assured them that Jesus was risen from the dead. This new information astonished the disciples exceedingly; and as they had before sent Peter and John to examine into the truth of what Mary Magdalene had told them concerning the body being removed out of the sepulchre, so they now judged it highly proper to send some of their number to see the angels, and learn from them the joyful tidings of that great transaction, of which the women had given them an account. That it was really the case, appears from what the disciples in their journey to Emmaus told their great Lord and Master; namely, that when the women came and told them that they had seen the angels, certain of their number went to the sepulchre, and found it even as the women had said, but him they saw not. The second deputation from the apostles did not go alone; for as Mary Magdalene returned with Peter and John, who were sent to examine the truth of her information, so the women who brought an account of the appearance of angels, in all probability returned with those who were sent to be witnesses of the truth of their report. Besides curiosity, they had an errand thither. The angels had expressly ordered them to tell the news to Peter in particular; for which reason, when they understood that he was gone

to the sepulchre, it is natural to think they would return with the disciples to seek him. About the time that the disciples and women set out from the sepulchre, Peter and John reached the city; but passing through a different street, did not meet their brethren. The disciples having a great desire to reach the place, soon left the women behind; and just as they arrived, Mary Magdalene, having seen the Lord, was coming away; but they did not meet her, because they entered the garden at one door, while she was coming out at another. When they came to the sepulchre, they saw the angels, and received from them the news of their blessed Master's resurrection; for St. Luke tells us, "They found it even as the women had said." Highly elated with what they saw, they departed, and ran back to the city with such expedition, that they gave an account of what they had seen in the hearing of the two disciples, before Mary Magdalene arrived. In the mean time, the company of women who followed the disciples happened to meet Peter and John. But they had not gone far from the sepulchre before Jesus himself met them, and said, "All hail!" On which they approached their great Lord and Master, "held him by the feet and worshiped him." This favor of embracing his knees, Jesus had previously refused to Mary Magdalene, because it was not then necessary; but he granted it to the women, because the angel's words having strongly impressed their minds with the notion of his resurrection, they might have taken his appearance for an illusion of their own imagination, had he not permitted them to touch him, and convince themselves, by the united reports of their senses, that he was their great Lord and Master, who was then risen from the dead, after having suffered on the cross for the sins of mankind. This company of pious women having tarried some time with Jesus on the road, did not arrive with the joyful tidings of their great Master's resurrection, till some time after Peter and John; and perhaps were overtaken by Mary Magdalene on the road, unless we suppose that she arrived a few minutes before them. The disciples were now lost in astonishment at what the women had related: they considered the account they had before given them of their having seen the angels, as an improbability; and now they seem to have considered this as something worse, for the evangelist tells us that they "believed not." Peter, indeed, to whom the angels sent the message, was disposed, by his sanguine temper, to give a little more credit to their words than the rest; possibly because the messengers from the heavenly Canaan had done him the honor of naming him in par-

ticular. Elated with the respect thus paid him, he immediately repaired again to the sepulchre; hoping, in all probability, that his Master would appear to him, or at least the angel who had so particularly distinguished him from the rest of the disciples. As soon as Peter arrived at the sepulchre, he stooped down, and seeing the linen clothes lying in the same manner as before, he viewed their position, the form in which they were laid, and returned, wondering greatly in himself at what had happened.

CHAPTER XLIII.

JESUS APPEARS ON DIVERS OCCASIONS TO DIFFERENT DISCIPLES—REPROVES AND CONVINCES THOMAS OF HIS UNBELIEF—SHOWS HIMSELF TO A GREAT NUMBER OF HIS FOLLOWERS IN GALILEE.



SOON after the women's first return to the disciples with the news of their having seen the appearance of angels, who told them that Jesus was risen from the dead, two of the brethren departed on their journey to a village called Emmaus, about two miles distant from Jerusalem. The concern they were in on account of the death of their great and beloved Master, was sufficiently visible in their countenances. And as they pursued their journey, talking with one another, and debating about the things that had lately happened among them, concerning the life and doctrine, the sufferings and death of the holy Jesus, and of the report that was just spread among his disciples of his being that very morning risen from the dead, Jesus himself overtook them, and joined company with them.

As he appeared like a stranger, they did not in the least suspect that their fellow-traveler was no other than the great Redeemer of the sons of men. He soon entered into discourse with them, by inquiring what event had so closely engaged them in conversation, and why they appeared so sorrowful and dejected, as if they had met with some heavy disappointment? One of them, whose name was Cleopas, being surprised at the question, replied, Is it possible that you can be so great a stranger to the affairs of the world, as to have been at Jerusalem, and not have heard the surprising events that have happened there? events that have astonished the whole city, and are now the constant topic of conversation among all the inhabitants? Jesus asked, what surprising events he meant? To which Cleopas replied, The transactions which have happened concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who appeared as a great prophet and teacher sent from God; and accordingly was highly venerated among the people for the excellency of his doctrine, his humility of

life, and the number, benefit, and greatness of his miracles. Our chief priests and elders therefore envying him, as one who lessened their authority over the people, apprehended him, and found means to put him to death. But we firmly believed he would have proved himself the Messiah, or great deliverer: and this persuasion we a long time supported; nor were we willing to abandon it even when we saw him put to death. But it is now three days since these things were done; and therefore we begin to fear we were mistaken. This very morning indeed, a thing happened which extremely surprises us, and we were very solicitous with regard to the event. Some women who had entertained the same hopes and expectations as we, going early in the morning to pay the last duties to their Master by embalming his body, returned with great haste to the city, and informed us that they had been at the sepulchre, but were disappointed in not finding the body; and to increase our surprise, they added, that they had seen the appearance of angels, who told them that Jesus was risen from the dead. This relation seemed at first to us not probable, nay, altogether incredible; but two of the company going immediately after to the sepulchre, found every thing exactly as the women had reported; they saw the angels, but heard not any thing of the body; so that we are still in doubt and perplexity with regard to this wonderful event.

In reply, Jesus said, Why are ye so very averse to believe all that the prophets have with one voice predicted concerning the Messiah? Is it not clearly and very expressly foretold in all the prophetic writings, that it was appointed by the counsel of Omnipotence for the Messiah to suffer in this manner; and that, after sustaining the greatest indignities, reproach, and contempt, from the malice and perverseness of mankind, and even undergoing an ignominious and cruel death, he should be exalted to a glorious and eternal kingdom? Having said this, he began at the writings of Moses, and explained to them in order all the principal passages both in the books of that great legislator, and the writings of the other prophets relating to his own sufferings, death, and glorious resurrection. And this he did with such surprising plainness, clearness, and strength, that the two disciples, not yet suspecting who he was, were as much amazed to find a stranger so well acquainted with all that Jesus did and suffered, as they at first wondered at his appearing to be totally ignorant of these transactions. They were also astonished to hear him interpret and apply the Scriptures to their present purpose with such readiness and convincing clearness

of argument, as carried with it a strange and unusual authority and efficacy. When therefore they came to the village whither they were going, and Jesus seemed as if he would have passed on and traveled farther, they desirous of his company, pressed him, in the strongest manner, to tarry with them that night, as it was then late. To this request the great Redeemer of mankind consented; and when they were sat down to supper, he took bread, and gave thanks to God, and brake it, and gave it to them in the same manner he used to do while he conversed with them upon earth before his death. This engaged their attention, and looking steadfastly on him, they perceived it was their great and beloved Master. But they had then no time to express their joy and astonishment to their benevolent Redeemer; for he immediately vanished out of their sight.

As soon as they found their Master was departed, they said one to another, How slow and stupid were we before, not to know him upon the road, while he explained to us the Scriptures; when, besides the affability of his discourse, and the strength and clearness of his arguments, we perceived such an authority in what he said, and such a powerful efficacy attending his words, even striking our hearts with affection, that we could not but have known it, if we had not been remarkably stupid, to have been the very same that used to accompany his teaching, and was peculiar to it. This surprising event would not admit them to stay any longer in Emmaus. They returned that very night to Jerusalem, and found the apostles, with several other disciples, discoursing about the resurrection of their Master; and on their entering the room, the disciples accosted them, saying, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon."

They had given little credit to the reports of the women, supposing they were occasioned more by imagination than reality. But when a person of Peter's capacity and gravity declared he had seen the Lord, they began to think that he was really risen from the dead. And their belief was greatly confirmed by the arrival of the two disciples from Emmaus, who declared to their brethren how Jesus appeared to them on the road, and how they discovered him to be their Master by the circumstances before related. While the disciples from Emmaus were thus describing the manner of the appearance of Jesus to them, and offering arguments to convince those who doubted the truth of it, their great Master himself put an end to

the debate, by standing in the midst of them, and saying, "Peace be unto you."

This appearance of our blessed Saviour greatly terrified the disciples, who supposed they had seen a spirit; for having secured the doors of the house where they were assembled for fear of the Jews, and Jesus having opened the locks by his miraculous power, without the knowledge of any in the house, it was natural for them to think that a spirit only could enter. The circumstance, therefore, of the doors being shut, is very happily mentioned by St. John; because it suggests a reason why the disciples took their Master for a spirit, notwithstanding many of them were convinced that he was really risen from the dead, and were at that moment conversing about his resurrection. But to dispel their fears and doubts, Jesus came forward, and spoke to them in the most endearing manner, showed them his hands and his feet, and desired them to handle him, in order to convince themselves by the united powers of their different senses, that it was he himself, and no spectre or apparition. "Why are ye troubled," said the benevolent Redeemer of mankind, "and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." These infallible proofs sufficiently convinced the disciples of the truth of their Lord's resurrection, and they received him with rapture and exultation. But their joy and wonder had so great an effect upon their minds, that some of them, sensible of the great commotion they were in, suspended their belief till they had considered the matter more calmly. Jesus, therefore, knowing their thoughts, called for meat, and ate with them, in order to prove more fully the truth of his resurrection from the dead, and the reality of his presence with them on this occasion.

After giving this farther ocular demonstration of his having vanquished the power of death, and opened the tremendous portals of the grave, he again repeated his salutation; "Peace be unto you." Adding, "The same commission that my Father hath given unto me, I give unto you; go ye therefore into every part of the world, and preach the Gospel to all the children of men." Then breathing on them, he said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost, to direct and assist you in the execution of your commission. Whosoever embraces your doctrine, sincerely repents, and believes on me, ye shall declare unto him the free forgiveness of his sins, and your declaration shall be ratified and confirmed in the courts of heaven. And whosoever either obstinately rejects your doctrine, disobeys it, or behaves him-

self unworthily after he has embraced it, his sins shall not be forgiven him; but the censure ye shall pass upon him on earth, shall be confirmed in heaven.

Thomas, otherwise called Didymus, was absent at the meeting of the apostles; nor did this happen without the special direction of Providence, that the particular and extraordinary satisfaction which was afterwards granted him, might be an abundant and undeniable testimony of the truth of our blessed Saviour's resurrection to all succeeding generations. The rest of the apostles therefore told him that they had seen the Lord, and repeated to him the words he had delivered in their hearing. But Thomas replied, "This event is of such great importance, that unless, to prevent all possibility of deception, I see him with mine own eyes, and feel him with mine own hands, putting my fingers into the print of the nails whereby he was fastened to the cross, and thrust my hand into his side which the soldiers pierced with the spear; I will not believe that he is really and truly risen from the dead."

Thus have we enumerated, in the most explicit manner, the transactions of that day on which the great Redeemer of mankind arose from the dead; a day highly to be remembered by the children of men throughout all generations. A day, in which were fully completed and displayed the conceptions lodged in the breasts of infinite wisdom! even those thoughts of love and mercy on which the salvation of the world depended. Christians have therefore the highest reason to solemnize this day with gladness each returning week, by ceasing from their labor, and giving up themselves to prayer, hearing and reading the word of God, pious meditations, and other exercises of religion. The redemption of mankind, which they weekly commemorate, affords matter for eternal praise; it is a subject impossible to be equaled, and whose lustre neither length of time, nor frequent reviewing, can either tarnish or diminish. It resembles the sun, which we behold always the same glorious and luminous object; for the benefit we celebrate is, after so many ages, as fresh and beautiful as ever, and will always continue the same, flourishing in the memories of pious people through the endless revolutions of eternity. Redemption is the brightest mirror by which we contemplate the goodness of the Almighty. Other gifts are only mites from the divine treasury; but redemption opens, I had almost said exhausts, all the stores of his grace. May it be constantly the favorite subject of our meditations, more delightful to our musing minds than applause to the ambitious ear! May it be the darling

theme of our discourse; sweeter to our tongues than the dropping of the honeycomb to the taste! May it be our choicest comfort through all the changes of this mortal life; and the reviving cordial even in the last extremities of dissolution itself!

Eight days after the resurrection of our great Redeemer, the blessed Jesus showed himself again to his disciples while Thomas was with them, and upbraided that disciple for his unbelief; but knowing that it did not, like that of the Pharisees, proceed from a wicked mind, but from an honest heart, and a sincere desire of being satisfied of the truth, he thus addressed himself to his doubting disciple: "Thomas," said he, "since thou wilt not be contented to rely on the testimony of others, but must be convinced by the experience of thy own senses, behold the wounds in my hands, and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and doubt no longer of the reality of my resurrection." Thomas was immediately induced to believe by the invitation of his dear Master, and being fully satisfied, he cried out, "I am abundantly convinced; thou art indeed my Lord, the very same that was crucified; and I acknowledge thine almighty power in having triumphed over death, and worship thee as my God." To which the blessed Jesus replied, "Because thou hast seen me, Thomas, thou hast believed that I am really risen from the dead. But blessed are they who, without such evidence of the senses, shall, upon credible testimony, be willing to believe and embrace a doctrine which tends so greatly to the glory of God, and the salvation of the sons of men."

St. John adds, that the blessed Jesus appeared on several other occasions to his disciples after his resurrection; and by many clear and infallible proofs, not mentioned by the evangelist, fully convinced them that he was alive after his passion. But those which are mentioned are abundantly sufficient to excite men to believe that Jesus was the Son of God, the great Messiah so often foretold by the ancient prophets; and by means of that belief they may attain everlasting life in the happy regions of the heavenly Canaan.

Our blessed Saviour having, first by the angels and afterwards in person, ordered his disciples to repair to their respective habitations in Galilee, it is reasonable to think they would leave Jerusalem as soon as possible. This they accordingly did, and on their arrival at their respective places of abode, applied themselves to their usual occupations; and the apostles returned to their old trade of fishing on the lake of Tiberias. Here they were toiling with their nets very early in the morning, and saw Jesus standing on the shore, but did not then know

him to be their Master, as it was somewhat dark, and they were at a considerable distance from him. He, however, called to them, and asked if they had taken any fish? To which they answered, they had caught nothing. He then desired them to let down their net on the right side of the boat, and they should not be disappointed. The disciples, imagining that he might be acquainted with the places proper for fishing, did as he directed them, and inclosed in their net such a prodigious multitude of fishes, that they were not able to draw it into the boat, but were forced to drag it after them in the water towards the shore.

It seems they had toiled all the preceding night to no purpose; and therefore such remarkable success, could not fail of causing various conjectures among them with regard to the stranger on the shore who had given them such happy advice. Some of the apostles declared they could not imagine who he was; but others were persuaded that this person was no other than their great and beloved Master. John was fully convinced of his being the Lord, and accordingly told his thoughts to Simon Peter, who, making no doubt of it, girded on his fisher's coat, and leaped into the sea, in order to get ashore sooner than the boat could be brought to land, dragging after it a net full of large fishes.

When the disciples came ashore, they found a fire kindled, and on it a fish broiling, and near it some bread. But neither being sufficient for the company, Jesus bade them bring some of the fish they had now caught, and invited them to eat with him. Thus did the blessed Jesus prove again to his disciples the reality of his resurrection, not only by eating with them, but by working a miracle like that which, at the beginning of his ministry, had made such an impression upon them as disposed them to be his constant followers. This was the third time that Jesus appeared publicly to a great number of his disciples in a body, besides showing himself at several times to particular persons upon several occasions.

When they had eaten, Jesus reminded Peter how diligent and zealous he ought to be, in order to wipe off the stain of his denying him when he was carried before the high priest: "Simon, son of Jonas," said our blessed Saviour to him, "art thou more zealous and affectionate in thy love towards me than the rest of my disciples?" To which Peter answered, "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." He was taught modesty and diffidence by his late fall; and therefore would not compare himself with others, but humbly appealed to his Master's omniscience for the sincerity of his regard to

him. Jesus answered, "Express then thy love towards me, by the care of my flock committed to thy charge. Feed my lambs; feed my sheep. Show thy love to me by publishing the great salvation I have accomplished; and feeding the souls of faithful believers with that food which never perishes, but endures forever and ever. I well know indeed," continued the blessed Jesus, "that thou wilt continue my faithful shepherd even until death. For the time will come, when thou who now girdest on thy fisher's coat voluntarily, and stretchest out thy hands to come to me, shalt in thine old age be girt by others, and forced to stretch out thy hands against thy will, in a very different manner, for the sake of thy constant profession of my religion."

By these last words Jesus signified the manner of Peters's death, and that he should finally suffer martyrdom, for the glory of God and testimony of the truth of Christianity.

The time being now come when the disciples were to meet their great Lord and Master, according to the messages he had sent them by the women, and in all probability appointed at some former appearance not mentioned by the evangelists, the brethren set out for the mountain in Galilee, perhaps that on which he was transfigured. Here five hundred of them were gathered together, expecting the joyful sight of their great Master, after he had triumphed over death and the grave; some of them not having yet seen him after his resurrection.

They did not wait long before Jesus appeared, on which they were seized with rapture, their hearts overflowed with gladness, they approached their kind, their benevolent Master, and worshiped him. Some few indeed doubted; it being natural for men to be afraid to believe what they vehemently wished, lest they should indulge themselves in false joys which vanish like a morning cloud. But Jesus afterwards appeared frequently to them, and gave them full satisfaction, and instructed them in many things relating to their preaching the Gospel, establishing the church, and spreading it through the whole earth.

CHAPTER XLIV.

OUR LORD'S ASCENSION—THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS VINDICATED AGAINST THE OBJECTIONS OF UNBELIEVERS—COMPARISON BETWEEN MOSES AND CHRIST—GENERAL REVIEW OF THE LIFE AND DOCTRINES OF THE GREAT REDEEMER.



FEW days before the feast of Pentecost, or the "feast of weeks," the disciples went up to Jerusalem, where the blessed Jesus made his last appearance to them; and after instructing them in many particulars concerning the kingdom of God, and the manner they were to behave themselves in propagating the doctrine of the Gospel; he put them in mind that, during his abode with them

in Galilee, he had often told them that all things written in the law, the prophets, and the psalms, concerning him, were to be exactly accomplished. At the same time "he opened their understandings" by divine illumination, he removed their prejudices by the operation of his Spirit, cleared their doubts, improved their memories, strengthened their judgments, and enabled them to discern the true meaning of the Scriptures.

Having thus qualified them for receiving the truth, he again assured them, that both Moses and the prophets had foretold that the Messiah was to suffer in the very manner he had suffered; that he was to rise from the dead on the third day as he had done; and that repentance and remission of sins were to be preached in the Messiah's name among all nations, beginning with the Jews in Jerusalem.

He next delivered unto them their commission to preach the doctrine of repentance and remission of sins, in his name, among all nations, and to testify unto the world the exact accomplishment in him of all things foretold concerning the Messiah; and to enable them to perform this important work, promised to bestow on them the gift of the Holy Spirit, which he called the promise of his Father, because the Almighty had promised him by his prophets.

Having thus strengthened them for the important work they were

going to undertake, he led them on to the Mount of Olives, as far as Bethany; where, standing on a hill above the town, he told them that he was going to ascend to his Father; for which reason they might go courageously through all the world, and preach the Gospel to every rational creature; that they who believed should be admitted into his church by the rite of baptism, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and be taught, in consequence of their baptism, to obey all the precepts he had enjoined them; that such baptized believers should receive the pardon of their sins, together with eternal life in the happy mansions of his Father's kingdom; but such as refused to embrace the doctrines of the Gospel, should be forever excluded those happy regions, and have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; that while they were employed in this work, he would be constantly with them to assist them by his Spirit, and protect them by his providence. Finally, that those who should, through their preaching, be induced to believe, should themselves work most astonishing miracles, by which the Gospel should be propagated with the greatest rapidity.

When the blessed Jesus had spoken these things, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. And in the action of blessing them, he was parted from them in the midst of the day, a shining cloud receiving him out of their sight; that is, this brilliant cloud encompassed him about, and carried him up to heaven; not suddenly, but at leisure, that they might behold him departing, and see the proof of his ascending into heaven as he had promised them. The cloud in which the blessed Jesus ascended was more bright and pure than the clearest lambent flame, being, as is supposed, no other than the shekinah, or glory of the Lord; the visible symbol of the divine presence, which had so often appeared to the patriarchs of old; which filled the temple at its dedication, and which, in its greatest splendor, could not be beheld with mortal eyes; for which reason it is called the light inaccessible. As he ascended, the flaming cloud that surrounded him marked his passage through the air, but gradually lost its magnitude in the eyes of those who stood below, till it at last vanished, together with their beloved Master, out of their sight.

Thus was the great Redeemer of mankind triumphantly carried into heaven, where he now sitteth at the right hand of God his Father, to whom be honor, glory, and power, forever and ever. Amen.

In this illustrious manner did the great Redeemer of mankind depart, after having finished the grand work which he left the bosom of his Father to execute; which angels with joy described was to happen, and which, through eternity to come, shall, at periods the most immensely distant from the time of its execution, be looked back upon with inexpressible delight by every inhabitant of heaven; for though the minute affairs of time may vanish altogether and be lost, when they are removed far back by the endless progression of duration, this object is such, that no distance, however great, can lessen. The kingdom of heaven is erected on the incarnation and sufferings of the Son of God, the kingdom and city of the Almighty, comprehending all the people of God in the universe, made happy by goodness and love, and therefore none of them can ever forget the foundation on which their happiness stands established. The human beings in particular, recovered by the labor of the Son of God, will view their deliverer, and look back on his stupendous undertaking with the highest rapture, while they are feasting without interruption on its delicious fruits. The angels likewise, the celestial inhabitants of the city of God, will contemplate it with perpetual pleasure, as the happy means of recovering their kindred that were lost, and bringing them to a joint and proper subjection to Him who reigneth forever, and whose favor is better than life itself.

From this history it is abundantly evident that our blessed Saviour showed himself to his disciples and friends only, not to the Jews in general. This circumstance gave Spinosa a pretence for raising an objection, which his disciples have considered as the strongest argument against our Lord's resurrection. "If," say they, "he really rose from the dead, to have showed himself to his enemies as well as to his friends, would have put the truth of his resurrection beyond all doubt, than which nothing could be more necessary to the cause of Christianity; and, therefore, the supposition of his having confined his appearances after his resurrection to a few select friends only, renders the affair extremely suspicious and improbable."

But this argument, however plausible it may appear at first sight, is destitute of the least force; because it may be demonstrated, that if Jesus had showed himself to his enemies, and to all the people in general, these appearances, instead of putting the truth of his resurrection beyond all doubt, would have weakened the evidence of it, at least in after ages; and, consequently, have been of infinite prejudice to mankind; for upon the supposition that our blessed

Saviour had showed himself openly, one of these two things must necessarily have happened: Either his enemies, submitting to the evidence of their senses, would have believed his resurrection; or resisting that evidence, they would reject it altogether. I shall begin with considering the latter.

Those enemies of the great Redeemer of mankind, who resisted the evidence of their senses, or who, though really convinced, would not acknowledge their conviction, must have justified their disbelief, by affirming that the person who appeared to them, as risen from the dead, was not Jesus whom the Roman governor had crucified, but an impostor who personated him. On any other foundation their infidelity would have been ridiculous and absurd; but, if the believing Jews, by our Lord's appearing personally to them, would have been laid under a necessity of denying the reality of his resurrection, even though persuaded of it in their own minds, the evidence of fact could have gained nothing by such public appearances: because the generality of the Jews were not capable of passing a judgment upon the falsehood which Christ's enemies must have made use of to support their denial of his resurrection. Being unacquainted with Jesus, they could not certainly tell whether he was really the very person whom the Romans had crucified. His apostles, disciples, and acquaintance, who, by their long attendance on him, knew his stature, shape, air, voice, and manner, were the only proper persons by whose determination the point in dispute could be decided: consequently if our Lord had appeared to all the people, if any considerable number of his enemies had continued in their infidelity, the whole stress of the evidence of his resurrection must have rested on the evidence of the very persons, who, according to the plan arranged by Providence, bear witness to it now, and upon whose testimony the world has believed it. So that instead of gaining an additional evidence by the proposed method of showing Jesus publicly to all the people, we should have had nothing to trust to but the testimony of his disciples, and that clogged with this incumbrance, that his resurrection was denied by many to whom he appeared, and who were not convinced thereby.

But, in the second place, it may be supposed, that in case our blessed Saviour had showed himself publicly, the whole nation of the Jews must have believed; and that future generations would thus have had the fullest evidence of the truth of his resurrection. This, however, will not appear to be the case, if we consider, that the greatest part of our Lord's enemies having not given themselves

the trouble of attending him often, cannot be supposed to have been so well acquainted with his person, as to know him with certainty. For which reason, though he had showed himself to them, even their belief of his resurrection must in a great measure have depended on the testimony of his disciples and friends. If so, it is not very probable that his appearing publicly would have had any great effect on the Jews, to persuade them to embrace a crucified Messiah. It is far more reasonable to believe, that they would have rejected the whole, and continued in their infidelity.

But to give the argument all the force Deists can desire, let us suppose, that, in consequence of our blessed Saviour's appearing to all the people of the Jews, the nation in general would have been convinced of the truth of his resurrection, and become his disciples; what advantage would the cause of Christianity have reaped from such effects of our Lord's public appearance? Would the evidence of his resurrection have become thereby the more unquestionable? Or would modern infidels have been the better disposed to believe in this crucified Jesus? By no means. For we do not find that men of this class are at all the more ready to believe the miracles of Moses in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the Wilderness, because the whole nation were witnesses of them. The truth is, had our blessed Redeemer persuaded all the people of the Jews, by appearing personally to them, the objections against his resurrection would have been ten times more numerous and forcible than they are at present; for would not the whole have been called a stale trick, a Jewish fable, a mere political contrivance, to patch up their broken credit, after they had so long talked of a Messiah, who was to come at that time? Besides, we should certainly have been told, that the government being engaged in the plot, a fraud of this kind might have easily been carried on, especially as the people in general would eagerly fall in with it; because it was so exactly adapted to their prejudices, and because the few who had sagacity enough to detect the fraud, could have no opportunity of examining into it. Or, if they did examine and detect the fraud, would not have dared to make any discovery of it, in opposition to the whole weight of the state: so that they would let it pass quietly, without once calling it in question.

To say the truth, the resurrection of our great Redeemer, universally believed among the Jews, and published to the world by the unanimous voice of the nation, would have been liable to an infinite number of objections, which are all effectually cut off by the scheme

made choice of by the wisdom of Providence: for as the people in general, and the rulers in particular, continued in their infidelity, the persons concerned in this supposed fraud, must have carried it on under the greatest disadvantages.

The reason is, that instead of making many friends to assist them, which a fraud of this kind requires, all men were their enemies, and interested to discover the cheat. The Jewish rulers, in particular, gave all possible encouragement to make the strictest scrutiny into the fact, and into all its circumstances; and many, doubtless, zealously made the inquiry with the utmost exactness. The apostles who preached the resurrection exposed themselves to the fiercest resentment of the men in power; because the resurrection of our great Redeemer cast the greatest reflection upon those who had put him to death. It should also be remembered, that if the generality of the nation had not continued in their unbelief, the apostles, who preached the resurrection, would not have suffered these persecutions which in every country were raised against them, chiefly by the Jews; and consequently one of the strongest arguments for the truth of their testimony, would have been wanting: whereas by their having been persecuted to death for their preaching the resurrection of their great Master, they fully demonstrated how sincerely they believed the great fact which they preached in continual jeopardy of their lives.

Thus have we followed our dear Redeemer through all the transactions of his life, and enlarged on the stupendous miracle of his resurrection, on which glorious event the whole Christian doctrine is founded.

As the similarity between Christ and the lawgiver Moses, whom the divine Redeemer mentioned to his disciples but a short time before his ascension into heaven, is so very remarkable, we shall, as an illustration of the glorious subject, point out a few instances, which will evince that the prophecies of old were only to be completed in the sufferings and death of Christ. Moses was the most distinguished of all the prophets, and his greatest prophecy was, that of another prophet to be raised up like unto himself. He was, at the time of this prediction, about to leave his people; and therefore to give them some comfort, he promised them another prophet. "The Lord thy God," said he, "will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken." Deut. xviii. 15. That this person, of whom Moses prophesied, was the great Redeemer of mankind, is amply

evident; and that Moses resembled Christ in a much greater degree than any other person ever did, will appear from the following circumstances. Both Moses and Christ showed "signs" and "wonders;" and in these respects none of the ancient prophets were like unto Moses. None of them were lawgivers; they only interpreted and enforced the laws of Moses. None of them had such clear communication with God: they all saw "visions, and dreamed dreams." Moses and Christ are the only two who so perfectly resembled each other in these respects. Moses fled from his country to escape the hands of the king of Egypt: so did Christ, when his parents went into Egypt. Afterwards "the Lord said unto Moses in Midian, Go, return into Egypt; for all the men are dead which sought thy life." Exod. iv. 19. So the angel of the Lord said to Joseph, in nearly the same words, "Arise, and take the young child, and go into the land of Israel; for they are dead which sought the young child's life." Mat. ii. 20. Pointing him out, as it were, for that Prophet who should arise like unto Moses. Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction: Christ refused to be made king, choosing rather to suffer the like. Moses, says Stephen, "was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians;" and Josephus says, that he was a very forward and accomplished youth, and had wisdom and knowledge above his years: St. Luke observes of Christ, that "he increased" betimes "in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man;" and his discourses in the temple with the doctors, when he was but twelve years old, were a proof of it. Moses was not only a lawgiver, a prophet, and a worker of miracles, but a king and a priest: in all these offices the likeness between Moses and Christ was singular. Moses brought darkness over the land; the sun withdrew his light at Christ's crucifixion: and as the darkness which spread over Egypt was followed by the destruction of their first-born, and of Pharaoh and his host; so the darkness at Christ's death was the forerunner of the destruction of the Jews. Moses foretold the calamities which would befall the nation for their disobedience: so did Christ. The spirit which was in Moses was conferred in some degree upon the seventy elders, and they prophesied: Christ conferred miraculous powers on his seventy disciples. Moses was victorious over powerful kings and great nations: so was Christ, by the effects of his religion, and by the fall of those who persecuted his church. Moses conquered Amalek by holding up both his hands: Christ overcame his and our enemies when his hands were fastened

to the cross. Moses interceded for transgressors, and caused an atonement to be made for them, and stopped the wrath of God: so did Christ. Moses ratified a covenant between God and the people, by sprinkling them with blood: Christ with his own blood. Moses desired to die for the people, and prayed that God would forgive them, or blot him out of his book: Christ did more; he died for sinners. Moses instituted the passover, when a lamb was sacrificed, none of whose bones were to be broken, and whose blood protected the people from destruction: Christ was the paschal Lamb. Moses lifted up the serpent, that they who looked upon it might be healed of their mortal wounds: by proper looking up to Christ, all such will be healed. All the affection of Moses towards the people, all his cares and toils on their account, were repaid by them with ingratitude, murmuring, and rebellion: the same returns the Jews made to Christ for all his benefits. Moses was ill-used by his own family; his brother and sister rebelled against him: there was a time when Christ's own brethren believed not on him, and his disciples forsook him. Moses had a very wicked and perverse generation committed to his care and conduct; and to enable him to rule them, miraculous powers were given to him, and he used his utmost endeavors to make the people obedient to God, and to save them from ruin, but in vain; in the space of forty-two years they all fell in the wilderness, except two: Christ also was given to a generation not less wicked and perverse, his instructions and his miracles were lost upon most of them, and in about the same space of time, after they had rejected him, they were destroyed. Moses was very meek, above all the men that were on the earth: so was Christ. The people could not enter into the land of promise until Moses was dead: by the death of Christ the kingdom of heaven was opened to believers. Moses enlightened the Jews under the dispensation of the old law: Christ enlightened the Christians under the Gospel. Moses did great wonders in the land of Egypt: Christ did great miracles in Judea. In the deaths of Moses and Christ there is also a resemblance in some circumstances: Moses died, in some sense, for the iniquities of the people; it was their rebellion which was the occasion of it, which drew down the displeasure of God upon them and upon him. Moses went up in the sight of the people to the top of Mount Nebo, and there he died, when he was in perfect vigor, when "his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated:" Christ suffered for the sins of men, and was led up in the presence of the people to Mount Calvary, where he died in the flower of his

age, and when he was in his full natural strength. Neither Moses nor Christ, as far as we can collect from sacred history, were ever sick, or felt any bodily decay or infirmity, which would have rendered them unfit for the toils they underwent; their sufferings were of another kind.

