

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

Part 1

Dr. John Gill D.D.

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THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

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

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

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

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

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

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

KING JAMES VERSION (KJV)

This is the English bible and was published in 1611 and known as the Authorised Version (AV). It is the New Testament that was translated from Greek manuscripts known as the Textus Receptus into English.

By the first half of the 18C, the Authorised Version had become effectively unchallenged as the English translation of the scriptures and used in Anglican and English Protestant Churches. Since this time Christians have used the KJV and all their theological and devotional writings are based on the KJV. Christians have by

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

2 Luke 5 verse 27.

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

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

continued use of the KJV have learned to identify those words and phrases that need clarification. A revision is not necessary.

In 1881 Wescot and Hort published a different version of the greek new testament called, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*, (1881). This differed from the textus receptus in over 5,700 places⁵. They claimed it to be the oldest and most reliable text of the New Testament.

All translations from this greek text and its eclectic sources have proved to be unreliable and for this reason the KJV is the preferred version of the bible.

COMMENTARY OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW by John Gill

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

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

His most important works are:

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

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

His views on Eschatology were Historic however his

⁵ https://jesus-is-savior.com/Bible/all_corrupt.htm

treatment of the Olivet Prophecy in Matthew shows he noted the significance of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD and it is believed by the publisher that had Dr. Gill known J.S. Russell the eschatology taught in his book *The Parousia*⁶ he would have been enabled to further the cause of God and Truth and clearly teach a fulfilled view of prophecy know as Preterism. It is hoped this commentary will be of helped to those Preterist who have no knowledge of Calvinistic soteriology.

⁶ See Further Publications at the end of this book.

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Matthew 1:1

JOHN GILL'S INTRODUCTION TO MATTHEW

The subject of this book, and indeed of all the writings of the New Testament, is the Gospel. The Greek word εὐαγγέλιον signifies a joyful message, good news, glad tidings of good things; such as Christ was anointed to preach, the Angels brought to the shepherds, and the Evangelists, Apostles, and Ministers of Christ published to the world. Isa 61:1. And such is the account given by this inspired writer, of the incarnation, life, actions, ministry, miracles, sufferings, and death of Jesus Christ; whereby peace and reconciliation, pardon and righteousness, atonement and redemption, life and salvation, are obtained for lost, perishing sinners. The Jews, to whom the message of grace was first sent, and among whom the Gospel was first preached, having despised and rejected it; they and their posterity, in allusion to the word “Evangelion”, most wickedly and blasphemously call the whole New Testament, אֵן גִּלְיוֹן ר' אֵוֹן גִּלְיוֹן “Aven Gilion”⁷, a “revelation”, or “volume of iniquity and vanity”; but “blessed are the people that know the joyful sound”, see Ps 89:15.

The writer of this Gospel, Matthew, who also was called Levi in Luke 5:27 was by occupation a publican, or tax-gatherer, and was in his employ when Christ called him by his grace. He was one of the twelve Apostles sent forth by Christ to preach the Gospel of the kingdom, Mt 10:3 and was honoured to be the first of the writers of the New Testament, and to be the first publisher therein of the good news of the incarnate Saviour; and was a wonderful instance of the rich and sovereign grace of God. Though he was employed in collecting the Roman tax, yet he was of Jewish extract; as appears from his being called the son of Alphaeus, Mark 2:14 and from his name Matthew Levi; for as the latter, so the former is an Hebrew name. The Jews say⁸ one of the disciples of Jesus was called מַתְתַּי, Matthai or Matthew: his name signifies a “gift” or “given”; he was one of those the Father had given to Christ, and was kept by him, when the son of perdition was lost, Joh 17:6.

It may not be improper to inquire in what language this Gospel was written. The ancient Christian writers were generally of opinion, that Matthew wrote it in Hebrew; Papias and⁹ Pantaenus were of this mind, as

⁷ T. Bab. Sabbat. fol. 116. 1. Vet. Nizzachou. p. 15, 39, 87, 94, 137, 186. Ed. Wagenseil.

⁸ T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 43. 1.

⁹ Euseb. Hist. Eccl. l. 3. c. 39. p. 113. Vid. ib. l. 5. c. 8. p.

also Irenaeus¹⁰, Origen¹¹ Eusebius¹², Athanasius¹³, Epiphanius¹⁴, and Jerom¹⁵; and it is asserted in the titles of the Arabic and Persic versions, and at the end of the Syriac version of this Gospel, that it was written in that language; and this opinion is espoused by Grotius and Hammond, though justly exploded by others; for what has been published by Munster, Mercer, Hutter, and Robertson, are translations, made by themselves or others, and of no antiquity: and since Hebrew and Syriac words are interpreted in this Gospel, see Mt 1:23 which would not have been done, had it been written in either language; and since Matthew generally follows the Septuagint version in the passages cited by him out of the Old Testament; and since the Hebrew language was not generally known at that time to the common people, only to the learned; for the law and the prophets, when read in the synagogues in that language, required an interpreter; and since the Greek tongue was the language more commonly spoken, and the rest of the Evangelists wrote in Greek, and the Gospel was designed for the Gentiles as well as the Jews; it is most reasonable to conclude that this Gospel also was wrote in Greek; whereby that ancient prophecy was fulfilled, at least in part, “God shall enlarge” or “persuade Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem”, Ge 9:27 the Gospel being published in the language of Japheth, the Greek language, which the Jews, the posterity of Shem, now understood; agreeably to which the Palmudic writers interpret the prophecy; says¹⁶ Bar Kaphra, mentioning the above words, “They shall speak בלשון של יפת in the language of Japheth, in the tents of Shem;” or, “the words of the law shall be spoken in the language of Japheth, in the midst of the tents of Shem¹⁷.” R. Jochanan¹⁸ explains them thus: “the words of Japheth” shall be in the tents of Shem; and says R. Chiya ben Aba, the sense of it is, The beauty of Japheth shall be in the tents of Shem.” Which the gloss interprets thus: “The beauty of Japheth is the language of Javan, or the Greek language, which language is more beautiful than that of

172. c 10. p. 175. & l. 6. c. 25. p. 226.

¹⁰ Adv. Haeres. l. 3. c 1.

¹¹ In Matt. Tom. l. p. 203. Ed. Huet.

¹² Eccl. Hist. l. 3. cap. 24. p. 95.

¹³ Synops. sacr. Script. p. 134. Vol. 2.

¹⁴ Contra Haeres. l. 1. Haer. 29. & 30.

¹⁵ Catalog. Script. Eccles fol. 90. Tom. 1. ad Hedib. fol. 46. Tom. 3.

¹⁶ T. Hieros. Megilla, fol. 71. 2.

¹⁷ Bereshit. Rabba, sect. 36. fol. 32. 1.

¹⁸ T. Bab. Megilla, fol. 9. 2.

any other of the sons of Japheth.”

The time when this Gospel was written is said ¹⁹ by some to be in the eighth or ninth, by others, in the fifteenth year after the ascension of Christ, when the Evangelist had received the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, among which was the gift of tongues; and when the promise of Christ had been made good to him, John 14:26.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW CHAPTER 1

1 The geneology of Christ from Abraham to Joseph. 18 He was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the virgin Mary when she was espoused to Joseph. 17 fourteen generations from Abraham to David, from David to the carrying away into Babylon the fourtten generation from the carrying away into Babylon to Chhrist. 19 The Angel satisfieth the misgiving thoughts of Joseph, and interpreteth the names of Christ.

Matthew 1

- [1] The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.
- [2] Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren;
- [3] And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Tamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram;
- [4] And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon;
- [5] And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse;
- [6] And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias;
- [7] And Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa;
- [8] And Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias;
- [9] And Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz; and Achaz begat Ezekias;
- [10] And Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias;
- [11] And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon:
- [12] And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel;
- [13] And Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor;
- [14] And Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud;

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

[16] And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

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

[18] Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

[19] Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.

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

[21] And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

[22] Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,

[23] Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

[24] Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:

[25] And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

JOHN GILL'S COMMENTARY ON MATTHEW CHAPTER I

Matthew 1:1

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

This is the genuine title of the book, which was put to it by the Evangelist himself; for the former seems to be done by another hand. This book is an account, not of the divine, but human generation of Christ; and not merely of his birth, which lies in a very little compass; nor of his genealogy, which is contained in this chapter; but also of his whole life and actions, of

¹⁹ Vid. Fabricii Biblioth. Graec. l. 4. c. 5. sect. 2. p. 197. & Vales. not. in Euseb. Eccl. Hist. p. 52.

what was said, done, and suffered by him. It is an Hebrew way of speaking, much like that in Ge 5:1 and which the Septuagint render by the same phrase as here; and as that was the book of the generation of the first Adam; this is the book of the generation of the second Adam. The Jews call their blasphemous history of the life of Jesus, ישו פר תולדות "The book of the generations of Jesus"²⁰. This account of Christ begins with the name of the Messiah, well known to the Jews, the son of David; not only to the Scribes and Pharisees, the more learned part of the nation, but to the common people, even to persons of the meanest rank and figure among them. See Mt 9:27. Nothing is more common in the Jewish writings, than for בן דוד "the son of David" to stand alone for the Messiah; it would be endless to cite or refer to all the testimonies of this kind; only take the following²¹,

"R. Jochanan says, in the generation in which בן דוד "the son of David" comes, the disciples of the wise men shall be lessened, and the rest, their eyes shall fail with grief and sorrow, and many calamities and severe decrees shall be renewed; when the first visitation is gone, a second will hasten to come. It is a tradition of the Rabbins (about) the week (of years) in which בן דוד "the son of David" comes, that in the first year this scripture will be fulfilled, Am 4:7. "I will rain upon one city", &c. in the second, arrows of famine will be sent forth; in the third there will be a great famine, and men, women and children, holy men and men of business will die, and the law will be forgotten by those who learn it; in the fourth there will be plenty and not plenty; in the fifth there will be great plenty, and they shall eat and drink and rejoice, and the law shall return to them that learn it; in the sixth there will be voices (or thunders;) in the seventh there will be wars; and in the going out of the seventh בן דוד the "son of David" comes. The tradition of R. Judah says, In the generation in which בן דוד "the son of David" comes, the house of the congregation (the school or synagogue) shall become a brothel house, Galilee shall be destroyed, and Gabalene shall become desolate; and the men of Gabul (or the border) shall go about from city to city, and shall find no mercy; and the wisdom of the scribes shall stink; and they that are afraid to sin

20 {o} Apud Wagenseil. Tela Ignea.

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

shall be despised; and the face of that generation shall be as the face of a dog, and truth shall fail, as it is said, Isa 59:15 --The tradition of R. Nehorai says, In the generation in which בן דוד "the son of David" comes, young men shall make ashamed the faces of old men, and old men shall stand before young men, the daughter shall rise up against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; nor will a son reverence his father. The tradition of R. Nehemiah says, In the generation in which בן דוד "the son of David" comes, impudence will increase, and the honourable will deal wickedly, and the whole kingdom will return to the opinion of the Sadducees, and there will be no reproof. --It is a tradition of the Rabbins, that בן דוד "the son of David" will not come, until traitorous practices are increased, or the disciples are lessened or until the smallest piece of money fails from the purse, or until redemption is despaired of."

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

The son of Abraham.

Abraham was the first to whom a particular promise was made, that the Messiah should spring from, Ge 22:18. The first promise in Ge 3:15 only signified that he should be the seed of the woman; and it would have been sufficient for the fulfilment of it, if he had been born of any woman, in whatsoever nation, tribe, or family; but by the promise made to Abraham he was to descend from him, as Jesus did; who took upon him the seed of Abraham, Heb 2:16 or assumed an human nature which sprung from him, and is therefore truly the son of Abraham. The reason why Christ is first called the son of David, and then the son of Abraham, is partly because the former was a more known name of the Messiah; and partly that the transition to the genealogy of Christ might be more easy and natural, beginning with Abraham, whom the Jews call ראש היתה²² the "head of the genealogy", and the root and foundation of it, as

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

Matthew here makes him to be; wherefore a Jew cannot be displeased with the Evangelist for beginning the genealogy of our Lord at, Abraham.

Matthew 1:2

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

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

Isaac begat Jacob.

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

Jacob begat Judas and his brethren. The lineage of Christ is carried on from Jacob in the line of Judah; the reason of which is, because it was particularly prophesied that the Messiah, Shiloh, the prince and chief ruler, should be of him, Ge 49:10 1Ch 5:2. And it is evident beyond all contradiction, that our Lord sprung from his tribe, Heb 7:14. The reason why the brethren of Judah, who were eleven in number, are mentioned, when the brethren of Isaac and Jacob are not, is, because though the Messiah did not spring from them, yet the promise of him was made to the twelve tribes, who all expected him, and to whom he was sent, and came. These made but one body of men, and therefore, though the Messiah came from the tribe of Judah, yet he is said to be of them all, Ro 9:4.

Matthew 1:3

Ver. 3. **And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar,....** The genealogical account of Christ goes on from Judah in the line of Phares, with whom Zara is mentioned; not because they were twins, for so were Jacob and Esau, and yet the latter is taken no notice of; but it may be because of what happened at their birth, see Ge 38:28. But the line of the Messiah was in Phares, and very rightly is he put in the genealogy of Christ, the Jews themselves being witnesses; who expressly say, that "the Messiah comes from him." These two are said to be

begotten of Thamar, daughter-in-law to Judah; who, though she was a Canaanitish woman, has the honour to be named in the genealogy of Christ, who came to save Gentiles as well as Jews: nor can the Jews reproach our Evangelist for putting her into the account; since they themselves frequently acknowledge that the Messiah was to spring from her: they say,²³

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

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

And Phares begat Esrom;

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

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

Matthew 1:4

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

Which, with what follows in this verse, exactly agrees with the genealogical account in Ru 4:19.

Matthew 1:5

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

That Salmon begat Boaz, is affirmed in Ru 4:21 but it is not there said, nor any where else in the Old Testament, as here, that he begat him of Rahab, that is, of Rahab the harlot. This the Evangelist had from tradition, or from the Jewish records. That the Messiah was to spring from Boaz is asserted by the Jewish writers²⁴; and they also own that Rahab was married to a prince in Israel, which some say²⁵ was Joshua: they

²³ Shemot Rabba, sect. 30. fol. 131. 4. Caphtor, fol. 122. 1.