Lastly, as Moses, a little before his death, promised "another prophet;" so Christ, before his death, promised "another Comforter." Moses, says Ambrose, was the figure of that Preceptor that was to come; who should preach the Gospel, fulfill the Old Testament, build the New, and feed the people with celestial aliment.

Such are the comparisons relative to the great resemblance between Moses and Christ; but the greatest similitude consists in their both being "lawgivers," which no other prophet ever was. They may resemble each other in many other circumstances, and a fruitful imagination may strike upon further resemblances: but what we have been mentioning may suffice. And we may ask, Is this similitude between Moses and Christ the effect of mere chance? Let us search all the records of universal history, and see if we can find a man who was so like to Christ as Moses was. If we cannot find such an one, then have we "found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God."

We shall conclude this chapter, with a few observations on the general conduct of our blessed Redeemer during his abode with men on earth.

The human character of the blessed Jesus, as it results from the account given of him by the evangelists, for they have not formally drawn it up, is entirely different from that of all other men whatsoever; for whereas they have selfish passions deeply rooted in their breasts, and are influenced by them in almost every thing they do, Jesus was so entirely free from them, that the most severe scrutiny cannot furnish one single action, in the whole course of his life, wherein he consulted his own interest only. No; he was influenced by very different motives: the present happiness and eternal welfare of sinners regulated his conduct; and while others followed their respective occupations, Jesus had no other business than that of doing the will of his Father, and promoting the happiness of the sons of men. Nor did he wait till he was solicited to extend his benevolent hand to the distressed: "he went about doing good," and always accounted it "more blessed to give than to receive;" resembling God rather than man. Benevolence was the very life of his soul: he

not only did good to objects presented to him for relief, but he industriously sought them out, in order to extend his compassionate assistance.

It is common for persons of the most exalted faculties to be elated with success and applause, or dejected by censure and disappointments; but the blessed Jesus was never elated by the one, or depressed by the other. He was never more courageous than when he met with the greatest opposition and cruel treatment; nor more humble than when the sons of men worshiped at his feet.

He came into the world inspired with the grandest purpose that ever was formed, that of saving from eternal perdition, not a single nation, but the whole world; and in the execution of it, went through the longest and heaviest train of labors that ever was sustained, with a constancy and resolution on which no disadvantageous impression could be made by any accident whatever. Calumny, threatenings, bad success, with many other evils constantly attending him, served only to quicken his endeavors in this glorious enterprise, which he unceasingly pursued, even till he had finished it by his death.

The generality of mankind are prone to retaliate injuries received, and all seem to take a satisfaction in complaining of the cruelties of those who oppress them; whereas the whole of Christ's labors breathed nothing but meekness, patience, and forgiveness, even to his bitterest enemies, and in the midst of the most excruciating torments. The words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," uttered by him when his enemies were nailing him to the cross, fitly express the temper which he maintained through the whole course of his life, even when assaulted by the heaviest provocations. He was destined to sufferings here below, in order that he might raise his people to honor, glory, and immortality, in the realms of bliss above; and therefore patiently, yea, joyfully, submitted to all that the malice of earth and hell could inflict. He was vilified that we might be honored; he died, that we might live forever and ever.

To conclude: The greatest and best men have discovered the degeneracy and corruption of human nature, and shown them to have been nothing more than men; but it was otherwise with Jesus. He was superior to all the men that ever lived, both with regard to the purity of his manners, and the perfection of his holiness. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.

Whether we consider him as a teacher or as a man, "he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." His whole life was perfectly free from spot or weakness; at the same time it was remark-

able for the greatest and most extensive exercises of purity and goodness. But never to have committed the least sin in word or deed, never to have uttered any sentiment that could be censured, upon the various topics of religion and morality which were the daily subjects of his discourses, and that through the course of a life filled with action, and led under the observation of many enemies, who had always access to converse with him, and who often came to find fault—is a pitch of perfection evidently above the reach of human nature; and consequently he who possessed it must have been “divine.”

Such was the Person who is the subject of the evangelical history. If the reader, by reviewing his life, doctrine, and miracles, as they are here represented to him united into one series, has a clearer idea of these things than before, or observes a beauty in his actions thus linked together, which taken separately do not appear so fully; if he feels himself touched by the character of Jesus in general, or with any of his sermons and actions in particular, thus simply delineated in writing, whose principal charms are the beauties of truth; above all, if his dying so generously for men strikes him with admiration, or fills him with hope, in the prospect of that pardon which is thereby purchased for the world,—let him seriously consider with himself, what improvement he ought to make of the divine goodness.

Jesus, by his death, hath set open the gate of immortality to the sons of men; and by his word, spirit, and example, graciously offers to make them meet for the glorious rewards in the kingdom of the heavenly Canaan, and to conduct them into the inheritance of the saints in light. Let us therefore remember, that being born under the dispensation of his Gospel, we have from our earliest years enjoyed the best means of securing to ourselves an interest in that favor of God, which is life, and that loving-kindness, which is better than life.

We have been called to aspire after an exaltation to the nature and felicity of the Almighty, exhibited to mortal eyes in the man Christ Jesus, to fire us with the noblest ambition. His Gospel teaches us that we are made for eternity; and that our present life is, to our future existence, as infancy is to manhood. But as in the former many things are to be learned, many hardships to be endured, many habits to be acquired, and that by a course of exercises which in themselves, though painful, and possibly useless to the child, yet are necessary to fit him for the business and enjoyments of manhood; so, while we remain in this infancy of human life, things are to be learned, hardships to be endured, and habits to be

acquired by a laborious discipline, which, however painful, must be undergone, because necessary to fit us for the employments and pleasures of our riper existence in the realms above; always remembering, that whatever our trials may be in this world, if we ask for God's assistance, he has promised to give it. Inflamed therefore with the love of immortality and its joys, let us submit ourselves to our heavenly Teacher, and learn of him those lessons which alone can render life pleasant, death desirable, and fill eternity with ecstatic joys.

CHAPTER XLV.

REMARKS ON THE PECULIAR NATURE OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION, THE PRINCIPLES IT INCULCATES, AND ITS FITNESS TO RENDER MEN HOLY AND HUMBLE HERE, AND GLORIFIED HEREAFTER.



DELIGHTFUL is this scene in the life of our dear Lord and Saviour, and we cannot close it more comfortably, than by considering the benefits resulting from a due attendance to his doctrines by all who shall, by faith, receive and embrace the same. Probably none have been greater enemies to the progress of religion, than those who delineate it in a gloomy and terrifying form; nor any guilty of a more injurious calumny against the Gospel, than those who represent its precepts as rigorous impositions and unnecessary restraints.

True religion is the perfection of human nature, and the foundation of uniform exalted pleasure, of public order, and private happiness. Christianity is the most excellent and the most useful institution, having the “promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” It is the voice of reason, it is also the language of Scripture: “The ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace;” and our blessed Saviour himself assures us, that his precepts are easy, and the burden of his religion light.

The Christian religion is a rational service, a worship “in spirit and in truth;” a worship worthy of the majesty of the Almighty to receive, and of the nature of man to pay. It comprehends all we ought to believe, and all we ought to practice; its positive rites are but few, of plain and easy significancy, and manifestly adapted to establish a sense of our obligation to God. The Gospel places religion, not in abstruse speculation and metaphysical subtleties; not in outward show and tedious ceremony; not in superstitious austerities and enthusiastic visions; but in purity of heart and holiness of life. The sum of our duty, according to our great Master himself, consists in the “love of God and of our neighbor;” according to St. Paul, in denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and in living

soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world; according to St. James, in visiting the fatherless and widow in affliction, and in keeping ourselves unspotted from the world. This is the constant strain and tenor of the Gospel. This it inculcates most earnestly, and on this it lays the greatest stress.

But is the Christian system only a republication of the law of nature, or merely a refined system of morality? No, certainly; it is a great deal more: it is an act of grace; a stupendous plan of Providence; designed for the recovery of mankind from a state of degradation and ruin, to the favor of the Almighty, and to the hopes of a happy immortality through a Mediator.

Under this dispensation, true religion consists in "repentance towards God," and in "faith in the Lord Jesus Christ," as the person appointed by the supreme authority of heaven and earth to reconcile apostate man to his offended Creator; as a SACRIFICE FOR SIN; our vital Head and governing Lord. This is religion, as we are Christians. And what hardships, what exaction, is there in all this? Surely none. Nay, the practice of religion is much easier than the servitude of sin.

Our rational powers, all will readily agree, are dreadfully impaired, and the soul weakened by sin. The animal passions are strong and corrupt, and oppose the dictates of the Spirit of God: objects of sense make powerful impressions on the mind. We are in every situation surrounded with many snares and temptations. In such a disordered state of things, we cannot please God till created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works. We must be born again; born from above.

The God of all grace has planted in the human breast a quick sense of good and evil; a faculty which strongly dictates right and wrong: and though by the strength of appetite and warmth of passion men are often hurried into immoral practices, yet, in the beginning, especially when there has been the advantage of a good education, it is usually with reluctance and opposition of mind. What inward struggles precede! what bitter pangs attend their sinful excesses! what guilty blushes and uneasy fears! what frightful prospects and pale reviews! "Terrors are upon them, and a fire not blown consumeth them." To make a mock at sin, and to commit iniquity without remorse, is, in some instances, an attainment that requires length of time and much painful labor; more labor than is requisite to attain that salvation which is the glory of the man, the ornament of the Christian, and the chief of his happiness.

The soul can no more be reconciled to acts of wickedness and injustice, than the body to excess, but by suffering many bitter pains and cruel attacks.

The mouth of conscience may indeed be stopped for a while by false principles; its secret whispers may be drowned by the noise of company, and stifled by the entertainments of sense; but this principle of conscience is so deeply rooted in human nature, and at the same time her voice is so clear and strong, that the sinner's arts will be unable to lull her into a lasting security. When the hour of calamity arrives, when sickness seizes and death approaches the sinner, conscience then constrains him to listen to her accusations, and will not suffer the temples of his head to take any rest. "There is no peace to the wicked;" the foundations of peace are subverted; they are at utter enmity with their reason, with their conscience, and with their God.

Not so in the case of true religion. For when religion, pure and genuine, forms the temper and governs the life, conscience applauds, and peace takes her residence in the breast. The soul is in its proper state. There is order and regularity both in the faculties and actions. Conscious of its own integrity, and secure of the divine approbation, the soul enjoys a calmness not to be described. But why do I call this happy frame calmness only? It is far more than mere calmness. The air may be calm, and the day overcast with thick mists and dark clouds. The pious and virtuous mind resembles a serene day, enlightened and enlivened with the brightest rays of the sun. Though all without may be clouds and darkness, there is light in the heart of a devout man. He is satisfied with favor, and "filled with peace and joy in believing." In the concluding scene, the awful moment of dissolution, all is peaceful and serene. The immortal part quits its tenement of clay with the well-grounded hope of ascending to happiness and glory.

Nor does the Gospel enjoin any duty but what is fit and reasonable. It calls upon all its professors to practice reverence, submission, love and gratitude to God; justice, truth, and universal benevolence to men; and to maintain the government of our minds. And what has any one to object against this? From the least to the greatest commandment of our dear Redeemer, there is not one which impartial reason can find fault with. His law is perfect; his precepts are true and righteous altogether. Not even those excepted which require us to love our enemies, to deny ourselves, and to take up our cross. To forgive an injury is more generous and manly than to revenge

it; to control a licentious appetite than to indulge it; to suffer poverty, reproach, and even death itself, in the sacred cause of truth and integrity, is much wiser and better than by base compliances to make "shipwreck of faith and a good conscience." Thus, in a storm at sea, or a conflagration on the land, a man with pleasure abandons his lumber to secure his jewels. Piety and virtue are the wisest and most reasonable things in the world: vice and wickedness the most irrational and absurd.

The all-wise Author of our being hath so framed our natures, and placed us in such relations, that there is nothing vicious but what is injurious; nothing virtuous, but what is advantageous to our present interest, both with respect to body and mind. Meekness and humility, patience and universal charity and grace, give a joy unknown to transgressors.

The divine virtues of truth and equity are the only bands of friendship, the only supports of society. Temperance and sobriety are the best preservatives of health and strength; but sin and debauchery impair the body, consume the substance, reduce to poverty, and form the direct path to an immediate and untimely death. Now this is the chief excellency of all laws, and what will always render their burden pleasant and delightful, is, that they enjoin nothing unbecoming or injurious. Besides, to render our duty easy, we have the example as well as the commands of the blessed Jesus. The masters of morality among the heathen gave excellent rules for the regulation of men's manners; but they wanted either the honesty or the courage to try their own arguments upon themselves. It was a strong presumption that the yoke of the Scribes and Pharisees was grievous, when they "laid heavy burdens upon men's shoulders," which they themselves refused to touch with one of their fingers. Not thus our great lawgiver, Jesus Christ, the righteous. His behavior was in all respects conformable to his doctrine. His devotion towards God, how sublime and ardent! Benevolence towards men, how great and diffusive! He was in his life an exact pattern of innocence, for he "did no sin; neither was guile found in his mouth." In the Son of God incarnate, is exhibited the brightest, the fairest resemblance of the Father that earth or heaven ever beheld, an example peculiarly persuasive, calculated to inspire resolution, and to animate us to use our utmost endeavors to imitate the divine pattern, the example of "the author and finisher of our faith, of him who loved us, and gave himself for us." Our profession and character as Christians, oblige us to make his example the model of our lives.

Every motive of propriety, gratitude, and interest, constrain us to tread the paths he trod before us.

We should also remember that our burden is easy; because God, who "knoweth whereof we are made, who considereth that we are but dust," is ever ready to assist us. The heathen sages themselves had some notion of this assistance, though guided only by the glimmering lamp of reason. But what they looked upon as probable, the Gospel clearly and strongly asserts. We there hear the apostle exhorting, "Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." We there hear the blessed Jesus himself arguing in this convincing manner: "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him!"

We would not here be understood to mean, that the agency of the Spirit is irresistible, and lays a necessitating bias on all the faculties and affections. Were this the case, precepts and prohibitions, promises and threatenings, would signify nothing, and duty and obligation would be words without a meaning. The Spirit assisteth in a manner agreeably to the frame of human nature; not controlling the free use of reason, but by assisting the understanding, influencing the will, and moderating the affections. But though we may not be able to explain the mode of his operations, the Scriptures warrant us to assert, that when men are renewed and prepared for heaven, it is "through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." How enlivening the thought! how encouraging the motive! We are not left to struggle alone with the difficulties which attend the practice of virtue in the present imperfect state. The merciful Father of our spirits is ever near to help our infirmities, to enlighten the understanding, to strengthen good resolutions, and, in concurrence with our own endeavors, to make us conquerors over all opposition. Faithful is he to his promises, and will not suffer the sincere and well-disposed to be tempted above what they are able to bear. What can be desired more than this? To promote the happiness of his people, every thing is done that is requisite; his grace is all-sufficient, his Spirit is able to conduct us through this vale of tears to never-fading bliss.

We should also remember, that the great doctrine of the Gospel concerning the propitious mercy of God to all penitents through Christ Jesus, greatly contributes to the consolation of Christians. Let it be granted that the hope of pardon is essential to the religion of fallen creatures, and one of its first principles; yet, considering

the doubts and suspicions which are apt to arise in a mind conscious of guilt, it is undoubtedly a great and inestimable favor to be relieved, in this respect, by a messenger from Omnipotence himself. This is our happiness. We are not left to depend upon consequential reasonings, which the bulk of mankind are little used to; but we are assured, that upon our true repentance we shall, through the mediation of Christ, receive the full remission of past sins, and be restored to the same state and favor with our Maker as if we had never transgressed his laws. Here the Gospel triumphs. With these assurances it abounds. Upon this head the declarations of our blessed Saviour and his apostles are so express and full, that every one who believes them, and knows himself to be a true penitent, must banish every doubt and fear, and rejoice with joy unspeakable. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Mat. xi. 28. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Mat. xii. 31. "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses." Acts xiii. 38, 39. The blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin! What grace and favor is this! Who can dwell upon the transporting theme too long? Now our way is plain before us, and the burden we are to bear is made easy. Our sins are pardonable, if repented of and forsaken.

Consider this, all ye who have never yet regarded religion, but pursued a course of vice and sensuality all your lives long. Though your conduct has been base to the last degree, your case is not desperate. Far from it. The God whom you have so highly offended commiserates your errors, is ever ready to extend his pardoning mercy to his most degenerate creatures, upon their faith and repentance, and is in Christ Jesus reconciling the world to himself, not imputing unto penitent sinners their trespasses. "Let the wicked therefore forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Is. lv. 7.

Another particular which renders the Christian religion delightful is, its leading to the perfect eternal life of heaven. It cannot be denied, but that we may draw from the light of nature strong presumptions of a future state. The present existence does not look like an entire scene, but rather like the infancy of human nature, which is capable of arriving at a much higher degree of maturity;

but whatever solid foundation the doctrine of a future state may have in nature and reason, certain it is, through the habitual neglect of reflection, and the force of irregular passions, this doctrine was, before the coming of our blessed Saviour, very much disfigured, and in a great measure lost among the sons of men.

In the heathen world a future state of rewards and punishments was a matter of mere speculation and uncertainty, sometimes hoped for, sometimes doubted of, and sometimes absolutely denied. The law of Moses, though of divine origin, is chiefly enforced by promises of temporal blessings: and even in the writings of the prophets a future immortality is very sparingly mentioned, and obscurely represented; but the doctrine of our Saviour hath "brought life and immortality to light." In the Gospel we have a distinct account of another world, attended with many engaging circumstances, about which the decisions of reason were dark and confused. We have the testimony of the Author of our religion, who was raised from the dead, and who afterwards, in the presence of his disciples, ascended into heaven. In the New Testament it is expressly declared, that good men, when absent from the body, are present with the Lord. Here we are assured of the resurrection of the body in a glorious form, clothed with immortal vigor suited to the active nature of the animating spirit, and assisting its most enlarged operations and incessant progress towards perfection. Here we are assured that "the righteous shall go into life everlasting;" that they shall enter into the kingdom of the heavenly Canaan, where no ignorance shall cloud the understanding, no vice disturb the will. In these regions of perfection nothing but love shall possess the soul; nothing but gratitude employ the tongue; there the righteous shall be united to an innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and church of the first-born; there they shall see their exalted Redeemer at the right hand of Omnipotence, and sit down with him on his throne; there they shall be admitted into the immediate presence of the supreme Fountain of life and happiness, and, beholding his face, be changed into the same image, from glory to glory. Here language: here imagination fails me! It requires the genius, the knowledge, and the pen of an angel, to paint the happiness, the blissful scene of the new Jerusalem, which human eyes cannot behold till this mortal body shall be purified from its corruption, and dressed in the robes of immortality; "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart

to conceive, the joys which God hath prepared for them that love him."

What is the heaven of the heathens compared with the heaven of the Christians? The hope, the prospect of this, is sufficient to reconcile us to all the difficulties that may attend our progress, sweeten all our labors, alleviate every grief, and silence every murmur.

But why, says the libertine in the gayety of his heart, should there be any difficulties or restraint at all? God hath made nothing in vain. The appetites he hath planted in the human breast are to be gratified. To deny or restrain them is ignominious bondage; but to give full scope to every desire and passion of the heart, without check or control, is truly manly freedom.

In opposition to this loose and careless way of reasoning, let it be considered that the liberty of a rational creature doth not consist in an entire exemption from all control, but in following the dictates of reason as the governing principle, and in keeping the various passions in due subordination. To follow the regular notion of those affections which the wise Creator hath implanted within us, is our duty; but as our natural desires in this state of trial are often irregular, we are bound to restrain their excesses, and not to indulge them, but in a strict subserviency to the integrity and peace of our minds, and to the order and happiness of human society established in the world. Those who allow the supreme command to be usurped by sensual and brutal appetites, may promise themselves liberty, but are truly and absolutely the servants of corruption. To be vicious, is to be enslaved. We behold with pity those miserable objects that are chained in the galleys, or confined in dark prisons and loathsome dungeons; but much more abject and vile is the slavery of the sinner! No slavery of the body is equal to the bondage of the mind: no chains press so closely, or gall so cruelly, as the fetters of sin, which corrode the very substance of the soul, and fret every faculty.

It must indeed be confessed, that there are some profligates so hardened by custom, as to be past all feeling; and because insensible of their bondage, boast of this insensibility as a mark of their native freedom, and of their happiness. Vain men! they might extol with equal propriety the peculiar happiness of an apoplexy, or the profound tranquillity of a lethargy.

Thus have we endeavored to place, in a plain and conspicuous light, some of the peculiar excellencies of the Christian religion; and from hence many useful reflections will naturally arise in the

mind of every attentive reader. It is the religion of Jesus that hath removed idolatry and superstition, and brought immortality to light, when concealed under the veil of darkness almost impenetrable. This hath set the great truths of religion in a clear and conspicuous point of view, and proposed new and powerful motives to influence our minds, and to determine our conduct. Nothing is enjoined to be believed but what is worthy of God; nothing to be practiced, but what is friendly to man. All the doctrines of the Gospel are rational and consistent; all its precepts are truly wise, just, and good. The Gospel contains nothing grievous to an ingenuous mind: it debars us from nothing but doing harm to ourselves or to our fellow-creatures, and permits us to range any where but in the paths of danger and destruction. It only requires us to act up to its excellent commands, and to prefer to the vanishing pleasure of sin the smiles of a reconciled God, and "an eternal weight of glory." And is this a rigorous exaction, a heavy burden not to be endured? How can sinful mortals harbor so unworthy a thought?

Surely no man, who is a real friend to the cause of virtue and to the interest of mankind, can ever be an enemy of Christianity if he truly understands it, and seriously reflects on its wise and useful tendency. It conducts us to our journey's end by the plainest and securest path; where the "steps are not straightened, and where he that runneth stumbleth not." Let us, who live under this last and most gracious dispensation of God to mankind, "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord;" and not suffer ourselves, by the slight cavils of unbelievers, to be "moved away from the hope of the Gospel." Let us demonstrate that we believe the superior excellency of the Christian dispensation, by conforming to its precepts. Let us show that we are Christians in deed and in truth; not by endless disputes about trifles, and in the transports of a blind zeal, but by abounding in those "fruits of righteousness, which are, through Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God."

From what has been said, we may clearly perceive how groundless all those prejudices are which some conceive against religion, as if it were a peevish, morose scheme, burdensome to human nature, and inconsistent with the true enjoyment of life. Such sentiments are too apt to prevail in the heat of youth, when the spirits are brisk and lively, and the passions warm and impetuous; but it is wholly a mistake, and a mistake of the most dangerous tendency. The truth is, there is no pleasure like that of a good conscience; no

real peace but what results from a sense of the divine favor. This ennobles the mind, and can alone support it under all the various and unequal scenes of the present state of trial. This lays a sure foundation of an easy, comfortable life, of a serene, peaceful death, and of eternal joy and happiness hereafter; whereas vice is ruinous to all our most valuable interests; spoils the native beauty, and subverts the order of the soul; renders us the scorn of man, the rejected of God, and, without timely repentance, will rob us of a happy eternity. Religion is the health, the liberty, and the happiness of the soul; sin is the disease, the servitude, and destruction of it.

If this be not sufficient to convince you, let me lead you into the chamber of an habitual rioter, the lewd debauchee worn out in the cause of iniquity, "his bones full of the sins of his youth," that from his own mouth, as he lies on his expiring bed, you may learn that "the way of transgressors is hard;" and that, however sweet sin may be in the commission, "it strikes like a serpent, and bites like an adder."

I am going, reader, to represent to you the last moments of a person of high birth and spirit; of great parts and strong passions; every way accomplished, but unhappily attached to those paths which lead to vice and destruction. His unkind treatment was the death of a most amiable wife; his monstrous extravagance, in effect, disinherited his only child. And surely the death-bed of a profligate is next in horror to that abyss to which it leads. It has the most of hell that is visible upon earth, and he that hath seen it has more than faith to confirm him in his creed. I see it now, says the worthy divine from whom I shall borrow this relation, for who can forget it? Are there in it no flames and furies? You are ignorant then of what a sacred imagination can figure! what a guilty heart can feel! How dismal it is! The two great enemies of soul and body, sickness and sin, sink and confound his friends; silence and darkness are the dismal scene. Sickness excludes the light of heaven and its blessed hope. Oh! double darkness, more than Egyptian! acutely to be felt!

The sad evening before the death of the noble youth, whose last hours suggested these thoughts, I was with him. No one else was there but his physician, and an intimate acquaintance whom he loved, and whom he had ruined. At my coming he said, "You and the physician are come too late. I have neither life nor hope. You both aim at miracles. You would raise the dead."—Heaven, I said,

was merciful.—“Or I could not,” answered he, “have been thus guilty. What has it not done to bless and to save me? I have been too strong for Omnipotence. I plucked down ruin.”—I said, The blessed Redeemer—“Hold, hold,” said he, “you wound me! This is the rock on which I have split. I denied his name.”

Refusing to hear any thing from me, or take any thing from the physician, he lay silent, as far as sudden darts of pain would permit, till the clock struck. Then he cried out with vehemence, “Oh time! time! It is fit thou shouldst strike thy murderer to the heart. How art thou fled forever! A month! Oh for a single week! I ask not for years, though an age were too little for the much I have to do.”

On my saying to him, We could not do too much; that heaven was a blessed place!

“So much the worse,” replied he, “’tis lost! ’tis lost! Heaven is to me the severest part of hell.”

Soon after I proposed prayer. To which he answered, “Pray you that can; I never prayed. I cannot pray. My conscience is too much wounded. I have deserted my benevolent Maker, and my soul is enveloped in the deepest horrors.” His friend being much troubled, even to tears, at this, (for who could forbear? I could not,) he, with a most affectionate look, said, “Keep those tears for thyself; I have undone thee. Dost thou weep for me? That’s cruel. What can pain me more?”

Here his friend, too much affected, would have left him.

“No,” said he, “stay. You still may hope; therefore hear me. How madly have I talked; how madly hast thou listened and believed! But look on my present state as a full answer to thee and to myself. This body is all weakness and pain; but my soul, as if stung up by torment to greater strength and spirit, is full powerful to reason—full mighty to suffer. And that which thus triumphs within the jaws of mortality, is doubtless immortal. And as for a Deity, nothing less than an Almighty could inflict the pains I feel.”

I was about to congratulate this passive involuntary confession, in his asserting the two prime articles of his creed, extorted by the rack of nature; when he thus very passionately added, “No, no! let me speak on. I have not long to speak. My much injured friend! my soul, as my body, lies in ruins; in scattered fragments of broken thought; remorse for the past throws my thoughts on the future. Worse dread of the future strikes it back on the past. I turn, and turn, and find no ray. Didst thou feel half the mountain that is on

me, thou wouldst struggle with the martyr for his stake, and bless heaven for the flame—that is not an everlasting flame; that is not an unquenchable fire!”

How were we struck! yet, soon after still more. With what an eye of distraction, what a face of despair, he cried out, “My principles have poisoned my friend: my extravagance beggared my boy; my unkindness murdered my wife!—And is there another hell? Oh, thou blasphemed, yet most indulgent Lord God! Hell itself is a refuge if it hides me from thy frown.”

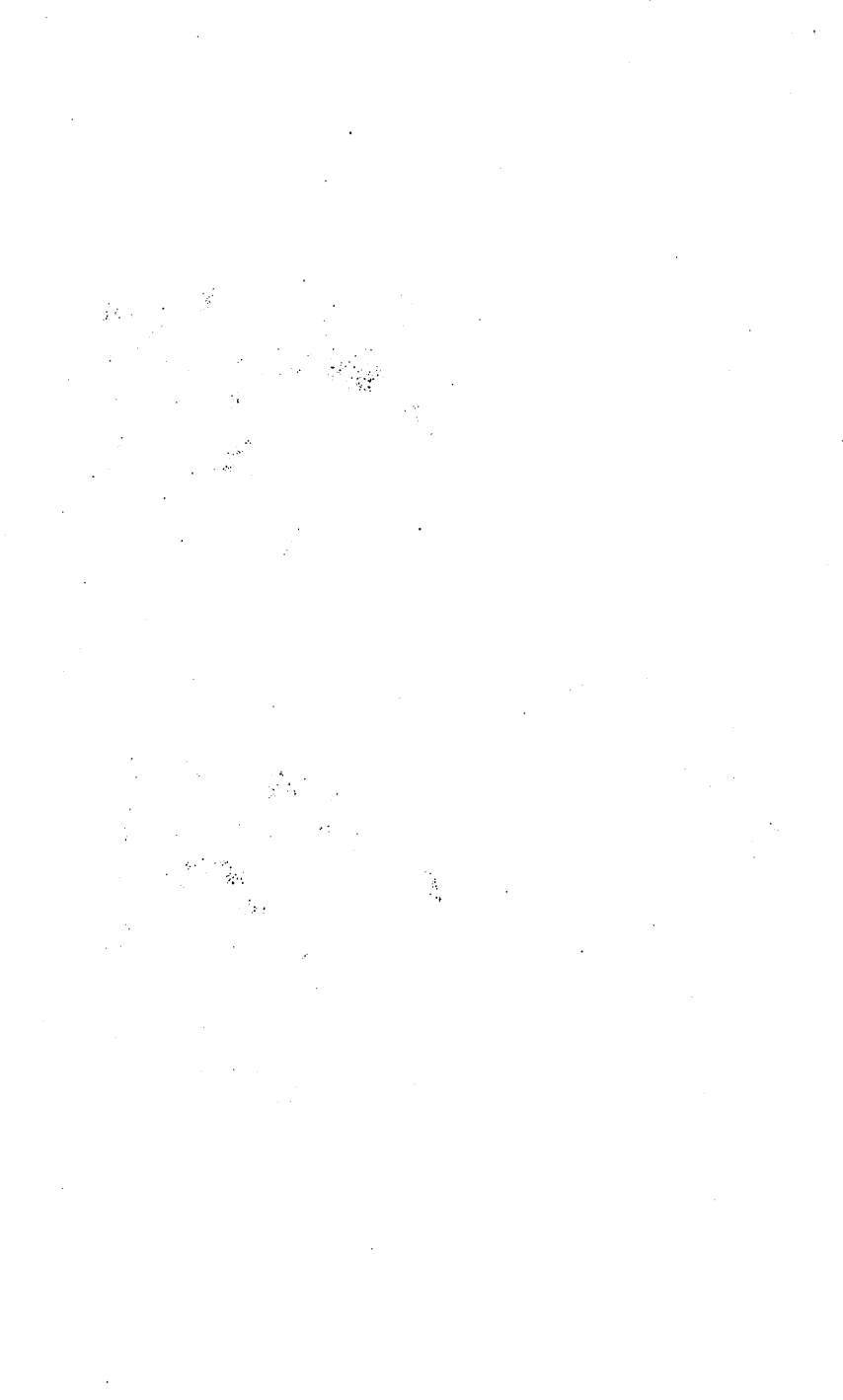
Soon after, his understanding failed; his terrified imagination uttered horrors not to be repeated or ever forgotten: and before the sun, which I hope has seen few like him, arose, this gay, young, noble, ingenuous, accomplished, and most wretched mortal expired.

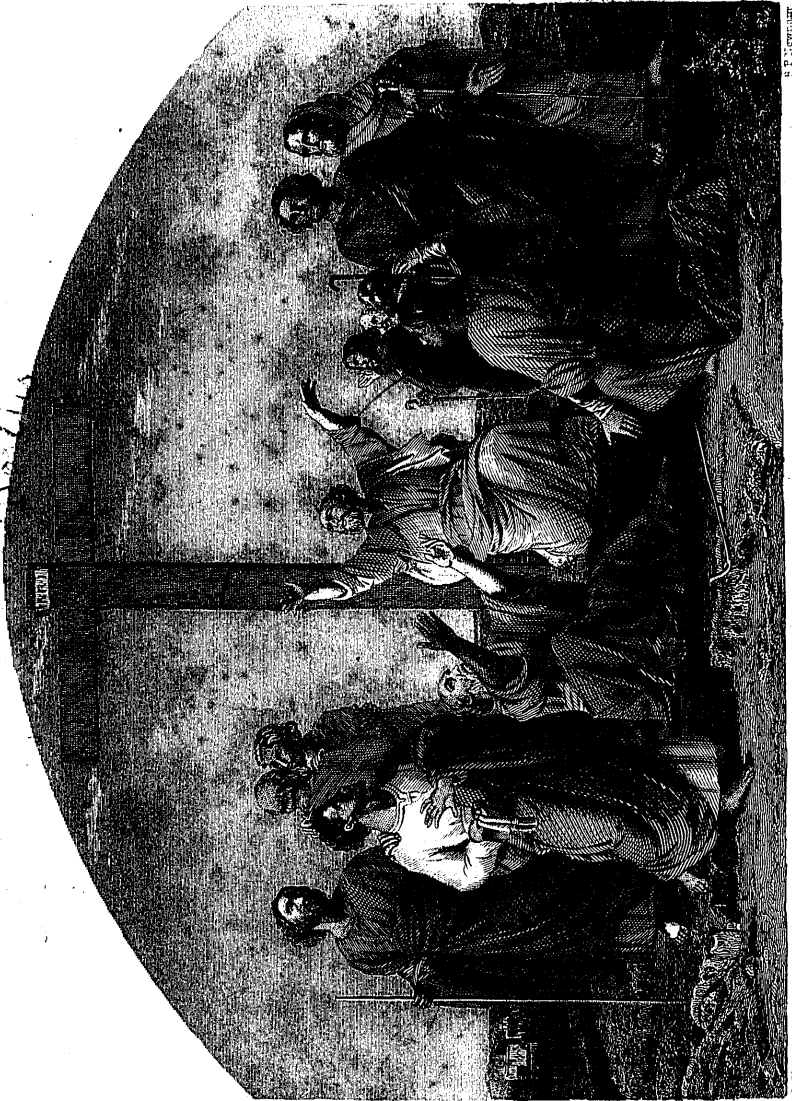
It must indeed be owned, it sometimes happens that men, who have led very wicked lives, have gone out of the world as they have lived in it, defying conscience, and deriding a future judgment as an idle fiction; but these instances are very rare, and only prove that there are monsters in the moral as well as the natural world.

It will perhaps be said, that the sons of vice and riot have pleasure in sensual indulgences. Allowed: but it is altogether of the lower kind, empty, fleeting, and transient; “like the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the mirth of the wicked.” It makes a noise and a blaze for the present, but soon vanishes away into smoke and vapor.

On the other hand, the pleasure of religion is solid and lasting, and will attend us through all, even the last stages of life. When we have passed the levity of youth, and have lost our relish for the gay entertainments of sense; when old age steals upon us, and bows us towards the grave, this will cleave fast to us, and give us relief. It will be so far from terminating at death, that it then commences perfect, and continually improves, with new additions.

Clad in this immortal robe, we need not fear the awful summons of the king of terrors, nor regret our retiring into the chambers of the dust. Our immortal part will wing its way to the arms of its omnipotent Redeemer, and find rest in the heavenly mansions of the Almighty. And though our earthly part, this tabernacle of clay, returns to its original dust and is dissolved, our joy, our consolation, our confidence is, that “we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”





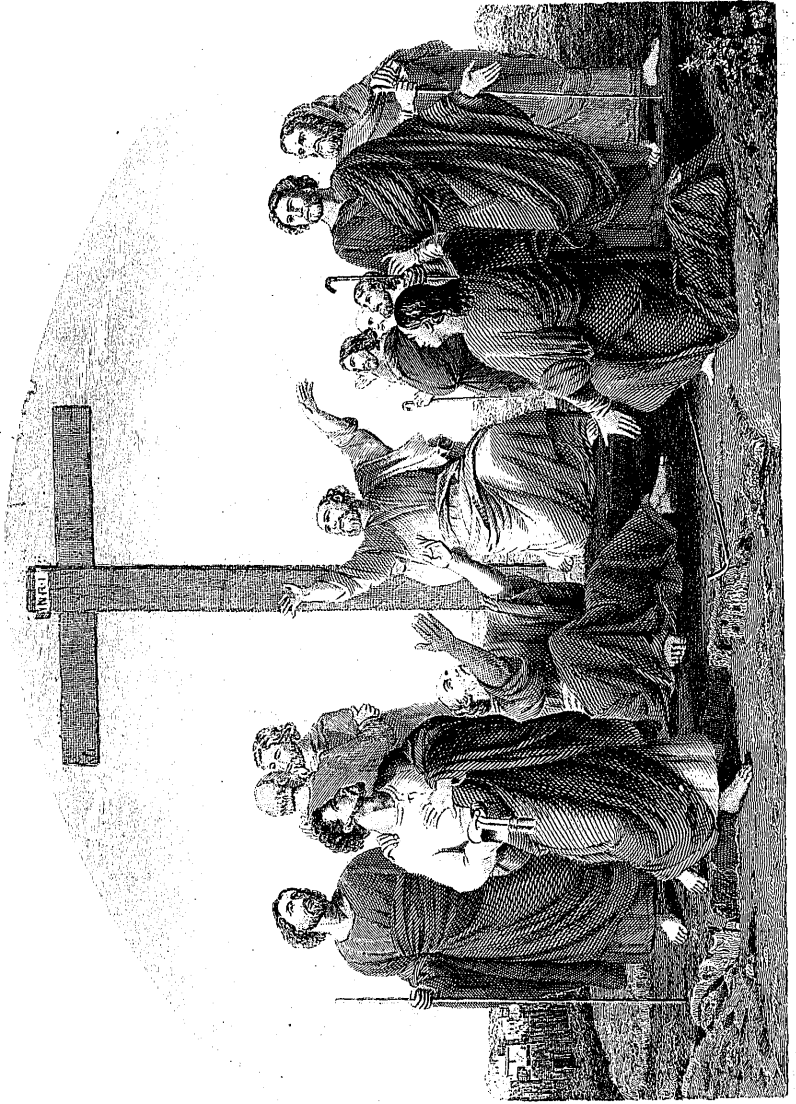
St. Peter's Church

C. Dwyer

THE LIVES

OF THE

HOLY APOSTLES AND EVANGELISTS.



THE LIVES

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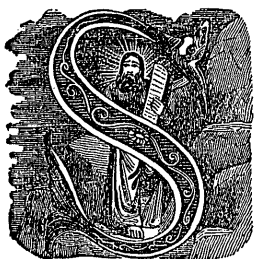
HOLY APOSTLES AND EVANGELISTS.



SAINT PETER.

CHAPTER I.

ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE OF ST. PETER, PRIOR TO HIS CALL TO THE APOSTLESHIP OF THE BLESSED JESUS.



T. PETER was born at Bethsaida, a city of Galilee, situate on the banks of the Lake of Genuesareth, called also the Sea of Galilee, from its being situated in that country, and the Lake of Tiberias, from that city being built on its banks. The particular time of this great Apostle's birth cannot be known; the evangelists, and other writers among the primitive Christians, having been silent with regard to this particular. It is,

however, pretty certain that he was at least ten years older than his Master; the circumstances of his being married, and in a settled course of life, when he first became a follower of the great Messiah, and that authority and respect the gravity of his person procured him among the rest of the Apostles, sufficiently declare this conjecture to be just.

As he was a descendant of Abraham, he was circumcised according to the rites of the Mosaic law, and called by his parents Simon or Simeon, a name common at that time among the Jews. But after his becoming a disciple of the blessed Jesus, the additional title of Cephias was conferred upon him by his Master, to denote the firmness of his faith; the word Cephias, in the Syriac, the common language of the Jews at that time, signifying a stone or rock; and thence he is called in Greek *Petros*, and by us Peter, which implies the same thing.

With regard to the parents of St. Peter, the evangelists have also been silent, except in telling us that his father's name was Jonah, who was highly honored by our blessed Saviour, who chose two of his sons, Andrew and Peter, to be his Apostles, and preachers of the glad tidings of salvation to the children of men.

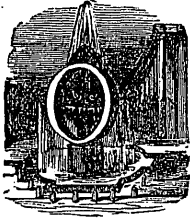
St. Peter in his youth was brought up to the trade of fishing, on the Lake of Bethsaida, famous for different kinds of fish, which excelled all

others in the fineness of their taste. Here he followed the trade of fishing, but afterwards removed to Capernaum, where he settled; for we find he had a house there when our Saviour began his public ministry, and there he paid tribute. Nicephorus tells us that Helen, the mother of Constantine, erected a beautiful church over the ruins of Peter's house, in honor of that Apostle.

Capernaum was as well situated as Bethsaida for carrying on his trade, standing at the influx of the Jordan into the Sea of Galilee, and where he might with equal advantage reap the fruits of an honest and industrious diligence. The business of Peter was both mean and toilsome; it exposed him to all the injuries of the weather, the tempestuousness of the sea, and the darkness and horror of the night, and all to acquire a mean livelihood for himself and family. But meanness of worldly degree is no obstacle to the favor of God; nay, if we review the state of Christianity, from its rise to the present period, we shall find that its votaries consist rather of persons of humble and lowly stations of life, than of the great, the dignified, and the opulent. And herein are manifested the wise and admirable methods used by Divine Providence, in making choice of such mean and unlikely instruments in planting and propagating the Christian religion in the world. Men who are destitute of the advantages of education, and brought up to the meanest employments, were chosen to confound the wise and overturn the learning of the great. Such were the persons whom the Almighty sent to propagate the religion of his Son; to silence the wise, the scribe, and the disputer of this world, and to make foolish the wisdom of the earth. For though the Jews required a sign, and the Greeks sought after wisdom; though the preaching of a crucified Saviour made no impression on the former, and wisdom became of little avail to the latter; yet by this preaching God was pleased to save them that believed, and in the event made it appear that the wisdom of God passeth all understanding,—that so the honor of all may redound to himself, “that no flesh should glory in his presence, but that he that glorieth should glory in the Lord.”

CHAPTER II.

THE MANNER BY WHICH PETER ARRIVED TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE BLESSED JESUS,
AND OF HIS CALL TO THE DISCIPLESHIP.



IF what sect the Apostle was sacred history hath not ascertained. We know, indeed, that his brother Andrew was a follower of John the Baptist, that preacher of repentance; and it is very unlikely that he who was ready to carry his brother the early tidings of the Messiah, that “the Sun of righteousness” was already risen in those parts, should not be equally solicitous to bring him under the discipline and influence of John the Baptist, the day-star which appeared to usher in the appearance of the Son of God. Besides, Peter’s great readiness and curiosity, at the first news of Christ’s appearing, to come to him and converse with him, shows that his expectation had been awakened, and some glimmering rays of hope conveyed to him by the preaching and ministry of John, who was “the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.”

He became acquainted with the immaculate Lamb of God in the following manner: the blessed Jesus, having spent thirty years in the solitude of a private life, had lately been baptized by John in Jordan, and there owned by the solemn attestation of heaven to be the Son of God; whereupon he was immediately hurried into the wilderness, and there for forty days maintained a personal contest with the devil. But, having conquered this great enemy of mankind, he returned to “the place beyond Jordan,” where John was baptizing his proselytes, and endeavoring to answer the Jews, who had sent a deputation to him to inquire concerning this new Messiah that appeared among them. To satisfy these curious inquiries of Israel, John faithfully related every thing he knew concerning him; gave him the greatest character, and soon after pointed him out to his disciples: upon which two of them followed the great Redeemer of mankind, one of whom was Andrew, Simon’s brother.

Nor did he conceal the joyful discovery he had made; for early in the morning he hastened to acquaint his brother Simon that he had found the Messiah. It is not enough to be happy alone: grace is a communicative principle, that, like the circles in the water, delights to multiply itself, and to diffuse its influences all around, especially on those whom nature has placed nearest to us. I have, said he with rapture to his brother,

found that eminent person, so long and signally foretold by the prophets, and whom all the devout and pious among the sons of Jacob so earnestly expected.

Simon, who was one of those who waited for the redemption of Israel, ravished with the joyful news, and impatient of delay, presently followed his brother to the place; and, on his arrival, our blessed Saviour immediately gave him a proof of his divinity; saluting him at first sight by his name, and telling him both who he was, his name and kindred, and what title should soon be conferred upon him.

The holy Jesus had now more than a year entered on his public ministry, going into every part of the country, to seek opportunities of doing good to the children of men; so that, by the constancy of preaching and the reputation of his miracles, his fame was spread throughout all Judea; and multitudes of people flocked to him from all parts, to hear his doctrines, and be spectators of his mighty works.

But, to avoid this prodigious throng of people, our great Redeemer often retired to some solitary place, to indulge the privacies of contemplation. In one of these retreats, on the banks of the Sea of Galilee, the multitude found him out, and ran to him from the city. Our Saviour, therefore, to avoid the crowd, stepped into a fishing boat which lay near shore, and belonged to Simon Peter, who, together with his companions, were on shore drying their nets, after an unsuccessful night spent in toil and labor. The blessed Jesus, who might have commanded, was pleased to entreat Peter, who now returned to his boat, to thrust off a little from the land, that he might instruct the people, who were gathering in prodigious crowds on the borders of the lake.

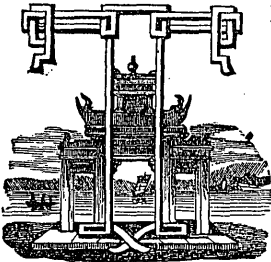
Peter gladly complied with the request of his Master, who delivered his heavenly doctrine to the people on the shore. As soon as he had ended his discourse, he resolved to seal it by a miracle, that the people might be persuaded he was a "teacher come from God." Accordingly, he ordered Simon to row farther from the shore, and cast his net into the sea. To which Simon answered, that they had labored the preceding night, and had taken nothing; and if they could not then succeed there were no hopes of it now, as the day was far less proper for fishing than the night. But as his Master was pleased to command, he would obey; and accordingly he let down his net, when, to the astonishment both of him and of his companions, so great a multitude of fishes were inclosed that they were obliged to call their partners to their assistance. Amazed at this miraenous draught of fishes, Simon Peter, in ecstasy of admiration, blended with awe and humility, fell prostrate at his Master's feet, acknowledging himself a vile and sinful person, and thinking himself unworthy of being admitted into the presence of a person so immediately sent from God. But the compassionate Son of the Most High kindly removed his fears; telling him that this miracle was wrought to confirm his faith,

and indicate to him that the Almighty had appointed a more noble employment for him, that of saving the children of men.

From this time Peter and his companions became the inseparable and constant disciples of the great Messiah, living under the rules of his discipline and institutions. Soon after, our blessed Saviour returned to Capernaum with his disciples, where they found the mother-in-law of Peter dangerously ill of a fever. But the compassionate Jesus, who never omitted any opportunity of doing good to the human race, rebuked the disease, and, taking her by the hand, restored her in a moment to her former health; demonstrating at once his power and willingness to relieve the sons and daughters of affliction.

CHAPTER III.

PECULIAR TRANSACTIONS OF THIS APOSTLE, FROM THE TIME OF BEING CHOSEN, TO HIS BLESSED MASTER'S ENTERING THE CITY OF JERUSALEM.



HE blessed Jesus, having entered upon his important mission, thought proper to select some peculiar persons from among his followers to be constant witnesses of his miracles and doctrine, and who, after his departure, might be intrusted with the care of building his church, and planting that religion in the world for which he himself left the mansions of heaven, and put on the vail of mortality. In order to

this, he withdrew privately in the evening to a solitary mountain, where he spent the night in solemn addresses to his Almighty Father for rendering the great work he was going to undertake prosperous and successful.

Early the next morning, the disciples came to him, out of whom he made choice of twelve to be his Apostles, and the attendants on his person. These he afterwards invested with the power of working miracles, and sent them into different parts of Judea, in order to carry on with more rapidity the great work which he himself had so happily begun.

All the evangelists, in their enumeration of these Apostles, constantly place Peter first. But we must not, on that account, suppose that Peter was invested with any personal prerogative above his brethren; none of them ever intimated any such thing; and Paul says expressly, that he himself was not inferior to the very chiefest Apostle.

We have no further account of Peter in particular, till the night after

our Saviour's miraculously feeding the multitude in the wilderness. Jesus had ordered his disciples to take ship and pass over to the other side, while he sent the multitude away. But a violent storm arising, they were in great danger of their lives, when their great Master came unto them, walking on the surface of the boisterous billows, with the same ease as if it had been dry ground.

At his approach the disciples were greatly terrified, supposing they had seen a spirit. But their compassionate Master soon dispelled their fears, by telling them it was he himself, and therefore they had no reason to be terrified.

Peter, who was always remarkable for bold resolutions, desired his Master to give him leave to come to him on the water; and on obtaining permission he left the ship, and walked on the sea, to meet his Saviour. But when he heard the deep roar around him, and the waves increase, he began to be afraid; and as his faith declined his body sunk in the water; so that in the greatest agony, he called for assistance to him who was able to save. Nor was his cry in vain; the compassionate Redeemer of mankind stretched out his hand, and again placed him on the surface of the water, with this gentle reproof, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" And no sooner were the blessed Jesus and his disciples entered into the ship, when the winds ceased, the waves subsided, and the ship was at the land whither they were going.

A miracle of this kind could not fail of astonishing the disciples, and convincing them of the divinity of his mission: accordingly, they drew near and worshiped him, with this confession, "Of a truth thou art the Son of God."

The next day our blessed Saviour entered the synagogue of Capernaum, and, from the miracle of the loaves, took occasion to discourse concerning himself and the true manna, and the "bread which came down from heaven;" opening to them the more sublime and spiritual mysteries of the Gospel, on which part of the audience, who expected he was going to erect a temporal kingdom, and re-establish the throne of David in Jerusalem, offended at his representing his dominion as entirely spiritual, departed from him, and came no more to hear his discourses. Jesus, on beholding this defection, turned himself towards his disciples, and asked them whether they also would go away? To which Peter replied, "Lord, whither shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life;" to whom should we apply for life and salvation? "Thou art the way, the truth, and the life."

The inhabitants of Judea, who beheld with astonishment the miracles wrought by the blessed Jesus, had formed many conjectures concerning him. Our great Redeemer was not ignorant of this; but being willing to hear what account his disciples would give of the various opinions of the people, asked them what the world said concerning him: to which

they replied, that some took him for John the Baptist risen from the dead; some thought him to be Elias, and others Jeremiah, or one of the old prophets. He asked them what they themselves thought of him; to which Peter, in the name of the rest, answered, "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God," anointed and set apart by the Most High, to be the great King, Priest, and Prophet of Israel.

This full and comprehensive declaration of Peter satisfied the inquiry of our blessed Saviour, who answered, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." That is, this faith which thou hast now confessed is not human, or built upon the testimony of man, but upon that knowledge which I was sent from God to reveal unto the world: therefore, I say also unto thee, "that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." As thy name signifies a rock, so shalt thou prove firm, solid, and immovable, in building my church, which shall be so firmly established by thy care and diligence upon that faith thou hast now professed, that all the assaults of men and devils shall not be able to destroy it.

The disciples had no idea that their Master was to suffer death for the sins of the world; on the contrary, they considered him as immortal, having imbibed the opinion of the Scribes and Pharisees, "that Christ abideth forever;" so that, when the blessed Jesus told them of the sufferings he must undergo at Jerusalem, what affronts and indignities he must suffer, and be at last put to death with all the acts of torture and disgrace, by a sentence of the Jewish sanhedrim, Peter, who could not endure the thought of his Master's suffering even the least punishment, much less those cruelties he had mentioned, and at last death itself, interrupted him very unseasonably, and said, "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee." He considered these sufferings as inconsistent with the character of the great Messiah, who he expected would restore the splendor of the throne of David his father, and reduce all the kingdoms of the earth to his obedience. But our blessed Saviour, who came down from heaven to give his life a ransom for the sins of the world, and who valued the redemption of mankind infinitely more than his own ease and safety, highly resented this speech of Peter, and accordingly returned this sharp reproof: "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence to me." Thy pernicious counsel, in seeking to oppose the design for which I purposely left the courts of heaven, is offensive; and thou "savorest not the things of God, but those that be of men."

Some time after, the great Redeemer of the souls of men, being to receive a specimen of his future glorification, took with him three of his most intimate Apostles, Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and went up into a very high mountain; and while they were employed in earnest addresses to the Almighty, he was transfigured before them, darting such

lustre from his face as exceeded the meridian rays of the sun in brightness; and such beams of light issued from his garments as exceeded the light of the clearest day: an event and sensible representation of that state, when the just shall walk in white robes, and shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. During this heavenly scene, the great prophets Moses and Elias appeared in all the brightness and majesty of a glorified state, familiarly conversing with him, and discoursing of the death and sufferings he was shortly to undergo, and his ascension to the heavenly regions of bliss and happiness.

In the mean time, Peter and the two Apostles were fallen asleep. But on their awaking were strangely surprised to see the Lord surrounded with so much glory, and those two great persons conversing with him. They, however, remained silent till those visitants from the courts of heaven were going to depart, when Peter, in rapture and ecstasy of mind, addressed himself to his Master, declaring their infinite pleasure and delight in being favored with this glorious spectacle; and desired his leave to erect three tabernacles, one for him, one for Moses, and one for Elias. But while he was speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed these two great prophets, and a voice came from it, uttering these remarkable words: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him:" on which the Apostles were seized with the utmost consternation, and fell upon their faces to the ground; but Jesus, touching them, bid them dismiss their fears, and look up with confidence; they immediately obeyed, but saw their Master only.

After this heavenly scene, our blessed Lord traveled through Galilee, and, at his return to Capernaum, the tax-gatherers came to Peter, and asked whether his Master was not obliged to pay tribute? When our blessed Saviour was informed of this demand, rather than give offence he wrought a miracle to pay it. Our great Redeemer was now going for the last time to Jerusalem, and he ordered two of his disciples, probably Peter and John, to fetch him an ass, that he might enter into the city on it, as had been foretold. The disciples obeyed their Master, and brought the ass to Jesus, who, being mounted thereon, entered the city amidst the hosannas of a numerous multitude, with palm branches in their hands, proclaiming at once both the majesty of a prince, and the triumph of a Saviour.

CHAPTER IV.

LIFE OF ST. PETER, FROM THE TIME OF THE CELEBRATION OF THE LAST PASSOVER TO THE CRUCIFICTION OF THE GREAT REDEEMER.



HE blessed Jesus proceeded from Jerusalem to Bethany, from whence he sent two of his disciples, Peter and John, to make preparations for his celebrating the passover.

Every thing being ready, our blessed Saviour and his Apostles entered the house, and sat down to table. But their great Master, who often taught them by example as well as precept, arose from his seat, laid aside his outer garment, took the towel, and pouring water into a basin, began to wash his disciples' feet, to teach them humility and charity by his own example. But on his coming to Peter, he would by no means admit his Master to perform so mean and condescending an office. What! the Son of God stoop to wash the feet of a sinful mortal! A thought which shocked the Apostle, who strenuously declared, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." But the blessed Jesus told him, that if he washed him not, he could have no part with him; intimating, that this action was mystical, and signified the remission of sins, and the purifying virtue of the Spirit of the Most High, to be poured upon all true Christians. This answer sufficiently removed the scruples of Peter, who cried out, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." Wash me in every part, rather than let me lose my portion in thee.

The blessed Jesus having set this pattern of humility, began to reflect on his approaching sufferings, and on the person who should betray him into the hands of wicked and cruel men, telling them that not a stranger or an enemy, but one of his friends, one of his Apostles, and even one of them who sat at the table with him, would betray him.

This declaration exceedingly affected them all in general, and Peter in particular, who made signs to John to ask him particularly who it was. Jesus complied with this request, and gave them to understand that it was Judas Iscariot.

Our great Redeemer now began the institution of his supper, that great and solemn institution, which he resolved to leave behind him, to be constantly celebrated in his church as a standing monument of his love in dying for mankind; telling them, at the same time, that he himself was now going to leave them, and that "whither he went they could not

come." Peter, not well understanding what he meant, asked him whither he was going? To which our great Redeemer replied, that he was going to that place whither he could not now, but should hereafter, follow him, intimating the martyrdom he was to suffer for his Master's religion. Peter answered, that he was ready now to follow him, even if it required him to lay down his life. This confident presumption was not at all agreeable to the blessed Jesus, who told him he had promised great things, but would be so far from performing them, that before "the cock crew," he would deny him thrice.

Supper being now ended, they sung a hymn, and departed to the Mount of Olives; where Jesus again put them in mind how greatly the things he was going to suffer would offend them. To which Peter replied, that "though all men should be offended because of him, yet he himself would never be offended." How far will an indiscreet zeal and affection transport even a good man into vanity and presumption! Peter questions the fidelity of others, but never doubts his own: though his Lord had just before reproved him for his self-sufficiency. This confidence of Peter inspired the rest of the Apostles with courage; so that they declared their constant and unshaken adherence to their Master.

They now repaired to the garden of Gethsemane; and leaving the rest of the Apostles near the entrance, our blessed Saviour, taking with him Peter, James, and John, retired into the most solitary part of the garden, to enter on the preparatory scene of the great tragedy that was now approaching. Here the blessed Jesus labored under the bitterest agony that ever human nature suffered, during which he prayed with the utmost fervency to his Father, "offering up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood, falling down to the ground."

While our blessed Redeemer was thus interceding with the Almighty, his three disciples were fallen asleep, though he had made three several visits to them, and, calling to Peter, asked him, If he could not watch one hour with him? Advising them all to watch and pray, that they might not enter into temptation, adding, "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." What incomparable sweetness! what generous candor did the Redeemer of mankind display on this occasion! He passed the most charitable censure upon an action which malice and ill-nature would have painted in colors as black as the shades of darkness.

The disciples were drowned in a profound security, and were buried in a deep sleep; and though often awaked and informed of the approaching tragedy, they little regarded the admonitions, as if nothing but ease and softness engaged their thoughts: an action which seemed to imply the most amazing ingratitude, and the highest disregard for their Lord and Master. But he, who was compassion itself, would not impute it to their want of affection or disregard for his safety; but considered it merely as

the effect of their infirmities, and made an excuse for them, when they could make none for themselves: teaching us the useful lesson of putting the most favorable construction on the actions of others; and to imitate the bee and not the spider, by sucking honey instead of poison from the various transactions of human life.

While he was discoursing with them, a band of soldiers from the chief priests and elders, preceded by the traitor Judas, to conduct and direct them, rushed into the garden, and seized the High Priest of our profession. Peter, whose ungovernable zeal would admit of no restraint, drew his sword, and, without the least order from his Master, struck at one of the persons who seemed to be remarkably busy in binding Jesus, and cut off his right ear. This wild and unwarrantable zeal was very offensive to his Master, who rebuked Peter, and entreated the patience of the soldiers, while he miraculously healed the wound. But now the fidelity of the Apostles, which they had urged with so much confidence, was put to the trial. They saw their Master in the hands of a rude and inconsiderate band of men; and therefore should have exerted their power to release him, or at least have been the companions of his sufferings, and endeavored, by every kind endearing action, to have lessened his grief. But, alas! instead of resisting or comforting their great Master, they forsook him and fled. The soldiers, after binding Jesus, led him away, and delivered him to the chief priests and elders, who carried him from one tribunal to another; first to Annas, and then to Caiaphas, where the Jewish sanhedrim were assembled, in order to try and condemn him. In the mean time Peter, who had followed the other disciples in their flight, recovered his spirits, and, being encouraged by his companion John, returned to seek his Master. Seeing him leading to the high priest's hall he followed at a distance to know the event; but on his coming to the door was refused admittance, till one of the disciples, who was acquainted there, came out and prevailed upon the servant who kept the door to let him in. Peter, being admitted, repaired to the fire burning in the middle of the hall, round which the officers and servants were standing; where, being observed by the maid-servant who let him in, she charged him with being one of Christ's disciples: but Peter publicly denied the charge, declaring that he did not know him, and presently withdrew into the porch, where, being secluded from the people, the reflection of his mind awakened his conscience to a quick sense of his duty, and the promise he had a few hours before made to his Master. But, alas! human nature, when left to itself, is remarkably frail and inconstant. This Peter sufficiently experienced; for while he continued in the porch, another maid met him, and charged him with being one of the followers of Jesus of Nazareth, which Peter firmly denied, and, the better to gain belief, ratified it with an oath. About an hour after this, the servant of the high priest, he whose ear Peter had cut off, charged him with being a disciple of Christ,

and that he himself had seen him in the garden with him; adding, that his very speech sufficiently proved that he was a Galilean. Peter, however, still denied the fact: and, to add to his sin, ratified it not only by an oath, but a solemn curse and execration, that "he was not the person, and that he knew not the man." But no sooner had he uttered this denial, which was the third time, than the cock crew; at which his Master turned about, and earnestly looked upon him in a manner that pierced him to the heart, and brought to his remembrance what his Saviour had more than once foretold him, namely, that he would basely and shamefully deny him. Peter was now no longer able to contain his sorrow; he flew from the palace of the high priest and wept bitterly, passionately bewailing his folly, and the aggravations of his sin.

The fall of Peter should convince us of the miserable frailty even of the best of men, and effectually subdue those vain confidences which are apt to rise in our hearts from our own supposed strength and virtue. For as this great disciple fell in so scandalous a manner, who shall hereafter dare to depend upon the highest degree of knowledge, when one so wise, so perfectly satisfied of the truth of the Christian doctrine, was, after the fullest convictions of his own conscience, so weak and frail as to deny and abjure his Lord, who instructed and bought him, even at the price of his own blood? Who shall presume upon his best resolutions, when he who declared so firm a purpose of adhering to Jesus, did, within a few hours, peremptorily and solemnly disown that very person for whose sake he was lately ready and disposed to lay down his life. We ought, therefore, on all occasions, to pray for and rely on the divine assistance, which alone can enable us to stand in a day of trial. There is, indeed, no reason to doubt that Peter at that time spoke the very sense of his soul; that he had an honest and sincere heart, was steadfastly determined, and, as he thought, able to perform what, with so much piety and affection, he intended and professed. But his misfortune was, that he did not consider the infirmities of human nature, promising in the warmth of his zeal more than he was able to perform. He relied on his own integrity, thinking good resolutions a sufficient defence against the most violent temptations. But when the assault was made, and danger with her terrifying aspect appeared, the event sufficiently proved that, how willing soever the spirit might be, yet the flesh was exceedingly frail and weak.

We have in Peter an example for our instruction. The opinion of his own strength formed his ruin. So dangerous and fatal is it to lean on our own understandings; to be wise, good, and safe in our own conceit; when all our sufficiency, all our safety, is of God. We should also, from this example, remember the wisdom and goodness of the Almighty, in causing the faults and infirmities of his saints to be recorded in the Holy Scriptures, and the use we ought to make of their failings and temptations. Their eminent perseverance in the cause of Christ, and their as eminent

repentance where they did amiss, are written as a seasonable warning, and exhibit an instance of humiliation to all future ages; by letting us see that the most perfect are but men, subject to blemishes and imperfections; and that the highest and purest state is no security from danger. This should make us very tender how we judge and despise our brethren, whose faults, however severely we may censure them, might probably have been our own, had we been in their circumstances; for "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." We should not then promise ourselves such safety and freedom from temptations, in any circumstances of life, as to think we are incapable of committing the blackest crimes, should the Almighty withdraw his grace and leave us to ourselves.

CHAPTER V.

AN ACCOUNT OF WHAT BEFELL THIS APOSTLE, FROM THE RESURRECTION OF HIS BLESSED MASTER TO HIS ASCENSION INTO HEAVEN.



It is certain from various circumstances that Peter, after the crucifixion of his Lord and Master, stayed at Jerusalem, or at least in the neighborhood; for when Mary Magdalene returned from the sepulchre to inform the disciples that the stone was rolled away from the door, and the body not to be found, Peter and John set out immediately towards the garden. John, who was the younger, arrived at the sepulchre first, looked into it, but did not enter, either out of fear or reverence to our Saviour. Peter came soon after, and resolutely went into the sepulchre, where he found the linen clothes lying together in one place, and the napkin that was about his head, wrapped together in another, a sufficient indication that the body was not stolen away; for had that been the case, so much care and order would not have been observed in disposing of the linen clothes. But Peter did not wait long in suspense with regard to his great Lord and Master, for the same day Jesus appeared to him; and as he was the first of the disciples who had made a signal confession of the divinity of the Messiah's mission, so it was reasonable he should first see him after his resurrection, and at the same time, to convince him that the crime he had been guilty of in denying him was pardoned, and that he was come like the good Samaritan to pour oil into the wounded conscience.

Soon after, the Apostles prepared to obey the command of their great Master, of retiring into Galilee; and we find that Peter, Nathaniel, the

two sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples, returned to their old trade of fishing in the lake.