²⁴ Zohar in Gen. fol. 105. 4. Gloss in T. Bab. Maccot. fol. 23. 2. Tzeror Hammor, fol. 49. 2. Zoher in Gen. fol. 63. 3.

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

pretend that she was ten years of age when the Israelites came out of Egypt; that she played the harlot all the forty years they were in the wilderness, and was married to Joshua upon the destruction of Jericho. To excuse this marriage with a Canaanitish woman, they tell us, she was not of the seven nations with whom marriage was forbid; and moreover, that she became a proselyte when the spies were received by her: they own that some very great persons of their nation sprung from her, as Jeremiah, Maaseiah, Hanameel, Shallum, Baruch, Ezekiel, Neriah, Seraiah, and Huldah the prophetess. The truth of the matter is, she became the wife of Salmon, or Salma, as he is called, 1Ch 2:11. And in the Targum on Ru 4:20 is said to be of Bethlehem; he was the son of Nahshon or Naasson, a famous prince in Judah, and the head and captain of the tribe, Nu 1:7 Nu 7:12. And from Rahab sprung the Messiah, another instance of a Gentile in the genealogy of Christ; and a third follows.

And Booz begat Obed of Ruth;

who was a Moabitess. It is a notion that generally obtains among the Jews²⁶, that she was the daughter of Eglon, grandson of Balak, king of Moab; and it is often taken notice of by them²⁷, that the king Messiah should descend from her; and also other persons of note, as David, Hezekiah, Josiah, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah, and Daniel; wherefore the mentioning of her in this genealogy, cannot be said by them to be impertinent.

And Obed begat Jesse.

Jesse is thought to be, not the immediate son of Obed, but to be of the fourth generation from him; though no others are mentioned between them in Ruth, any more than here. A Jewish writer observes²⁸, that

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

Now notwithstanding this, Jesse may be said to be begotten by Obed, as Hezekiah's posterity, who were carried captive into Babylon, are said to be begotten by him, Isa 39:7 though they were a remove of several generations from him. However, Jesse is rightly put

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

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

28 Juchasin, fol. 10. 2.

among the progenitors of Christ, since the Messiah was to be a rod of his stem, and the branch of his roots, and is called the root of Jesse, Isa 11:1 which words are interpreted of the Messiah, by many of the Jewish writers²⁹; and to this day the Jews pray for him in their synagogues under the name of בן ישי, “the son of Jesse”³⁰.

Matthew 1:6

Ver. 6. And Jesse begat David the king,

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

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

which was Bathsheba, though not named; either because she was well known, or because of the sin she had been guilty of, which would easily be revived by mentioning her name: our translators have rightly supplied, “that had been”, and not as the Vulgate Latin, which supplies it, “that was the wife of Urias”, for Solomon was begotten of her, not while she was the wife of Uriah, but when she was the wife of David.

Matthew 1:7

Ver. 7. And Solomon begat Roboam,

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

And Roboam begat Abia,

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

And Abia begat Asa,

who was a good king; his mother's name is the same with the name of his father's mother; and perhaps it is not his proper mother, but his grandmother who is

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

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

meant in 1Ki 15:10. He is wrongly called Asaph in the Persic and Ethiopic versions, and in one copy.

Matthew 1:8

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

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

And Josaphat begat Joram;

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

And Joram begat Ozias;

called Uzziah, 2Ch 26:1 and Azariah, 2Ki 15:1. He was not the immediate son of Joram; there were three kings between them, Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah, which are here omitted; either because of the curse denounced on Ahab's family, into which Joram married, whose idolatry was punished to the third or fourth generation; or because these were princes of no good character; or because their names were not in the Jewish registers. Nor does this omission at all affect the design of the Evangelist, which is to show that Jesus, the true Messiah, is of the house of David; nor ought the Jews to complain of it, as they do³¹ since such omissions are to be met with in the Old Testament, particularly in Ezr 7:2 where six generations are omitted at once; and which is taken notice of by one of their own genealogical writers, whose words are these³²;

“we see in the genealogy of Ezra that he hath skipped over seven generations (perhaps it should be † “six” and not † “seven”, since six are only omitted) from Ahitub to Ahitub.”

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

Matthew 1:9

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

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

And Joatham begat Achaz,

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

And Achaz begat Ezekias,

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

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

32 Juchasin, fol. 10. 2.

Matthew 1:10

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

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

And Manasses begat Amon,

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

And Amon begat Josias,

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

Matthew 1:11

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

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

and his brethren.

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

about the time they were carried away to Babylon,

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

Matthew 1:12

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

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

Jechonias begat Salathiel.

Not Jechonias mentioned in the former verse, but his son, called Jehoiachin, 2Ki 24:6 and Coniah, Jer 22:24 both which are rendered Jechonias by the

Septuagint in 2Ch 36:8 and he is so called, 1Ch 3:16. Abulpharagius³³ calls him Junachir, and says he is the same who in Matthew is called Juchonia; and he asserts him to be the father of Daniel the Prophet. But here a considerable difficulty arises, how he can be said to beget Salathiel, called Shealtiel, Hag 1:1 when he was pronounced “childless”, Jer 22:30. To remove which, it may be observed, that the sentence pronounced may be considered with this tacit condition or proviso, if he repented not. Now the Jews have a tradition³⁴ that he did repent in prison, upon which the sentence was revoked; but there is no need to suppose this, though it is not an unreasonable supposition; for the sentence does not imply that he should have no children, but rather that he should, as will appear upon reading the whole; “thus saith the Lord, write ye this man childless³⁵, a man that shall not prosper in his days; for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting on the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah”. Besides, the Hebrew word רִירִי, rendered “childless”, comes from רָה, which signifies “to make naked” or “bare” and so denotes not only such as have no children, or are bereft of them, but such as are by any providence stripped of the blessings of life, and are left bare, destitute, and unhappy, as Jechonias and his posterity were: however, the Jews have no reason to find fault with our Evangelist, since Salathiel is expressly called Jechonias’s son, 1Ch 3:17 either he was his proper natural son, or, to use their way of speaking, בֶּן מַלְכוּת “the son of the kingdom”³⁶, that is, his heir and successor in the kingdom, as some have thought; since it looks as if he was the son of Neri, Luke 3:27 though the chronicle of Jedidaeus of Alexandria³⁷, or Philo the Jew, says, that Jechonias was called Neri, because Ner, or the lamp of David, shined in him, which had been almost extinguished.

And Salathiel begat Zorobabel.

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

noted Jewish commentator³⁸ observes, that

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

No doubt there are many instances of this; but to me it seems that Pedaiah was not the son of Shealtiel, but his brother, 1Ch 3:17. And I greatly suspect that Shealtiel had no children of his own, since none are mentioned; and that he adopted his brother Pedaiah’s son Zorobabel, and made him his heir and successor in the government of Judah. However, it is certain, as a genealogical writer³⁹ among the Jews observes, that he was of the son’s sons of Jechonias, king of Judah, from whom our Evangelist makes him to descend.

Matthew 1:13

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

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

And Abiud begat Eliakim,

From hence to the 16th verse the genealogy is carried down to Joseph, the husband of Mary; which account must be taken from the genealogical tables of the Jews, to which recourse might be had, and with which it agrees; or otherwise the Jews would have cavilled at it; but I do not find any objections made by them to it. That there were genealogical books or tables kept by the Jews is certain, from the following instances⁴⁰;

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

Again⁴¹, says R. Levi,

“they found a “volume of genealogies” in Jeru-

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

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

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

36 Ib. in 1 Chron. iii. 15.

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

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

39 Juchasin, fol. 13. i.

40 T. Bab. Yebamot, fol. 49. 2.

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

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

Once more⁴², says R. Chana bar Chanma, when the holy blessed God causes his

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

Now if Matthew’s account had not been true, it might easily have been refuted by these records. The author of the old ⁴³ Nizzachon takes notice of the close of this genealogy, but finds no fault with it; only that it is carried down to Joseph, and not to Mary; which may be accounted for by a rule of their own ⁴⁴, קרויה משפחת “the mother’s family is not called a family”, whereas the father’s is. It is very remarkable that the Jewish Targum ⁴⁵ traces the descent of the Messiah from the family of David in the line of Zorobabel, as Matthew does; and reckons the same number of generations, wanting one, from Zorobabel to the Messiah, as the Evangelist does, from Zorobabel to Jesus; according to Matthew, the genealogy stands thus, Zorobabel, Abiud, Eliakim, Azor, Sadoc, Achim, Eliud, Eleazar, Matthan, Jacob, Joseph, Jesus; and according to the Targum the order is this,

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

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

Matthew 1:14

See Gill on “Mt 1:13”.

⁴² T. Bab. Kiddushin, fol. 70. 9.

⁴³ P. 186.

⁴⁴ T. Bab. Yebamot, fol. 54. 2. Bava Bathra, fol. 109. 2. & 110. 2. Bereshit Rabba, fol. 6. 1. Jucbasin, fol. 55. 2.

⁴⁵ In 1 Chron. iii. 24. Vid. Beckii Not. in ib. p. 56, 57.

Matthew 1:15

See Gill on “Mt 1:13”.

Matthew 1:16

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

According to an old tradition mentioned by ⁴⁶ Epiphanius, this Jacob, the father of Joseph, was named Panther, and which name perhaps is originally Jewish; and it may be observed, that Joseph is sometimes called by the Jewish writers Pandera⁴⁷, and Jesus בן פנוריא, the son of Pandira ⁴⁸. It has created some difficulty with interpreters that Jacob should be here said to beget Joseph, when Joseph in Luke is said to be the son of Eli. Some have thought Joseph’s father had two names, one was Jacob, and the other Eli; others take them to be two different persons, and suppose that Joseph was the natural son of the one, and the legal son of the other, either by marriage, or by adoption, or by the law of the brother’s wife, De 25:5. But the truth of the matter is, that not Joseph, but Jesus, is by Luke called the son of Eli, as will be made to appear in its proper place. Joseph, who is here called the husband of Mary, because he not only espoused her, but, upon the advice and encouragement of the Angel, took her to be his wife, was, as is evident by this genealogy, of the house and lineage of David; though a mean and obscure person, and by trade a carpenter. Mary, which is the same name with Miriam in Hebrew, was a poor virgin that dwelt at Nazareth, a city of Galilee; yet also of the family of David, and belonged to the city of Bethlehem;

of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ,

or Messiah; being that illustrious person, who was spoken of by the Prophets of the Old Testament under that name, and whom the Jews expected. We may learn from hence, what a low condition the family of David was in, when the true Messiah came; according to ancient prophecy, it was like a stump of a tree, or like to a tree cut down to the root, Isa 11:1 and Christ who sprung from it was like a root out of a dry ground, Isa 53:2. From the whole of this genealogy it appears, that Jesus was of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Judah, and of the family of David; whereby several ancient prophecies have their accomplishment, and therefore he ought to be acknowledged as the true Messiah: and also that he was of the blood royal, and had his descent from the kings of Judah, and was heir apparent to the throne

⁴⁶ Contra Haeres. l. 3. Haeres. 78.

⁴⁷ Toldos Jesu, p. 3.

⁴⁸ T. Hieros. Avoda Zara, fol. 40. 4. T. Bab. Sabbath, fol. 14. 2. & Midrash Kohelet, fol. 81. 1.

and kingdom of his father David. The Talmudic Jews own that Jesus, or Jesu, as they call him, was put to death because he⁴⁹, קרוב למלכות היה “was nigh to the kingdom”, or nearly related to it. Yea, even in that malicious book⁵⁰ they have written of his life, they represent him as akin to queen Helena, who they say, on that account, would have saved his life. And this was so clear a point, and their forefathers were so thoroughly convinced of this matter, that they would have took him by force and made him a king, Joh 6:15 but his kingdom was to be of another kind, a spiritual, and not a temporal one.

Matthew 1:17

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

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

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

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

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

This must be understood as before; for there might be more generations in this interval, but these were enough to answer the design of the Evangelist; and which he thought proper to mention, and may be numbered in this manner; Jechonias, or Jehoiachin, Salathiel, Zorobabel, Abiud, Ehakim, Azor, Sadoc, Achim, Eliud, Eleazar,

Matthan, Jacob, Joseph, Christ. This way of reckoning by generations was used by other nations as well as the Jews⁵¹, particularly the Grecians; so⁵² Pausanias says, “From Tharypus to Pyrrhus the son of Achilles, pente and πεντε ανδρων και δεκα εισι γενεαι, were fifteen generations of men. “And Herodotus⁵³ speaking of those who had reigned in Babylon, says, among them were two women, one whose name was Semiramis, who reigned before the other γενεησι πεντε, five generations; many other instances of the like kind might be given.

Matthew 1:18

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

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

was on this wise,

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

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

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

but of the Holy Ghost,

according to Luke 1:35. “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee”, &c. and this was done that the human nature of Christ might be clear of original pollution; that so being the immediate produce of the Holy Ghost and without sin, it might be fit for union with the Son of God, and for the office of Mediator he had undertook. When Mary is said to be

found with child,

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

espoused to Joseph,

and thereby the outward credit both of Mary and

49 T. Bab. Sanhed. fol. 43. 1.

50 Toldos Jesu, p. 10.

51 Vid. Pirke Abot. c. 5. sect. 2.

52 Attica sive l. 1. c. 10. p. 19.

53 Clio. l. 1. c. 184. p. 74.

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

before they came together;

that is, before they cohabited together as man and wife, before he brought her home to his own house and bed. The espousals were before they thus came together. It was usual with the Jews first to espouse or betroth, and then to marry, or rather consummate the marriage, by bringing the woman home to her husband's house, between which there was some space of time. The account and manner of betrothing is given by Maimonides⁵⁴ in the following words.