One morning early, as they were laboring at their employment, having spent the whole night to no purpose, they saw on the shore a grave person, who called to them, and asked them if they had any meat; to which they answered, No. Cast then, replied he, the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They followed his directions, and caught a prodigious number of large fish. Astonished at such remarkable success, the disciples looked one upon another for some time, till John told Peter that the person on the shore was, doubtless, their great Lord and Master, whom the winds, the sea, and the inhabitants of the watery region were ready to obey. Peter no sooner heard the beloved disciple declare his opinion concerning the stranger, than his zeal took fire, and, notwithstanding the coldness of the season, girt on his fisher's coat, threw himself into the sea, and swam to shore; his impatience to be with his dear Lord and Master not suffering him to stay the few minutes necessary to bring the ship to land. As soon as the disciples came on shore, they found a fire kindled, and fish laid upon it, either immediately created by the power of their divine Master, or which came ashore of its own accord, and offered itself to his hand. But, notwithstanding there was fish already on the shore, he ordered them to bring those they had now caught and dress them for their repast, he himself eating with them; both to give them an instance of mutual love and friendship, and also to assure them of the truth of his human nature, since he was risen from the dead. When the repast was ended, our blessed Saviour addressed himself particularly to Peter, urging him to the utmost diligence in the care of souls; and, because he knew that nothing but a sincere love to him could support him under the trouble and dangers of so laborious and difficult an employment, he inquired of him whether he loved him more than the rest of the Apostles; mildly reproofing him for his over-confident resolution. Peter, whom fatal experience had taught humility, modestly answered, that none knew so well as himself the integrity of his affections. Thou knowest the hearts of all men, nothing is hid from thee, and therefore thou knowest that I love thee. The question was three several times repeated by our blessed Saviour, and as oftentimes answered by the Apostle; it being but just that he who by a three-fold denial had given so much reason to question his affection, should now, by a three-fold confession, give more than common assurance of his sincere love to his Master; and to each of these confessions our great Redeemer added this signal trial of his affection, "Feed my sheep." Instruct and teach them with the utmost care and the utmost tenderness. The blessed Jesus, having thus engaged Peter to a cheerful compliance with the dangers that might attend the discharge of his office, particularly intimated to him the fate that would attend him; telling him that when he was young, he girt him-

self, lived at his pleasure, and went wherever his fancy directed him ; but when he should reach the term of old age, he should stretch forth his hands, and another should gird and bind him, and lead him whither he had no desire to go, intimating, as the evangelist tells us, " by what death he should glorify God."

Peter was well pleased to drink the bitter cup, and make his confession as public as his denial, provided all would be sufficient to atone for his former sin. And, seeing John following, he asked his great Master what should be his fate, and whether he who had been the object of his Master's love in his lifetime, should not have as honorable a death as he that had denied him ? To which Jesus replied, It doth not concern thee to know how I shall dispose of events with regard to him : he shall see the destruction of the Jewish nation, and then go down to the chambers of the dust in peace.

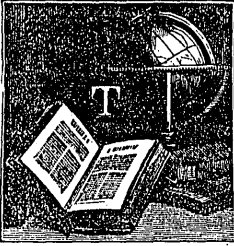
Not long after, our blessed Saviour appeared to his disciples at Jerusalem, to take his last farewell of them who had attended during his public ministry among the sons of men. He led them out as far as Bethany, a small village on the Mount of Olives, where he briefly told them that they were the persons he had chosen to be the witnesses both of his death and resurrection ; a testimony which they should publish in every part of the world. In order to which, he would, after his ascension into heaven, pour out his Spirit upon them in an extraordinary manner, that they might be the better enabled to struggle with that violent rage and fury with which the doctrine of the Gospel would be opposed by men and devils ; adding that, in the mean time, they would return to Jerusalem, and there wait till those miraculous powers were given them from on high.

Having finished this discourse, he laid hands upon them, and gave them his solemn benediction ; during which he was taken from them, and received up into the regions of the heavenly Canaan. The Apostles, who beheld their Master visibly ascend into heaven, were filled with a greater sense of his glory than they had ever been while he conversed with them familiarly on earth. And having performed their solemn adoration to him, they returned to Jerusalem with great joy, there to wait for the accomplishment of their great Master's promise.

How sudden a change was now wrought in the minds of the Apostles ! They who were lately overwhelmed with sorrow at the very mention of their Lord's departure from them, beheld him now with joy and triumph ; they were fully satisfied of his glorious advancement to the right hand of Omnipotence, and of that peculiar care and providence which they were sure he would exercise over them, in pursuance of those great trusts he had committed to their care.

CHAPTER VI.

TRANSACTIONS OF PETER, FROM THE ASCENSION OF HIS BLESSED MASTER TO THE DISPERSION OF THE CHURCH AT JERUSALEM.



THE Apostles, though deprived of the personal presence of their Lord and Master, were indefatigable in fulfilling the commission they had received from him. The first object that engaged their attention, after their return to Jerusalem, was to fill up the vacancy in their number lately made by the unhappy fall and apostasy of Judas. In order to this they called together the church, and entered into "an upper room," when Peter, as president of the assembly, proposed to them the choice of a new Apostle. He put them in mind that Judas, one of the disciples of their great and beloved Master, being betrayed by his covetous and insatiable temper, had lately fallen from the honor of his place and ministry. That this was no more than what the prophet had long since foretold should come to pass, and that the care of the church which had been committed to him should devolve upon another; that therefore it was highly necessary that some person who had been familiarly conversant with the blessed Jesus from first to last, and, consequently, a competent witness both of his doctrine and miracles, his death, resurrection, and ascension, should be substituted in his room. This, indeed, was highly requisite; for as no witness is so valid and satisfactory as the testimony of an eye-witness, as the Apostles all along principally insisted on this, that they delivered nothing to the world, concerning the great Redeemer of mankind, than what they themselves had seen and heard; as his rising from the dead was a principle likely to meet with the greatest opposition, and which would be the most difficult tenet of the Gospel to be believed by the sons of men; they urged this great truth incessantly, declaring that they were "eye-witnesses of his resurrection;" that they had seen and felt him, eaten and familiarly conversed with him after his return from the chambers of the grave. It was therefore highly requisite that such an Apostle should be chosen; and accordingly two candidates were proposed; Joseph, called Barsabbas, and Matthias, both qualified for the great and important office of the apostleship. And having prayed that the Divine Providence would immediately guide and direct their choice, they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Matthias, who was accordingly admitted to the number of the Apostles.

After filling up the vacancy in the apostolic number, they spent their time in prayer and meditation till the feast of Pentecost; when the promise of their great Master, in sending the Holy Ghost, was fulfilled. The Christian assembly were met as usual to perform the public services of their worship, when suddenly a sound like that of a mighty wind rushed in upon them; representing the powerful efficacy of that divine Spirit which was now to be communicated to them. After which there appeared small flames of fire, which, in the shape of cloven tongues, descended and sat upon the head of each of them, to denote that their enjoyment of this gift should be constant and perpetual; and not like the prophets of old, who were inspired only at some particular times and seasons. Upon this they were all immediately filled with the Holy Ghost, which in an instant enabled them to speak fluently several languages they had never learned, and probably never heard. The report of so sudden and strange an action was soon spread through every part of Jerusalem, which at that time was full of Jewish proselytes; "devout men out of every nation under heaven, Parthians, Medes, Elamites, the dwellers of Mesopotamia and Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt, the parts of Libya and Cyrene," from Rome, from Crete, and from Arabia. These no sooner heard of this miraculous effusion of the Holy Spirit, than they flocked in prodigious numbers to the Christian assembly, where they were amazed to hear these Galileans speaking to them in their own native languages, so various and so very different from one another. And it could not fail of exceedingly increasing the wonder to reflect on the meanness of the speakers, who were neither assisted by genius, polished by education, nor improved by use and custom. The disciples were destitute of all these assistances; their parts were mean, their education small, and their experience in speaking before great assemblies little. Yet now these persons spoke boldly, and with the greatest propriety, in various languages. Nor were their discourses filled with idle stories, or the follies of a luxuriant fancy. No, they expatiated on the great and admirable works of Omnipotence, and the mysteries of the Gospel, which human apprehension could never discover.

This surprising transaction had different effects on the minds of the people; some attributing it to the effect of a miracle, and others to the power and strength of "new wine." Upon which the Apostles all stood up, and Peter, in the name of the rest, undertook to confute this injurious calumny. He told them that this scandalous slander proceeded from the spirit of malice and falsehood; that their censure was uncharitable as it was unjust; that it was early in the morning, and therefore not a time for drinking, especially on a day set apart for devotion; that these extraordinary and miraculous effects were but the accomplishment of an ancient prophecy, which the Almighty had expressly declared should be fulfilled in the times of the Messiah; that Jesus of Nazareth had evi-

dently proved himself to be that great prophet, the Son of the Most High, by many unquestionable miracles, of which they themselves had been eye-witnesses; and though, by the permission of Omnipotence, who was pleased by this means to bring about the redemption of mankind, they had wickedly crucified and slain him, yet God raised him from the dead; nor was it consistent with the justice and goodness of the Almighty, especially those divine predictions made concerning him, that he should be confined in the chambers of the grave; David having particularly foretold, "that his flesh should rest in hope, that God would not leave his soul in hell, neither suffer his Holy One to see corruption; but would make known to him the way of life." That this prophecy could not relate to David himself, as he had many ages since been reduced to dust, and his flesh passed through the different stages of corruption, his tomb being yet visible among them, and from whence he was known never to return; and therefore the prophecy must relate to Christ, having never been fulfilled in any but him, who both died and was risen again, whereof they were his witnesses. Nay, that he was not only risen from the dead, but ascended into the highest heaven, and according to David's prediction, "sat down on the right hand of God, until he had made his enemies his footstool;" which could not be primarily meant of David, as he never ascended bodily into heaven; that therefore the whole house of Israel ought to believe, that this very Jesus whom they had crucified was that person whom God had appointed to be the Messiah, the founder of the Christian church, and the Saviour of the world.

This discourse, though the first that Peter ever made in public, deeply affected the people, and every word, like a dagger, pierced them to the heart, so that they cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" To which Peter answered, the only way to expiate your guilt, obtain pardon for the many sins you have committed, and acquire the gift of the Holy Ghost, is to repent sincerely, and be baptized into the religion of this crucified Saviour. Upon these terms the promises of the new covenant, ratified by the death of the Son of God, will belong to you and your children, and to all that sincerely believe and embrace the Gospel. The effect of this discourse was surprising; for great numbers of those who before ridiculed the religion of Jesus now acknowledged him for their Saviour, and flew to him for refuge from the impending storm; and Luke tells us, that there were that day added to the church no less than three thousand souls, who were all baptized and received into the flock of the great Shepherd of Israel, the Bishop of our souls. A quick and plentiful harvest indeed! "This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes."

Soon after this wonderful conversion, Peter and John, going up to the temple about three in the afternoon, near the conclusion of one of the solemn hours of prayer, saw a poor impotent cripple, nearly forty years

of age, who had been lame from his birth, lying at the "beautiful gate of the temple," and asking alms of those who entered the sacred edifice. This miserable object moved their compassion; and Peter, beholding him with attention, said, The riches of this world, the silver and gold so highly coveted by the sons of men, are not in my power to bestow; but I possess the power of restoring life and health, and I am ready to assist thee. Then taking the man by the hand, he commanded him in the name of "Jesus of Nazareth to rise up and walk." Immediately the nerves and sinews were strengthened, and the several parts of the diseased members performed their natural functions. Upon which the man accompanied them into the temple, walking, exulting, and praising God.

So strange and extraordinary a cure filled the minds of the people with admiration, and their curiosity drew them round the Apostles, to view the man who had performed it. Peter, seeing the multitude gathering round them, took the opportunity of speaking to them in the following manner: "Men and brethren, this remarkable cure should not excite your admiration of us, as if we had performed it by our own power. It was wrought in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, our crucified Master, by the power of that very Christ, that holy and just person whom you yourselves denied, and delivered to Pilate, nay, and preferred a murderer before him, when the governor was desirous of letting him go. But, though you have put him to death, yet we are witnesses that he hath raised him again from the dead, and that he is ascended into heaven, where he will remain till the great and tremendous day of general restitution. This I know was done by you and your rulers through ignorance, not being thoroughly convinced of the greatness and divinity of his person, the means by which the great and righteous designs of Omnipotence were brought about, and the prophecies concerning the person and sufferings of the Messiah, delivered by Moses, Samuel, and all the prophets, 'since the world began,' have been accomplished. But now it is high time to repent and turn to God, that your crying sins may be forgiven, that when the Messiah shall appear to execute judgment upon the Jewish nation, it may be time of comfort to you, as it will be of vengeance and destruction to others."

While Peter was speaking to the people in one part of the temple, John was in all probability doing the same in the other; and the success plainly indicated how powerful the preaching of the Apostles was—five thousand persons embracing the doctrines of the Gospel, and acknowledging the crucified Jesus for their Lord and Saviour. Such amazing success could not fail of exciting the attention and envy of the rulers of Israel. Accordingly, the priests and Sadducees repaired to the Roman magistrate, and intimated to him that, in all probability, this concourse of people would prove the cause of a tumult and insurrection. Upon this information, the captain of the temple seized on the Apostles, and cast them into prison.

The next day they were carried before the Jewish sanhedrim; and, being asked by what power and authority they had done this, Peter boldly answered, "Be it known unto you, and to all the descendants of Jacob, that this miracle was wrought wholly in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, whom ye yourselves have crucified and slain, and whom the Almighty hath raised again from the dead. This is the stone which your builders refused, and which is become the head of the corner. Nor is there any other way by which you or any of the sons of men can be saved but by this crucified Saviour."

The boldness of the Apostle was admired by all, even by the court of the sanhedrim. And it should be remembered that these very judges were the persons who had so lately condemned the blessed Jesus himself, and had no other way of coloring their proceedings than by a second act of cruelty; that the Apostles did not charge them with the crime of crucifying the Son of God in secret, but in the open court of judicature, and in the hearing of all the people. The court, after beholding them with a kind of astonishment, remembered that they had seen them with Jesus of Nazareth, and therefore ordered them to withdraw, while they debated among themselves what was proper to be done. It was impossible to deny the miracle; for it was performed before all the people, and the person on whom it was wrought was no stranger in Jerusalem. They therefore resolved to charge them strictly not to preach any more in the name of Jesus. Accordingly they were again called in and acquainted with this resolution of the council. To which the Apostles answered, that as they had received a commission from heaven to declare to all nations what they had seen and heard, it was certainly their duty to "obey God rather than man."

The labors of the Apostles were crowned with abundant success; and it seems that such was the aversion of the inveterate Jews to those who became converts to the faith of Christ, that they were deprived of business in their respective callings; for we find that the professors of the religion of the holy Jesus sold their effects, and brought the money to the Apostles, that they might deposit it in one common treasury, and from thence supply the several exigencies of the church. But hypocrisy was not unknown among the professors of religion, even in primitive times. Ananias and his wife Sapphira, having embraced the doctrines of the Gospel, pretended to follow the free and generous spirit of these times, by consecrating and devoting their estate to the honor of God and the necessities of the church. Accordingly, they sold their possessions, and brought part of the money and laid it at the Apostles' feet; hoping to deceive them, though guided by the Spirit of Omnipotence. But Peter, at his first coming in, asked Ananias how he could suffer Satan to fill his heart with such enormous wickedness; as to think to "deceive the Holy Ghost." That before it was sold, it was wholly in his own power, and afterwards the money

entirely at his own disposal; so that his action was capable of no other interpretation, than that he had not only abused and injured man, but mocked the Almighty himself, who, he must know, was privy to the most secret thoughts.

The Apostle had no sooner finished, than Ananias, to the great terror of all that were present, fell down dead by a stroke from heaven. Not long after, his wife came in, whom Peter reproved in the same manner he had done her husband, adding, that she should immediately end her life in the same awful manner; upon which she was smitten by the hand of Omnipotence, and fell down dead; sharing with her husband in the punishment, as she had before in the heinous crime. This remarkable instance of severity filled all the converts with fear and trembling, and prevented, in a great measure, that hypocrisy and dissimulation by which others might flatter themselves to deceive the church.

Such instances of severity were very extraordinary: the power of the Apostles was generally exerted in works of mercy and beneficence towards the sons and daughters of affliction. They cured all kinds of diseases, and cast out devils; so that they brought the sick into the streets, and laid them upon beds and couches, that the shadow at least of Peter as he passed by might cover some of them; well knowing that a single touch or word from either of the Apostles was sufficient to remove the most inveterate diseases. Such astonishing miracles could not fail of contributing to the propagation of the Gospel, and to convince the world that the Apostles were far more considerable persons than they at first took them to be; and that poverty and meanness may be blended with true worth and genuine greatness.

CHAPTER VII.

CONCLUDING SCENES OF ST. PETER'S LIFE.



HERETO, without much violence or opposition, the Christian doctrine had been propagated in Jerusalem, but now a storm commenced with the death of the proto-martyr Stephen, nor did it end but with the dispersion of all the disciples, except the Apostles, by which means the glad tidings of the Gospel, which had till now been confined to Judea, were preached to the Gentile world, and an ancient prophecy fulfilled, which says, "out of Sion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Thus does the Almighty bring good out of evil, and cause the malicious intentions of the wicked to redound to his praise.

The storm, though violent, being at length blown over, the church enjoyed a time of calmness and security; during which Peter went to visit the churches lately planted in those parts by the disciples whom the persecution had dispersed. And at his arrival at Lydda, he miraculously healed Æneas, who had been afflicted with the palsy, and confined to his bed eight years; but on Peter bidding him arise in the name of Jesus, he was immediately restored to perfect health. Nor was the success of this miracle confined to Æneas and his family; the fame of it was blazed through all the neighboring country, and many believed in the doctrine of the Son of God. It was even known at Joppa, a sea-port town about six miles from Lydda, and the brethren immediately sent for Peter, on a melancholy occasion. Tabitha, whose Greek name was Dorcas, a woman venerable for her piety and extensive charity, was lately dead, to the great loss of mankind, who loved genuine benevolence, especially the poor and afflicted who were supported by her charity. At Peter's arrival, he found her dressed for the funeral solemnity, and surrounded by mournful widows, who showed the coats and garments wherewith she had clothed them, the monuments of her liberality. But Peter put them all out, and, kneeling down, prayed with the utmost fervency; then turning to the body, he commanded her to arise, and taking her by the hand, presented her in perfect health to her friends and others, who were assembled to pay their last duties to so good a woman. This miracle confirmed those who had newly embraced the doctrine of Jesus, and converted many more to the faith. After which he stayed a considerable time at Joppa, lodging in the house of one Simon a tanner.

Peter, having finished his visitation to the newly planted churches, returned to Jerusalem, and was indefatigable in instructing the converts in the religion of Jesus, and preaching the glad tidings of salvation to the descendants of Jacob. But he did not long continue in this pleasing course; Herod Agrippa, in order to ingratiate himself into the favor of the Jews, put the Apostle James to death, and finding this was highly acceptable to that people, he resolved to extend his cruelty to Peter, and accordingly cast him into prison. But the churches were incessant in their prayers to God for his safety; and what have mortals to fear, when guarded by the hand of Omnipotence? Herod was persuaded he should soon accomplish his intention, and sacrifice Peter to the insatiable cruelty of the Jews. But the night before this intended execution, a messenger from the court of heaven visited the gloomy horrors of the dungeon, where he found Peter asleep between his keepers. The angel raised him up and took off his chains, ordered him to gird on his garments, and follow him. Peter obeyed, and having passed through the first and second watch, they came to the iron gate leading to the city, which opened to them of its own accord. The angel also accompanied him through one of the streets, and then departed from him; on which Peter came to himself, and perceived

that it was no vision, but that his great and beloved Master had really sent a messenger from above, and released him from prison. He therefore repaired to the house of Mary, where the church was assembled, and offering up their prayers to the throne of grace for his safety. On his knocking at the door, a maid who came to let him in, knowing his voice, ran back to tell them that Peter was at the door; which they at first considered as the effect of fancy; but the damsel continuing to affirm that it was really true, they concluded it was his angel, or some messenger sent from the court of heaven. But on opening the door, they were convinced of their mistake, finding that it really was Peter himself, who briefly told them how he was delivered: and desiring them to inform his brethren of his being set at liberty, he retired to another place. In the morning the officers came from Herod to the prison, with orders to bring Peter out to the people, who were gathered together to behold his execution. But when they came to the prison, the keepers informed them that the Apostle had made his escape; which so exasperated Herod, that he commanded those who were intrusted with the care of the prisoner to be put to death.

Some time after this miraculous deliverance of Peter, a controversy arose between the Jewish and Gentile converts, with regard to the observation of the Mosaic law; a dispute which gave great uneasiness to many persons; the Jews zealously contending that it was absolutely necessary to salvation to be circumcised, and observe the precepts of the ceremonial law as well as those of the Gospel. To compose this difference, it was thought necessary to summon a general council of the Apostles and brethren to meet at Jerusalem. This was accordingly done, and the case thoroughly debated. At last Peter stood up, and declared that God—having chosen him out of all the Apostles, to be the first preacher of the Gospel among the Gentiles—God, who was best able to judge of the hearts of men, had borne witness to them that they were accepted of him, by giving them his Holy Spirit as well as he had done the Jews, and, consequently, that there was no difference between them. They could not, therefore, place the Jewish yoke, which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear, upon the necks of the disciples, without tempting and provoking the Almighty, who had given sufficient reasons to believe that the Gentiles as well as the Jews would be saved by the grace of the Gospel. This declaration of Peter convinced the church, and it was unanimously decreed that no other burden than the temporary observance of a few particular precepts, equally convenient to the Jew and Gentile, should be imposed on them. And the decision was drawn up in an epistle, and sent to the several churches, for allaying the heats and controversies this dispute had occasioned.

As we have now related the transactions of this Apostle that are

founded on Scripture authority, we shall have recourse to ancient historians for the residue of his life.

Peter had preached the Gospel in various parts of the world, enlarging the kingdom of his great Master, and spreading the glad tidings of salvation among the inhabitants of various countries; and among the rest to those of Rome, then the mistress of the world. In that capital he is said to have continued several years, till the emperor Claudius, taking advantage of some seditious tumults raised by the Jews, published an edict whereby they were banished from Rome, and among the rest Peter, who returned to Jerusalem, and was present at the synod already mentioned. But how long he continued in the capital of Judea is uncertain; for we have no account of his transactions for many years. This, however, is certain, that he was not idle in the service of his great Master; and Eusebius tells us, from Metaphrastus, that he visited several of the western parts, and particularly the island of Great Britain, where he continued several years, spreading the glad tidings of salvation in those remote parts, and converting the several nations to the Christian faith. But however this be, whether Peter was or was not in England, it is certain that towards the latter end of Nero's reign he returned to Rome, where he found the minds of the people strangely bewildered, and hardened against the doctrines of the Gospel, by the sorceries of Simon Magus, who, as already observed, was chastized by Peter for his wickedness at Samaria. This monster of impiety not only opposed the preaching of the Apostles, but also did all in his power to render them and their doctrine odious to the emperor. Peter, foreseeing that the calumnies of Simon and his adherents would hasten his death, took the greater pains, and was still more assiduous to confirm those he had been anywise instrumental in converting to the sublime truths they had received.

Ambrose tells us, that when the people perceived the danger to which Peter was exposed, they prayed him to quit Rome, and repair for a while to some secure retreat, that his life might be preserved for the benefit of the church. Peter, with great reluctance, yielded to their entreaties, and made his escape by night; but as he passed the gate, he was met by a person in the form of his great and beloved Master, and on his asking whither he was going, answered, "To Rome, to be crucified a second time:" which Peter taking for a reproof of his cowardice returned again into the city, and was soon after apprehended, and cast, together with Paul, into the Mamertine prison. Here they were confined eight or nine months, but spent their time in the exercise of religion, especially in preaching to the prisoners, and those who resorted to them. And during his confinement it is generally thought Peter wrote the second epistle to the dispersed Jews, wherein he endeavors to confirm them in the belief and practice of Christianity, and to fortify them against those poi-

sonous and pernicious principles and actions which even then began to break in upon the Christian church.

Nero at last, returning from Achaia, entered Rome in triumph; and soon after his arrival resolved that the Apostles should fall as victims and sacrifices to his cruelties and revenge. While the fatal stroke was daily expected, the Christians in Rome were continually offering up their prayers to heaven to protect those two holy persons. But the Almighty was now willing to put an end to their sorrows; and, after sealing the truth they had preached with their own blood, to receive them into the regions of eternal bliss and happiness, and exchange their crowns of martyrdom for crowns of glory. Accordingly they were both condemned by the cruel emperor of Rome; and Peter having taken his farewell of the brethren, especially of Paul, was taken from the prison, and led to the top of the Vatican Mount near the Tiber, where he was sentenced to surrender up his life on the cross. At his coming to the place of execution, he begged the favor of the officers that he might not be crucified in the common manner, but with his head downward; affirming that he was unworthy to suffer in the same posture in which the Lord had suffered before him. This request was accordingly complied with; and the great Apostle Peter surrendered up his soul into the hands of his great and beneficent Master, who came down from heaven to ransom mankind from destruction, and open for them the gates of the heavenly Canaan. His body being taken down from the cross, is said to have been embalmed by Mercellinus, the presbyter, after the manner of the Jews, and then buried in the Vatican, near the Appian way, two miles from Rome. Here it remained till the time of pope Cornelius, who reconveyed it to Rome, where it rested in an obscure place till the reign of Constantine, who, from the great reverence he entertained for the Christian religion, erected many churches at Rome, and rebuilt and greatly enlarged the Vatican in honor of Peter. He also considerably enriched the church with gifts and ornaments: and it has continued increasing in riches and splendor in every age, until it is become one of the wonders of the world.

SAINT PAUL.

CHAPTER I.

ACCOUNT OF THIS APOSTLE, FROM HIS BIRTH TO HIS CONVERSION TO THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.



HIS great Apostle of the Gentiles was a native of Tarsus, and a descendant from the ancient stock of Abraham. He belonged to the tribe of Benjamin, the youngest son of Jacob, who thus prophesied of him: "Benjamin shall raven as a wolf; in the morning he shall devour the prey; and at night he shall divide the spoil;" a prophetic character which Tertullian and others will have to be accomplished in our Apostle. For in his youth, or "morning of his days," he persecuted the churches, destroying the flock of the Almighty; he "devoured the prey:" in his declining age, or "evening of his days," he became a physician of the nations, feeding and distributing with the greatest care and assiduity the sheep of Christ, that great Shepherd of Israel; he "divideth the spoil."

Tarsus, the place of this Apostle's nativity, was the metropolis of Cilicia, and situated about three hundred miles distant from Jerusalem; it was exceedingly rich and populous, and a Roman municipium, or free corporation, invested with the privileges of Rome by the two first emperors, as a reward for the citizens' firm adherence to the Cæsars in the rebellion of Crassus. Paul was therefore born a Roman citizen, and he often pleads this privilege on his trials.

It was common for the Jewish inhabitants of Tarsus to send their children into other cities for learning and improvement; especially to Jerusalem, where they were so numerous, that they had a synagogue of their own, called the synagogue of the Cilicians. To this capital our Apostle was also sent, and brought up at the school of that eminent rabbi, Gamaliel, in the most exact knowledge of the law of Moses. Nor did he fail to profit by the instructions of that great master; for he so diligently conformed himself to its precepts, that, without boasting, he asserts of himself, that touching the righteousness of the law he was blameless, and defied even his enemies to allege any thing to the contrary, even in his youth. He joined himself to the sect of the Pharisees, the most strict order of the Jewish religion; but, at the same time, the proudest, and the greatest enemies to Christ and his holy religion. With regard to his double capacity of Jewish extraction and Roman freedom, he had two

names, *San.* and *Paul*, the former Hebrew and the latter Latin. It was common for the descendants of Benjamin to give the name *Saul* to their children ever since the times of the first king of Israel, who was chosen out of that tribe; and *Paul* was a name as common among the Romans. We must also consider his trade of tent-making as a part of his education, it being a constant practice of the Jews to bring up their children to some honest calling, that in case of necessity they might provide for themselves by the labor of their own hands.

Saul, having obtained a thorough knowledge of the science cultivated by the Jews, and being naturally of a very hot and fiery temper, became a grand champion of the law of *Moses* and the tradition of the elders, which he considered as zeal for God. This rendered him impatient of all opposition to the doctrine and tenets he had imbibed, and a vehement blasphemer and persecutor of the Christians, who were commonly reputed the enemies and destroyers of the Jewish economy. We must not, however, consider our Apostle as guilty of the pride and hypocrisy of the Pharisees; for he declares that he had ever been careful to act in conformity to the dictates of his conscience, by which he thought himself bound to do "many things contrary to the name of *Jesus of Nazareth*." It was, therefore, the prejudices of his education, and the natural warmth of his temper, that excited him to those violent persecutions of the Christians for which he became so famous. The first action we find him engaged in was the disputation he and his countrymen had with the martyr *Stephen* with regard to the Messiah. The Christian was too hard for them in dispute; but they were too powerful for him in their civil interests; for being enraged at his convincing arguments, they carried him before the high priest, who by false accusations condemned him to death. How far *Saul* was concerned in this cruel action it is impossible to say; all we know is, that "he kept the raiment of them that slew him."

The storm of persecution against the church being thus begun, it increased prodigiously, and the poor Christians of *Jerusalem* were miserably harassed and dispersed. In this persecution our Apostle was a principal agent, searching all the adjacent parts for the afflicted saints, beating some in the synagogue, inflicting other cruelties, confining some in prison, and procuring others to be put to death. Nor could *Jerusalem* and the adjacent parts confine his fiery zeal: he applied to the sanhedrim, and procured a commission from that court to extend his persecution to *Damascus*. How infernally insatiable is the fury of a misguided zeal! How restless and unwearied in its designs of cruelty! It had already sufficiently harassed the poor Christians at *Jerusalem*; but not content with this, it persecuted them even to strange cities, even to *Damascus* itself, whither many of them had fled for shelter, resolving to bring them back to *Jerusalem*, in order to their punishment and execution

The Jewish sanhedrim had not only the power of seizing and scourging offenders against their law within the bounds of their own country, but, by the connivance and favor of the Romans, might send into other countries, where there were any synagogues that acknowledged a dependence in religious affairs upon the council of Jerusalem, to apprehend them; and accordingly Saul was sent to Damascus to apprehend what Christians he could find in that city, and bring them bound to Jerusalem. But it was the will of Providence he should be employed in a work of a very different nature, and accordingly he was stopped in his journey. For as he was traveling between Jerusalem and Damascus, to execute the commission of the Jewish sanhedrim, a refulgent light, far exceeding the brightness of the sun, darted upon him, at which both he and his companions were terribly amazed and confounded, and immediately fell prostrate on the ground. While they lay in this state a voice was heard in the Hebrew language, saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" To which Saul replied, "Who art thou, Lord?" And was immediately answered, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." As if the blessed Jesus had said, "All thy attempts to extirpate the faith in me will prove abortive; and, like kicking against the goads, wound and torment thyself." Saul was sufficiently convinced of his folly in having acted against Jesus, whom he was now assured to be the true Messiah, and asked, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" On which the blessed Jesus replied, "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." The company which were with him heard the voice, but did not see the person who spake from heaven. In all probability they were ignorant of the Hebrew language, and therefore only heard a confused sound: for the Apostle himself tells us, that "they heard not the voice of him that spake:" that is, they did not understand what was spoken. The Apostle now arose from the earth, but found himself deprived of sight, the resplendent brightness of the vision being too intense for mortal eyes to behold. His companions, therefore, led him by the hand to the city of Damascus, where he entered the house of Judas, and remained there three days without sight, nor did he either eat or drink, but spent his time in prayer to the Almighty, beseeching him to pardon the sins of his ignorance and blinded zeal.

In the mean time our blessed Saviour appeared in a vision to Ananias, a very devout and religious man, highly esteemed by all the inhabitants of Damascus, though he professed the religion of the crucified Jesus, commanding him to go into such a street in the city, and inquire in the house of Judas for "one Saul of Tarsus," then offering up the most fervent prayers to the throne of grace. "And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus; for behold he prayeth, and hath

seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight." Ananias, who was ever ready to obey the commands of the Most High, startled at the name, having heard the bloody practices of Saul at Jerusalem, and what commission he was now come to execute in Damascus. He therefore suspected that his conversation was nothing more than a snare artfully laid by him against the Christians. But our blessed Saviour soon removed his apprehensions, by telling him that his suspicions were entirely destitute of foundation: and that he had now taken him as a chosen vessel to preach the Gospel both to the Jews and Gentiles, and even before the greatest monarchs of the earth. "Go thy way," said he, "for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." At the same time he acquainted him with the great persecutions he should undergo for the sake of the Gospel: "For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." This quieted the fears of Ananias, who immediately obeyed the heavenly vision, repaired to the house of Judas, and, laying his hands upon Saul, addressed him in words to this effect: "That Jesus," said he, "who appeared to thee in the way, hath sent me to restore thy sight, and by the infusion of his Spirit to give thee the knowledge of those truths which thou hast blindly and ignorantly persecuted; but who is willing to receive thee by baptism into his church, and make thee a member of his body." This speech was no sooner pronounced, than there fell from his eyes thick films, resembling scales, and he received his sight; and after baptism conversed with the Christians of Damascus. Nor did he only converse with them; he also, to the great astonishment of the whole church, preached the Gospel to those Christians he came with an intention to destroy, at the same time boldly asserting, "that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God;" and proving it to the Jews with such demonstrative evidence, that they were confounded, and found it impossible to answer him.