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

And such a distinction between a married woman and a betrothed virgin, which was Mary's case, may be observed in De 22:22 moreover, her being found or appearing to be with child, was "before they came together"; which it is likely, as Dr. Lightfoot⁵⁵ observes, was about three months from her conception, when she was returned from her cousin Elizabeth. It is probable that as soon as she was espoused to Joseph, or quickly after, she went and paid her visit to Elizabeth, with whom she stayed about three months, and then returned home, Luke 1:56. Upon her return home, she appears to be with child, with which she had gone three months, a proper time for the discovery of such a matter, Ge 38:24 and which is assigned by the Jewish doctors for this purpose.

In the Misna⁵⁶ {a} such a case as this is put,

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

that is, as Bartenora observes upon it,"

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

Matthew 1:19

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

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

being a just man,

observant of the law of God, particularly that which respected adultery, being wholly good and chaste, like the Patriarch of the same name; a character just the reverse of that which the Jews give him, in their scandalous⁵⁷ book of the life of Jesus; where, in the most malicious manner, they represent him as an unchaste and an unrighteous person:

and not willing to make her a public example,

or to deliver her, i.e. to the civil magistrate, according to Munster's Hebrew edition. The Greek word signifies to punish by way of example to others, to deter them from sinning; and with the ancients it⁵⁸ denoted the greatest and severest punishment. Here it means either bringing her before the civil magistrate, in order to her being punished according to the law in De 22:23 which requires the person to be brought out to the gate of the city and stoned with stones, which was making a public example indeed; or divorcing her in a very public manner, and thereby expose her to open shame and disgrace. To prevent which, he being tender and

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

55 In loc.

56 Yebamot, c. 3. sect. 10.

57 Teldos Jesu, p. 3.

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

compassionate, though strictly just and good,

was minded to put her away privily:

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

Matthew 1:20

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

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

probably the same Angel which appeared to Zacharias, and brought him tidings that his wife should have a son, and who also appeared to Mary, and acquainted her that she should conceive, and bring forth the Messiah, Whose name was Gabriel, Luke 1:11. If we will believe the Jews, this Angel must be Gabriel, since he is the Angel who they say⁵⁹ רממנא ל חלמא "is appointed over dreams"; for he appeared to

Joseph in a dream,

which is one of the ways and methods in which the Lord, or an Angel of his, has appeared to the saints formerly, and has answered them, see Ge 31:11 and is reckoned by the Jews⁶⁰ one of the degrees or kinds of prophecy: and so the Angel here not only encourages Joseph to take to him his wife,

saying Joseph, thou son of David;

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

fear not to take unto thee

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

⁵⁹ Zohar in Gen. fol. 103. 3.

⁶⁰ Zohar in Gen. fol. 103. 3. & Maimon. Yesode Hattorah. c. 7. l. 13.

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

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

Matthew 1:21

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

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

for he shall save his people from their sins.

The salvation here ascribed to him, and for which he is every way fit, being God as well as man, and which he is the sole author of, is to be understood, not of a temporal, but of a spiritual and everlasting salvation; such as was prophesied of, Is 45:17 and which old Jacob had in his view, when he said, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord", Ge 49:18 which by the Jewish⁶¹ Targumist is paraphrased thus:

"Jacob said when he saw Gideon the son of Joash, and Samson the son of Manoah, that they would rise up to be saviours, not for the salvation of Gideon do I wait, nor for the salvation of Samson do I look, for their salvation is פורקן דשׁתא "a temporary salvation"; but for thy salvation, O Lord, do I wait and look, for thy salvation is לְמִינֵי פורקן "an everlasting salvation", or (according to another copy) but for the salvation of Messiah the son of David, who shall save the children of Israel, and bring them out of captivity, for thy salvation my soul waiteth."

By "his people" whom he is said to save are meant, not all mankind, though they are his by creation and preservation, yet they are not, nor will they be all saved by him spiritually and eternally; nor also the people of the Jews, for though they were his nation, his kinsmen,

⁶¹ Targum Jon. Ben Uzziel in loc.

and so his own people according to the flesh, yet they were not all saved by him; many of them died in their sins, and in the disbelief of him as the Messiah: but by them are meant all the elect of God, whether Jews or Gentiles, who were given to him by his Father, as a peculiar people, and who are made willing in the day of his power upon them, to be saved by him in his own way. And these he saves from “their sins”, from all their sins, original and actual; from secret and open sins; from sins of heart, lip and life; from sins of omission and commission; from all that is in sin, and omission upon it; from the guilt, punishment, and damning power of it, by his sufferings and death; and from the tyrannical government of it by his Spirit and grace; and will at last save them from the being of it, though not in this life, yet hereafter, in the other world, when they shall be without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.

Matthew 1:22

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

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

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

that is, the Prophet Isaiah, and so some copies read. The passage referred to is in Is 7:14 what is there spoken was by divine inspiration; it was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet; the Spirit of the Lord spake by him. Prophets and holy men formerly, spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; so that what they said is to be looked upon as the word of God. Now between the prophecy of Isaiah referred to, and the fact here recorded by the Evangelist, is an entire agreement: the prophecy shows the will, counsel, and determination of God about this matter; the accomplishment of it, the faithfulness and veracity of God in his word; the prediction declares that the thing would be, and the thing itself was done, that what was spoken might be fulfilled; not merely by way of accommodation, or in a typical and mystical, but in a strict, proper and literal sense.

Matthew 1:23

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

These words are rightly applied to the virgin Mary and her son Jesus, for of no other can they be understood; not

of Ahaz’s wife and his son Hezekiah, who was already born, and must be eleven or twelve years of age when these words were spoken; nor of any other son of Ahaz by her or any other person since no other was Lord of Judea; nor of the wife of Isaiah, and any son of his, who never had any that was king of Judah. The prophecy is introduced here as in Isaiah with a “behold!” not only to raise and fix the attention, but to denote that it was something wonderful and extraordinary which was about to be related; and is therefore called אֵימָה a “sign”, wonder, or miracle; which lay not, as some Jewish writers⁶² affirm, in this, that the person spoken of was unfit for conception at the time of the prophecy, since no such thing is intimated; or in this, that it should be a son and not a daughter⁶³, which is foretold; for the wonder lies not in the truth of the prediction, but in the extraordinariness of the thing predicted; much less in this⁶⁴, that the child should eat butter and honey as soon as born; since nothing is more natural and common with new born infants, than to take in any sort of liquids which are sweet and pleasant. But the sign or wonder lay in this, that a “virgin” should “conceive” or “be with child”; for the Evangelist is to be justified in rendering, לְמָה by παρθενος “a virgin”; by the Septuagint having so rendered it some hundreds of years before him, by the sense of the word, which comes from לָמַח and which signifies to “hide” or “cover”; virgins being such who are unknown to, and not uncovered by men, and in the Eastern countries were kept recluse from the company and conversation of men; and by the use of the word in all other places, Ge 24:43. The last of these texts the Jews triumph in, as making for them, and against us, but without any reason; since it does not appear that the “maid” and the “adulterous woman” are one and the same person; and if they were, the vitiated woman might be called a maid or virgin, according to her own account of herself, or in the esteem of others who knew her not, or as antecedent to her defilement; see De 22:28. Besides, could this be understood of any young woman married or unmarried, that had known a man, it would be no wonder, no surprising thing that she should “conceive” or “be with child”, and “bring forth a son”. It is added,

and they shall call his name Emmanuel.

The difference between Isaiah and Matthew is very

⁶² Jarchi. in Isa. vii. 14.

⁶³ Gaon. in Aben Ezra, in ib.

⁶⁴ Kimchi & Aben Ezra in ib. R. Isaac Chizuk. Emun. p. 1. c. 21.

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

being interpreted is God with us:

for it is a compound word of אלהי “God” and עמנו “with us”, and well agrees with Jesus, who is God in our nature, the word that was made flesh and dwelt among us. Joh 1:14, and is the one and only Mediator between God and us,⁶⁵ 1Ti 2:5⁶⁶

Matthew 1:24

Ver. 24. Then Joseph being raised from sleep,

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

did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him;

firmly believing that it was a messenger of God that was sent to him, and that this matter was of the Lord. Wherefore he

took unto him his wife,

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

Matthew 1:25

Ver. 25. “And knew her not”,

Or “but he knew her not”, και answering to the Hebrew ו that is, had carnal knowledge of her, or copulation with her, though his wife. The words are an euphemism, or a modest way of expressing the conjugal

act, and is a very ancient one, see Ge 4:1 and what has been used in nations and languages. And this conduct of his was necessary,

till she had brought forth her firstborn;

that it might be manifest not only that she conceived, being a virgin, but also that she brought forth, being a virgin: for both are signified in the prophecy before related, “a virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son”; which is all one as if it had been said, a virgin shall conceive, and “a virgin” shall bring forth a son. The “firstborn”⁶⁷ is --- that which first opens the womb of its mother, whether any follows after or not, (Exodus 13:12 Exodus 13:13) (Numbers 3:12) . Christ is called Mary’s firstborn, because she had none before him, whether she had any after him or not; for her perpetual virginity seems to be no necessary article of faith: for when it is said,

Joseph knew her not till she had brought forth,

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

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

CHAPTER II

1 The wise men out of the east are directed by a star. 11 They worship him and offer their presents. 14. Joseph fleeth into Egypt, with Jesus and his mother. 16 Herod slayeth the children. 20 himself dieth. 23. Christ is brought back again into Galilee to Nazareth.

Matthew 2

- [1] Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,
- [2] Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.
- [3] When Herod the king had heard these things, he

⁶⁵ See more of this in a book of mine, called “The Prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the Messiah, literally fulfilled in Jesus”, ch. 5. p. 92, 93

⁶⁶ So the Septuagint interpret the word in Isa 8:8.

- was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.
- [4] And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.
- [5] And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,
- [6] 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.
- [7] Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.
- [8] And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.
- [9] When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.
- [10] When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.
- [11] And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.
- [12] And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.
- [13] And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.
- [14] When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:
- [15] And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.
- [16] Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.
- [17] Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy

the prophet, saying,

- [18] In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.
- [19] But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,
- [20] Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life.
- [21] And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.
- [22] But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee:
- [23] And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

JOHN GILL'S COMMENTARY ON MATTHEW CHAPTER II

Matthew 2:1

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

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

in Bethlehem of Judea;

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

“Such a year, says a noted⁶⁸ chronologer of theirs, Jesus of Nazareth was born in Bethlehem Juda, which is a “parsa” and a half, i.e. six miles, from Jerusalem.”

Benjamin⁶⁹ Tudelensis says it is two parsas, i.e. eight miles, from it; and according to Justin Martyr⁷⁰ it was thirty five furlongs distant from it. Yea even they own this, that Jesus was born there, in that vile and blasphemous book⁷¹ of theirs, written on purpose to defame him; nay, even the ancient Jews have owned that

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

69 Itinerarium, p. 48.

70 Apolog. 2. p. 75.

71 Toldos, p. 7.

the Messiah is already born, and that he was born at Bethlehem; as appears from their Talmud⁷², where we meet with such a passage.

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

Afterwards they tell you, he was snatched away by winds and tempests. This story is told in much the same manner in another⁷³ of their writings. Bethlehem signifies “the house of bread”, and in it was born, as an ancient writer⁷⁴ observes, the bread which comes down from heaven: and it may also signify “the house of flesh”, and to it the allusion may be in 1Ti 3:16 “God manifest in the flesh”. The time of Christ’s birth is here expressed, in the days of Herod the king. This was Herod the great, the first of that name: the Jewish chronologer⁷⁵ gives an account of him in the following manner.

“Herod the first, called Herod the Ascalonite, was the son of Antipater, a friend of king Hyrcanus and his deputy; him the senate of Rome made king in the room of Hyrcanus his master. This Herod whilst he was a servant of king Hyrcanus (so in the⁷⁶ Talmud Herod is said to be השמונא a servant of the family of the Asmonaeans) king Hyrcanus saved from death, to which he was sentenced by the sanhedrim of Shammai; that they might not slay him for the murder of

one Hezekiah, as is related by Josephus, l. 6. c. 44. and Herod took to him for wife Miriam, the daughter of Alexander the son of Aristobulus, who was the daughter’s daughter of king Hyrcanus.”

This writer tacitly owns afterwards⁷⁷ that Jesus was born in the days of this king; for he says, that in the days of Hillel and Shammai (who lived in those times) there was one of their disciples, who was called R. Joshua ben Perachiah, and he was, adds he, רבו הנורי “the master of the Nazarene”, or of Jesus of Nazareth. Herod reigned, as this same author observes, thirty seven years; and according to Dr. Lightfoot’s calculation, Christ was born in the thirty fifth year of his reign, and in the thirty first of Augustus Caesar, and in the year of the world three thousand nine hundred and twenty eight, and the month Tisri, which answers to part of our September, about the feast of tabernacles; which indeed was typical of Christ’s incarnation, and then it may reasonably be thought that “the word was made flesh”, and eskhnwsen “tabernacled among us”, Joh 1:14. Another circumstance relating to the birth of Christ is, that

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

these wise men in the Greek text are called magoi, “Magi”, a word which is always used in a bad sense in the sacred writings; hence they are thought by some to be magicians, sorcerers, wizards, such as Simon Magus, Ac 8:9 and Elymas, Ac 13:8 and so the Jewish writers⁷⁸ interpret the word vwgm a wizard, an enchanter, a blasphemer of God, and one that entices others to idolatry; and in the Hebrew Gospel of Munster these men are called מכשפיי “wizards”. Some have thought this to be their national name. Epiphanius⁷⁹ supposes that these men were of the posterity of Abraham by Keturah, who inhabited a country in some part of Arabia, called Magodia: but could this be thought to be the name of their country, one might rather be induced to suppose that they were of the μαγοι, “Magi”, a nation of the Medes mentioned by Herodotus⁸⁰; since both the name and country better agree with these persons; but the word seems to be rather a name of character and office, and to design the wise men, and priests of the Persians.

72 Hieros. Beracot. fol. 5. 1.

73 Echa Rabbati, fol. 50. 1.

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

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

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

77 Ib. col. 2.

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

79 Contr. Haeres. l. 3. Haeres. 30.

80 Clio sive l. 1. c. 101.

An Eastern ⁸¹ writer says the word is of Persic original, and is compounded of two words, "Mije Gush", which signifies "a man with short ears"; for such was the first founder of the sect, and from whom they were so called. But in the Arabic Persic Nomenclator⁸² {a} it is rendered "a worshipper of fire", and such the Persian priests were; and to this agrees what Apuleius {b} says, that "Magus", in the Persian language, is the same as "priest" with us: and Xenophon⁸³ says, that the Magi were first appointed by Cyrus, to sing hymns to the gods, as soon as it was day, and to sacrifice to them. The account given of them by Porphyry ⁸⁴ is, that

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

From whence we may learn in some measure who these men were, and why the word is by our translators rendered "wise men"; since the Magi, as Cicero ⁸⁵ says, were reckoned a sort of wise men, and doctors among the Persians: who further observes, that no man could be a king of the Persians before he understood the discipline and knowledge of the Magi: and the wisdom of the Persian Magi, as Aelianus⁸⁶ writes, among other things, lay in foretelling things to come. These came

from the east,

not from Chaldea, as some have thought, led hereunto by the multitude of astrologers, magicians, and soothsayers, which were among that people; see Da 2:2 for Chaldea was not east, but north of Judea, as appears from Jer 1:14 Jer 6:22. Others have thought they came from Arabia, and particularly Sheba, induced hereunto by Ps 72:10. But though some part of Arabia lay east, yet Sheba was south of the land of Israel, as is evident from the queen of that place being called the "queen of the south", Mt 12:42. The more generally received opinion seems to be most right, that they came from Persia, which as it lies east of Judea, so was famous for this sort of men,

81 Alfiranzabadius in Pocock. Specim. Hist. Arab. p. 146

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

83 Cyropaedia, l. 8. sect. 6.

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

85 De Divinatione, l. i.

86 Hist. Var. l. 2. c. 17.

and besides the name, as has been seen, is of Persic original. The place whither they came was Jerusalem, the "metropolis" of Judea, where they might suppose the king of the Jews was born, or where, at least, they might persuade themselves they should hear of him; since here Herod the king lived, to whom it seems they applied themselves in the first place. The time of their coming was, "when Jesus was born"; not as soon as he was born, or on the "thirteenth" day after his birth, the sixth of January, as it stands in our Calendar; or within the forty days before Mary's Purification; since this space of time does not seem to be sufficient for so long a journey, and which must require a considerable preparation for it; nor is it probable if they came so soon as this, that after such a stir at Jerusalem, after Herod's diligent search and inquiry concerning this matter, and his wrath and anger at being disappointed and deluded by the wise men, that Joseph and Mary should so soon bring the child into the temple, where, it was declared to be the Messiah by Simeon and Anna. Besides, immediately after the departure of the wise men, Joseph with his wife and child were ordered into Egypt, which could not be done before Mary's Purification. But rather this their coming was near upon two years after the birth of Christ; since it is afterwards observed, that "Herod sent and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men", Mt 2:16. This was the opinion of Epiphanius ⁸⁷ formerly, and is embraced by Dr. Lightfoot ⁸⁸, to whom I refer the reader for further proof of this matter.

Matthew 2:2

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

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

for we have seen his star in the east.

By the star they saw, some understand an angel, which is not likely. The learned Lightfoot⁸⁹ is of opinion

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

88 Harmony, Vol. I. p. 205, 432, &c.

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

that it was the light or glory of the Lord, which shone about the shepherds, when the angel brought them the news of Christ's birth, and which at so great a distance appeared as a star to these wise men; others, that it was a comet, such as has been thought to portend the birth or death of some illustrious person: but it seems to be properly a star, a new and an unusual one, such as had never been seen, nor observed before; and is called his star, the star of the king born, because it appeared on his account, and was the sign of his birth, who is "the root and offspring of David, and the bright and morning star", Re 22:16. This they saw "in the east"; not in the eastern part of the heavens, but they saw it when they were in the east, that is, in their own country; and according to the best observations they were able to make, it was in that part of the heavens right over the land of Judea; from whence they concluded that the king of the Jews was born; but the question is how they should hereby know and be assured that such a person was born? To this it maybe replied, that there is a prophecy of Balaam's which is thus expressed, "there shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel", Nu 24:17 which is owned by some Jewish writers⁹⁰ to be a prophecy of the Messiah; though the star there mentioned is considered by them as one of the Messiah's titles; hence one who set up himself, and for a while was by some received as the Messiah, was called by them בר כוכבא "the son of a star"; but when he was discovered to be an impostor, they called him בר כוזיבא "the son of a lie": but I rather take it to be a sign of the Messiah's coming, and the meaning is, when a star shall דרב "walk" or steer its course from Jacob, or above, or over the land of Israel, then a sceptre, or sceptre bearer, that is, a king, shall rise out of Israel. Now this prophecy of Balaam, who lived in the east, might be traditionally handed down to this time, and be well known by these men; and who, observing such a star appear over the land of Judea, might conclude that now the sceptre bearer or king was born⁹¹. Besides, Zerdusht or Zoroastres, the author of the sect of the Magi or wise men, and who appears to be a Jew by birth, and to be acquainted with the writings of the Old Testament, and with this prophecy, spoke of the birth of Christ to his followers; and told them when he should be born, a star

would appear, and shine in the day, and ordered them to go where that directed, and offer gifts, and worship him. An Eastern writer, who affirms {m} what I have now mentioned, relates⁹² the following speech as spoke by the wise men to Herod, when in conversation with him, about this matter:

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

If this be true, we are not at a loss how they come by their knowledge, nor for a reason of their conduct. That the Jews have expected that a star should appear at the time of the Messiah's coming, is certain, from some passages in a book of theirs of great value and esteem among them, in which are the following things: in one place it is said ⁹³,

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

and in another place, ⁹⁴

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

once more it is affirmed as a tradition⁹⁵ that

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

Now this expectation of the appearing of such a star

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90 Targum Onk. Jon. & Aben Ezra in loc. Zohar. in Exod. fol. 4. 1. Abarbinel Mashmia Jeshua, fol. 4. 3. Tzeror Hamor, fol. 126. 3.

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

92 lb. p. 70.

93 Zohar. in Gen. fol. 74. 3.

94 Zohar. in Exod. fol. 3. 3, 4.

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

at the coming of the Messiah takes its rise from and is founded upon the above mentioned prophecy. It is said⁹⁶ that Seth the son of Adam gave out a prophecy, that a star should appear at the birth of the Messiah; and that a star did appear at the birth of Christ is certain from the testimony of the Evangelist, and seems to have some confirmation from the writings of the Heathens themselves. Some have thought that the star which Virgil speaks of, and calls⁹⁷ "Caesaris Astrum", "Caesar's star", is this very star, which he in complaisance to that monarch ascribes to him. Pliny⁹⁸ makes mention

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

If the testimony of Chalcidius, a Platonic philosopher, taken notice of by many learned men, is genuine, and he not a Christian,⁹⁹ it is much to the purpose, and is as follows:

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

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

and are come to worship him;

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

Matthew 2:3

Ver. 3. **When Herod the king had heard these things**, That is, the report made by the wise men of the appearance of an unusual star, and of the birth of the

king of the Jews, which they affirmed with all certainty, without any hesitation,

he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

Herod was troubled, his mind was disturbed and made uneasy, fearing he should be deposed, and lose his kingdom, to which he knew he had no just right and claim, being a foreigner; and "all Jerusalem", i.e. all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who heard of this, were also troubled, and showed a concern at it with him; either feignedly, as knowing his jealousy, suspicion and cruelty; or in reality, because of tumults, commotions and wars, they might fear would arise upon this, having lost the true notion of the Messiah, as a spiritual king, saviour and redeemer. And hereby was fulfilled, in part, the famous prophecy in Ge 49:10 according to the sense of one¹⁰⁰ of the Targumists on it, who paraphrases it after this manner;

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

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

Matthew 2:4

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

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

the chief priests,

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

the scribes of the people

are meant a sort of letter learned men, whose business it was to keep and write out copies of the law, and other things, for "the people"; they were the fathers of the traditions, and interpreters of the law to them; and therefore are called "the scribes of the people": as well also, because they were chosen from among the people, from any other tribe, and not from the tribe

96 Vid. Wolf. Bibl. Heb. p. 1156.

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

98 Nat. Hist. l. 2. c. 25.

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

100 Jonathan ben Uzziel in loc.

of Levi, from whom the priests were; so that one seems to design the “clergy”, and the other the laity, in this assembly. The Septuagint render שׁוֹטְרִים “the officers of the people”, by this same word the scribes, and scribes of the people, in Nu 11:16 Jos 1:10. The learned Dr. Lightfoot¹⁰¹ conjectures, that the persons of note, who were present at this time, were Hillell the president of the council, Shammai the vice president, the sons of Betira, Judah and Joshua, Bava ben Buta, Jonathan ben Uzziel, the Chaldee paraphrast, and Simeon the son of Hillell.

He demanded of them,

or asked them with authority, as the chief captain did, Ac 21:33 “where Christ”; מָה־הָיָה הַמָּשִׁיחַ the Christ, the Messiah **should be born?**

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

Matthew 2:5

Ver. 5. **And they said unto him,** They answer without any hesitation, it being a generally received notion, and a thing well known among them, in Bethlehem of Judea; and give their reason for it; for thus it is written by the prophet, that is, the prophet Micah, in whose prophecy, Mic 5:2 it stands, and is as follows:

Matthew 2:6

Ver. 6. **And thou Bethlehem in the land of Juda,** This prophecy, which the chief priests and scribes produced, as pointing at the place of Christ’s birth, is owned by both ancient and later Jews¹⁰² to be a prophecy of the Messiah. The difference between Micah and Matthew is easily reconciled. Bethlehem is called by Micah, Bethlehem Ephratah, and by Matthew, Bethlehem in the land of Judah, and both were one and the same place. Bethlehem Ephratah was in the land of Juda, as appears from the prophecy of Micah itself, from Ru 1:2 and the Septuagint version of Jos 15:60 and is described in this manner by Matthew, partly to distinguish it from another Bethlehem in the land of Zebulun, Jos 19:15 and partly because its other name Ephratah was now disused, and so unknown to Herod, who was unacquainted with the

books and prophecies of the Old Testament. Micah says this place was

little among the thousands of Judah.

Matthew says, “not the least”. But in this is no apparent contradiction, it might be “little” and yet “not the least”; besides, it might be “little” and “not little”, or “not the least” in different respects, and at different times; it might be little, mean, and contemptible as to worldly splendour, riches, number of inhabitants, pompous buildings, &c. and yet not be little or mean, when considered as the place of the birth of many great persons, such as Booz, Jesse, David, &c. and especially Christ. It might be little in Micah’s time, and yet not in Matthew’s; especially since it had received a considerable additional honour by Christ’s being born there. Moreover, the words in Micah may be rendered, by way of interrogation, “art thou little, or the least?” To which the answer in Matthew is, “no, thou art not the least”, &c. or else the word רבד may be understood, and the text be translated thus; “it is a small thing that thou art among the thousands of Judah, for out of thee”, &c. a great honour shall be conferred on thee, the Messiah shall spring from thee. Again, what Micah calls “thousands”, are in Matthew called “princes”; the reason of this is, because the tribes of Israel were divided into thousands, and every thousand had its prince; so that though here is a difference in words, yet none in sense. What Micah styles “a ruler in Israel”, Matthew expresses by “a governor that shall rule or feed my people Israel”; but in this there is no contradiction. Add to all this, that it should be observed, that the Evangelist is not giving a version of his own, but of the chief priests and scribes; and therefore was it ever so faulty, they, and not he, must be chargeable with it; for he has acted the part of a faithful historian in giving it in the words in which they cited it¹⁰³.

Matthew 2:7

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

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

101 Vol. II. p. 111.

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

103 See my book of the “Prophecies of the Messiah”, &c. ch. 6. p. 104-116.

forming in his own mind to destroy the young king; and having called them to him, he

inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

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

Matthew 2:8

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

Having got out of them all that he could, and was for his purpose, he informs them of the place where they might find the person they came to inquire after, according to the account of it which the chief priests and scribes had given him; and then sends them away to Bethlehem, where Christ, according to prophecy, was to be born, and now was born. It may seem strange that neither any of the Jews, nor Herod, or any of his ministers and courtiers, should go along with these men to Bethlehem; since it was but a little way off, not above five or six miles from Jerusalem; and since the birth of such a person was no trivial thing, but an affair of great concern and importance. The Jews might not care to go, lest Herod should suspect that they were going to revolt from him, and set up this new born king against him; and it might be a piece of policy in Herod and his courtiers not to accompany them, for they might imagine that the parents of the child would be jealous and afraid of them, and would therefore conceal it, when they would be in no fear of strangers: and no doubt but the wise providence of God overruled and directed this matter, that so the young child Jesus might be preserved from the bloody designs of this tyrant; who often takes the wise in their own craftiness, and carries the counsel of the froward headlong. When he dismissed them he gave them this charge and these orders,

go and search diligently for the young child;

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

and when you have found him bring me word again;

give me a particular account of him, who are his

parents, and where he dwells,

that I may come and worship him also:

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

Matthew 2:9

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

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

they departed;

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

and lo,

to their great surprise and joy,

the star, which they saw in the east,

then appeared; for, it seems, it had for some time disappeared: it looks as if it had been only seen at the time of Christ's birth, and when they were in their own country; for both here, and in Mt 2:2 they are only said to have seen it "in the east", that is, when they were in the east country; so that it seems from that time they had had no sight of it, not while they were on their journey, nor at Jerusalem; nor was it necessary they should. When they saw it in their own country, according to their best observation, it was over the land of Judea, and they were persuaded of it, that it was a certain sign that the king of the Jews was born: they therefore determine upon and prepare for a journey to Jerusalem, the metropolis of the nation, and where the king kept his court, to inquire for him; nor needed they the guidance of the star to direct them to a place so well known; but being in quest of him in an obscure place, and without any guide, this star appears to them; and, which is something very extraordinary,

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

This star had a motion, kept pace with them, and was a guide unto them, till it and they came to the place where Christ was; and then it stood directly over the house, so that they had no need to inquire of any person for him. It is certain from hence, that this star was indeed a very unusual one; its being seen in the daytime, its motion and standing still, its situation, which must be very low, and its use to point out the very house where

Christ was, show it to be so; but though it was an unusual appearance, it should not be thought incredible.¹⁰⁴ Varro relates, that

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

The appearing of this star, and then its disappearing for a time, agree, in some measure, with the account the Jews give of the star which they expect will be seen at the coming of the Messiah; for they¹⁰⁵ say,

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

Matthew 2:10

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

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

Matthew 2:11

¹⁰⁴ Apud Servium in Virgil Aeneid. l. 1. p. 471. Ed. Basil. 1586.