CHAPTER II.

CONTINUATION OF THE LIFE OF ST. PAUL, FROM THE TIME OF HIS CONVERSION TILL THE COUNCIL WAS HELD AT JERUSALEM.



At the divine command, the miraculous convert retired into Arabia Petræa, where he received a full revelation of all the mysteries of Christianity; for he himself declares that he conferred not with flesh and blood. Having preached in several parts of that country some time, he returned again to Damascus, applying himself with the utmost assiduity to the great work of the ministry, frequenting the synagogues there, powerfully confuting the objections commonly made by the

descendants of Jacob against Jesus of Nazareth, and converting great numbers of Jews and Gentiles. He was, indeed, remarkably zealous in his preaching, and blessed with a very extraordinary method of reasoning, whereby he proved the fundamental points of Christianity beyond exception. This irritated the Jews to the highest degree; and at length, after two or three years' continuance in those parts, they found means to prevail on the governor of Damascus to have him put to death. But they knew it would be difficult to take him, as he had so many friends in the city; they therefore kept themselves in a continual watch, searching all the houses where they supposed he might conceal himself, and also obtained a guard from the governor to observe the gates, in order to prevent his escaping from them. In this distress, his Christian friends were far from deserting him; they tried every method that offered to procure his escape; but finding it impossible for him to pass through either of the gates of the city, they let him down from one of their houses through a window in a basket over the wall, by which means the cruel designs of his enemies were rendered abortive.

Having thus escaped from his malicious persecutors, he repaired to Jerusalem, and on his arrival addressed himself to the church. But they, knowing well the former temper and principles of this great persecutor, shunned his company, till Barnabas brought him to Peter, who was not yet cast into prison, and to James, bishop of Jerusalem, informing them of his miraculous conversion, and that he had preached the Gospel with the greatest boldness in the synagogues of Damascus, upon which they gladly received him, and familiarly entertained him fifteen days. During this

interval, he was remarkably assiduous in preaching the Gospel of the Son of God, and confuting the Hellenistic Jews with the greatest courage and resolution. But snares were laid for him, for malice can as easily cease to be as to remain inactive. Being warned by God in a vision that his testimony would not be received at Jerusalem, he thought proper to depart and preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. Accordingly, being conducted by his brethren to Cæsarea Philippi, he set sail for Tarsus, his native city; from whence he was soon after brought by Barnabas to Antioch, to assist him in propagating Christianity in that city. In this employment he spent one whole year, and had the satisfaction of seeing the Gospel flourish in a very remarkable manner. It was in this city that the disciples first acquired the name of Christians, before which they were styled Nazarenes; but this appellation soon prevailed over all the world, and the latter was in a few ages almost entirely forgotten.

About this time a terrible famine, foretold by Agabus, happened in several parts of the Roman empire, particularly Judea, which induced the Christians at Antioch to compassionate the miseries of their brethren at Jerusalem. They accordingly raised considerable contributions for their relief, which they sent to the capital of Judea, by the hands of Barnabas and Saul, who immediately after executing their commission returned to Antioch. But while they were performing the public exercises of religion, it was revealed to them by the Holy Ghost, that they should "set apart Barnabas and Saul" to preach the Gospel in other places, which was accordingly done, and they were immediately deputed for that service by prayer, fasting, and the imposition of hands. The first place they visited was Seleucia, where they did not continue long, but sailed for Cyprus; and at Salamis, a great city in that island, they preached in the synagogue of the Jews. From hence they removed to Paphos, the residence of Sergius Paulus the proconsul of the island, a man of great wisdom and prudence, but miserably seduced by the wicked artifices of Bar-Jesus, a Jewish impostor, who styled himself Elymas, or the magician, vehemently opposed the Apostles, and kept the proconsul from embracing the faith. The proconsul, however, called for the Apostles, who, after severely rebuking Elymas for his malicious opposition to the truth, told him the divine vengeance was now ready to seize upon him, and immediately he was deprived of his sight. The vengeance of the Almighty was remarkably displayed in this punishment, by depriving him of his bodily eyes, who had so willfully and maliciously shut those of his mind against the light of the Gospel, and also endeavored to keep others in darkness and ignorance. This miracle convinced the proconsul of the truth of the doctrines taught by the Apostles, and made him a convert to the faith.

Paul, after this remarkable success in Cyprus, repaired to Perga in Pamphylia, and taking another with him in the room of Mark, who was gone to Jerusalem, traveled to Antioch, and the metropolis of Pisidia.

Soon after their arrival, they entered the synagogue of the Jews on the Sabbath-day, and after the reading of the law, Paul, being invited by the rulers of the synagogue, addressed them, and the spirited address of the great Apostle carried with it its own weight, and obtained from the converted Gentiles a request that it should again be delivered the ensuing Sabbath; when almost the whole city flocked to hear the Apostle; at which the Jews were filled with envy, and contradicted Paul, uttering many blasphemous expressions against the name of Jesus of Nazareth. But their opposition could not daunt the Apostles, who boldly declared that our blessed Saviour had charged them to preach the Gospel first to the Jews, but as they so obstinately rejected it, they were now to address themselves to the Gentiles; who hearing this, rejoiced exceedingly, magnifying the words of the Almighty, and many of them embraced the doctrines of the Gospel. This increased the malice and fury of the Jews; who, by false and artful insinuations, prevailed on some of the more bigoted and honorable women to bring over their husbands to their party; by which means Paul and Barnabas were driven out of the city. At which the Apostles departed, shaking off the dust from their feet, as a testimony of the sense they had of the ingratitude and infidelity of the Jews. From Antioch they went to Iconium, the metropolis of Lycaonia, a province of the Lesser Asia, where they entered into the synagogue of the Jews, notwithstanding the ill treatment they had met with from the Jews in other places; for so great was their zeal for the Gospel, that they were not to be deterred from preaching it by ill usage, however great. Therefore, according to their usual method, they again began their preaching in the assembly of Israelites, and the Almighty so far assisted their endeavors, that many, both Jews and proselytes, believed. Their success encouraged them to continue a considerable time in the city to instruct the converts, and confirm their faith by miracles. But though they had gained a considerable part of the city to the faith, yet many continued in their infidelity: the old leaven of Jewish malice began again to ferment, and the unbelieving Jews, having stirred up many Gentiles against the Apostles, at last prevailed on the multitude to stone them. But the Apostles, having timely notice of their design, fled from the city and traveled to Lystra, where they preached the Gospel to the inhabitants and those who dwelt in the adjacent country. Among the converts at Lystra was a man who had been lame from his mother's womb, and never had walked. But Paul perceiving that he had faith to be saved, thought proper to add the cure of his body to that of his soul, knowing that it would not only be beneficial to him but to all the rest of the believers, by confirming their faith. And that the miracle might be wrought in the most conspicuous manner, he in the midst of the congregation said in an audible voice to the man, "Stand upright on thy feet."

And the words were no sooner pronounced than his strength was at once restored, and he leaped up and walked.

The people who beheld this miracle well knew that it was not wrought by any human power ; but having been initiated into the superstitious customs of the heathens, they cried out, " The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men." Accordingly they called Barnabas Jupiter, because of his venerable gravity, and Paul Mercury, from his eloquence. Nor was it long before the whole city resounded with acclamations ; so that all the inhabitants gathered themselves together, and, preceded by the priest of Jupiter, and oxen dressed in garlands, they came to the house where the Apostles were, intending to do sacrifice to them. But as soon as Barnabas and Paul understood their intentions, they were greatly affected at this superstitious design ; and rending their clothes, to express their grief and abhorrence of the action, ran to them, crying out, " Ye men of Lystra, ye are mistaken in the object of your worship ; for though we have done many miracles in the name and by the power of Christ, yet we are no more than men, and subject to the same passions with yourselves, and preach unto you the glad tidings of salvation, that ye may forsake the vanities of this world, and turn to the living God, who created the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all the creatures they contain. This omnipotent Being suffered all nations formerly to walk in their own ways, though he never left himself without witness, doing the greatest good to the children of men ; it is he that sendeth rain from heaven, and crowneth the year with fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with joy and gladness." This argument of the Apostle's had the desired effect ; and the people were at last, though with difficulty, persuaded to lay aside their intended idolatrous sacrifice.

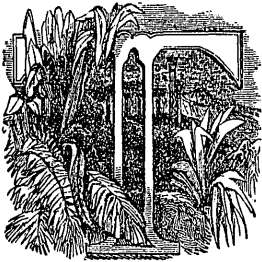
The Apostles indefatigably persevered in the execution of their important commission, declaring wherever they went the glad tidings of salvation, through repentance unto life and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. But the malice of the Jews still pursued them ; for some of these bigoted Israelites coming from Antioch and Iconium exasperated and stirred up the multitude ; so that those very persons who could hardly be restrained from offering sacrifice to them, now used them like slaves, stoning them in so cruel a manner that Paul was thought to be dead, and as such they dragged him out of the city ; but while the Christians of Lystra were attending on his body, probably in order to carry him to the grave, he arose and returned with them into the city ; and the next day departed with Barnabas to Derbe, where they preached the Gospel, and converted many : no danger being able to terrify them from the work of the ministry, and publishing the glad tidings of salvation in every place. They did not, however, long continue at Derbe, but returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch in Pisidia, confirming the Christians of those places in the faith, earnestly persuading them to persevere, and not to be discouraged with

those troubles and persecutions which they must expect would attend the profession of the Gospel. And that the affairs of the church might be conducted with more regularity, they ordained elders and pastors, to teach, to instruct, and to watch over them; and then left them to the protection of the Almighty, to whose care they recommended them by prayer and fasting. After leaving Antioch, they passed through Pisidia, and came to Pamphylia: and after preaching the Gospel at Perga, they went down to Attalia.

Having thus finished the circuit of their ministry, they returned back to Antioch in Syria, from whence they at first departed. Here they summoned the church, and gave them an account of their ministry, the success it had met in different parts, and how great a door had thus been opened for the conversion of the Gentile world. While Paul continued at Antioch, that famous controversy with regard to the observation of the Jewish ceremonies in the Christian dispensation was set on foot by certain Jewish converts, to the great disturbance of the whole church; and it was determined to send Paul and Barnabas to consult with the Apostles and church at Jerusalem, that this affair might be settled on the most solid foundation. On their arrival at Jerusalem, they first addressed themselves to Peter, James, and John, the pillars of that church, by whom they were kindly entertained, and admitted to the right hand of fellowship: and perceiving, by the account given them by Paul, that the Gospel of the uncircumcision was committed to him, as that of the circumcision was to Peter, they agreed that Peter should preach to the Jews and Paul to the Gentiles. This being determined, a council was summoned, wherein Peter declared his opinion, and Paul and Barnabas acquainted them with the great things God, by their ministry, had done among the Gentiles: a plain evidence that they were accepted by the Almighty, though uncircumcised, as well as the Jews, with all their legal rites and privileges: accordingly it was unanimously determined that the Gentiles were not under the obligation of the law of Moses, and therefore that some persons of their own church should be joined with Paul and Barnabas, to carry the decrees of the council to Antioch, for their further satisfaction in this matter. Nothing tends more to impede the progress of vital religion than a bigoted attachment to inessential forms and modes.

CHAPTER III.

TRANSACTIONS OF THIS GREAT APOSTLE FROM THE TIME OF THE SYNOD AT JERUSALEM TILL HIS PREACHING AT ATHENS.



HE controversy concerning the observation of Jewish ceremonies in the Christian church, being decided in favor of Paul, he and his companions returned back to Antioch; and soon after Peter himself came down. On reading the decretal epistle in the church, the Jewish converts conversed freely and inoffensively with the Gentiles, till some of the Jews coming thither from Jerusalem, Peter withdrew his conversation, as if it had been a thing unwarrantable and unlawful. By such a strange method of proceeding the minds of many were dissatisfied, and their conscience very uneasy. Paul with the greatest concern observed it, and publicly rebuked Peter with the sharpness and severity his unwarrantable practice deserved.

Soon after this dispute, Paul and Barnabas resolved to visit the churches they had planted among the Gentiles, and Barnabas was desirous of taking with him his cousin Mark; but this Paul strenuously opposed, as he had left them in their former journey. This trifling dispute arose to such a height, that these two great Apostles and fellow-laborers in the Gospel parted; Barnabas, taking Mark with him, repaired to Cyprus, his native country; and Paul, having made choice of Silas, and recommended the success of his undertaking to the care of divine providence, set forward on his intended journey.

They first visited the churches of Syria and Cilicia, confirming the people in the faith by their instructions and exhortations. Hence they sailed to Crete, where Paul preached the Gospel and constituted Titus to be the first bishop and pastor of the island, leaving him to settle those affairs of the church which time would not permit the Apostle to settle himself. From hence Paul and Silas returned back into Cilicia, and came to Lystra, where they found Timothy, whose father was a Greek, but his mother a Jewish convert, and by her he had been brought up under all the advantages of a pious and religious education, especially with regard to the Holy Scriptures, which he had studied with the greatest assiduity and success. This person Paul designed for the companion of his travels, and a special instrument in the ministry of the Gospel. But

knowing that his being uncircumcised would prove a stumbling-block to the Jews, he caused him to be circumcised ; being willing in lawful and indifferent matters to conform himself to the tempers and apprehensions of men, in order to save their souls. In this instance the Apostle evinced much prudence, well knowing that inveterate prejudices in religious matters are not easily overcome ; for which reason he is said to become all things to all men.

Every thing being ready for their journey, Paul and his companion departed from Lystra, and passed through Phrygia and the country of Galatia, where the Apostle was entertained with the greatest kindness and veneration, the people looking upon him as an angel sent immediately from heaven ; and being by revelation forbidden to go into Asia, he was commanded by a second vision to repair to Macedonia to preach the Gospel. Accordingly, our Apostle prepared to pass from Asia into Europe. Here Luke joined them, and became ever after the inseparable companion of Paul, who, being desirous of finding the speediest passage into Macedonia, took ship, with his companions Silas, Luke, and Timothy, and came to Samothracia, an island in the *Ægean* Sea, not far from Thrace ; and the next day he went to Neapolis, a port of Macedonia. Leaving Neapolis, they repaired to Philippi, the metropolis of that part of Macedonia, and a Roman colony, where they stayed some days.

In this city Paul, according to his constant practice, preached in a *Proseucha*, or oratory of the Jews, which stood by the river side at some distance from the city, and was much frequented by the devout women of their religion, who met there to pray and hear the law. To these Paul preached the glad tidings of the Gospel ; and by the influence of the Holy Spirit converted many, especially a certain woman named Lydia, a Jewish proselyte, a seller of purple in that city, but a native of Thyatira. This woman being baptized, with her whole family, was so importunate with Paul and his companions to abide at her house, that they were constrained to accept of her invitation. During the time the Apostles resided in this city, they continued their daily course of worshipping at the same oratory ; and after several days, as they were repairing to the same place of devotion, there met them a damsel who possessed a spirit of divination, by whom her masters acquired very great advantage. This woman followed Paul and his companions, crying out, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation." Paul at first took no notice of her, not being willing to multiply miracles without necessity. But when he saw her following them several days together, he began to be troubled ; and, in imitation of his great Master, who would not suffer the devil to acknowledge him, lest his false and lying tongue should prejudice the truth in the minds of men, commanded the spirit in the name of Jesus to come out of her. The evil spirit with reluctance obeyed, and left the damsel that very instant. This miraculous

cure proving a great loss to her masters, who acquired large gains from her soothsaying, they were filled with envy and malice against the Apostles; and by their instigation the multitude arose and seized upon Paul and his companions, and hurried them before the magistrates and governors of the colony; and accused them, as Jews, of introducing many innovations which were prejudicial to the state, and unlawful for them to comply with, as being Romans.

The magistrates, being concerned for the tranquillity of the state, and jealous of all disturbances, were very forward to punish the offenders, against whom great numbers of the multitude testified; and therefore commanded the officers to strip them and scourge them severely, as seditious persons. This was accordingly executed; after which the Apostles were committed to close custody, the jailer receiving more than ordinary charge to keep them safely; and he accordingly thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. But the most obscure dungeon, or the pitchy mantle of the night, cannot intercept the beams of divine joy and comfort from the souls of pious men. Their minds were all serenity; and at midnight they prayed and sung praises so loud, that they were heard in every part of the prison. Nor were their prayers offered to the throne of grace in vain: an earthquake shook the foundations of the prison, opened the doors, loosed the chains, and set the prisoners at liberty.

This convulsion of nature roused the jailer from his sleep; and concluding from what he saw that all his prisoners were escaped, he was going to put a period to his life; but Paul observing him, hastily cried, "Do thyself no harm, for we are all here." The keeper was now as greatly surprised at the goodness of the Apostles as he was before terrified at the thoughts of their escape; and calling for a light, he came immediately into the presence of the Apostles, fell down at their feet, took them from the dungeon, brought them to his house, washed their stripes, and begged of them to instruct him in the knowledge of that God who was so mighty to save. Paul readily granted his request, and replied, that if he believed in Jesus Christ he might be saved, with his whole house: accordingly the jailer with all his family were, after competent instruction, baptized and received as members of the church of Christ. How happy a change does the doctrine of the Gospel make in the minds of men! How does it smooth the roughest tempers, and instill the sweetest principles of civility and good-nature into the minds of men! He who but a few moments before tyrannized over the Apostles with the most cruel usage, now treats them with the greatest respect and the highest marks of kindness.

As soon as it was day the magistrates, either hearing what had happened, or reflecting on what they had done as too harsh and unjustifiable, sent their sergeant to the jailer with orders to discharge the Apostles.

The jailer joyfully delivered the message, and bid them "depart in peace;" but Paul, that he might make the magistrates sensible what injury they had done them, and how unjustly they had punished him without examination or trial, sent them word, that as they thought proper to scourge and imprison Romans, contrary to the laws of the empire, he expected they should come themselves, and make them some satisfaction. The magistrates were terrified at this message; well knowing how dangerous it was to provoke the formidable power of the Romans, who never suffered any freeman to be beaten uncondemned; they came therefore to the prison, and very submissively entreated the Apostles to depart without any farther disturbance. This small recompense for the cruel usage they had received was accepted by the meek followers of the blessed Jesus; they left the prison, and retired to the house of Lydia, where they comforted their brethren with an account of their deliverance, and departed; having laid the foundation of a very eminent church, as appears from Paul's epistle to the Philippians.

Leaving Philippi, Paul and his companions continued their journey towards the west, till they came to Thessalonica, the metropolis of Macedonia, about a hundred and twenty miles from Philippi. On their arrival at Thessalonica, Paul according to his custom went into the synagoge of the Jews and preached unto his countrymen; the ungrateful usage he had met with in other places not discouraging him in persevering in so glorious a work. His doctrine, however, was strenuously opposed by the Jews, who would not allow Jesus to be the Messiah, because of his ignominious death.

During the stay of the Apostles at Thessalonica, they lodged in the house of a certain Christian named Jason, who entertained them very courteously. But the Jews would not suffer the Apostles to continue at rest. They refused to embrace the Gospel themselves, and therefore envied its success, and determined to oppose its progress. Accordingly, they gathered together a great number of lewd and wicked wretches, who beset the house of Jason, intending to take Paul and deliver him up to an incensed multitude. But in this they were disappointed, Paul and Silas being removed from thence by the Christians, and concealed in some other part of the city. Their fury, however, was rather exasperated than lessened at losing their prey; and, as they could not find the Apostles of the blessed Jesus, they determined to be revenged on Jason, who had concealed them: accordingly they seized on him, with some others of the brethren, and carried them before the magistrates of the city, accusing them, as they had before done the Apostles themselves at Philippi, of disturbing the peace of the empire, and setting up Jesus as a king, in derogation of the emperor's dignity and authority. This accusation induced both the people and the magistrates to be their enemies; and though Jason was only accused of harboring those innovators, yet the magis-

trates could not be prevailed upon to dismiss him and his companions till they had given security for their appearance.

As soon as the tumult was over, the Thessalonians who had been converted by them sent away Paul and Silas by night to Beræa, a city about fifty miles south of Thessalonica, but out of the power of their enemies. Here also Paul's great love for his countrymen the Jews, and his earnest desire of their salvation, excited him to preach to them in particular; accordingly, he entered into their synagogue, and explained the Gospel unto them, proving out of the Scriptures of the Old Testament the truth of the doctrines he advanced. These Jews were of a more ingenuous and candid temper than those of Thessalonica; and as they heard him with great reverence and attention expound and apply the Scriptures, so they searched diligently, whether his proofs were proper and pertinent, and consonant to the sense of the texts he referred to: and having found every thing to be agreeable to what Paul had advanced, many of them believed; and several Gentiles, following their example, became obedient to the faith, among whom were several women of quality. The news of this remarkable success was carried to Thessalonica, and greatly incensed the inveterate enemies of the Gospel there, who accordingly repaired to Beræa, and raised tumults against the Apostle; so that Paul, to avoid their fury, was forced to leave the town; but Silas and Timothy, either less known or less envied, continued still there.

Paul leaving Beræa under the conduct of certain guides, it was said he designed to retire by sea out of Greece, that his restless enemies might cease their persecution; but the guides, according to Paul's order, brought him to Athens, and left him there, after receiving from him an order for Silas and Timotheus to repair to him as soon as possible. While Paul continued at Athens, expecting the arrival of Silas and Timothy, he walked up and down, to take a more accurate survey of the city, which he found miserably overrun with superstition and idolatry. The inhabitants were remarkably religious and devout; they had a great number of gods whom they adored; false indeed they were, but such as they, being destitute of revelation, accounted true; and so very careful were they that no deity should want due honor from them, that they had an altar inscribed to THE UNKNOWN GOD. A great variety of reasons are given for this inscription: some affirm that it was the name which the pagans generally gave to the God of the Jews, but others think that it included all the gods of Asia, Europe, and Africa. These superstitious practices grieved the spirit of the Apostle; accordingly, he exerted his strength for their conversion; he disputed on the Sabbath-days in the synagogues of the Jews; and at other times took all opportunities of preaching to the Athenians the coming of the Messiah to save the world.

This doctrine was equally new and strange to the Athenians; and though they did not persecute him as the Jews did, yet his preaching

Jesus was considered by the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers as a fabulous legend, and by the more sober part, as a discovery of some new gods which they had not yet placed in their temples: and though they were not unwilling to receive any new deities, yet as the Areopagus, the supreme court of the city, was to judge of all gods to whom public worship might be allowed, they brought him before those judges, to give an account of his doctrine. Paul, being placed before the judges of this high assembly, readily gave them an account of his doctrine in a grave and elegant speech; wherein he did not tell them they were horrible and gross idolaters, lest he should offend them, and thereby prevent them from listening to his reasons; but having commended them for their religious dispositions, he took occasion, from the altar inscribed to the unknown God, to make a proper defence of his doctrine. "I endeavor," said he, "only to explain that altar to you, and manifest the nature of that God whom ye ignorantly worship. The true God is he that made the world, and all things therein; and who, being Lord of all, dwells not in temples made with hands, nor is to be worshiped in lifeless idols. As he is the Creator of all things, he cannot be confined to the workmanship of man, whether temples or statues; nor stand in need of sacrifices, since he is the fountain of life to all things. He made from one common original the whole race of mankind; and hath wisely determined their dependence on him, that they might be obliged to seek after him and serve him: a truth perceivable in the darkest state of ignorance, and acknowledged by one of your own poets. If this be the nature of God, it is surely the highest absurdity to represent him by an image or similitude. The divine patience hath been too much exercised already with such gross abuses in religion, but now expects a thorough reformation, having sent his Son Jesus Christ to make him known to the world, and at the same time to inform them that he hath appointed a day of general judgment; when the religion of mankind shall be tried by the test of the Gospel, before his only begotten Son, who is appointed sole judge of the quick and dead, and whose commission to that high office hath been ratified by the Almighty, in raising him from the dead." On his mentioning the resurrection, some of the philosophers mocked and derided him; others, more modest, but not satisfied with the proofs he had given, gravely answered, "We would hear thee again of this matter." After which Paul departed from the court; but not without some success: for a few of his auditors believed, and attended his instructions.

Thus boldly did this intrepid servant and soldier of Jesus Christ assert the cause of his divine Master, among the great, the wise, and the learned, and reason with great persuasion and eloquence on the nature of God, and the manner in which he has commanded his creatures to worship, even in spirit and in truth.

CHAPTER IV.

SUCCESS OF ST. PAUL'S MINISTRY AT CORINTH AND EPHESUS.



URING Paul's stay at Athens, Timothy, according to the order he had received, came to him out of Macedonia; and brought an account that the Christians at Thessalonica were under persecution from their fellow-citizens ever since his departure: at which Paul was greatly concerned, and at first inclined to visit them in person, to confirm them in the faith they had embraced; but being hindered by the enemies of the Gospel, he sent

Timothy to comfort them, and put them in mind of what they had at first heard, namely, that persecution would be the constant attendant on their profession.

On Timothy's departure, Paul left Athens, and traveled to Corinth, a very populous place, and famous for its trade. Here he found Aquila and Priscilla his wife, lately come from Italy, having been banished from Rome by the decree of Claudius. And, they being of the same trade which he himself had learned in his youth, he wrought with them, that he might not be burdensome to the new converts: honest ministers are not mercenary. After some stay in Corinth, the Apostle was joined by Silas and Timothy, and disputed frequently in the synagogue, reasoning and proving that Jesus was the true Messiah. This exasperated the Jews to the greatest degree, and what they could not conquer by argument and force of reason they endeavored to carry by noise and clamor, blended with blasphemies and revilings; the last refuge of an impotent and baffled cause. But Paul, to testify his displeasure, shook his garments, and told them that since they were determined to pull down the vengeance of heaven upon their own heads, he was absolutely guiltless and innocent, and would henceforth address himself to the Gentiles. Accordingly he left them and repaired to the house of Justus, a religious proselyte, where, by his preaching and miracles, he converted great numbers to the faith; among whom were Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and Gaius and Stephanus, who with their families were baptized and admitted members of the Christian church. But lest the ungrateful, yea, cruel behavior of unbelievers, should discourage this able minister from prosecuting the glorious work of the conversion of sinners, our dear Redeemer

appeared to him in a vision, and told him that, notwithstanding the bad success he had hitherto met with, there was a large harvest to be gathered in that place : that he should not be afraid of his enemies, but preach the Gospel boldly and securely ; for that he himself would protect and preserve him.

About this time he seems to have written his first epistle to the Thessalonians, Silas and Timothy being lately returned from thence, and delivered the message for which he had sent them thither. The principal design of this epistle is to confirm them in the belief of the Christian religion, and excite them to persevere in it, notwithstanding all the malice of their enemies, and the persecutions they must expect to suffer, and to instruct them in the duties of a religious life.

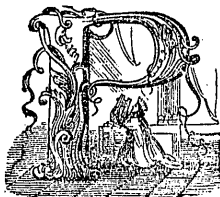
During the Apostle's stay at Corinth, he wrote his second epistle to the Thessalonians, to supply his absence. In this epistle he again endeavors to confirm their minds in the truth of the Gospel, and prevent their being shaken with those troubles which the wicked and unbelieving Jews would be continually raising against them. On his leaving the church at Corinth, Paul took ship at Cenchrea, the port of Corinth, for Syria, taking with him Aquila and Priscilla ; and on his arrival at Ephesus, he preached a while in the synagogue of the Jews, promising to return to them after keeping the passover at Jerusalem. Accordingly he again took ship, and landed at Cæsarea, and from thence traveled to Jerusalem, where he kept the feast, visited the church, and then repaired to Antioch. Here he stayed some time, and then traversed the countries of Galatia and Phrygia, confirming the newly converted Christians, till he returned to Ephesus, where he fixed his abode for three years, bringing with him Gaius of Derbe, Aristarchus a native of Thessalonica, Timotheus and Erastus of Corinth, and Titus. The first thing he did after his arrival, was to examine certain disciples, " whether they had received the Holy Ghost since they believed ?" To which they answered, " that the doctrine they had received promised nothing of that nature, nor had they ever heard that such an extraordinary Spirit had of late been bestowed upon the church." This answer surprised the Apostle who asked them in what name they had been baptized ; since in the Christian form the name of the Holy Ghost was always expressed. They replied that they had only received John's baptism ; upon which the Apostle informed them, that though John's baptism commanded nothing but repentance, yet it tacitly implied the whole doctrine of Christ and the Holy Ghost. When they heard this they were baptized according to the form prescribed by Christ himself—that is, in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ; and after the Apostle had prayed and laid his hands over them, they received the gifts of tongues, and other miraculous powers. After this, he entered into the Jewish synagogue, where, for the first three months, he contended and disputed with the Jews, endea-

voing with great earnestness and resolution to convince them of the truth of the Christian religion. But when instead of success he met with nothing but obstinacy and infidelity, he left the synagogue, and taking those with him whom he had converted, instructed them and others who resorted to him in the school of one Tyrannus, a place where scholars used to be instructed. In this manner he continued to preach the Gospel two whole years; by which means the Jews and proselytes had an opportunity of hearing the glad tidings of salvation; and because miracles are the clearest evidence of a divine mission, the Almighty was pleased to testify the doctrine which Paul delivered by amazing and miraculous operations, many of which were of a peculiar and extraordinary nature; for he not only healed those that came to him, but if napkins or handkerchiefs were only touched by him, and applied to the sick, their diseases immediately vanished, and the evil spirits departed out of them that were possessed by them.

About this time the Apostle wrote his epistle to the Galatians; for he had heard that since his departure corrupt opinions had crept in among them with regard to the necessity of observing the legal rites; and that several impostors had found admittance into the church, who knew no better method of undermining the doctrine he had planted there than by villifying his person, slighting him as an Apostle only at second hand, not to be compared with Peter, James, and John, who had familiarly conversed with Christ in the days of his flesh, and been immediately deputed by him. In this epistle, therefore, he reproves them with some necessary severity for their being so soon led out of the right way wherein he had placed them, and so easily suffering themselves to be imposed upon by the crafty artifices of seducers. He vindicates the honor of his apostleship, and the immediate receiving his commission from Christ, wherein he shows that he was not inferior to the very best of the Apostles. He largely refutes those Judaical opinions that had tainted and infected them, and in the conclusion instructs them in the rules and duties of a holy life.

CHAPTER V.

TRANSACTIONS OF ST. PAUL, DURING THE FARTHER PROGRESS OF HIS MINISTRY, TO THE TIME OF HIS ARRAIGNMENT BEFORE FELIX.



PAUL, soon after the tumult at Ephesus, called the Christians together, and took his leave of them, with the most tender expressions of love and affection. He had now spent almost three years at Ephesus, and founded there a very considerable church, of which he had ordained Timothy the first bishop. He first traveled about two hundred miles northward to Troas, before he took ship, expecting to meet Titus there. But missing him, he proceeded on his voyage to Macedonia. On his arrival there he preached the Gospel in several places, even as far as Illyricum, now called Slavonia.

During this journey he met with many troubles and dangers; "without were fightings, and within fears;" but God, who comforteth those that are cast down, revived his spirits by the arrival of Titus, who gave him a pleasing account of the good effects his epistle had produced at Corinth. This worthy bishop came thither with large contributions from the church at Corinth, and, from the example of those liberal Christians, Paul stirred up the Macedonians to imitate their charity, intending to assist the poor Christians at Jerusalem.

During the stay of Titus in Macedonia, Paul wrote his second epistle to the Corinthians, and sent it to them by Titus and Luke. In this epistle he endeavors to rectify what his former epistle had not effected, to vindicate his apostleship from that contempt and scorn, and himself from those slanders and aspersions, which the seducers, who found themselves lashed by his former letter, had cast upon him; together with several other particular cases relative to the church. About this time also he wrote his first epistle to Timothy, whom he had left at Ephesus.

During his stay in Greece, he went to Corinth, where he wrote his epistle to the Romans, which he sent by Phœbe, a deaconess of the church of Cenchrea, near Corinth. His principal intention in this epistle is, fully to state and determine the great controversy between the Jews and Gentiles with regard to the obligations of the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish law, and those principal and material points of doctrine depending upon it—namely, Christian liberty, the use of indifferent things, and the like. And, which is the chief intention of all religion,

instructs them and presses them to perform the duties of a holy and pious life, such as the Christian doctrine naturally recommends.

Paul being now determined to return into Syria, in order to convey the contributions to the brethren at Jerusalem, set out on his journey; but being informed that the Jews had formed a design of killing him by the way, he returned back into Macedonia, and came to Philippi, from whence he went to Troas, where he stayed seven days. Here he preached to them on the Lord's day, and continued his discourse till midnight, being himself to depart in the morning. The length of his discourse and time of the night caused some of his audience to be overtaken with sleep, and among them a young man named Eutychus, who fell from the third story, and was taken up dead; but the Apostle, by his prayers, presently restored him to life and health. How indefatigable was the industry of this great Apostle! How closely did he tread in the steps of his great Master, who "went about doing good!" He preached and wrought miracles wherever he came. As a master-builder, he either laid a foundation or raised the superstructure. He was "instant in season and out of season," and spared no pains to assist the souls of men. The night being thus spent in holy exercises, Paul took his leave of the brethren in the morning, traveling on foot to Assos, a sea-port town, whither he had before sent his companions by sea. From thence they sailed to Mytilene, a city in the isle of Lesbos. The next day they sailed from thence and came over against Chios, and the day following landed at Trogyllium, a promontory of Ionia, near Samos. The next day they came to Miletus, not putting in at Ephesus, because the Apostle was resolved if possible to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.

On his arrival at Miletus, he sent to Ephesus to summon the elders of the church; and on their coming reminded them of the manner in which he had conversed among them; how faithfully and affectionately he had discharged the offices of his ministry, and how incessantly he had labored for the good of the souls of men; adding, that he had never failed to acquaint them, both in public and private, with whatever might be useful and profitable to them; urging both the Jews and Gentiles to repentance and reformation of life, and a hearty perseverance in the faith of Christ: that he was now going up to Jerusalem, where he was ignorant of what might befall him, except what had been foretold him by those who were endued with the prophetic gifts of the Holy Ghost: namely, that afflictions and imprisonment would attend him. But that this gave him no concern, being willing to lay down his life whenever the Gospel required it, and fully determined to serve faithfully his great Lord and Master. Paul having finished his discourse, he kneeled down and joined with them in prayer; and they all melted into tears, and with the greatest expressions of sorrow attended him to the ship; grieving in the most passionate

manner for what he had told them, "that they should see his face no more."

Paul with his companions now departed from Miletus, and arrived at Coos, from whence they sailed the next day to Rhodes, a large island in the *Ægean* Sea. Leaving this place they came to Patara, the metropolis of Lycia, where they went on board another vessel bound for Tyre in Phœnicia. On his arrival, he visited the brethren there, and continued with them a week, and was advised by some of them, who had the gift of prophecy, not to go up to Jerusalem. But the Apostle would by no means abandon his design, or refuse to suffer any thing, provided he might spread the Gospel of his Saviour. Finding all persuasions were in vain, they jointly accompanied him to the shore, where he kneeled down and prayed with them; and after embracing them with the utmost affection, he went on board, and came to Ptolemais, and the next day to Cæsarea. During their stay in this place, Agabus, a Christian prophet, came thither from Judea, who, taking Paul's girdle, bound his own hands and feet with it, signifying by this symbol that the Jews would bind Paul in that manner, and deliver him over to the Gentiles. Whereupon both his own companions and the Christians of Cæsarea earnestly besought him that he would not go up to Jerusalem. But the Apostle asked them if they intended by these passionate dissuasives to add more affliction to his sorrow? "For I am ready," continued he, "not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus."

When the disciples found that his resolution was not to be shaken, they importuned him no farther, leaving the event to be determined according to the pleasure of the Most High. And all things being ready, Paul and his companions set forward on their journey, and were kindly and joyfully received by the Christians on their arrival at Jerusalem. The day after their arrival, Paul and his companions went to the house of James the Apostle, where the rest of the bishops and governors of the church were met together. After mutual salutations, the Apostle gave them a particular account of the success with which God had blessed his endeavors in propagating Christianity among the Gentiles; for which they all joined in thanksgiving to God; but withal told him, that he was now come to a place where there were many thousands of Jewish converts, who were all zealous for the law of Moses, and who had been informed that he taught the Jews whom he had converted to renounce circumcision and the ceremonies of the law. That as soon as the multitude heard of his arrival, they would all assemble to see how he behaved himself in this matter; and therefore, to prevent a disturbance, they thought it advisable for him to join himself with four persons, who were at that time to accomplish a vow, and perform the usual rites and ceremonies with them, and provide such sacrifices for them as the law in that case required. Paul, who in such cases was willing "to become all things to all men, that he might

gain the more," consented unto their counsel; and taking the persons with him to the temple, told the priests that the time of a vow they had made being now expired, and having purified themselves, according as the nature of their case required, they were come to make the offerings required by law.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TRANSACTIONS OF PAUL, FROM HIS FIRST TRIAL BEFORE FELIX TILL HIS COMING TO ROME.



ABOUT five days after this, Ananias the high priest, with others of the sanhedrim, came down to Cæsarea, and brought with them an advocate, named Tertullus, who, in a speech set off with all the insinuating arts of eloquence, to prepossess the governor in their favor, accused Paul of being a seditious person and a disturber of the public peace; who had set himself at the head of the sect of the Nazarenes, and made no scruple of profaning even the temple itself.

The orator having finished his charge against the Apostle, Felix told Paul that he was now at liberty to make his defence, which he did in the following manner :

“ I answer this charge of the Jews with the greater satisfaction before thee, because thou hast for many years been a judge of this nation. About twelve days since, I repaired to Jerusalem to worship the God of Jacob. But I neither disputed with any man, nor endeavored to stir up the people in the synagogues or the city. Nor can they prove the charge they have brought against me. This, however, I readily confess, ‘ that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, ’ and according to this faith I am careful to maintain a clear and quiet conscience, both towards God and man. After I had spent some years in distant countries, I repaired to Jerusalem with the alms I had collected in other provinces for the poor of mine own nation, an offering to the God of Jacob. And while I was performing the duties of religion, certain Asiatic Jews found me in the temple purified according to the law : but neither attended with a multitude of followers, nor the least tumultuous assembly. It was therefore necessary that these Jews should have been here, if they had any thing to allege against me. Nay, I appeal to those of the sanhedrim here present, if any thing has been laid to my charge, except the objections of the Sadducees, who violently opposed me for asserting the doctrine of the resurrection.”

Felix having thus heard both parties, refused to pass any final sentence

till he had more fully advised about it, and consulted Lysias, the governor of the castle, who was the most proper person to give an account of the sedition and tumult; commanding, in the mean time, that Paul should be kept under a guard, but should enjoy the liberty of being visited by his friends, and receiving from them any office of friendship.

Soon after this, Felix's wife Drusilla, a Jewess, and daughter of the elder Herod, came down to him at Cæsarea, in whose presence the governor sent for Paul, and gave him leave to explain the doctrines of Christianity. In this discourse the Apostle took occasion to insist upon the most important points both of faith and practice, particularly the influence which a future judgment should have upon the whole tenor of his life and conduct. This discourse was wisely adapted to the state and temper of Felix: though when Paul pathetically described the terrors of the last judgment, Felix trembled on his throne, and was so greatly affected, that he caused the Apostle to break off abruptly, telling him that he would hear the remainder of his discourse at a more convenient season. Felix no doubt had sufficient reason to tremble, and his conscience to be sensibly alarmed at these reflections; for he was a man notoriously infamous for rapine and violence. Tacitus tells us, that he made his will the law of his government, practicing all manner of cruelty and injustice. To these qualities he added bribery and covetousness; and therefore often sent for our Apostle to discourse with him, expecting he would have given him a considerable sum for his release; having probably heard that Paul had brought a large quantity of money to Jerusalem. But finding no offers were made him, he kept him a prisoner two years; when he himself being discharged from his office by Nero, he left Paul in prison, in order to gratify the malice of the Jews, and engage them to speak the better of his government after his departure from Judea. Felix was succeeded in the government of the province by Portius Festus, before whom, at his first coming to Jerusalem, the high priest and sanhedrim preferred an indictment against Paul, desiring that he might be sent for up to Jerusalem in order to take trial, intending to assassinate him by the way. But Festus told them that he was shortly going himself to Cæsarea, and that if they had any complaint against Paul, they should come down hither and accuse him. Accordingly, as soon as he was come to Cæsarea, he ascended the tribunal, where the Jews renewed the charge they had before brought against Paul; but the Apostle soon cleared himself of every part of the charge, they not being able to prove any thing against him. Festus, however, being willing to procure the favor of the Jews at his entrance on the government, asked Paul whether he would go up and be tried before him at Jerusalem? But the Apostle, well knowing the consequences of such a proposal, answered, as a Roman, "I appeal unto Cæsar." This method of appealing was common among the Romans, and introduced to defend and secure the lives and fortunes of the people from the unjust encroachments and rigorous severities of the magistrates.

Some time after Paul had appealed unto Cæsar, king Agrippa, who succeeded Herod in the tetrarchite of Galilee, and his sister Bernice, came to Cæsarea to visit the new governor. Festus embraced this opportunity of mentioning the case of our Apostle to king Agrippa, together with the remarkable tumult this affair had occasioned among the Jews, and the appeal he had made to Cæsar. This account excited the curiosity of king Agrippa, and he was desirous of hearing himself what Paul had to say in his own vindication. Accordingly, the next day, the king and his sister, accompanied with Festus the governor and several other persons of distinction, came into the court with a pompous and splendid retinue, where the prisoner was brought before them. On his appearing, Festus informed the court how greatly he had been importuned by the Jews, both at Cæsarea and Jerusalem, to put the prisoner to death as a malefactor; but having on examination found him guilty of no capital crime, and the prisoner himself having appealed unto Cæsar, he was determined to send him to Rome; but was willing to have his cause debated before Agrippa, that he might be furnished with some material particulars to send with him; it being highly absurd to send a prisoner without signifying the crimes alleged against him.

Festus having finished his speech, Agrippa told Paul he was now at liberty to make his own defence: and silence being made, he delivered himself in the following manner, addressing his speech particularly to Agrippa:

“I consider it a peculiar happiness, king Agrippa, that I am to make my defence against the accusations of the Jews before thee; because thou art well acquainted with all their customs, and the questions commonly debated among them. I therefore beseech thee to hear me patiently. All the Jews are well acquainted with my manner of life from my youth, the greatest part of it having been spent with mine own countrymen at Jerusalem. They also know that I was educated under the institutions of the Pharisees, the strictest sect of our religion, and am now arraigned for a tenet believed by all their fathers; a tenet sufficiently credible in itself, and plainly revealed in the Scriptures, I mean the resurrection of the dead. Why should any mortal think it either incredible or impossible that God should raise the dead? I indeed formerly thought myself indispensably obliged to oppose the religion of Jesus of Nazareth. Nor was I satisfied with imprisoning and punishing with death itself the saints I found at Jerusalem, compelling them to blaspheme; I even persecuted them in strange cities, whither my implacable zeal pursued them, having procured authority for that purpose from the chief priests and elders. Accordingly I departed for Damascus with a commission from the sanhedrim; but as I was traveling towards that city, I saw at mid-day, O king, a light from heaven, far exceeding the brightness of the sun, encompassing me and my companions. On seeing this awful appearance, we all

fell to the earth, and I heard a voice, which said to me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.' To which I answered, 'Who art thou, Lord?' and he replied, 'I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.' But be not terrified, arise from the earth: for I have appeared unto thee, that thou mightest be both a witness of the things thou hast seen, and also of others which I will hereafter reveal unto thee. My power shall deliver thee from the Jews and Gentiles, to whom now I send thee to preach the Gospel: to withdraw the veil of darkness and ignorance; to turn them from falsehood unto truth, 'and from the power of Satan unto God.' Accordingly, king Agrippa, I readily obeyed the heavenly vision: I preached the Gospel first to the inhabitants of Damascus, then to those of Jerusalem and Judea, and afterwards to the Gentiles; persuading them to forsake their iniquities, and by sincere repentance turn to the living God. These endeavors to save the souls of sinful mortals exasperated the Jews, who caught me in the temple, and entered into a conspiracy to destroy me. But by the help of Omnipotence I still remain a witness to all the human race, preaching nothing but what Moses and all the prophets foretold, namely, that the Messiah should suffer, be the first that should rise from the grave, and publish the glad tidings of salvation both to the Jews and Gentiles."

While the Apostle thus pleaded for himself, Festus cried out, "Paul, thou art mad; too much study hath deprived thee of thy reason." But Paul answered, "I am far, most noble Festus, from being transported with idle and distracted ideas; the words I speak are dictated by truth and sobriety; and I am persuaded that king Agrippa himself is not ignorant of these things; for they were transacted openly before the world. I am confident, king Agrippa, that thou believest the prophets; and therefore must know that all their predictions were fulfilled in Christ." To which Agrippa answered, "Thou hast almost persuaded me to embrace the Christian faith." Paul replied, "I sincerely wish that not only thou, but also all that hear me, were not almost, but altogether the same as I myself, except being prisoners."

It being now finally determined that Paul should be sent to Rome, he was with several other prisoners of consequence committed to the care of Julius, commander of a company belonging to the legion of Augustus; and was accompanied in his voyage by Luke, Aristarchus, Trophimus, and some others not mentioned by the sacred historian.

In the month of September they embarked on board a ship of Adramyttium, and sailed to Sidon, where the centurion courteously gave the Apostle leave to go on shore to visit his friends and refresh himself. After a short stay they sailed for Cyprus, and arrived opposite the Fair Havens, a place near Myra, a city of Lycia. Here the season being far advanced, and Paul foreseeing it would be a dangerous voyage, persuaded

them to put in and winter there. But the Roman centurion, preferring the opinion of the master of the ship, and the harbor being at the same time incommodious, resolved if possible to reach Phœnice, a port of Crete, and winter there. But they soon found themselves disappointed; for the fine southerly gale, which had favored them for some time, soon changed into a stormy and tempestuous wind at north-east, which blew with such violence that the ship was obliged to sail before it; and, to prevent her sinking, they threw overboard the principal part of her lading. In this desperate and uncomfortable condition they continued fourteen days, and on the fourteenth night the mariners discovered they were near some coast, and therefore, to avoid the rocks, thought proper to come to an anchor, till the morning might give them better information. During the time they continued at anchor, waiting for the light of the morning, Paul prevailed upon them to eat and refresh themselves, having fasted a long time, assuring them they should all escape.

The country near which they were, was, as Paul had foretold, an island called Melita, now Malta, situated in the Libyan Sea, between Syracuse and Africa. Here they landed and met with great civility from the people, who treated them with humanity, and entertained them with every necessary accommodation. But whilst Paul was laying a few sticks on the fire, a viper, enlivened by the heat, came from among the wood and fastened on his hand. On seeing this, the inhabitants of the island concluded that he was certainly some notorious murderer whom divine vengeance, though it suffered him to escape the sea, had reserved for a more public and solemn execution. But when they saw him shake off the venomous creature into the fire, and no manner of harm ensue, they changed their sentiments, and cried out "that he was a god."

After three months' stay in this island, the centurion with his charge went on board the *Castor and Pollux*, a ship of Alexandria, bound to Italy. They put in at Syracuse, where they tarried three days: they then sailed to Rhegium, and from thence to Puteoli, where they landed; and finding some Christians there, stayed at their request a week with them, and then set forward on their journey to Rome. The Christians of this city, hearing of the Apostle's coming, went to meet him as far as "the Three Taverns," at the distance of about thirty miles from Rome, and others as far as the Appii-forum, fifty-one miles distant from the capital. They kindly embraced each other, and the liberty he saw the Christians enjoy at Rome, greatly tended to enliven the spirits of the Apostle, who was permitted for the time being "to dwell by himself, with a soldier that kept him."

CHAPTER VII.

THE TRANSACTIONS OF PAUL FROM HIS ARRIVAL AT ROME TILL HIS MARTYRDOM.



HAVING refreshed himself after the fatigue of his voyage, the Apostle sent for the heads of the Jewish consistory at Rome, and related to them the cause of his coming, in the following manner: "Though I have been guilty of no violence of the laws of our religion, yet I was delivered by the Jews at Jerusalem to the Roman governors, who more than once would have acquitted me as innocent of any capital offence; but by the perverseness of my persecutors I was obliged to appeal unto Cæsar; not that I had any thing to accuse my nation of: I had recourse to this method merely to clear my own innocence." Having thus removed a popular prejudice, he added, "that the true cause of his sufferings was what their own religion had taught him, 'the belief and expectation of a future resurrection.'" But his discourse had different effects on different hearers, some being convinced, and others persisting in their infidelity. For two whole years Paul dwelt at Rome, in a house he had hired for his own use; wherein he assiduously employed himself in preaching and writing for the good of the church.

The Christians at Philippi hearing of Paul's being at Rome, and not knowing what distress he might be reduced to, raised a contribution for him, and sent it by Epaphroditus their bishop, by whom he returned an epistle to them, wherein he gives some account of the state of his affairs at Rome; gratefully acknowledges their kindness to him, warns them against the dangerous opinions which the Judaizing teachers began to propagate among them, and advises them to live in continual obedience to Christ; to avoid disputations, delight in prayer, be courageous under affliction, united in love, and clothed with humility, in imitation of the blessed Jesus, who so far humbled himself as to "become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Paul lived about three years at Ephesus, preaching the Gospel to the numerous inhabitants of that city, and was therefore well acquainted with the state and condition of the place: so, taking the opportunity of Tychicus's going thither, he wrote his epistle to the Ephesians, wherein he labors to countertermine the principles and practices both of the Jews and Gentiles; to confirm them in the belief and practices of the Christian doctrine, and to instruct them fully in the great mysteries of the Gospel; their redemption and justification by the death of Christ; their gra-

tnitous election, their union with the Jews in one body, of which Christ is the head, and the glorious exaltation of that head above all creatures, both spiritual and temporal: together with many excellent precepts, both as to the general duties of religion, and the duties of their particular relations.

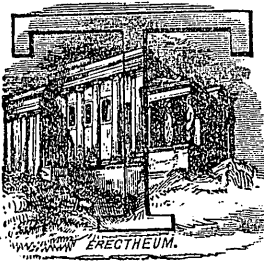
By what means Paul was discharged from the accusation the Jews brought against him we have no account in history: but it is natural to suppose, that not having sufficient proof of what they alleged, or being informed that the crimes they accused him of were no violation of the Roman laws, they durst not implead him before the emperor, and so permitted him to be discharged of course. But by whatever means he procured his liberty, he wrote his epistle to the Hebrews before he left Italy, from whence he dates his salutations. The principal design of it is to magnify Christ and the religion of the Gospel above Moses and the Jewish economy, in order to establish and confirm the converted Jews in the firm belief and profession of Christianity, notwithstanding the trouble and persecutions that would certainly attend them. Having thus discharged his ministry both by preaching and writing in Italy, Paul, accompanied by Timothy, prosecuted his long-intened journey into Spain; and, according to the testimony of several writers, crossed the sea, and preached the Gospel in Great Britain.

What success he had in those western parts is not known: he, however, continued there eight or nine months, and then returned again to the east, visited Sicily, Greece, and Crete, and then repaired to Rome. Here he met with Peter, and was together with him thrown into prison, doubtless in the general persecution raised against the Christians, under pretence that they had set fire to the city. How long he remained in prison is uncertain; nor do we know whether he was scourged before his execution. He was, however, allowed the privilege of a Roman citizen, and therefore beheaded. Being come to the place of execution, which was the *Aquæ Salvæ*, three miles from Rome, he cheerfully, after a solemn preparation, gave his neck to the fatal stroke; and from this vale of misery passed to the blissful regions of immortality, to the kingdom of his beloved Master, the great Redeemer of the human race. He was buried in the *Via Ostiensis*, about two miles from Rome. And about the year 317, Constantine the Great, at the instance of Sylvester, bishop of Rome, built a stately church over his grave, adorned it with a hundred marble columns, and beautified it with the most exquisite workmanship.

Paul seems indeed to have been eminently fitted for the apostleship of the Gentiles, to contend with and confute the grave and the wise, the acute and the subtile, the sage and the learned of the heathen world, and to wound them with arrows from their own quiver. He seldom, indeed, made use of learning and philosophy, it being more agreeable to the designs of the Gospel to confound the wisdom and learning of the world by

the plain doctrine of the cross. He was humble to the lowest step of debasement and condescension, no one ever thinking better of others or more meanly of himself. And though, when he had to deal with envious and malicious adversaries, who endeavored by villifying his person to obstruct his ministry, he knew how to magnify his office, and to let them know that he was not inferior to the chiefest of the Apostles; yet at other times he always declared to the world that he considered himself "the least of the Apostles, not meet to be called an Apostle;" and, as if this were not enough, he formed a word on purpose to express his humility, styling himself, "Elachistoteron," that is, "less than the least of the saints," nay, "the very chief of sinners." His repentance and sobriety were remarkable; for he often abridged himself of the conveniency of lawful and necessary accommodations.

S A I N T A N D R E W .



HIS Apostle was born at Bethsaida, a city of Galilee, built on the banks of the Lake of Gennesareth, and was son to John or Jonas, a fisherman of that town. He was brother to Simon Peter, but whether older or younger is not certainly known, though the generality of the ancients intimate that he was the younger. He was brought up to his father's trade, at which he labored till our blessed Saviour called him to be a fisher of

men, for which he was by some preparatory institutions qualified, even before the appearance of the Messiah.

John the Baptist had lately preached the doctrine of repentance; and was by the generality of the Jews, from the impartiality of his precepts, and the remarkable strictness and austerity of his life, held in great veneration. In the number of his followers was our Apostle, who accompanied him beyond Jordan, when the Messiah, who had some time before been baptized, came that way. Upon his approach, the Baptist pointed him out as the Messiah, styling him the Lamb of God, the true sacrifice that was to expiate the sins of the world. As soon as the Baptist had given this character of Jesus, Andrew and another disciple, probably John, followed the Saviour of mankind to the place of his abode. After some conversation with him, Andrew departed, and having found his brother Simon, informed him that he had discovered the great Messiah, so long expected

by the house of Jacob, and accordingly brought him to Jesus. They did not, however, stay long with their Master, but returned to their calling.

Something more than a year after, Jesus passing through Galilee found Andrew and Peter fishing on the Sea of Galilee, where he fully satisfied them of the greatness and divinity of his person, by a miraculous draught of fishes, which they took at his command. He now told them that they should enter on a different series of labors, and instead of fish should, by the efficacy and influence of their doctrine upon the heart and conscience, catch men; commanding them to follow him, as his immediate disciples and attendants; and accordingly they left all and followed him.

After the ascension of the blessed Jesus into heaven, and the descent of the Holy Ghost on the Apostles, to qualify them for their great undertaking, Andrew, according to the generality of ancient writers, was chosen to preach the Gospel in Scythia and the neighboring countries. Accordingly he departed from Jerusalem, and first traveled through Cappadocia, Galatia, and Bithynia, instructing the inhabitants in the faith of Christ, and continued his journey along the Euxine Sea into the deserts of Scythia. An ancient author tells us, that he first came to Amnysus, where, being entertained by a Jew, he went into the synagogue, preached to them concerning Jesus, and from the prophecies of the Old Testament proved him to be the Messiah and Saviour of the world.

He went next to Trapezium, a maritime city on the Euxine Sea; from whence, after visiting many other places, he came to Nice, where he stayed two years, preaching and working miracles with great success. After leaving Nice, he passed to Nicodemia, and from thence to Chalcedon, whence he sailed through the Propontis, came by the Euxine Sea to Heraclea, and afterwards to Amastris. In all these places he met with the greatest difficulties, but overcame them by an invincible patience and resolution.

He next came to Sinope, a city situated on the same sea, and famous both for the birth and burial of king Mithridates; here he met with his brother Peter, and stayed with him a considerable time. The inhabitants of Sinope were mostly Jews, who partly from a zeal for their religion, and partly from their barbarous manners, were exasperated against Andrew, and entered into confederacy to burn the house in which he lodged. But being disappointed in their design, they treated him with the most savage cruelty, throwing him on the ground, stamping upon him with their feet, pulling and dragging him from place to place; some beating him with clubs, some pelting him with stones, and others, to satisfy their brutal revenge, biting off his flesh with their teeth; till, apprehending they had entirely deprived him of life, they cast him out into the fields. But he miraculously recovered, and returned publicly into the city; by which and other miracles he wrought among them, he converted many from

the error of their ways, and induced them to become disciples of the blessed Jesus.

Departing from Sinope, he returned to Jerusalem; but he did not continue long in that neighborhood. He returned again to the province allotted him for the exercise of his ministry, which greatly flourished through the power of divine grace that attended it.

He traveled over Thrace, Macedonia, Thessaly, Achaia, and Epirus, preaching the Gospel, propagating Christianity, and then confirming the doctrine he taught with signs and miracles. At last he came to Petrea, a city of Achaia, where he gave his last and greatest testimony to the Gospel of his Divine Master, sealing it with his blood.

Ægeus, proconsul of Achaia, came at this time to Petrea, where, observing that multitudes had abandoned the heathen religion and embraced the Gospel of Christ, he had recourse to every method both of favor and cruelty, to reduce the people to their old idolatry. The Apostle, whom no difficulties or dangers could deter from performing the duties of his ministry, addressed himself to the proconsul, calmly putting him in mind that, being only a judge of men, he ought to revere him who was the supreme and impartial Judge of all, pay him the divine honors due to his exalted majesty, and abandon the impieties of his idolatrous worship; observing to him, that if he would renounce his idolatries and heartily embrace the Christian faith, he should, with him and the members who had believed in the Son of God, receive eternal happiness in the Messiah's kingdom. The proconsul answered, that he himself should never embrace the religion he mentioned; and that the only reason why he was so earnest with him to sacrifice to the gods was, that those whom he had every where seduced might by his example be brought back to the ancient religion they had forsaken. The Apostle replied, that he saw it was in vain to endeavor to persuade a person incapable of sober counsels, and hardened in his own blindness and folly; that with regard to himself he might act as he pleased, and if he had any torment greater than another, he might heap that upon him, as the greater constancy he showed in his sufferings for Christ, the more acceptable he should be to his Lord and Master. Ægeus could hold no longer; and after treating him with every opprobrious language, and showing him the most distinguished marks of contempt, he passed sentence on him that he should be put to death. He first ordered the Apostle to be scourged, and seven lictors successively whipped his naked body; but, seeing his invincible patience and constancy, he commanded him to be crucified; but to be fastened to the cross with cords instead of nails, that his death might be more lingering and tedious. As he was led to the place of execution, walking with a cheerful and composed mind, the people cried out, that a good and innocent man was unjustly condemned to die. On his coming near the cross, he saluted it in the following manner: "I have long desired and expected this happy hour. The

cross has been consecrated by the body of Christ hanging on it, and adorned with his members as with so many inestimable jewels. I therefore come joyfully and triumphantly to it, that it may receive me as a disciple and follower of Him who once hung upon it, and be the means of carrying me safe to my Master, being the instrument on which he redeemed me."

After offering up his prayers to the throne of grace, and exhorting the people to constancy and perseverance in the faith he had delivered to them, he was fastened to the cross, on which he hung two whole days, teaching and instructing the people in the best manner his wretched situation would admit, being sometimes so weak and faint as scarcely to have the power of utterance. In the mean time great interest was made to the proconsul to spare his life; but the Apostle earnestly begged of the Almighty that he might now depart, and seal the truth of his religion with his blood. His prayers were heard, and he expired on the last day of November, but in what year is uncertain.

There seems to have been something peculiar in the form of the cross on which he suffered. It was commonly thought to have been a cross decussate, or two pieces of timber crossing each other in the centre, in the form of the letter X, and hence usually known by the name of Andrew's cross. His body being taken down from the cross, was decently and honorably interred by Maximillia, a lady of great quality and estate, and who Nicephorus tells us was wife to the proconsul.

Constantine the Great afterwards removed his body to Constantinople, and buried it in the great church he had built to the honor of the Apostles; but this structure being taken down some hundred years after, in order to rebuild it by Justinian the emperor, the body of Andrew was found in a wooden coffin, and again deposited in its proper place.

SAINT JAMES THE GREAT.

THIS Apostle, who was surnamed the Great, by way of distinction from another of that name, was the son of Zebedee, and by trade a fisherman, to which he applied himself with remarkable assiduity, and was exercising his employment when the Saviour of the world, passing by the Sea of Galilee, saw him with his brother in the ship, and called them both to be his disciples. Nor was the call in vain: they cheerfully complied with it, and immediately left all to follow him; readily delivering themselves up to perform whatever service he should appoint them. Soon after this, he was called from the station of an ordinary disciple to the

apostolical office, and even honored with some particular favors beyond most of the Apostles, being one of the three whom our Lord made choice of as his companions in the more intimate transactions of his life, from which the rest were excluded. Thus, with Peter and his brother John, he attended his Master when he raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead: he was admitted to Christ's glorious transfiguration on the Mount; and when the holy Jesus was to undergo his bitter agonies in the garden, as preparatory sufferings to his passion, James was one of the three taken to be a spectator of them. Nor was it the least instance of that particular honor our Lord conferred on these Apostles, that at his calling them to the apostleship he gave them a new name and title. Simon he called Peter, or a rock, and James and John, who were brothers, Boanerges, or the sons of thunder.

Some think that this name was given them on account of their loud and bold preaching the Gospel to the world, fearing no threatenings, despising all opposition, and going on thundering in the ears of a drowsy and sleepy world: rousing and awakening the consciences of men with the earnestness and vehemence of their preaching, which resembled thunder, as the voice of God powerfully shakes the natural world, and breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon. Others think it relates to the doctrine they delivered, teaching and promulgating the great mysteries of the Gospel in a more profound and lofty strain than the rest.

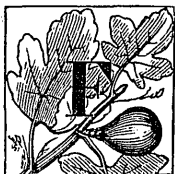
But however this be, our blessed Saviour doubtless alluded by this term to the furious and resolute disposition of these two brothers, who seem to have been of a more fiery temper than the rest of the Apostles, of which we have this memorable instance. When our Lord was determined on his journey to Jerusalem, he sent some of his disciples before him to make preparations for his coming; but, on their entering a village of Samaria, they were rudely rejected, from the old grudge that subsisted between the Samaritans and Jews, and because the Saviour, by going up to Jerusalem, seemed to slight their place of worship on Mount Gerizim. This piece of rudeness and inhumanity was so highly resented by James and his brother, that they came to Jesus, desiring to know if he would not imitate Elias, by calling down fire from heaven to consume this barbarous, inhospitable people. Thus we find the best of men are but men, and that corrupt nature will sometimes appear even in renewed minds. But the holy Jesus soon convinced them of their mistake, by telling them that, instead of destroying, he was come to save the lives of the children of men.

Sophronius tells us, that after the ascension of the blessed Jesus, this Apostle preached to the dispersed Jews; that is, to those converts who were dispersed after the death of Stephen. The Spanish writers will have it, that after preaching the Gospel in several parts of Judea and Samaria, he visited Spain, where he planted Christianity, and appointed some select

disciples to perfect what he had begun : but if we consider the shortness of James's life, and that the Apostles continued in a body at Jerusalem even after the dispersion of the other Christians, we shall find it difficult to allow time sufficient for so tedious and difficult a voyage as that was in those early ages, and therefore it is safest to confine his ministry to Judea and the adjacent countries.

Herod, who was a bigot to the Jewish religion, as well as desirous of acquiring the favor of the Jews, began a violent persecution of the Christians, and his zeal against them animated him to pass sentence of death on James immediately. As he was led to the place of execution, the officer that guarded him to the tribunal, or rather his accuser, having been converted by the remarkable courage and constancy shown by the Apostle at the time of his trial, repented of what he had done, came and fell down at the Apostle's feet, and heartily begged pardon for what he had said against him. The holy man, after recovering from the surprise, tenderly embraced him. "Peace," said he, "my son, peace be unto thee, and the pardon of thy faults." Upon which the officer publicly declared himself a Christian, and both were beheaded at the same time. Thus fell the great Apostle James, taking cheerfully that cup of which he had long since told his Lord he was ready to drink.

SAINT JOHN THE EVANGELIST.