¹⁰⁵ Zohar in Exod. fol. 3, 4. & 71. 1.

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

they found the young child, with Mary his mother;

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

they fell down

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

and worshipped him

as a king; giving him the same civil honour and respect, as they were wont to do to their own kings and princes; which custom began with Cyrus: for so Xenophon¹⁰⁶ {c} says, that

”when the people saw him, pantev prosekunhsan, they all worshipped him; either because some were ordered to begin this custom; or else being amazed at the apparatus; or because he seemed to appear so great and beautiful; for before that time none of the Persians worshipped Cyrus.”

And when they had opened their treasures,

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

they presented,

or offered to him

gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh:

such things as they had; it being usual, not only with the Persians, but other eastern nations, to make presents to kings and great persons, when they made any addresses to them; which generally, among other things, consisted of gold, spices, myrrh, and the like, see Ge 43:11. Which last passage referred to, being a prophecy of the Messiah, has been thought by some now to have had its accomplishment, together with Isa 60:6 where frankincense as well as gold is mentioned, “they shall bring gold and incense” or frankincense; upon which a noted Jewish writer¹⁰⁷ observes, that gold and

¹⁰⁶ Cyropaedia, l. 8. sect. 23.

¹⁰⁷ R. David Kimchi. {e} Ludolph. Lex. Ethiop. p. 539,

frankincense shall be brought privately as a present to the king Messiah. According to the Ethiopians, these wise men were three, whose names they give us; the name of him that offered the gold, was Annoson; he that offered the frankincense, was Allytar; and he that offered the myrrh, Kyssad {e}. The Papists call them the three kings of Colen, and say they lie buried in that place.

Matthew 2:12

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

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

that they should not return to Herod:

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

they departed into their own country another way.

What became of these persons afterwards, and whether they were spiritually and savingly enlightened into the knowledge of Christ; what a report they made of him when they came into their own country, and the success thereof, we have no account of, either in sacred or profane history.

Matthew 2:13

Ver. 13. And when they were departed,

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

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

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

and take the young child and his mother.

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

chiefly regarded, and for which the providence of God was particularly concerned; wherefore Joseph is ordered to take them in proper carriages, and

flee into Egypt,

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

for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him:

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

to destroy him,

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

Matthew 2:14

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

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

the command of God; he took the young child and his mother,

by night,

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

departed into Egypt:

what part of Egypt he went into is not certain. The Jews say that Jesus went to Alexandria in Egypt, and which is probable enough; since this was a place greatly resorted to at this time by Jews, and where provision was made for their sustenance; though they greatly mistake the person with whom he went; for they say¹⁰⁸ that R. Joshua ben Perachiah, whom they pretend was his master, went to Alexandria in Egypt, and Jesus with him. However, this is an acknowledgment of the truth of this part of Christ's history, that he was in Egypt; as also when they blasphemously and maliciously say¹⁰⁹ {g}, did not Ben Stada, by whom they mean Jesus, bring enchantments or magic, Myrumm Mypvk, "out of Egypt", in a cutting in the flesh? To which wicked accusation Arnobius seems to refer¹¹⁰, when he says,

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

Matthew 2:15

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

Which was in a very short time; for Eusebius¹¹¹ says, that immediately, in a very little time after the slaughter of the children at Bethlehem, the divine vengeance inflicted diseases on him, which quickly brought him to

108 T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 107. 2. Cabala R. Abraham. Juchasin, fol. 16. 2.

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

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

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

his end; so that, according to the learned Dr. Lightfoot¹¹² {k}, Jesus was not above three or four months in Egypt.

Now all this was brought about,

that it might be fulfilled;

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

which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet,

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

my son out of Egypt:

who through a tyrant's rage and malice will be obliged to abide there a while; yet I will bring him from thence into the land of Judea, where he shall live and "help" my "servant", paidov¹¹³, "child Israel"; shall instruct him in his duty, teach him the doctrines of the Gospel, and at last, by his sufferings and death, procure for him the pardon of all his transgressions; of which there is a particular enumeration in Mt 2:3. This is the natural and unconstrained sense of these words, which justifies the Evangelist in his citation and application of them to Christ's going to Egypt, and his return from thence, as I have elsewhere¹¹⁴ shown.

Matthew 2:16

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

Herod, having waited a proper time for the return of the wise men, and they not coming, concluded he was

112 Harmony of the New Testament, p. 6.

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

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

tricked by them; though, no doubt, when they promised to return, and bring him word how things were, they seriously meant and designed a performance; but having met with a divine oracle, which ordered them another way, they thought it most advisable to obey God rather than man. Upon this,

Herod was exceeding wroth;

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

sent forth

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

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

A most cruel and barbarous action, and agrees with the character given of him, that he was in the beginning of his reign, and it seems too in the latter end of it, ומרמה וְאִישׁ דְּמוּיָו “a bloody and deceitful man”¹¹⁵: he slew, or ordered to be slain, “children”, infants who had done him no injury, nor were capable of doing any, and whose parents also had not disobliged him; he slew the infants at Bethlehem, because this was the place of the Messiah’s birth, the knowledge of which he had got from the chief priests and scribes; he slew all of them, that there might be no possibility of the young child’s escaping: and lest it should by any means escape to a neighbouring town or village, he slew all the children

in all the coasts thereof,

in all the territories of Bethlehem, in all the towns and villages around it, as many as were

from two years old and under:

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

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

of the appearing of the star to them, and when they concluded this great and famous prince was born. This cruel murder of the infants seems to be hinted at

¹¹⁵ Ganz. Tzemach David, par. 1. fol. 25. 1.

by Josephus¹¹⁶, where he says, that “many slaughters followed the prediction of a new king”; and is more manifestly referred to by Macrobinus, a Heathen author, though the story is mixed and confounded with other things; who reports¹¹⁷, that

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

Killing of infants as soon as born, or while in their cradles, is by the Jews ascribed to one Lilith, which, R. Elias¹¹⁸ says, is the name of a devil, which kills children; and indeed such an action is truly a diabolical one.

Matthew 2:17

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

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

Jeremy the prophet,

in Jer 31:15.

in Rama was there a voice heard,

That this prophecy belongs not to the Babylonish captivity, but the times of the Messiah, appears from the whole context; which manifestly speaks of the miraculous conception of Christ, of the blessings of his kingdom to be enjoyed by his people, and of the new covenant to be made with them, as I have shown in another place¹¹⁹. Rama was not in Arabia, as Justin Martyr says¹²⁰, but a town in the tribe of Benjamin, Jos 18:25 and very near to Bethlehem in the tribe of Juda: between these two places, and near to both of them, was the grave of Rachel, Ge 35:19 for which reason, and also because Rama belonged to Benjamin, a son of hers, and where, no doubt, many children were destroyed in this massacre, as well as at Bethlehem, Rachel is introduced in the prophecy representing the sorrowful mothers of those parts,

weeping for their children;

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

¹¹⁶ Antiq. l. 17. c. 3.

¹¹⁷ Saturnal. l. 2. c. 4.

¹¹⁸ Methurgemau in voce tyyl. Vid. Buxtorf. Lexicon Rab. in cadem voce & Synagog. Jud. c. 4. p. 80.

¹¹⁹ Prophecies of the Messiah, &c. p. 126, &c.

¹²⁰ Dialog. cum Tryph. p. 304.

would not be comforted;

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

were not,

i.e. were dead, were not in the land of the living, and no more to be enjoyed by them in this world. I cannot forbear transcribing a remark made by a noted Jew ¹²¹ upon that passage in Ge 35:20. "And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave"; to show, says he, that Jacob saw that this thing was of the Lord, and that it would be an help to her children, as it is written, "a voice was heard in Rama", &c. wherefore he set a pillar upon her; and to show that the affair of her grave, that this היתה לתור "belonged to the time to come", he says, "that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day": he means, יום הגאולה "the day of redemption". And Rachel, in the passage of Jeremy, the Jews ¹²² themselves own, means the congregation of Israel.

Matthew 2:18

See Gill on "Mt 2:17"

Matthew 2:19

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

Who died, as before observed, a few months after this tragedy was acted; and, according to the ¹²³ Jewish writers, on the seventh day of the month Cisleu, and which answers to the twenty fifth of our November: and was afterwards observed as a day of rejoicing by the Jews. The account which Josephus ¹²⁴, and from him Eusebius ¹²⁵, gives of his miserable death, is as follows; a burning fever seized him, with an intolerable itching all over his body, and continual pains of the colic; his feet swelled with a dropsy; he had an inflammation in the lower part of his belly: a putrefaction in his privy parts, which bred worms; a frequency and difficulty of breathing, and convulsions in all his members; he had a voracious appetite, a stinking breath, and his intestines abounded with ulcers; when he found that all means made use of were ineffectual, and that he must die, he attempted to lay violent hands upon himself, but was prevented, and soon after expired in a very miserable manner. Now some time after his death,

behold an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream

¹²¹ R. Abraham Seba Tzeror Hammor, fol. 47. 1.

¹²² Zohar in Exod. fol. 13. 1. & in Lev. fol. 8. 4.

¹²³ Megillah Taanith apud Van Till. de anno, &c. Christ. Nat. p. 122.

¹²⁴ De Bello Judaic. l. 1. c. 33. sect. 5. 7. & Antiq. l. 17. c. 9.

¹²⁵ Eccl. Hist. l. 1. c. 8. p. 25, 26.

to Joseph in Egypt.

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

Matthew 2:20

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

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

and go into the land of Israel.

He does not bid him go to Bethlehem or Nazareth, or any particular place, but the land of Israel, where he might go even into any part of it, without fear; and gives this reason for it, for they are dead which sought the young child's life; meaning either Herod only, the plural number being put for the singular; or including Antipater his son with him, who might be equally concerned in seeking the life of Christ; since he was next heir, and whom Herod ¹²⁶ ordered to be slain about five days before his death; or else designing with him many of the executioners of the infants at Bethlehem, and thereabout; who might have been, as well as he, miserable instances of divine vengeance, for their concern in that barbarous tragedy.

Matthew 2:21

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

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

¹²⁶ Joseph. de Bello Judaico, l. 1. c. 33. sect. 8, 9.

Matthew 2:22

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

This Archelaus was a son of Herod the great by Malthace Samaritan, and was appointed by him for his successor a little before his death, and was upon it declared king by the populace, the soldiers, and those that were in power; all which is affirmed by Josephus¹²⁷, and confirms the account given by the Evangelist; with whose account agrees what the Jewish chronologer says¹²⁸, that

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

which is the very phrase used by Matthew. Now this man was like his father, a very cruel wicked man; and, as the above chronologer says¹²⁹, he ordered his troops, and slew at the feast of the passover, in the temple of the Lord, “nine thousand persons”: though perhaps Josephus’s account is truest, who says¹³⁰, that he sent in his whole army upon the people, who had raised a sedition, and slew, whilst they were sacrificing, about “three thousand”; and this happened at the beginning of his reign, and indeed before he had scarce mounted the throne. And now the news of this might have reached the ears of Joseph, and be the reason why he

was afraid to go thither,

into Judea, where Archelaus reigned.

Notwithstanding being warned of God in a dream,

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

turned aside into the parts of Galilee;

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

Matthew 2:23

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

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

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

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

129 Ib.

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

and fixed their habitation,

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

This affair of going into Galilee, and settling at Nazareth, was brought about with this view, to accomplish what had been foretold by the prophets, or prophet, the plural number being used for the singular, as in Joh 6:45. And indeed it is so rendered here in the Syriac, Persic, and Ethiopic versions; and designs the prophet Isaiah, and respects that prophecy of his in Isa 11:1 “and there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and **נֵי** “a branch shall grow out of his roots”; a prophecy owned by the Jews¹³¹ themselves to belong to the Messiah, and which was now fulfilled in Jesus; who as he was descended from Jesse’s family, so by dwelling at Nazareth, he would appear to be, and would be “called a Nazarene, or Netzer, the branch”; being an inhabitant of Natzaireth, or Netzer, so called from the multitude of plants and trees that grew there.

A Nazarene, as David de Pomis says¹³²,

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

Now though Christ was not born, yet because he dwelt at Nazareth, and was educated there; hence the Jews frequently call him **ישו הנזיר**, “Jesus, the Nazarene¹³³”; and sometimes only **הנזיר**, “the Nazarene”¹³⁴. They also design him by **בן נֵי** “Ben Netzer”¹³⁵, of whom they say a great many evil things: and that Christ is often called Jesus of Nazareth, or the Nazarene, and his followers Nazarenes, from the place of his habitation, is known to everyone. One of Christ’s disciples is called Netzer in the Talmud¹³⁶, and made to plead for his life, because his name signified a branch, according to Isa 11:1. Surenhusius observes¹³⁷, that the form **מזה שנאמר** “to fulfil what is said”, used by the Talmudists, and which he takes to be the same with this here, is used by them, when they allege not the very words of Moses, or the prophets, but their sense, which is deduced as a certain axiom from them; and thinks it is applicable to

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

132 Lexic Heb. fol. 141. 2.

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

134 Ganz. par. 1. fol. 24. 2.

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

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

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

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

the present case.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW CHAPTER III

Matthew 3

- [1] In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,
- [2] And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.
- [3] For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.
- [4] And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.
- [5] Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan,
- [6] And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.
- [7] But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?
- [8] Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:
- [9] And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.
- [10] And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.
- [11] I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:
- [12] Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.
- [13] Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.
- [14] But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?
- [15] And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.
- [16] And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God

descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

- [17] And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

JOHN GILL'S COMMENTARY ON MATTHEW CHAPTER III

1 John preacheth. His office. life, and baptism. 7 He reprehendeth the Pharisees. 13 and baptizeth Christ in Jordan.

Matthew 3:1

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

The Evangelist having given an account of the genealogy and birth of Christ; of the coming of the wise men from the east to him; of his preservation from Herod's bloody design against him, when all the infants at Bethlehem were slain; of the flight of Joseph with Mary and Jesus into Egypt, and of their return from thence, and settlement in Nazareth, where Christ continued till near the time of his baptism, and entrance on his public ministry; proceeds to give a brief relation of John, the harbinger and forerunner of Christ, and the administrator of baptism to him: and he describes him by his name John, in Hebrew יוחנן, "Jochanan", which signifies "gracious", or "the grace of the Lord", or "the Lord has given grace"; which agrees with him, both as a good man, on whom the Lord had bestowed much grace, and as a preacher, whose business it was to publish the grace of God in Christ, Luke 16:16. This name was given him by an angel before his conception, and by his parents at his birth, contrary to the mind of their relations and neighbours, Luke 1:13. He is called by some of the Jewish writers¹³⁸, John the "high priest"; his father Zacharias was a priest of the course of Abia, and he might succeed him therein, and be the head of that course, and for that reason be called a "high" or "chief priest"; as we find such were called, who were the principal among the priests, as were those who were chosen into the sanhedrim, or were the heads of these courses; and therefore we read of many chief priests, Mt 2:4. From his being the first administrator of the ordinance of baptism, he is called John the Baptist; and this was a well known title and character of him. Josephus¹³⁹ calls him "John", who is surnamed ο βαπτιστης, "the Baptist"; and Ben Gorion having spoken of him, says¹⁴⁰, this is that John who *יָשָׂה טְבִילָה*, "made", instituted, or practised "baptism"; and

¹³⁸ Ganz. Tzemach David, par. 1. fol. 25. 2. Chronicon Regum, fol. 54. 4.

¹³⁹ Antiq. l. 18. c. 7.

¹⁴⁰ L. 5. c. 45.

which, by the way, shows that this was not in use among the Jews before, but that John was the first practiser this way. He is described by his work and office as a preacher, he “came” or “was preaching” the doctrines of repentance and baptism; he published and declared that the kingdom of the Messiah was at hand, that he would quickly be revealed; and exhorted the people to believe on him, which should come after him. The place where he preached is mentioned,

in the wilderness of Judea;

not that he preached to trees and to the wild beasts of the desert; for the wilderness of Judea was an habitable place, and had in it many cities, towns, and villages, in which we must suppose John came preaching, at least to persons which came out from thence. There were in Joshua’s time six cities in this wilderness, namely Betharabah, Middin, and Secacah, and Nibshan, and the city of Salt, and Engedi, Jos 15:61. Mention is made in the Talmud¹⁴¹ of this wilderness of Judea, as distinct from the land of Israel, when the doctors say, that

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

The Jews have an observation¹⁴² of many things coming from the wilderness;

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

So John came preaching here, and Christ was tempted here. The time of his appearance and preaching was in those days: not when Christ was newly born; or when the wise men paid their adoration to him; or when Herod slew the infants; or when he was just dead, and Archelaus reigned in his room; or when Christ first went to Nazareth; though it was whilst he dwelt there as a private person; but when John was about thirty years of age, and Christ was near unto it, Luke 3:23 an age in which ecclesiastical persons entered into service, Nu 4:3. It was indeed, as Luke says, Luke 3:1 in the “fifteenth” year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar; Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea; and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee;

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

142 Shirhashirim Rabba, fol. 13. 3.

and his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea; and of the region of Trachonitis; and Lysanias, the tetrarch of Abilene; Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests.

Matthew 3:2

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

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

for the kingdom of heaven is at hand:

by which is meant not the kingdom of glory to be expected in another world; or the kingdom of grace, that is internal grace, which only believers are partakers of in this; but the kingdom of the Messiah, which was “at hand”; just ready to appear, when he would be made manifest in Israel and enter upon his work and office: it is the Gospel dispensation which was about to take place, and is so called; because of the wise and orderly management of it under Christ, the king and head of his church by the ministration of the word, and administration of ordinances; whereby, as means, spiritual and internal grace would be communicated to many, in whose hearts it would reign and make them meet for the kingdom of glory; and because the whole economy of the Gospel, the doctrines and ordinances of it are from heaven. This phrase, “the kingdom of heaven”

is often to be met with in Jewish writings; and sometimes it stands opposed to the “kingdom of the earth”¹⁴³; by it is often meant the worship, service, fear, and love of God, and faith in him: thus in one of their books¹⁴⁴ having mentioned those words, “serve the Lord with fear”: it is asked, what means this phrase, “with fear?” It is answered, the same as it is written, “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”; and this is מלכות שמיים “the kingdom of heaven”. And elsewhere they¹⁴⁵ ask, “what is the kingdom of heaven?” To which is answered, “the Lord our God is one Lord”. Yea, the Lord God himself is so called¹⁴⁶, and sometimes the sanctuary; and sometimes they intend by it the times of the Messiah, as the Baptist here does; for so they paraphrase¹⁴⁷ those words,

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

Very pertinently does John make use of this argument to engage to repentance; since there cannot be a greater motive to it, whether it regard sorrow for sin, and confession of it, or a change of principles and practice, than the grace of God through Christ, which is exhibited in the Gospel dispensation: and very appropriately does he urge repentance previous to the kingdom of heaven; because without that there can be no true and cordial embracing or entering into the Gospel dispensation, or kingdom of heaven; that is, no real and hearty receiving the doctrines, and submitting to the ordinances of it. Nor ought the Jews above all people to object to John’s method of preaching; since they make repentance absolutely necessary to the revelation of the Messiah and his kingdom, and redemption by him; for they say¹⁴⁸ in so many words, that

“if Israel do not repent, they will never be redeemed; but as soon as they repent, they will be

redeemed; yea, if they repent but one day, immediately the son of David will come.”

Matthew 3:3

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

These are not the words of the Baptist himself, as in Joh 1:23 but of the Evangelist, who cites and applies to John a passage in the Prophet Isaiah, Isa 40:3 and that very pertinently, since that “chapter” is a prophecy of the Messiah. The consolations spoken of in Isa 40:3, were to be in the days of the king Messiah, as a writer of note¹⁴⁹ among the Jews observes. The Messiah is more expressly prophesied of in Isa 40:9 as one that should appear to the joy of his people, and “come with a strong hand”, vigorously prosecute his designs, faithfully perform his work, and then receive his reward; he is spoken of under the “character” of a “shepherd”, who would tenderly discharge the several parts of his office as such, which character is frequently given to the Messiah in the Old Testament: now the person spoken of in Isa 40:3 was to be his harbinger to go before him, proclaim and make ready for his coming; and what is said of him agrees entirely with John the Baptist, as the character given of him,

the voice of one crying,

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

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

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

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

The Lord whom ye have sought, the Messiah whom you have expected, is just coming, he will quickly appear; prepare to meet him by repentance, and receive him by faith, relinquish your former notions and principles, correct your errors, and amend your lives, remove all out of the way which may be offensive to him. The allusion is to a great personage being about to make his public appearance or entrance; when a harbinger goes before him, orders the way to be cleared, all impediments to be removed, and everything got ready for the reception of

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

143 Bereshit Rabba, fol. 7. 4.

144 Zohar in Exod. fol 39. 2.

145 Debarim Rabba, fol. 237. 2.

146 Zohar in Gen. fol. 112. 3.

147 Shirhashirim Rabba, fol. 11. 4.

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

him.

Matthew 3:4

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

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

the same

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

had his raiment of camel's hair;

not of camel's hair softened and dressed, which the Talmudists¹⁵⁰ call קַרְ גַּמְלִיִּם "camel's wool"; of which wool of camels and of hares, the Jews say¹⁵¹ the coats were made, with which God clothed Adam and Eve; and which being spun to a thread, and wove, and made a garment of, they call¹⁵² חַמְלִיָּה, and we "camlet"; for this would have been too fine and soft for John to wear, which is denied of him, Mt 11:8 but either of a camel's skin with the hair on it, such was the "rough garment", or "garment of hair", the prophets used to wear, Zec 13:4 or of camels hair not softened but undressed; and so was very coarse and rough, and which was suitable to the austerity of his life, and the roughness of his ministry. And it is to be observed he appeared in the same dress as Elijah or Elias did, 2Ki 1:8 in whose spirit and power he came, and whose name he bore, Luke 1:17.

And a leathern girdle about his loins;

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

And his meat was locusts and wild honey;

by the "locusts" some have thought are meant a sort of fish called "crabs", which John found upon the banks of Jordan, and lived upon; others, that a sort of wild fruit, or the tops of trees and plants he found in the wilderness and fed on, are designed; but the truth is, these were a sort of creatures "called locusts", and which by the ceremonial law were lawful to be eaten, see Le 11:22. The Misnic doctors¹⁵³ describe such as are fit to be eaten after this manner;

"all that have four feet and four wings, and whose thighs and wings cover the greatest part of their

¹⁵⁰ Misn. Negaim. c. 11. sect. 2. & Kilaim, c. 9. sect. 1. Talmud, Bab. Menachot, fol. 39. 2.

¹⁵¹ Bereshit Rabba, fol. 18. 2.

¹⁵² T. Hieros. Nedarim, fol. 40. 3.

¹⁵³ Misn. Cholin. c. 3. sect. 7.

body, and whose name is חַגְבִּי "a locust."

For it seems they must not only have these marks and signs, but must be so called, or by a word in any other language which answers to it, as the commentators¹⁵⁴ on this passage observe; and very frequently do these writers speak¹⁵⁵ of locusts that are clean, and may be eaten. Maimonides¹⁵⁶ reckons up "eight" sorts of them, which might be eaten according to the law. Besides, these were eaten by people of other nations, particularly the Ethiopians¹⁵⁷, Parthians¹⁵⁸, and Lybians¹⁵⁹.

And wild honey:

this was honey of bees, which were not kept at home, but such as were in the woods and fields; of this sort was that which Jonathan found, and eat of, 1Sa 14:25 now the honey of bees might be eaten, according to the Jewish laws¹⁶⁰, though bees themselves might not.

Matthew 3:5

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

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

all the region round about Jordan;

multitudes from thence, which seems to be the same country with that which is called "beyond Jordan", Mt 4:25 and is distinguished from Judea as here. The Septuagint in 2Ch 4:17 use the same phrase the Evangelist does here, and likewise in Ge 13:10.

Matthew 3:6

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

The place where they were baptized of him was, "in

¹⁵⁴ Maimon. & Bartenora in ib.

¹⁵⁵ Misn. Beracot, c. 6. sect. 3. Terumot. c. 10. sect. 9. & Ediot. c. 7. sect. 2. & 8. 4.

¹⁵⁶ Maacolot Asurot, c. 1. sect. 21.

¹⁵⁷ Plin. Nat. Hist. l. 6. c. 30. Alex. ab Alex. l. 3. c. 11. Ludolph. Hist. Ethiop. l. 1. c. 13.

¹⁵⁸ Plin. Nat. Hist. l. 11. c. 29.

¹⁵⁹ Hieron. adv. Jovinian. fol. 26. Tom. 2.

¹⁶⁰ Moses Kotzensis Mitzvot Tora precept. neg. 132.

Jordan”; some copies read, “in the river Jordan”, as in Mark 1:5. As to the name of this river, and the etymology of it, the Jews say¹⁶¹ it was so called שְׂוֹרֵד מְדַן “because it descended” from Dan, i.e. Leshem Dan, or Pamias, which they say is a cave at the head of it. It was in John’s time and long after a considerable river, a river to swim in; we¹⁶² read that “Resh Lakish בִּירְדַּנָּה הָיָה שׁוֹמֵם בַּיַּרְדֵּן” was swimming in Jordan.” And elsewhere¹⁶³, that one day “R. Jochanan was swimming in Jordan.” Also it was a river for boats and ships to pass in, so that it was a navigable river; hence we read¹⁶⁴ of הַיַּבֵּת הַיַּרְדֵּן “the boat of Jordan”, and of ships in it, and of such and such things being forbidden to be carried over Jordan in a ship¹⁶⁵; particularly,

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

Pliny¹⁶⁶, Pausanias¹⁶⁷, Solinus¹⁶⁸, and others, speak of it as a very considerable and delightful river; see Jos 3:15. The Christians of Christ’s time are called by the Jews, in a way of contempt, apostates, that received the doctrine of baptism, and were בִּירְדַּנָּה טְבֹלִימָ “dipped in Jordan”¹⁶⁹. The manner in which they were baptized by him was by immersion or plunging them in the water: this may be concluded from the signification of the word baptizw where used, which in the primary sense of it signifies to dip or plunge; from the place in which they were baptized, “the river Jordan”; and from John’s constant manner of baptizing elsewhere, who chose places for this purpose, where and because there was there much water; see Joh 1:28. The character of the persons baptized by him is this, they were such as were

confessing their sins.