FROM the very minute and circumstantial account this evangelist gives of John the Baptist, he is supposed to have been one of his followers, and is thought to be that other disciple, who, in the first chapter of his Gospel, is said to have been present with Andrew, when John declared Jesus to be "the Lamb of God," and thereupon to have followed him to the place of his abode. He was by much the youngest of the Apostles, yet he was admitted into as great a share of his Master's confidence as any of them. He was one of those to whom he communicated the most private transactions of his life ; one of those whom he took with him when he raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead ; one of those to whom he displayed a specimen of his divinity in his transfiguration on the Mount ; one of those who were present at his conference with Moses and Elias, and heard that voice which declared him "the beloved Son of God ;" and one of those who were companions in his solitude, most retired devotions, and bitter agonies in the garden.

These instances of particular favor our Apostle endeavored in some

measure to answer by returns of particular kindness and constancy. For though he at first deserted his Master on his apprehension, yet he soon recovered himself, and came back to see his Saviour, confidently entered the high priest's hall, followed our Lord through the several particulars of his trial, and at last waited on him at his execution, owning him as well as being owned by him in the midst of armed soldiers, and in the thickest clouds of his most inveterate enemies. Here it was that our great Redeemer committed to his care his sorrowful and disconsolate mother with his dying breath. And certainly the holy Jesus could not have given a more honorable testimony of his particular respect and kindness to John, than by leaving his own mother to his trust and care, and substituting him to supply that duty he himself paid her while he resided in this vale of sorrow.

After the ascension of the Saviour of the world, when the Apostles made a division of the provinces among themselves, that of Asia fell to the share of John, though he did not immediately enter upon his charge, but continued at Jerusalem till the death of the blessed Virgin, which might be about fifteen years after our Lord's ascension. Being released from the trust committed to his care by his dying Master, he retired into Asia, and industriously applied himself to the propagation of Christianity, preaching where the Gospel had not yet been known, and confirming it where it was already planted. Many churches of note and eminence were of his foundation, particularly those of Smyrna, Pergamus, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea, and others; but his chief place of residence was at Ephesus, where Paul had many years before founded a church, and constituted Timothy its bishop.

After spending several years at Ephesus, he was accused to Domitian, who had begun a persecution against the Christians, as an asserter of atheism and impiety, and a public subverter of the religion of the empire; so that by his command the proconsul sent him bound to Rome, where he met with the treatment that might have been expected from so barbarous a prince, being thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil. But the Almighty, who reserved him for further service in the vineyard of his Son, restrained the heat, as he did in the fiery furnace of old, and delivered him from this seemingly unavoidable destruction. And surely one would have thought that so miraculous a deliverance should have been sufficient to have persuaded any rational man that the religion he taught was from God, and that he was protected from danger by the hand of Omnipotence. But miracles themselves were not sufficient to convince this cruel emperor, or abate his fury. He ordered John to be transported to a disconsolate island in the Archipelago, called Patmos, where he continued several years instructing the poor inhabitants in the knowledge of the Christian faith; and here, about the end of Domitian's reign, he wrote his book of Revelation, exhibiting by visions and prophetic re-

presentations the state and condition of Christianity in the future periods and ages of the church.

Upon the death of Domitian and the succession of Narva, who repealed all the odious acts of his predecessor, and by public edicts recalled those whom the fury of Domitian had banished, John returned to Asia, and fixed his seat again at Ephesus; the rather because the people of that city had lately martyred Timothy the bishop. Here, with the assistance of seven other bishops, he took upon himself the government of the large diocese of Asia Minor, and disposed of the clergy in the best manner that the circumstances of those times would permit, spending his time in an indefatigable execution of his charge, traveling from east to west, to instruct the world in the principles of the holy religion he was sent to propagate.

In this manner John continued to labor in the vineyard of his great Master, until death put a period to all his toils and sufferings, which happened in the beginning of Trajan's reign, in the ninety-eighth year of his age; and, according to Eusebius, his remains were buried near Ephesus.

John seems always to have led a single life; though some of the ancients tell us he was a married man. He was polished by no study or arts of learning; but what was wanting from human art was abundantly supplied by the excellent constitution of his mind, and that fulness of divine grace with which he was adorned. His humility was admirable, studiously concealing his own honor. For in his epistles he never styles himself either Apostle or evangelist; the title of presbyter or elder is all he assumes, and probably in regard to his age as much as his office. In his Gospel, when he speaks of "the disciple whom Jesus loved," he constantly conceals his own name, leaving the reader to discover whom he meant. Love and charity he practiced himself, and affectionately pressed them upon others: the great love of his Saviour towards him seems to have inspired his soul with a large and more generous charity than the rest. This is the great vein that runs through all his writings, especially his epistles, where he urges it as the great and peculiar law of Christianity, and without which all other pretences to the religion of the holy Jesus are vain and frivolous, useless and insignificant. And this was his constant practice to the hour of his dissolution; for when age and the decays of nature had rendered him so weak that he was unable to preach to the people any longer, he was constantly led at every public meeting to the church at Ephesus, and always repeated to them the same precepts, "Little children, love one another." And when his hearers, wearied with the constant repetition of the same thing, asked him why he never varied his discourse? he answered, because to love one another was the command of our blessed Saviour, and consequently one grand guide of our conduct through life. It is further added, that this Apostle, when stricken

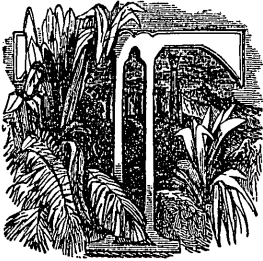
in years, would confine his discourses often to these words, "Little children, love one another."

The greatest instance of our Apostle's care for the souls of men is in the writings he left to posterity; the first of which in time, though placed last in the sacred canon, is his Apocalypse, or Book of Revelation, which he wrote during his banishment at Patmos. Next to the Apocalypse, in order of time, are his three epistles, the first of which is catholic, calculated for all times and places, containing the most excellent rules for the conduct of a Christian life, pressing to holiness and pureness of manners, and not to be satisfied with a naked and empty profession of religion; not to be led away with the crafty insinuations of seducers, and cautioning men against the poisonous principles and practices of the Gnostics. The Apostle here, according to his usual modesty, conceals his name; it being of more consequence to a wise man what is said than who says it. It appears from Augustine that this epistle was anciently inscribed to the Parthians, because in all probability John preached the Gospel in Parthia. The other two epistles are but short, and directed to particular persons; the one to a lady of great quality, the other to the charitable and hospitable Gaius, the kindest friend and the most courteous entertainer of all indigent Christians.

Before he undertook the task of writing the Gospel, he caused a general fast to be kept by all the Asiatic churches, to implore the blessing of heaven on so great and momentous an undertaking. When this was done he set about the work, and completed it in so excellent and sublime a manner, that the ancients generally compared him to an eagle soaring aloft among the clouds, whither the weak eye of man was not able to follow him. "Among all the evangelical writers," says Basil, "none are like St. John, the son of thunder, for the sublimity of his speech and the height of his discourses, which are beyond any man's capacity fully to reach and comprehend." "St. John, as a true son of thunder," says Epiphanius, "by a loftiness of speech peculiar to himself, acquaints us, as it were out of the clouds and dark recesses of wisdom, with the divine doctrine of the Son of God."

Such is the character given of the writings of this great Apostle and evangelist, who was honored with the endearing title of being the beloved disciple of the Son of God; a writer so profound as to deserve, by way of eminence, the character of "St. John the divine."

SAINT PHILIP.



HIS Apostle was a native of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. He had the honor of being first called to be a disciple of the great Messiah, which happened in the following manner: Our blessed Saviour, soon after his return from the wilderness where he had been tempted by the devil, met with Andrew and his brother Peter, and after some discourse parted from them. The next day, as he was passing through Galilee,

he found Philip, whom he presently commanded to follow him, the constant form he made use of in calling his disciples, and those that inseparably attended him: so that the prerogative of being first called evidently belongs to Philip, he being the first of our Lord's disciples; for though Andrew and John were the first that came and conversed with the Saviour of the world, yet they immediately returned to their occupation, and were not called till a whole year after.

It cannot be doubted, that notwithstanding Philip was a native of Galilee, yet he was excellently skilled in the law and the prophets. Metaphrastes assures us that he had from his childhood been excellently educated; that he frequently read over the books of Moses, and attentively considered the prophecies relating to the coming of the Messiah.

Nor was our Apostle idle after the honor he had received of being called to attend the Saviour of the world: he immediately imparted the glad tidings of the Messiah's appearance to his brother Nathaniel, and conducted him to his beloved Master.

After his being called to the apostleship we have very little recorded of him by the evangelists. It was, however, to him that our Saviour proposed the question, as to where they should find bread sufficient to satisfy the hunger of so great a multitude. Philip answered, that it was not easy to procure so large a quantity; not considering that it was equally easy for Almighty power to feed double the number, when it pleased to exert itself. It was also to the same Apostle that the Gentile proselytes, who came up to worship at Jerusalem, applied, when they were desirous to see the Saviour of the world. And it was with him our Lord had the discourse a little before the paschal supper, as recorded by the evangelist John.

The compassionate Jesus had been fortifying their minds with proper

considerations against his departure from them, and had told them that he was going to prepare for them a place in the mansions of the heavenly Canaan; that he was "the way, the truth, and the life: that no man could come to the Father but by him;" and that knowing him "they both knew and had seen the Father." Philip, not thoroughly understanding the force of his Master's reasoning, begged of him that he would show them the Father. Our Lord gently reproved his ignorance, that, after attending so long to his instructions, he should not know that he was the image of his Father, the express character of his infinite wisdom, power, and goodness appearing in him; that he said and did nothing but by his Father's appointment; of which, if they did not believe, his miracles were a sufficient evidence: that such demands were therefore unnecessary and impertinent; and that it was an indication of great weakness in him, after three years' education under his discipline and institutions, to appear so ignorant with regard to these particulars.

The ancients tell us, that in the distribution made by the Apostles of the several regions of the world, Upper Asia fell to his share, where he labored with an indefatigable diligence and industry. By the constancy and power of his preaching and the efficacy of his miracles he gained numerous converts, whom he baptized into the Christian faith, curing at once their bodies of infirmities and distempers, and their souls of error and idolatry. He continued with them a considerable time in settling churches and appointing them guides and ministers of religion.

After several years successfully exercising his apostolical office in all those parts, he came at last to Hierapolis, in Phrygia, a city remarkably rich and populous, but at the same time overrun with the most enormous idolatry.

Philip, being grieved to see the people so wretchedly enslaved by error and superstition, continually offered his addresses to heaven, till by his prayers and often calling on the name of Christ, he procured the death or at least the vanishing of an enormous serpent to which they paid adoration.

Having thus demolished their deity, he demonstrated to them how ridiculous and unjust it was for them to pay divine honors to men, the lower animals, or matter; more especially such a venomous and odious creature as a serpent; showed them that God alone was to be worshiped as the great parent of all the world, who in the beginning made man after his glorious image, and, when fallen from that innocent and happy state, sent his own Son into the world to redeem him; that in order to perform this glorious work, he died on the cross, and rose again from the dead, and at the end of the world will come again to raise all the sons of men from the chambers of the dust, and sentence them to everlasting rewards and punishments. This discourse roused them from their lethargy; they

were ashamed of their late idolatry, and great numbers embraced the doctrines of the Gospel.

This provoked the great enemy of mankind, and he had recourse to his old methods—cruelty and persecution. The magistrates of the city seized the Apostle, and having thrown him into prison caused him to be scourged. When this preparatory cruelty was over, he was led to execution, and being bound was hanged against a pillar; or, according to others, crucified. The Apostle being dead, his body was taken down by Bartholomew, his fellow-laborer in the Gospel, and Mariamne, Philip's sister, the constant companion of his travels, and decently buried; after which they confirmed the people in the faith of Christ, and departed from them.

SAINT BARTHOLOMEW.



HIS Apostle is mentioned amongst the twelve immediate disciples of our Lord, under the appellation of Bartholomew, although it is evident, from divers passages of Scripture, that he was also called Nathanael and Bartholomew as belonging to one and the same person.

With regard to his descent and family, some are of opinion that he was a Syrian, and that he was descended from the Ptolemies of Egypt. But it is plain from the evangelical history that he was a Galilean, John having expressly told us that Nathanael was of Cana in Galilee.

The Scripture is silent with regard to his trade and manner of life, though from some circumstances there is room to imagine that he was a fisherman. He was at his first coming to Christ conducted by Philip, who told him they had now found the long-expected Messiah, so often foretold by Moses and the prophets, "Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." And when he objected that the Messiah could not be born in Nazareth, Philip desired him to come and satisfy himself that he was the Messiah.

At his approach our blessed Saviour saluted him with this honorable character, that he was an Israelite indeed, a man of true simplicity and honesty, and his simplicity particularly appears in this, that when he was told of Jesus, he did not object against the meanness of his origin, the low condition of his parents, or the narrowness of their fortunes, but only against the place of his birth, which, as he justly observed, could not be Nazareth, the Scriptures peremptorily fortelling that the Messiah should be born at Bethlehem. By this, therefore, he appeared to be a true

Israelite, one that waited for redemption in Israel, which from the times mentioned in the Scripture predictions he knew to be near at hand.

He was greatly surprised at our Lord's salutation, wondering how he could know him at first sight, thinking he had never before seen his face. But he was answered, that he had seen him while he was yet under the fig-tree, even before Philip called him. Convinced by this instance of our Lord's divinity, he presently made this confession, that he was now sure that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the Son of God, whom he had appointed to govern his church. Our blessed Saviour told him, that if from this instance he could believe him to be the Messiah, he should have far greater arguments to confirm his faith; for that he should hereafter behold the heavens opened to receive him, and the angels visibly appearing to attend his triumphant entrance into the heavenly Canaan.

Our Apostle having his peculiar spot allotted him, for the promulgation of the Gospel of his blessed Master, who had now ascended into heaven, and sent his Holy Spirit to fit and qualify his disciples for the important work, visited different parts of the world to preach the Gospel, and penetrated as far as the hither India. Whence, after spending a considerable time in India and the eastern extremities of Asia, he returned to the northern and western parts, and we find him at Hierapolis in Phrygia, laboring in concert with Philip to plant Christianity in those parts; and to convince the blind idolaters of the evil of their ways, and direct them in the paths that lead to eternal salvation. This enraged the bigoted magistrates, and he was together with Philip, designed for martyrdom, and in order to this fastened to a cross; but their consciences pricking them for a time, they took him immediately down from the cross and set him at liberty.

From hence he retired into Lyaconia, and Chrysostom assures us that he instructed and trained up the inhabitants in the Christian discipline. His last remove was to Albanople in Great Armenia, a place miserably overrun with idolatry, from which he labored to reclaim the people. But his endeavors to "turn them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God," were so far from having the desired effect, that they provoked the magistrates, who prevailed on the governor to put him to death, which he cheerfully underwent, sealing the truth of the doctrine he had preached with his blood.

SAINT MATTHEW.



ST. MATTHEW, called also Levi, though a Roman officer, was a true Hebrew, and probably a Galilean; his trade was that of publican or tax-gatherer to the Romans, an office detested by the generality of the Jews, on two accounts; first, because, having farmed the custom of the Romans, they used every method of oppression to pay their rents to them; secondly, because they demanded tribute of the Jews, who considered themselves a free people, having received that privilege from God himself. And hence they had a common proverb among them, "Take not a wife out of that family in which there is a publican, for they are all publicans." That is, they are all thieves, robbers, and notorious sinners. And to this proverbial custom our blessed Saviour alludes, when speaking of a hardened sinner, on whom neither private reproofs nor the public censures and admonitions of the church can prevail, "Let him be to thee as an heathen man and a publican."

Our blessed Saviour having cured a person long afflicted with the palsy, retired out of Capernaum to walk by the sea-side, where he taught the people that flocked after him. Here he saw Matthew sitting in his office, and called him to follow him. The man was rich, had a large and profitable employment, was a wise and prudent person, and doubtless understood what it would cost him to comply with the call of Jesus. He was not ignorant that he must exchange wealth for poverty, a custom-house for a prison, rich and powerful masters for a naked and despised Saviour. But he overlooked all these considerations, and left all his interest and relations, to become our Lord's disciple, and to embrace a more spiritual way of commerce and traffic.

The Pharisees, who sought all opportunities of raising objections against the doctrine of the blessed Jesus, took this opportunity of suggesting to his disciples, that it was highly unbecoming so pure and holy a person as their Master pretended himself to be to converse so familiarly with the worst of men, with publicans and sinners, persons infamous to a proverb. But he presently replied to them, that these were the sick, and therefore needed the physician; that his company was of most consequence where the souls of men most required it; that God himself preferred works of mercy and charity, especially in doing good to the souls of men, infinitely above all ritual observances; and that the principal design of his coming into the world was not to call the righteous, or

those who, like themselves, vainly pretend to be so, but sinners, humble, self-convicted sinners, to repentance.

After our blessed Saviour's ascension into heaven, Matthew, for the first eight years at least, preached in different parts of Judea; but afterwards he left the country of Palestine to convert the Gentile world. Before his departure, he was entreated by the Jewish converts to write the history of the life and actions of the blessed Jesus, and leave it among them as a standing monument of what he had so often delivered to them in his sermons. This request he readily complied with.

After his leaving Judea, he traveled into several parts, especially Ethiopia, but the particular places he visited are not known with certainty. However, after laboring indefatigably in the vineyard of his Master, he suffered martyrdom at a city of Ethiopia, called Naddabar: but by what kind of death is not absolutely known; though the general opinion is, that he was slain with a halbert.

Matthew was a remarkable instance of the power of religion in bringing men to a better temper of mind. If we reflect upon his circumstances while he continued a stranger to the great Redeemer of mankind, we shall find that the love of the world had possessed his heart. But, notwithstanding this, no sooner did Christ call him than he abandoned without the least scruple or hesitation all his riches; nay, he not only renounced his lucrative trade, but ran the greatest hazard of displeasing the masters who employed him, for quitting their service without giving them the least notice, and leaving his accounts in confusion. Had our blessed Saviour appeared as a secular prince, clothed with temporal power and authority, it would have been no wonder for him to have gone over to his service; but when he appeared under all the circumstances of meanness and disgrace, when he seemed to promise his followers nothing but misery and sufferings in this life, and to propose no other rewards than the invisible encouragements of another world, his change appears truly wonderful and surprising; but divine grace can subdue all opposition, and soften the most obdurate hearts.

The last thing we shall remark in the life of this Apostle is his Gospel, written at the entreaty of the Jewish converts while he abode in Palestine; but at what time is uncertain; some believe it to have been written eight, some fifteen, and some thirty years after our Lord's ascension. It was originally written in Hebrew; but soon after translated into Greek by one of the disciples.

After the Greek translation was admitted, the Hebrew copy was chiefly owned and used by the Nazaræi, a middle sect between Jews and Christians; with the former, they adhered to the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic law, and with the latter they believed in Christ and embraced his religion; and hence this Gospel has been styled, "The Gospel according to the Hebrews," and "The Gospel of the Nazarenes."

SAINT THOMAS.



VANGELICAL history is entirely silent with regard either to the country or kindred of Thomas. It is, however, certain that he was a Jew, and in all probability a Galilean. He was together with the rest called to the apostleship, and not long after gave an eminent instance of his being ready to undergo the most melancholy fate that might attend him. For when the rest of the Apostles dissuaded their Master from going into Judea, at the time of Lazarus's death, because the Jews lately endeavored to stone him, Thomas desired them not to hinder his journey thither, though it might cost them all their lives. "Let us go," said he, "that we may die with him;" concluding that, instead of Lazarus being raised from the dead, they should all like him be placed in the chambers of the dust.

When the holy Jesus, a little before his last sufferings, had been speaking to them of the joys of heaven, and had told them that he was going to prepare mansions for them, that they might follow him, and that they knew both the place whither he was going and the way thither; our Apostle replied, that they knew not whither he was going, much less the way that would lead them thither. To which our Lord returned this short but satisfactory answer, "I am the way." I am the person whom the Father hath sent into the world, to show mankind the paths that lead to eternal life, and therefore you cannot miss the way if you follow my example.

After the disciples had seen their great Master expire on the cross, their minds were distracted by hopes and fears concerning his resurrection, about which they were not then fully satisfied, which engaged him the sooner to hasten his appearance, that by the sensible manifestations of himself he might put the matter beyond all possibility of dispute. Accordingly, the very day on which he arose from the dead he came into the house where they were assembled, while, for fear of the Jews, the doors about them were close shut, and gave them sufficient assurance that he was risen from the dead. At this meeting Thomas was absent, having probably never rejoined their company since their dispersion in the garden, when every one's fears prompted him to consult his own safety. At his return they told him that the Lord had appeared to them, but he obstinately refused to give credit to what they said, or to believe that it was really he, presuming it rather to have been a spectre or apparition, unless he might see the very print of the nails, and feel the wounds in his hands and side

Our compassionate Saviour would not take the advantage of his perverse obstinacy, but on that day seven-night came again to meet them, as they were solemnly met at their devotions, and, calling to Thomas, bade him look upon his hands, put his fingers into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into his side, to satisfy his faith by a demonstration from the senses. Thomas was soon convinced of his error and obstinacy, confessing that he now acknowledged him to be his Lord and Master, saying, "My Lord and my God." Our Lord answered, that it was happy for him that he believed the testimony of his own senses; but that it would have been more commendable in him to have believed without seeing, because it was foretold that the Son of God should burst the chains of death, and rise again from the dead.

Our great Redeemer having, according to promise before his ascension, poured an extraordinary effusion of the Holy Ghost upon the disciples, to qualify them for the great work of preaching the Gospel, Thomas as well as the rest labored in the cause of his Divine Master in several parts of Judea; and after the dispersion of the Christian church in Jerusalem, repaired into Parthia, the province assigned him for his ministry. After which, as Sempronius and others inform us, he preached the Gospel to the Medes, Persians, Carminians, Hyrcani, Bactarians, and the neighboring nations. During his preaching in Persia he is said to have met with the magi, or wise men, who had taken that long journey at our Saviour's birth to worship him, whom he baptized and took with him as his companions and assistants in propagating the Gospel.

Leaving Persia, he traveled into Ethiopia, preaching the glad tidings of the Gospel, healing the sick, and working other miracles, to prove he had his commission from on high; and after traveling through these countries he entered India.

His remarkable success alarmed the Bramins, who plainly perceived that their religion would be soon extirpated, unless some method could be found of putting a stop to the progress of Christianity, and therefore resolved to put the Apostle to death. At a small distance from the city was a tomb, whither Thomas often retired for private devotion. Hither the Bramins and their armed followers pursued him, and while he was at prayer they first shot at him a shower of darts, after which one of the priests ran him through with a lance. His body was taken up by his disciples, and buried in the church he had lately erected, and which was afterwards improved into a fabric of great magnificence.

Chrysostom says that Thomas, who at first was the weakest and more incredulous of all the Apostles, became, through Christ's condescension to satisfy his scruples, and the power of the divine grace, the most active and invincible of them all; traveling over most parts of the world, and living without fear in the midst of barbarous nations, through the efficacy of that Almighty power which can make the weakest vessels to perform acts of the greatest difficulty and moment.

SAINT JAMES THE LESS.



It has been doubted by some whether this was the same with that James who was afterwards bishop of Jerusalem, two of this name being mentioned in the sacred writings, namely, James the Great and James the Less, both Apostles. The ancients mention a third, surnamed the Just, which they will have to be distinct from the former, and bishop of Jerusalem. But this opinion is built on a sandy foundation, for nothing is plainer than that James the Apostle, whom Paul calls our Lord's brother, and reckons, with Peter and John, one of the pillars of the church, was the same who presided among the Apostles, doubtless by virtue of his office, and determined the causes in the synod of Jerusalem. It is reasonable to think that he was the son of Joseph, afterwards the husband of Mary, by his first wife, whom Jerome styles Escha, and adds that she was the daughter of Aggi, brother to Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist. Hence he was reputed our Lord's brother. We find, indeed, several mentioned as the brethren of our Saviour in the evangelical history, but in what sense was greatly controverted by the ancients. Jerome, Chrysostom, and some others, will have them to be so called from their being the sons of Mary, cousin-german, or, according to the Hebrew idiom, sister to the Virgin Mary. But Eusebius, Epiphanius, and many others, tell us they were the children of Joseph by a former wife. And this seems most natural and best agrees with what the evangelists say of them, when they enumerate the questions of the Jews: "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren James and Joses, Simeon and Judas? and his sisters, are they not all with us?" Whence then has this man these things?" From hence it is plain that the Jews understood these persons not to be Christ's kinsmen only, but his brethren, the same carpenter's sons, having the same relation to him that Jesus himself had. With regard to the place of his birth the sacred history is silent.

After the resurrection, he was honored with a particular appearance of our Lord to him, which, though passed over in silence by the evangelists, is recorded by Paul.

Some time after this appearance, he was chosen bishop of Jerusalem, preferred before all the rest for his near relation to Christ; and for the same reason we find Simon chosen to be his immediate successor in that See, because, after James, he was our Lord's next kinsman; a consideration that made Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, though they had been particularly honored by our Saviour, not to contend for this high and

honorable station, but freely to choose James the Just bishop of Jerusalem.

When Paul came to Jerusalem after his conversion, he applied to James, and was by him honored with the right hand of fellowship. And it was to James that Peter sent the news of his miraculous deliverance out of prison. "Go," said he, "show these things unto James, and to the brethren;" that is, to the whole church, especially to James the pastor of it.

He performed every part of his duty with all possible care and industry, omitting no particular necessary to be observed by a diligent and faithful guide of souls; strengthening the weak, instructing the ignorant, reducing the erroneous, reproofing the obstinate, and, by the constancy of his sermons, conquering the stubbornness of that perverse and refractory generation he had to deal with, many of the nobler and better sort being persuaded to embrace the Christian faith.

But a person so careful, and successful in his charge, could not fail of awakening the spite and malice of his enemies: a sort of men of whom the Apostle has given too true a character, that "they please not God, and are contrary to all men." They were vexed to see Paul had escaped their hands by appealing unto Cæsar; and therefore turned their fury against James: but being unable to effect their design under the government of Festus, they determined to attempt it under the procuratorship of Albinus his successor: Ananus the younger, of the sect of the Sadducees, being high priest.

In order to this, a council was summoned, and the Apostle with others arraigned and condemned as violaters of the law. But that the action might appear more plausible and popular, the Scribes and Pharisees, masters in the art of dissimulation, endeavored to ensnare him; and at their first coming told him that they had all placed the greatest confidence in him; that the whole nation as well as they gave him the title of a just man, and one that was no respecter of persons; that they therefore desired he would correct the error and false opinion the people had conceived of Jesus, whom they considered as the Messiah, and take this opportunity of the universal confluence to the pascal solemnity to set them right in their opinions in this particular, and would go with them to the top of the temple, where he might be seen and heard by all. The Apostle readily consented, and being advantageously placed on a pinnacle of the temple, they addressed him in the following manner: "Tell us, O Justus, for we have all the reason in the world to believe, that the people are thus generally led away with the doctrine of Jesus, who was crucified; tell us, what is this institution of the crucified Jesus?" To which the Apostle answered, with an audible voice, "Why do you inquire of Jesus, the Son of man? He sits in heaven, at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and will come again in the clouds of heaven." The people below hearing this glorified the blessed Jesus, and openly proclaimed, "Hosanna to the Son of David!"

The Scribes and Pharisees now perceived that they had acted foolishly ; that instead of reclaiming they had confirmed the people in their error ; and that there was no way left but to dispatch him immediately, in order to warn others by his sufferings not to believe in Jesus of Nazareth. Accordingly, they suddenly cried out that Justus himself was seduced and become an impostor, and immediately threw him from the pinnacle on which he stood into the court below ; but not being killed on the spot, he recovered himself so far as to rise on his knees, and pray fervently to heaven for his murderers. But malice is too diabolical to be pacified with kindness or satisfied with cruelty. Accordingly, his enemies, vexed that they had not fully accomplished their work, showered stones upon him, while he was imploring their forgiveness at the throne of grace, and one of them, more merciful than the rest, put an end to his misery with a fuller's club.

Thus did this great and good man finish his course, in the ninety-sixth year of his age, and about twenty-four years after our blessed Saviour's ascension into heaven. His death was lamented by all good men, even by the sober and just persons among the Jews themselves, as Josephus himself confesses.

He was of a remarkably meek and humble temper, honoring what was excellent in others, concealing what was valuable in himself ; neither the eminence of his relation to the blessed Jesus, nor the dignity of the place he so worthily filled, could induce him to entertain lofty thoughts of himself above the rest of his brethren ; on the contrary, he strove to conceal whatever might place him in a higher rank than the other disciples of the Lord of glory. Though he was brother to the Redeemer of mankind, he styles himself only "the servant of our Lord Jesus Christ ;" not so much as mentioning his being an Apostle. His temperance was admirable, wholly abstaining from flesh, drinking neither wine nor strong drink, and never using the bath.

SAINT SIMON THE ZEALOT.



ST. SIMON, in the catalogue of the Apostles, is styled Simon the Canaanite, whence some conjecture that he was born in Cana of Galilee, and others will have him to have been the bridegroom mentioned by John, at whose marriage our blessed Saviour turned the water into wine. But this word has no relation to his country, or the place of his nativity, being derived from the Hebrew word *knaah*, which signifies zeal, and de-

notes a warm and sprightly temper. What some of the evangelists therefore call Canaanite, others, rendering the Hebrew by the Greek word, style Zealot: not from his great zeal, his ardent affection to his Master, and his desire of advancing his religion in the world, but from his warm active temper and zealous forwardness in some particular sect of religion before his coming to our Saviour.

In order to understand this the better, it will be necessary to observe, that as there were several sects and parties among the Jews, so there was one, either a distinct sect, or at least a branch of the Pharisees, called the sect of the Zealots. This sect of the Zealots took upon them to execute punishments in extraordinary cases; and that not only by the connivance, but with the leave both of the rulers and people, till in process of time their zeal degenerated into all kinds of licentiousness and wild extravagance; and they not only became the pests of the commonwealth at home, but opened the doors for the Romans to break in upon them, to their final and irrevocable ruin. They were continually prompting the people to throw off the Roman yoke, and assert their natural liberty, taking care, when they had thrown all things into confusion, to make their own advantage of the tumult. Josephus gives a large account of them, and everywhere bewails them as the great plague of the nation.

Many attempts were made, especially by Annas, the high priest, to reduce them to order, and oblige them to observe the rules of sobriety; but all were in vain; they continued their violent proceedings, and, joining with the Idumeans, committed every kind of outrage. They broke into the sanctuary, slew the priests themselves before the altar, and filled the streets of Jerusalem with tumults, rapine, and blood. Nay, when Jerusalem was closely besieged by the Roman army, they continued their detestable proceedings, creating fresh tumults and factions, and were indeed the principal cause of the ill success of the Jews in that fatal war.

Simon continued in communion with the rest of the Apostles and disciples at Jerusalem; and at the feast of Pentecost received the same miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, so that he was qualified with the rest of the brethren for the Apostolic Office; and in propagating the Gospel of the Son of God, we cannot doubt of his exercising his gifts with the same zeal and fidelity, though in what part of the world is uncertain. Some say he went into Egypt, Cyrene, and Africa, preaching the Gospel to the inhabitants of those remote and barbarous countries. And others add, that after he had passed through those burning wastes, he took ship and visited the frozen regions of the north, preaching the Gospel to the inhabitants of the western parts, and even in Britain, where, having converted great multitudes, and sustained the greatest hardships and persecutions, he was at last crucified, and buried in some part of Great Britain, but the place where, is unknown.

SAINT JUDE.



Y three several names this Apostle is mentioned in the evangelical history, namely, Jude or Judas, Thaddeus, and Lebbeus. He was brother to James the Less, afterwards bishop of Jerusalem, being the son of Joseph, the reputed father of Christ, by a former wife. It is not known when or by what means he became a disciple of our blessed Saviour, nothing being said of him till we find him in the catalogue of the twelve Apostles; nor afterwards, till Christ's last supper, when, discoursing with them about his departure, and comforting them with a promise that he would return to them again, meaning after his resurrection, though the "world should see him no more," our Apostle said to his Master, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world?"

Paulinus tells us, that the province which fell to the share of Jude was Lybia, but he does not tell us whether it was the Cyrenean Lybia, which is thought to have received the Gospel from Mark, or the southern parts of Africa. But, however that be, in his first setting out to preach the Gospel, he traveled up and down Judea and Galilee; then through Samaria into Idumea, and to the cities of Arabia, and the neighboring countries, and afterwards to Syria and Mesopotamia. Nicephorus adds, that he came at last to Edessa, where Abagarus governed, and where Thaddeus, one of the seventy, had already sown the seeds of the Gospel. Here he perfected what the other had begun; and having by his sermons and miracles established the religion of Jesus, he died in peace; but others say that he was slain at Berytus, and honorably buried there. The writers of the Latin church are unanimous in declaring that he traveled into Persia, where, after great success in his apostolical ministry for many years, he was at last, for his openly reproving the superstitious rites and customs of the magi, cruelly put to death.