They were called to repentance by John’s ministry, and had the grace of it bestowed upon them; being thoroughly convinced of sin, and truly sorry for it, they

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

Matthew 3:7

Ver. 7. **But when he saw many of the Pharisees,** This being the first place in which mention is made of the Pharisees and Sadducees, it may not be amiss to give some account of them once for all, and to begin with the Pharisees, and first with their name. Some derive this word from פָּר pharatz to “divide”, to “make a breach”, from whence Phares had his name Ge 38:29 so Jerom¹⁷⁰, who observes, that

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

And in¹⁷¹ another place,

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

Origen¹⁷² seems to refer to this etymology of the word, when he says,

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

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

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

161 T. Bab. Becorot. fol. 55. 1. Kimchi in Josh. xix. 47.

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

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

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

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

166 Nat. Hist. l. 5. c. 15.

167 L. 5. p. 29.

168 Polyhist. c. 48.

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

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

And true it is, that this sect often meddled with the affairs of the government, and were very ambitious of being concerned therein. Josephus¹⁷³ observes of queen Alexandra, that she governed others, and the Pharisees governed her; hence, though they were in great esteem with the people, they were rather dreaded than loved by the government. Others derive this name from פֶּרַשׁ “Pharas” to “expand”, or “stretch out”; either because they made broad their phylacteries, and enlarged the borders of their garments; or because they exposed themselves to public notice, did all they could to be seen of men, prayed in the corners of the streets, had a trumpet blown before them when they gave alms, chose the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, greetings in the markets, and to be called of men “Rabbi”: all which to be sure are their just characters. Others derive it from the same word, as signifying to “explain” or “expound”; because it was one part of their work, and in which they excelled, to expound the law; but this cannot be the reason of their general name, because there were women Pharisees as well as men, who cannot be thought to be employed in that work. The more generally received opinion is, that this name is taken from the above word, as signifying to “separate”; because they separated themselves from the men and manners of the world, to the study of the law, and to a greater degree of holiness, at least in pretence, than other persons. They were strict observers of the traditions of the elders; are said, to hold both fate and free will; they owned the resurrection of the dead, and that there were angels and spirits, in which they differed from the Sadducees. Or rather they have their name from פָּרָה, which signifies “a reward”; they being stiff defenders of the doctrine of rewards and punishments in a future state, which the Sadducees denied. The Talmudic writers¹⁷⁴ say, there were “seven” sorts of them, and if it would not be too tedious to the reader, I would give the names of them; and the rather, because some of them seem to tally with the complexion and conduct of the Pharisees mentioned in the scriptures. There were then,

1. פְּרוֹשׁ שֵׁיכֶמֶי the “Shechemite Pharisee”, who does as Shechem did; is circumcised, not on God’s account, or

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

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

for his glory, or because circumcision is a command of his, but for his own profit and advantage, and that he may get honour from men.

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

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

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

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

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

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

When this sect first began, and who was the first author of it, is not easy to say; it is certain there were great numbers of them in the times of John the Baptist, and of Christ, and for some time after. The Jews say¹⁷⁵, that when the temple was destroyed the second time, the Pharisees increased in Israel.

Next let us consider the Sadducees, who they were, and from whence they sprung. These have their name not from רִיק “Saddik righteous”¹⁷⁶, or רִק “Sedik righteousness”, being self justitaries; for though they were, yet this would not have distinguished them from the Pharisees, who were likewise such; but

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

176 So Epiphanius contr. Haeres. l. 1. Haeres. 14. Hieron. Comment. in Matt. c. 22. l. 3. fol. 30. M. Tom. 9.

from qwdu Sadok or Saduk, a disciple of Antigonus, a man of Socho¹⁷⁷. The occasion of this new sect was this; Antigonus, among the instructions he gave to his scholars, had this saying;

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

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

said unto them;

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

O generation of vipers!

It seems their parents before them were vipers, and they their offspring were like them, in hypocrisy and malice. The viper appears very beautiful outwardly, but is full of poison; it looks harmless and innocent, as if it neither could nor would do any hurt, its teeth being hid, but is a most deadly and hurtful creature: so these men, though they made specious pretences to religion and holiness, yet were full of the deadly poison of hypocrisy, malice, and error. A very disagreeable salutation this must be to men, who were desirous of being reckoned very religious, and who boasted of, and trusted in, their being the seed of Abraham; when they were the

children of the devil, the seed of the old serpent, and the offspring of the worst of men, and in whom was verified the proverb, like father like son. John proceeds and asks, saying, “who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” who has suggested this to you? from whom have ye received this hint? who has pointed out the way to you to escape divine vengeance, or the ruin which will quickly come upon you? for by

wrath to come

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

Matthew 3:8

Ver. 8. **Bring forth therefore fruits,**

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

fruits meet for repentance

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

Matthew 3:9

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

John knew the sentiments of their minds, and the prevailing opinion they had given into, against which he cautions them; as, that because they were Abraham’s seed, they were in a state of salvation, in the favour of God, and had a right to all privileges and ordinances: this they trusted in, and boasted of, and would often think of it within themselves, pleasing themselves with

¹⁷⁷ Abot R. Nathan c. 5. fol. 3. 1. Sepher Cosri orat. 3. fol. 187. 2. & R. Juda Muscatus in ib. Maimon. in Pirk. Abot. c. 1. sect. 3. Juchasin. fol. 15. 2. Ganz. Tzemach David. par. 1. fol. 20. 2. & Bartenora in Misn. Judaim, c. 4. sect. 6.

the thoughts of it, and speak of it to others;

we have Abraham for our father.

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

for I say unto you;

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

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

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

Matthew 3:10

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

of all the trees

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

Therefore every tree,

every individual person, though one of Abraham's children, and made never such a fair show in the

flesh, which bringeth not forth good fruit;

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

is hewn down and cast into the fire.

Temporal ruin and destruction shall come upon him; he shall not escape divine vengeance here, and

shall be cast into everlasting burnings hereafter; which is quite contrary to a notion of theirs, that בְּכֹחַי דַּאֲבְרָהִם “by the merits of Abraham”, the Israelites shall be delivered from the fire of hell¹⁷⁸.

Matthew 3:11

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

I indeed baptize you;

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

with water,

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

unto repentance,

or “at”, or upon “repentance”: for so eiv may be rendered, as it is in Mt 12:41 for the meaning is not that John baptized them, in order to bring them to repentance; since he required repentance and fruits meet for it, previous to baptism; but that he had baptized them upon the foot of their repentance; and so the learned Grotius observes, that the phrase may be very aptly explained thus: “I baptize you upon the ‘profession’ of repentance which ye make.” John gives a hint of the person whose

forerunner he was, and of his superior excellency to him: he indeed first speaks of him as one behind him, not in nature or dignity, but in order of time as man;

but he that comes after me.

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

is mightier than I;

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

whose shoes I am not worthy to bear;

or as the other Evangelists relate it, “whose shoe latchet I am not worthy to unloose”; which amounts to the same sense, since shoes are unloosed in order to be taken from, or carried before, or after a person; which to do was the work of servants among the Jews. In the Talmud¹⁷⁹ it is asked,

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

Or, as is elsewhere ¹⁸⁰ said,”

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

This was such a servile work, that it was thought too mean for a scholar or a disciple to do; for it is¹⁸¹ said,

179 T. Hieros. Kiddushin, fol. 59. 4. Maimon. & T.

Bartenora in Misu. Kiddushin, c. 1. sect. 3.

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

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

178 Zohar in Exod. fol. 34. 4.

all services which a servant does for his master, a disciple does for his master, חוץ מהחירת לו מנל, “except unloosing his shoes”.

The gloss on it says,

“he that sees it, will say, he is a “Canaanitish servant”.”

for only a Canaanitish, not an Hebrew servant¹⁸², might be employed in, or obliged to such work; for it was reckoned not only, mean and servile, but even base and reproachful. It is one of their¹⁸³ canons;

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

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

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

referring, either to the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, to be bestowed on the disciples on the day of Pentecost, of which the cloven tongues, like as of fire, which appeared unto them, and sat upon them, were the symbols; which was an instance of the great power and grace of Christ, and of his exaltation at the Father’s right hand. Or rather, this phrase is expressive of the awful judgments which should be inflicted by him on the Jewish nation; when he by his Spirit should “reprove” them for the sin of rejecting him; and when he should appear as a “refiner’s fire”, and as “fuller’s soap”; when “the day of the Lord” should “burn as an oven”; when he should “purge the blood of Jerusalem”, his own blood, and the blood of the Apostles and Prophets shed in it, “from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning”; the same with “the Holy Ghost and fire” here,

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

183 Moses Kotzensis Mitzvot Torah, precept. neg. 176

or the fire of the Holy Ghost, or the holy Spirit of fire; and is the same with “the wrath to come”, and with what is threatened in the context: the unfruitful trees shall be cut down, and cast into the fire”, and the “chaff” shall be burnt with unquenchable fire”. And as this sense best agrees with the context, it may the rather be thought to be genuine; since John is speaking not to the disciples of Christ, who were not yet called, and who only on the day of Pentecost were baptized with the Holy Ghost and fire, in the other sense of this phrase; but to the people of the Jews, some of whom had been baptized by him; and others were asking him questions, others gazing upon him, and wondering what manner of person he was; and multitudes of them continued obdurate and impenitent under his ministry, whom he threatens severely in the context. Add to all this, that the phrase of dipping or baptizing in fire seems to be used in this sense by the Jewish writers. In the Talmud¹⁸⁴ one puts the question, In what does he (God,) dip? You will say in water, as it is written, “who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand?” Another replies, בְּנוֹרָא טְבִיל, “he dips in fire”; as it is written, “for behold the Lord will come with fire”. What is the meaning of בְּנוֹרָא טְבִיל, “baptism in fire?” He answers, according to the mind of Rabbah, the root of “dipping in the fire”, is what is written; “all that abideth not the fire, ye shall make go” through the water. Dipping in the fire of the law, is a phrase used by the Jews¹⁸⁵. The phrases of “dipping, and washing in fire”, are also used by Greek¹⁸⁶ authors.

Matthew 3:12

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

The Jews had their hand fans, and which were like a man’s hand; their names were מַבְרַח מְנוּב; which, as Maimonides says¹⁸⁷, were three sorts of instruments used in the floor, in form of a man’s hand; with which they cleansed the wheat and barley from the straw; and their names differ according to their form: some have many teeth, and with them they cleanse the wheat at the end of the work; and there are others that have few teeth, no more than three, and with these they purge the wheat at first, from the thick straw. By the “fan”, here is meant, either the Gospel which Christ was just ready to publish; by which he would effectually call his chosen people among the Jews, and so distinguish and separate

184 T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 39. 1.

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

186 Moschi Idyll. 1. Philostrate, Vit. Apollon, l. 3. c. 5.

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

them from others, as well as purify and cleanse them, or rather the awful judgment of God, which Christ was ready to execute, and in a short time would execute on the unbelieving and impenitent Jews: hence it is said to be “in his hand”; being put there by his Father, who “hath committed all judgment to the Son”. That this is the meaning of the “Baptist”, seems evident, since “fanning” is always, when figuratively taken, used for judgments, Isa 41:16. By “his floor”, is meant the land of Israel, where he was born, brought up, and lived; of which the Lord says, “O my threshing, and the corn of my floor!” Isa 21:10. This, he says, “he will thoroughly purge” of all his refuse and chaff, that is, by fanning: so fanning and cleansing, or purging, are joined together, Jer 4:11 so בָּרַר is used for purging by fanning, in the Misnic writings¹⁸⁸. By “his wheat”, are meant his elect among the Jews, the chosen of God and precious; so called because of their excellency, purity, usefulness, solidity, and constancy: these he “will gather into his garner”; meaning either some place of protection, where he would direct his people to for safety from that wrath, ruin, and destruction; which should fall upon the Jewish nation; or else the kingdom of heaven, into which he would bring them, by taking them out of the world from the evil to come. By “the chaff”, are meant wicked and ungodly persons, such as are destitute of the grace of God, whether professors, or profane; being empty, barren, and unfruitful; and so good for nothing but the fire, which therefore “he will burn with unquenchable fire”, of divine wrath and vengeance: an allusion to a custom among the Jews, who, when they purified the increase of their unclean fields, gathered it together in an “area” or floor, in the midst of them, and then sifted it with sieves; one sort with two sieves, another with three, that they might thoroughly purge it, and burnt the chaff and stalks¹⁸⁹; see Isa 5:24.

Matthew 3:13

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

That is, when John had been some time preaching the doctrine of repentance, and administering the ordinance of baptism; for which, time must be allowed, since he went into all the country about Jordan, and preached unto them, and baptized such large numbers: very probably it might be six months from his first entrance on his ministry; since there was this difference in their age, and so might be in their baptism and preaching. Now when John had given notice of the Messiah’s coming, and so had prepared his way; had declared the excellency of

his person, the nature of his work, and office, and had raised in the people an expectation of him,

then cometh Jesus from Galilee;

from Nazareth of Galilee, Mark 1:9 where he had lived for many years, as the Jews¹⁹⁰ themselves own; in great obscurity, in all obedience to God, in subjection to his parents, exercising a conscience void of offence towards God and man, and employing his time in devotion and business: from hence he came to Jordan to John, who was baptizing there; which shows the great humility of Christ, who comes to John, and does not send for him, though John was his servant, and he was his Lord and Master; and also his cheerful and voluntary subjection to the ordinance of baptism, since of himself, of his own accord, he took this long and fatiguing journey; for Nazareth, according to David de Pomis¹⁹¹, was three days journey from Jerusalem, though somewhat nearer Jordan; the end and design of his coming was

to be baptized of him.

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

Matthew 3:14

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

It appears from hence, that John knew Christ before he baptized him, and before he saw the Spirit descending and abiding on him, Joh 1:33 wherefore that was not a signal, whereby he should first know him but whereby his knowledge of him should be confirmed; which knowledge of him he had, not through his kindred to him, or by any conversation he had with him before, but by immediate, divine revelation: upon which account he “forbad him”; refused to administer the ordinance to

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

189 Misn. Oholot. c. 18. sect. 2.

190 Toldos Jesu, p. 6.

191 Tzemach David, fol. 141. 2.

him; earnestly entreated that he would not insist upon it; desired to be excused being concerned herein: and this he did, partly lest the people should think Christ was not so great a person as he had represented him to be; yea, that he was one of the penitent sinners John had admitted to his baptism; and chiefly because of the majesty and dignity of Christ's person, who he knew stood in no need of such an outward ordinance; and because of his own unworthiness to administer it to him, as is evident from what follows,

I have need to be baptized of thee;

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

and comest thou to me?

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

Matthew 3:15

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

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

suffer it to be so now;

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

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

then he suffered him,

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

Matthew 3:16

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

Christ, when he was baptized by John in the river Jordan, the place where he was baptizing,
went up straightway out of the water.