Jude left only one epistle, which is placed the last of those seven styled catholic in the sacred canon. It had no particular inscription, as the other six have, but is thought to have been primarily intended for the Christian Jews, in their several dispersions, as Peter's epistles were. In it he tells them that he at first intended to write to them in general of the common salvation, and establish and confirm them in it: but seeing the doctrine of Christ attacked on every side by heretics, he conceived it more necessary to spend his time in exhorting them to fight manfully in defence of the faith once delivered to the saints, and oppose the false teachers who labored so indefatigably to corrupt it.

SAINT MATTHIAS.



S Matthias was not an Apostle of the first election, immediately called and chosen of the Son of God himself, it cannot be expected that any account of him can be found in the evangelical history. He was one of our Lord's disciples, probably one of the seventy, that had attended on him the whole time of his public ministry, and after his death was elected into the apostleship, to supply the place of Judas, who, after betraying his great Lord and Master, laid violent hands on himself. The defection of Judas having made a vacancy in the apostolic college, the first thing they did after their return from Mount Olivet, when their great Master ascended to the throne of his glory, was to fill up this vacancy with a proper person. Accordingly two persons were proposed, Joseph, called Barsabas, and Matthias, both duly qualified for the important office. The method of election was by lots, a way common both among the Jews and Gentiles for determining doubtful and difficult cases, especially in choosing judges or magistrates. And this course seems to have been taken by the Apostles, because the Holy Ghost was not yet given, by whose immediate dictates and inspirations they were afterwards chiefly guided. The prayer being ended, the lots were drawn, by which it appeared that Matthias was the person thus preferred, and he was accordingly numbered among the twelve Apostles.

Not long after this election, the promised powers of the Holy Ghost were conferred upon the Apostles, to qualify them for that great and difficult employment upon which they were sent, the establishing of the holy religion of the Son of God among the children of men.

Matthias spent the first year of his ministry in Judea, where he reaped a very considerable harvest of souls, and then traveled into different parts of the world, to publish the glad tidings of salvation to people who had never yet heard of a Saviour; but the particular parts he visited are not certainly known. Dorotheus says he finished his course at Sebastople, and was buried there, near the Temple of the Sun. An ancient martyrology reports him to have been seized by the Jews, and as a blasphemer to have been stoned and then beheaded. But the Greek offices, supported herein by the authority of several ancient breviaries, tell us that he was crucified.

SAINT MARK



AS descended from Jewish parents, and of the tribe of Levi. Nor was it uncommon among the Jews to change their names on some remarkable revolution or accident of life, or when they intended to travel into any of the European provinces of the Roman empire.

The ancients generally considered him as one of the seventy disciples ; and Epiphanius expressly tells us that he was one of those who, taking exception at our Lord's discourse of "eating his flesh and drinking his blood, went back, and walked no more with him." But there appears no manner of foundation for these opinions, nor for that of Nicephorus, who will have him to be the son of Peter's sister.

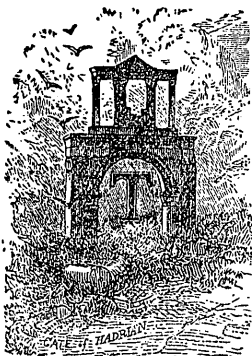
Eusebius tells us that Mark was sent into Egypt by Peter to preach the Gospel, and accordingly planted a church in Alexandria, the metropolis of it ; and his success was so very remarkable, that he converted multitudes both of men and women, persuading them not only to embrace the Christian religion, but also a life of more than ordinary strictness. Mark did not confine himself to Alexandria, and the oriental parts of Egypt, but removed westward to Lybia, passing through the countries of Marmacia, Pentapolis, and others adjacent, where, though the people were both barbarous in their manners and idolatrous in their worship, yet by his preaching and miracles he prevailed on them to embrace the tenets of the Gospel ; nor did he leave them till he had confirmed them in the faith.

After this long tour he returned to Alexandria, where he preached with the greatest freedom, ordered and disposed of the weightiest affairs of the church, and wisely provided for a succession, by constituting governors and pastors of it. But the restless enemy of the souls of men would not suffer our Apostle to continue in peace and quietness ; for while he was assiduously laboring in the vineyard of his Master, the idolatrous inhabitants, about the time of Easter, when they were celebrating the solemnities of Serapis, tumultuously entered the church, forcing Mark, then performing divine service, from thence ; and binding his feet with cords, dragged him through the streets, and over the most craggy places, to the Bucelus, a precipice near the sea, leaving him there in a lonesome prison for that night ; but his great and beloved Master appeared to him in a vision, comforting and encouraging his soul under the ruins of his shattered body. The next morning early the tragedy began afresh, dragging him about in the same cruel and barbarous manner till he expired. But

their malice did not end with his death; they burned his mangled body after they had so inhumanly deprived it of life. But the Christians, after the hellish tragedy was over, gathered up his bones and ashes, and decently interred them near the place where he used to preach. His remains were afterwards, with great pomp, removed from Alexandria to Venice, where they are religiously honored, and he is adopted as the titular saint and patron of that state. He suffered martyrdom on the 25th of April, but the year is not absolutely known; the most probable opinion however is, that it happened about the end of Nero's reign.

His Gospel, the only writing he left behind him, was written at the entreaty and earnest desire of the converts at Rome, who, not content to have heard Peter preach, pressed Mark his disciple to commit to writing an historical account of what he had delivered to them, which he performed with equal faithfulness and brevity, and, being perused and approved by Peter, was commanded to be publicly read in their assemblies. It was frequently styled Peter's Gospel, not because he dictated it to Mark, but because the latter composed it from the accounts Peter usually delivered in his discourses to the people. And this is probably the reason of what Chrysostom observes, that in his style and manner of expression he delights to imitate Peter, representing a great deal in a few words. The strict impartiality he observed in all his relations is plain, and hence, so far from concealing the shameful lapse of Peter, his dear tutor and master, he describes it with more aggravating circumstances, than any other evangelist.

SAINT LUKE.



HIS disciple of the blessed Jesus was born at Antioch, the metropolis of Syria, a city celebrated for the pleasantness of its situation, the fertility of its soil, the riches of its commerce, the wisdom of its senate, and the civility and politeness of its inhabitants, by the pens of some of the greatest writers of those times. It was eminent for schools of learning, which produced the most renowned masters in the arts and sciences; so that, being born as it were in the lap of the muses, he could not well fail of acquiring an ingenious and liberal education. But he was not contented with the learning of his own country; he traveled for im-

provement into several parts of Greece and Egypt, and became particularly skilled in physic, which he made his profession. But those who would, from this particular, infer the quality of his birth and fortune, seem to forget that the healing art was in these early times generally practiced by servants; and hence Grotius is of opinion that Luke was carried to Rome, and lived there as servant to some noble family in quality of physician; but after obtaining his freedom he returned into his own country, and probably continued his profession till his death, it being so highly consistent with and in many cases subservient to the care of souls. He is also famous for his skill in another art, namely, painting, and an ancient inscription found in a vault near the church of St. Maria de Via Lata at Rome, supposed to have been the place where Paul dwelt, mentions a picture of the blessed Virgin: *Una ex vii. ab Luca depictis*, being one of the seven painted by Luke.

Luke was a Jewish proselyte; but when he became a Christian is uncertain. Those who understand him in the beginning of his Gospel, say that he had the facts from the reports of others, who were eye-witnesses, and suppose him to have been converted by Paul; and that he learned the history of his Gospel from the conversation of that Apostle, and wrote it under his direction; and that when Paul in one of his epistles says, "According to my Gospel," he means this of Luke, which he styled *his* from the great share he had in the composition of it.

On the other hand, those who hold that he wrote his Gospel from his own personal knowledge, observe that he could not receive it from Paul, as an eye-witness of the matters contained in it, because all those matters were transacted before his conversion; and that he never saw our Lord before he appeared to him in his journey to Damascus, which was some time after he ascended into heaven. Consequently, when Paul says, "According to my Gospel," he means no more than that Gospel in general which he preached; the whole preaching of the Apostles being styled the Gospel. But however this be, Luke became the inseparable companion of Paul in all his travels, and his constant fellow-laborer in the work of the ministry. This infinitely endeared him to that Apostle, who seems delighted with owning him for his fellow-laborer, and in calling him the "beloved physician," and the "brother whose praise is in the Gospel."

Luke wrote two books for the use of the church, his Gospel, and the Acts of the Apostles; both of which he dedicated to Theophilus, which many of the ancients supposed to be a feigned name, denoting a lover of God, a title common to all sincere Christians. But others think it was a real person, because the title of "Most Excellent" is attributed to him; the usual title and form of address in those times to princes and great men. His Gospel contains the principal transactions of our Lord's life; and the particulars omitted by him are, in general, of less importance than those of the other evangelists.

With regard to the Acts of the Apostles, written by Luke, the work was no doubt performed at Rome, about the time of Paul's imprisonment there, with which he concludes his story. It contains the actions and sometimes the sufferings of the principal Apostles, especially Paul, whose activity in the cause of Christ made him bear a great part in the labors of his Master; and Luke being his constant attendant, an eye-witness of the whole carriage of his life, and privy to his most intimate transactions, was consequently capable of giving a more full and satisfactory account of them. Among other things he enumerates the great miracles the Apostles did in confirmation of their doctrine.

In both these treatises his manner of writing is exact and accurate, his style noble and elegant, sublime and lofty, yet clear and perspicuous, flowing with an easy and natural grace and sweetness, admirably adapted to an historical narrative. In short, as an historian, he was faithful in his relations and elegant in his writings; as a minister, careful and diligent for the good of souls; as a Christian, devout and pious; and, to crown all the rest, laid down his life in testimony of the truth of the Gospel he had both preached and published to the world.

SAINT BARNABAS.



T. BARNABAS was at first called Joses, a softer termination generally given by the Greeks to Joseph. His fellow disciples added the name of Barnabas, as significant of some extraordinary property in him. Luke interprets it, "the son of consolation," which he was ever ready to administer to the afflicted, both by word and action. He was a descendant of the tribe of Levi, of a family removed out of Judea, and settled in the Isle of Cyprus, where they had purchased an estate, as the Levites might do out of their country. His parents, finding their son of a promising genius and disposition, placed him in one of the schools of Jerusalem, under the tuition of Gamaliel, Paul's master; an accident which, in all probability, laid the foundation for that intimacy which afterwards subsisted between these two eminent servants of the blessed Jesus.

The first mention we find of Barnabas in the Holy Scripture is the record of the great and worthy service he did the church of Christ, by succoring it with the sale of his patrimony in Cyprus, the whole price of which he laid at the Apostles' feet, to be put into the common stock, and disposed of as they should think fit, among the indigent followers of the

holy Jesus. The worthy example was followed by those who were blessed with the goods of fortune: none kept their plenty to themselves, but turned their houses and lands into money, and devoted it to the common use of the church. Barnabas is indeed mentioned as selling a most valuable estate on this occasion; being the most forward and ready to begin a common stock, and set others a laudable pattern of charity and benevolence. And now Barnabas became considerable in the ministry and government of the church; for we find that Paul, coming to Jerusalem three years after his conversion, and not readily procuring admittance into the church, because he had been so grievous a persecutor of it, and might still be suspected of a desigu to betray it, addressed himself to Barnabas, a leading man among the Christians, and one that had personal knowledge of him. He accordingly introduced him to Peter and James, and satisfied them of the sincerity of his conversion, and in what miraculous manner it was brought about. This recommendation carried so much weight with it, that Paul was not only received into the communion of the Apostles, but taken into Peter's house, "and abode with him fifteen days." Gal. i. 18.

About four or five years after this, the agreeable news was brought to Jerusalem that several of their body, who had been driven out of Judea by the persecutions raised about Stephen, had preached at Antioch with such success that a great number both of Jews and proselytes embraced Christianity, and were desirous that some of the superior order would come down and confirm them. This request was immediately granted, and Barnabas was deputed to settle this new plantation; and being himself "a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith," his charitable deeds accompanying his discourses, and his pious life exemplifying his sound doctrine, the people were greatly influenced by him, and very large additions were made to the Christian church. But there being too large a field for one laborer, he went to bring Saul from Tarsus, who came back with him to Antioch, and assisted him a whole year in establishing that church. Their labors prospered; their assemblies were crowded, and the disciples, who before this were called among themselves brethren, believers, elect, and by their enemies, Nazarenes and Galileans, were now called Christians first in Antioch.

When the Apostles had fulfilled their charitable embassy, and stayed some time at Jerusalem to see the good effect of it, they returned again to Antioch, bringing with them John, whose surname was Mark, the son of Mary, sister to Barnabas, and at whose house the disciples found both security for their persons, and conveniences for the solemnities of their worship. But soon after the Apostles returned to Antioch, an express relation was made to the church, by the mouth of one of the prophets who ministered there, that Barnabas and Saul should be set apart for an extraordinary work unto which the Holy Ghost had appointed them. Upon

this declaration the church set apart a day for a solemn mission ; after devout prayer and fasting, they laid their hands upon them, and ordained them to their office ; which was to travel over certain countries, and preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. From this joint commission, Barnabas obtained the name of an Apostle, not only among later writers of the church, but with Paul himself, and with Luke, in the history of the Acts of the Apostles. Paul and Barnabas being thus consecrated "the Apostles of the Gentiles," entered upon their province, taking with them John Mark for their minister or deacon, who assisted them in many ecclesiastical offices, particularly in taking care of the poor.

The first city they visited after their departure from Antioch was Selucia, a city of Syria, adjoining to the sea ; from whence they sailed for the island of Cyprus, the native place of Barnabas, and arrived at Salamis, a port formerly remarkable for its trade. Here they boldly preached the doctrines of the Gospel in the synagogue of the Jews ; and from thence traveled to Paphos, the capital of the island, and famous for a temple dedicated to Venus, the titular goddess of Cyprus. Here their preaching was attended with remarkable success ; Servius Paulus, the proconsul, being among others converted to the Christian faith.

Leaving Cyprus, they crossed the sea to preach in Pamphylia, where their deacon John, to the great grief of his uncle Barnabas, left them, and returned to Jerusalem ; either tired with continual travels, or discouraged at the unavoidable dangers and difficulties which, experience had sufficiently informed him, would constantly attend the preachers of the Gospel, from hardened Jews and idolatrous Gentiles.

Soon after their arrival at Lystra, Paul cured a man who had been lame from his mother's womb, which so astonished the inhabitants, that they believed them to be gods who had visited the world in the form of men. Barnabas they treated as Jupiter, their sovereign deity, either because of his age, or the gravity and comeliness of his person ; for all the writers of antiquity represent him as a person of a venerable aspect and a majestic presence. But the Apostles, with the greatest meekness and humility, declared themselves to be but mortals : and the inconsistent populace soon satisfied themselves of the truth they had asserted ; for at the persuasion of their indefatigable persecutors, who followed them hither also, they made an assault upon them, and stoned Paul till they left him for dead ; but supported by an invisible power from on high, he soon recovered his spirits and strength, and the Apostles immediately departed for Derbe. Here they applied themselves to the work of the ministry, and converted many to the religion of the blessed Jesus.

From Derbe they returned back to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch in Pisidia, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith ; teaching that the followers of Christ must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. After a short stay they again

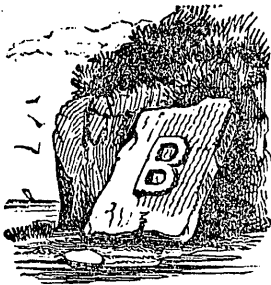
visited the churches of Pamphylia, Perga, and Attalia, where they took ship for Antioch in Syria, the place from whence they first set out. Presently after their arrival, they called the church of this city together, and gave them an account of their travels, and the great success with which their preaching to the Gentiles had been attended. But they had not long continued in this city before their assistance was required to compose a difference in the church, occasioned by some of the Jewish converts, who endeavored to persuade the Gentiles that they were bound to observe the law of Moses as well as that of Christ, and be circumcised as well as baptized. Barnabas endeavored to persuade the zealots from pressing such unnecessary observances; but all his endeavors proving ineffectual, he was deputed with Paul and others to the church at Jerusalem to submit the question to be determined there in full assembly. During their stay at Jerusalem, Mark in all probability reconciled himself to his uncle Barnabas, and returned with him and Paul to Antioch, after they had succeeded in their business at Jerusalem, and obtained a decree from the synod there that the Gentile converts should not have circumcision and other Mosaic rites imposed upon them.

Some days after this last occurrence, Paul made a proposal to Barnabas that they should repeat their late travels among the Gentiles, and see how the churches they had planted increased in their numbers, and improved in the doctrines they had taught them. Barnabas very readily complied with the motion, but desired they might take with them his reconciled nephew John Mark. This Paul absolutely refused, because in their former voyage Mark had not shown the constancy of a faithful minister of Christ, but consulted his own case at a dangerous juncture, and departed from them without leave at Pamphylia, and returned to Jerusalem. Barnabas still insisted on taking him, and the other continuing as resolute to oppose it, a short debate arose, which terminated in a rupture, whereby these two holy men, who had for several years been companions in the ministry, and with united endeavors propagated the Gospel of the Son of God, now took different provinces. Barnabas with his kinsmen sailed to his own country, Cyprus; and Paul, accompanied by Silas, traveled to the churches of Syria and Cilicia.

After this separation from Paul, the sacred writer gives us no account of Barnabas; nor are the ecclesiastical writers agreed among themselves with regard to the actions of our Apostle after his sailing for Cyprus. This however seems to be certain, that he did not spend the whole remainder of his life in that island, but visited different parts of the world, preaching the glad tidings of the Gospel, healing the sick, and working other miracles among the Gentiles. After long and painful travels, attended with different degrees of success in different places, he returned to Cyprus, his native country, where he suffered martyrdom in the following manner. Certain Jews coming from Syria to Salamis,

where Barnabas was then preaching the Gospel, were highly exasperated at his extraordinary success, fell upon him as he was disputing in the synagogue, dragged him out, and after the most inhuman tortures stoned him to death. His kinsman, John Mark, who was a spectator of this barbarous action, privately interred his body in a cave; where it remained till the time of the emperor Zeno, in the year of Christ 485, when it was discovered with Matthew's Gospel in Hebrew, written with his own hand, lying on his breast.

SAINT STEPHEN.



OTH the Scriptures and the ancient writers are silent with regard to the birth, country, and parents of Stephen. Epiphanius is of opinion that he was one of the seventy disciples; but this is very uncertain. Our blessed Saviour appointed his seventy disciples to teach the doctrines and preach the glad tidings of the Gospel; but it does not appear that Stephen and the six other first deacons had any particular designation before they were chosen for the service of the tables; and therefore Stephen could not have been one of our Lord's disciples, though he might have often followed him and listened to his discourses. He was remarkably zealous for the cause of religion, and full of the Holy Ghost; working many wonderful miracles before the people, and pressing them with the greatest earnestness to embrace the doctrines of the Gospel.

This highly provoked the Jews; and some of the synagogue of the freed men of Cyrenia, Alexandria, and other places, entered into dispute with him; but being unable to resist the wisdom and spirit by which he spake, they suborned false witnesses against him, to testify that they heard him blaspheme against Moses and against God. Nor did they stop here; they stirred up the people by their calumnies, so that they dragged him before the council of the nation or great sanhedrim, where they produced false witnesses against him, who deposed that they had heard him speak against the temple and against the law, and affirm that Jesus of Nazareth would destroy the holy place, and abolish the law of Moses. Stephen, supported by his own innocence and an invisible power from on high, appeared undaunted in the midst of this assembly, his countenance

shining like that of an angel; and when the high priest asked him what he had to offer against the accusations laid to his charge, he delivered a long address to them, closing in the following cutting manner: "Ye stiff-necked, ye uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye will forever resist the Holy Ghost. Ye tread in the paths of your fathers; as they did, so do you still continue to do. Did not your fathers persecute every one of the prophets? Did not they slay them who showed the coming of the Holy One, whom ye yourselves have betrayed and murdered? Ye have received the law by the deposition of angels, but never kept it."

At this the crowds were so enraged, that they gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, lifting up his eyes to heaven, saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of Omnipotence; upon which he said to the council, "I see the heavens open, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God." This so greatly provoked the Jews, that they cried out with one voice, and stopped their ears, as if they had heard some dreadful blasphemy; and falling upon him, they dragged him out of the city, and stoned him to death. It was the custom of the Jews, on these occasions, for the witnesses to throw the first stone. Whether they observed this particular at the martyrdom of Stephen is uncertain; but the evangelist tells us that the witnesses were principally concerned in this action; for they stripped off their clothes, and laid them at the feet of a young man whose name was Saul, then a violent persecutor of the Christian church, but afterwards one of the most zealous preachers of the Gospel. Stephen, while they were mangling his body with stones, was praying to Omnipotence for their pardon. "Lord," said he, "lay not this sin to their charge." And then, calling on his dear Redeemer to receive his spirit, he yielded up his soul.

SAINT TIMOTHY.



TIMOTHY was a convert and a disciple of Paul. He was born, according to some, at Lystra; or, according to others, at Derbe. His father was a Gentile, but his mother a Jewess, whose name was Eunice, and that of his grandmother Lois.

These particulars are taken notice of, because Paul commends their piety and the good education which they had given Timothy. When Paul came to Derbe and Lystra, about the year of Christ 51 or 52. the brethren gave a very advantageous testimony of

the merit and good dispositions of Timothy; and the Apostle would have him along with him, but he initiated him at Lystra, before he received him into his company. Timothy applied himself to labor with Paul in the business of the Gospel, and did him very important services through the whole course of his preaching. It is not known when he was made a bishop; but it is believed that he received very early the imposition of the Apostle's hands; and that in consequence of a particular revelation or order from the Holy Ghost. Paul calls him not only his dearly beloved son, but also his brother, the companion of his labors, and a man of God. He declared that there was no one more united with him in heart and mind than Timothy.

This holy disciple accompanied Paul to Macedonia, to Philippi, to Thessalonica, to Berea; and when the Apostle went from Berea, he left Timothy and Silas there to confirm the converts. When he came to Athens he sent to Timothy to come thither to him; and when he was come, and had given him an account of the churches at Macedonia, Paul sent him back to Thessalonica, from whence he afterwards returned with Silas, and came to Paul at Corinth. There he continued with him, and the Apostle mentions him with Silas at the beginning of the two epistles which he then wrote to the Thessalonians. Some years after this Paul sent Timothy and Erastus into Macedonia; and gave Timothy orders to call at Corinth, to refresh the minds of the Corinthians with regard to the truths which he had inculcated upon them. And some time after, writing to the same Corinthians, he recommends them to take care of Timothy, and send him back in peace. After this Timothy returned to Paul in Asia, who there stayed for him. They went together into Macedonia; and the Apostle puts Timothy's name with his own before the second epistle to the Corinthians, which he wrote to them from Macedonia, about the middle of the year of Christ 57; and he sends his recommendations to the Romans in the letter which he wrote them from Corinth the same year.

When Paul returned from Rome, in 64, he left Timothy at Ephesus, to take care of that church, of which he was the first bishop, as he is recognized by the council of Chalcedon. Paul wrote to him from Macedonia the first of the two letters which are addressed to him. He recommends him to be more moderate in his austerities, and to drink a little wine, because of the weakness of his stomach, and his frequent infirmities. After the Apostle came to Rome, in the year 65, being now very near his death, he wrote to him his second letter, which is full of the marks of his kindness and tenderness for this his dear disciple, and which is justly looked upon as the last will of Paul. He desires him to come to Rome to him before winter, and bring with him several things which Paul had left at Troas. If Timothy went to Rome, as it is probable he did, he must have been a witness there of the martyrdom of this Apostle, in the year of

Christ 66. If he did not die before the year 97, we can hardly doubt but that he must be the angel of the church of Ephesus to whom John writes in his Revelations; though the reproaches which the Holy Ghost makes to him, etc., of having left his first love, do not seem to agree to so holy a man as Timothy was. Thus he speaks to him: "I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are Apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars; and hast borne and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." The greater number of interpreters think that these reproaches do not so much concern the person of Timothy, as that of some members of his church whose zeal was grown cool. But others are persuaded that they may be applied to Timothy himself, who made ample amends by the martyrdom which he suffered for what the Holy Ghost reproaches him with in this place. We are not to think that the saints are here in an unimpeachable state, and that their zeal never suffers any diminution. It is thought that Timothy had Onesimus for his successor.

SAINT TITUS.



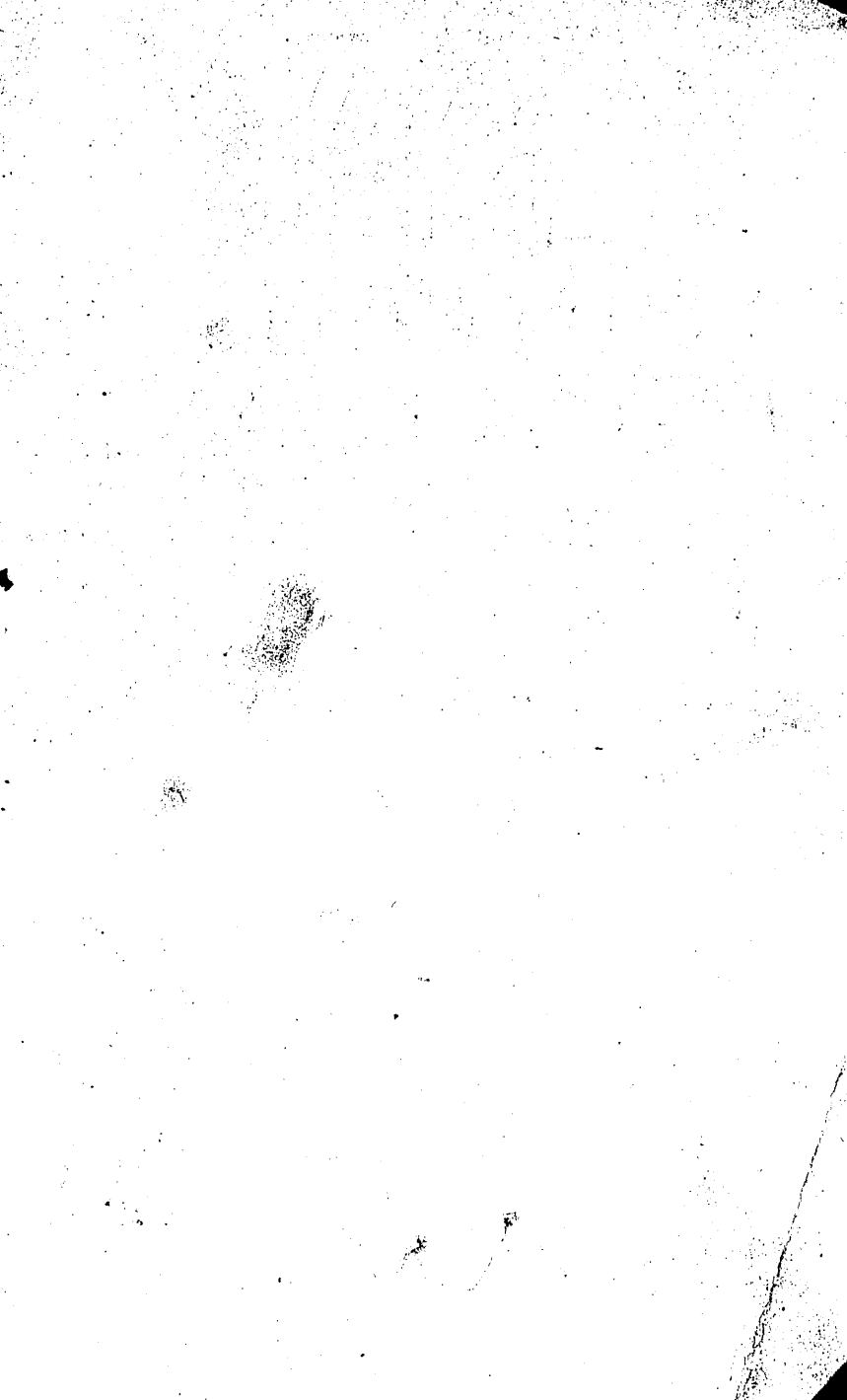
TITUS was a Gentile by religion and birth, but converted by Paul, who calls him his son. Jerome says that he was Paul's interpreter; and that probably because he might write what Paul dictated, or explained in Latin what this Apostle said in Greek; or rendered into Greek what Paul said in Hebrew or Syriac. Paul took him with him to Jerusalem, when he went thither in the year 51 of the vulgar era, about deciding the question which was then started, whether the converted Gentiles ought to be made subject to the ceremonies of the law. Some would then have obliged him to circumcise Titus, but neither he nor Titus would consent to it. Titus was sent by the same Apostle to Corinth, upon occasion of some disputes which then divided the church. He was well received by the Corinthians, and very much satisfied with their ready compliance, but would receive nothing from them, imitating thereby the disinterestedness of his Master. From hence he went to Paul in Macedonia, and gave him an account of

the state of the church at Corinth. A little while after, the Apostle desired him to return again to Corinth, to set things in order against his coming. Titus readily undertook this journey, and departed immediately, carrying with him Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. Titus was made bishop of the Isle of Crete, about the 63d year of Christ, when Paul was obliged to quit this island, in order to take care of the other churches. The following year he wrote to him, to desire that as soon as he should have sent Tychicus of Artemas to him for supplying his place in Crete, Titus would come to him to Nicopolis in Macedonia, or to Nicopolis in Epirus, upon the Gulf of Ambracia, where the Apostle intended to pass his winter.

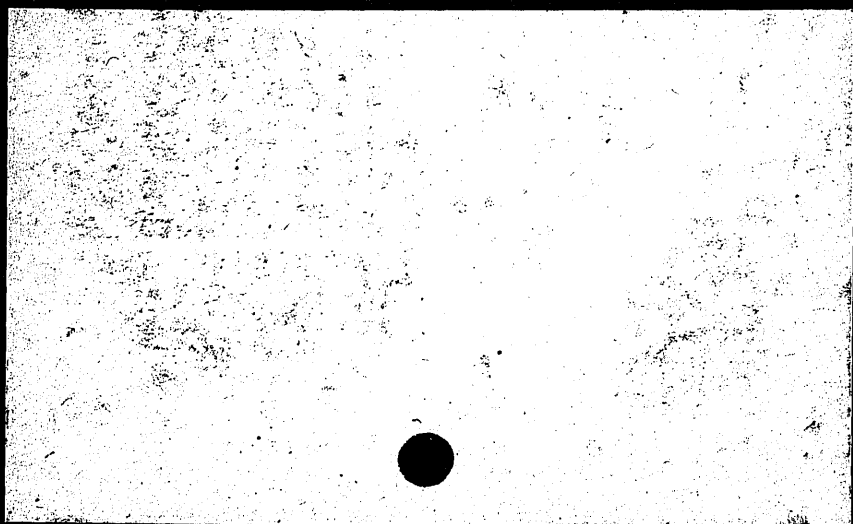
The subject of this epistle is to represent to Titus what are the qualities that a bishop should be endued with. As the principal function which Titus was to exercise in the isle of Crete was to ordain priests and bishops, it was highly incumbent on him to make a discreet choice. The Apostle also gives him a sketch of the advice and instructions which he was to propound to all sorts of persons; to the aged, both men and women; to young people of each sex; to slaves or servants. He exhorts him to keep a strict authority over the Cretans; and to reprove them with severity, as being a people addicted to lying, wickedness, idleness, and gluttony. And as many converted Jews were in the churches of Crete, he exhorts Titus to oppose their vain traditions and Jewish fables; and at the same time to show them that the observation of the legal ceremonies is no longer necessary; that the distinction of meat is now abolished; and that every thing is pure and clean to those who are so themselves: he puts him in mind of exhorting the faithful to be obedient to temporal power; to avoid disputes, quarrels, and slander; to apply themselves to honest callings; and to shun the company of heretics, after the first and second admonitions.

The epistle to Titus has always been acknowledged by the church. The Marcionites did not receive it, nor did the Basilidians, and some other heretics; but Titian, the head of the Encratites, received it, and preferred it before all the rest. It is not certainly known from what place the epistle was written, nor by whom it was sent.

Titus was deputed to preach the Gospel in Dalmatia; and he was still there in the year 65, when the Apostle wrote his second epistle to Timothy. He afterwards returned into Crete; from which it is said he propagated the Gospel into the neighboring islands. He died at the age of 94, and was buried in Crete. We are assured that the cathedral of the city of Candia is dedicated to his name, and that his head is preserved there entire. The Greeks keep his festival on the 25th of August, and the Latins on the 4th of January.







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