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

lo the heavens were opened:

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

and Jesus, when he was baptized, was scarcely come up out of the water, but lo,

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

rather before,

the heavens were opened to him;

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

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

for this is what was promised to John, as a sign, which should confirm his faith in Jesus, as the true Messiah, and which he himself says he saw, and upon which he based the record and testimony he bore to Christ, as the Son of God; see Joh 1:32 not but that the descent of the Holy Ghost in this manner might be seen by Christ, as well as John, according to Mark 1:10. The Spirit of God, here said to descend and light on Christ, is the same, which in the first creation moved upon the face of the waters; and now comes down on Christ, just as he was coming up out of the waters of Jordan, where he had been baptized; and which the Jews ¹⁹² so often call רוח מלך המשיח, “the Spirit of the king Messiah, and the spirit of the Messiah”. The descent of him was in a “bodily shape”, as Luke says in Luke 3:22 either in the shape of a dove, which is a very fit emblem of the Spirit of God who descended, and the fruits thereof, such as simplicity, meekness, love, &c. and also of the dove-like innocence, humility, and affection of Christ, on whom he lighted; or it was in some other visible form, not expressed, which pretty much resembled the hovering and lighting of a dove upon anything: for it does not necessarily follow from any of the accounts the Evangelists give of this matter, that the holy Spirit assumed, or appeared in, the form of a dove; only that his visible descent and lighting on Christ was *peristera*, as a dove descends, hovers and lights; which does not necessarily design the form of the creature, but the manner of its motion. However, who can read this account without thinking of Noah’s dove, which brought in its mouth the olive leaf, a token of peace and reconciliation, when the waters were abated from off the earth? Give me leave to transcribe a passage

I have met with in the book of Zohar ¹⁹³;

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

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

Matthew 3:17

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

At the same time the heavens were opened, and the Spirit of God descended as a dove, and lighted on Christ, and whilst it abode upon him, an extraordinary voice was heard; hence the note of attention and admiration, “lo”, is prefixed unto it, as before, to the opening of the heavens; being what was unusual and surprising; and as denoting something to be expressed of great moment and importance. The Jews, in order to render this circumstance less considerable, and to have it believed, that these voices from heaven heard in the time of Jesus, and in relation to him were common things, have invented a great many stories concerning *בַּת קוֹל מִשְׁמַיִם*, “the voice”, or “the daughter of the voice from heaven”; which they pretend came in the room of prophecy: their¹⁹⁴ {t} words are,”

after the death of the latter prophets, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, the holy Spirit departed from Israel, and thenceforwards they used “*Bath Kol*”, the “voice”. One time they were sitting in the chamber of the house of Guria in Jericho, and there came to them *בַּת קוֹל מִשְׁמַיִם* *tb*, “the voice from heaven”, (saying;) there is one here, who is fit to have the *Shekinah* (or divine majesty) abide on

¹⁹³ In Num. fol. 68. 3, 4.

¹⁹² Bereshit Rabba, fol. 2. 4. & 6. 3. Vajikra Rabba, fol. 156. 4. Zohar in Gen. fol. 107. 3. & 128. 3. Baal Hatturim in Gen. i. 2. Caphtor Uperah, fol. 113. 2.

¹⁹⁴ T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 11. 1. Sota, fol. 48. 2. Yoma. fol. 9. 2.

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

I have cited this passage at large, partly because, according to them, it fixes the date and use of “the voice”; and partly, because it affords instances of it, wherefore more need not be mentioned; for, it would be endless to repeat the several things spoken by it; such as encouraging Herod to rebel, and seize his master’s kingdom¹⁹⁵; forbidding Ben Uzziel to go on with his paraphrase on the Hagiographa, or holy books, when he had finished his Targum on the prophets¹⁹⁶; declaring the words of Hillell and Shammai to be the words of the living God¹⁹⁷; signifying the conception, birth, and death of¹⁹⁸ {y} persons, and the like; all which seem to be mere fiction and imagination, diabolical delusions, or satanical imitations of this voice, that was now heard, in order to lessen the credit of it. But, to proceed; this extraordinary voice from heaven, which was formed in articulate sounds for the sake of John; and, according to the other Evangelists, was directed to Christ, Mark 1:11 expressed the following words, “this is my beloved Son”. “This” person, who had been baptized in water, on whom the holy Spirit now rested, is no other than the Son of God in human nature; which he assumed, in order to be obedient to this, and the whole of his Father’s will: he is his own proper “son”, not by creation, as angels, and men; nor by adoption, as saints; nor by office, as magistrates; but in such a way of filiation as no other is: he is the natural, essential, and only begotten Son of God; his beloved Son, whom the Father loved from everlasting, as his own Son; the image of himself, of the same nature with him, and possessed of the same perfections; whom he loved, and continued to love in time, though clothed with human nature, and the infirmities of it; appearing in the likeness of sinful flesh; being in his state of

195 T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 3. 2.

196 Megilla, fol. 3. 1.

197 T. Hieros. Beracot, fol. 3. 2.

198 T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 22. 1. T. Hieros. Sabbat. fol.

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

in whom I am well pleased.

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

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW CHAPTER IV

1 Christ fasteth and is tempted. 11. The angels minister unto him. 13 He dwelleth in Capernaun. 17 beginneth to preach. 18 calleth Peter and Andrew 21 James and John. 23 and healeth all the diseased.

Matthew 4

- [1] Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.
- [2] And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.
- [3] And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

- [4] But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.
- [5] Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,
- [6] And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.
- [7] Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.
- [8] Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;
- [9] And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.
- [10] Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.
- [11] Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.
- [12] Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee;
- [13] And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephtholim:
- [14] That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,
- [15] The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephtholim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles;
- [16] The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.
- [17] From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.
- [18] And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.
- [19] And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.
- [20] And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.
- [21] And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.

- [22] And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.
- [23] And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.
- [24] And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.
- [25] And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan.

JOHN GILL'S COMMENTARY ON MATTHEW CHAPTER IV

Matthew 4:1

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

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

was led of the Spirit:

by "the Spirit" is meant the same spirit of God, which had descended and lighted on him in a bodily shape, with the gifts and graces of which he was anointed, in an extraordinary manner, for public service; of which he was "full", Luke 4:1 not but that he was endowed with the Holy Ghost before which he received without measure from his Father; but now this more eminently and manifestly appeared and by this Spirit was he led; both the Syriac and the Persic versions read, "by the holy Spirit". Being "led" by him, denotes an internal impulse of the Spirit in him, stirring him up, and putting him upon going into the wilderness: and this impulse being

very strong and vehement, another Evangelist thus expresses it; “the Spirit driveth him, εκβαλλει thrusts him forth into the wilderness”, Mr 1:12 though not against his will; to which was added an external impulse, or outward rapture, somewhat like that action of the Spirit on Philip. Ac 8:39. When he is said to be led up, the meaning is, that he was led up from the low parts of the wilderness, where he was, to the higher and mountainous parts thereof, which were desolate and uninhabited. The place where he was led was “into the wilderness”, i.e. of Judea, into the more remote parts of it; for he was before in this wilderness, where John was preaching and baptizing; but in that part of it which was inhabited. There was another part which was uninhabited, but by “wild beasts” and here Christ was led, and with these he was, Mark 1:13 all alone, retired from the company of men; could have no assistance from any, and wholly destitute of any supply: so that Satan had a fair opportunity of trying his whole strength upon him; having all advantages on his side he could wish for. The end of his being led there, was

to be tempted of the devil:

by “the devil” is meant “Satan” the prince of devils, the enemy of mankind, the old serpent, who has his name here from accusing and calumniating; so the Syriac calls him אכל קרא, the accuser, or publisher of accusations. He was the accuser of God to men, and is the accuser of men to God; his principal business is to tempt, and Christ was brought here to be tempted by him, that he might be tried before he entered on his public work; that he might be in all things like unto his brethren; that he might have a heart as man, as well as power, as God, to succour them that are tempted; and that Satan, whose works he came to destroy, might have a specimen of his power, and expect, in a short time, the ruin of his kingdom by him. The time when this was done was “then”; when Jesus had been baptized by John; when the Holy Ghost descended on him, and he was full of it; when he had such a testimony from his Father of his relation to him, affection for him, and delight in him; “then” was he led, “immediately”, as Mark says, Mark 1:12. As soon as all this was done, directly upon this, he was had into the wilderness to be tempted by and to combat with Satan; and so it often is, that after sweet communion with God in his ordinances, after large discoveries of his love and interest in him follow sore temptations, trials, and exercises. There is a very great resemblance and conformity between Christ and his people in these things.

Matthew 4:2

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

As Moses did, when he was about to deliver the law to the Israelites, Ex 34:28 and as Elijah did, when he bore his testimony for the Lord of hosts, 1Ki 19:8 so did Christ, when he was about to publish the Gospel of his grace, and bear witness to the truth. “Forty nights” as well as days, are mentioned; partly to show that these were whole entire days, consisting of twenty four hours; and partly to distinguish this fast of Christ from the common fastings of the Jews, who used to eat in the night, though they fasted in the day: for according to their canons¹⁹⁹, they might eat and drink as soon as it was dark, and that till cock crowing; and others say, till break of day. Maimonides²⁰⁰ says, they might eat and drink at night, in all fasts, except the ninth of Ab. What is very surprising in this fasting of our Lord, which was made and recorded, not for our imitation, is, that during the whole time he should not be attended with hunger; for it is added,

he was afterwards an hungered;

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

Matthew 4:3

Ver. 3. And when the tempter came to him

By “the tempter”, is meant the devil, see 1Th 3:5 so called, because it is his principal work and business, in which he employs himself, to solicit men to sin; and tempt them either to deny, or call in question the being of God, arraign his perfections, murmur at his providences, and disbelieve his promises. When he is here said to come to Christ at the end of forty days and nights, we are not to suppose, that he now first began to tempt him; for the other Evangelists expressly say, that he was tempted of him forty days, Mark 1:13 but he now appeared openly, and in a visible shape: all the forty days and nights before, he had been tempting him secretly and inwardly; suggesting things suitable to, and taking the advantage of the solitary and desolate condition he was in. But finding these suggestions and temptations unsuccessful, and observing him to be an hungered, he

¹⁹⁹ T. Bab. Taanith, fol. 12. 1, 2. Misn. Taanith, c. 1. sect. 5.

²⁰⁰ Hilch. Taanith, c. 5. sect. 5.

puts on a visible form, and with an articulate, audible voice, he said,

if thou be the Son of God;

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

command that these stones be made bread,

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

Matthew 4:4

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

The passage referred to, and cited, is in De 8:3 the manner of citing it is what was common and usual with the Jews; and is often to be met with in the Talmudic writings; who, when they produce any passage of scripture, say רכחיב, “as it is written”. The meaning of this scripture is; not that as the body lives by bread, so the soul lives by the word of God, and doctrines of the Gospel; though this is a certain truth: or that man lives by obedience to the commands of God, as was promised to the Israelites in the wilderness, and in the land of Canaan; but that God, in satisfying man’s hunger, and in supporting and preserving his life, is not tied to bread only, but can make use of other means, and order whatever he pleases to answer these ends; as, by raining manna from heaven, which is mentioned in the passage cited; and therefore there was no occasion to change the nature of things, to turn stones into bread; since that was not so absolutely necessary to the sustenance of life, as that it could not be maintained without it. Our

Lord hereby expresses his strong faith and confidence in God, that he was able to support him, and would do it, though in a wilderness, and destitute of supply; whereby he overcame this temptation of Satan. Christ, in this, and some following citations, bears a testimony to, and establishes the authority of the sacred writings; and though he was full of the Holy Ghost, makes them the rule of his conduct; which ought to be observed against those, who, under a pretence of the Spirit, deny the scriptures to be the only rule of faith and practice and at the same time points out to us the safest and best method of opposing Satan’s temptations; namely, by applying to, and making use of the word of God.

Matthew 4:5

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

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

he brought him to Jerusalem,

Luke 4:9 called so, because of the presence, worship, and service of God, which had been in it, though then in a great measure gone; and according to the common notions of the Jews, who say²⁰¹ Jerusalem was more holy than any other cities in the land, and that because of the Shekinah. The inscription on one side of their shekels was ירושלם יר הקדש, “Jerusalem, the holy city”²⁰². Satan frequents all sorts of places; men are no where free from his temptations; Christ himself was not in the holy city, no nor in the holy temple; hither also he had him,

and setteth him upon a pinnacle,

or “wing of the temple”. In this place²⁰³ the Jews set James, the brother of Christ, and from it cast him down headlong: this was the נרכא “the summit”, or “top” of it; and intends either the roof encompassed with battlements, to keep persons from falling off; or the top of the porch before the temple, which was 120 cubits high; or the top of the royal gallery, built by Herod, which was of such an height, that if a man looked down

201 Bemidbar Rabba, fol. 183. 4. & Maimon. Hilch. Beth. Habechirah, c. 7. sect. 14. & 6. 16.

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

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

from it, he soon became dizzy²⁰⁴. The view Satan had in setting him here appears in the next verse.

Matthew 4:6

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

thou art the Son of God,

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

cast thyself down

that is, from the pinnacle of the temple: for since thou art the Son of God, no hurt will come to thee; thou wilt be in the utmost safety; and this will at once be a full demonstration to all the people, that thou art the Son of God: for hither Satan brought him, hoping to have got an advantage of him publicly; otherwise, had his view only been to have got him to cast himself down from any place of eminence, and so to have destroyed himself, he might have set him upon any other precipice; but he chose to have it done in the sight of the people, and in the holy city, and holy place. Let it be observed, that Satan did not offer to cast him down himself; for this was not in his power, nor within his permission, which reached only to tempt; and besides, would not have answered his end; for that would have been his own sin, and not Christ's: accordingly, we may observe, that when he seeks the lives of men, he does not attempt to destroy them himself, but always puts them upon doing it. To proceed, Satan not only argues from his divine power, as the Son of God, that he would be safe in casting himself down; but observing the advantageous use Christ made of the scriptures, transforms himself into an angel of light, and cites scripture too, to encourage him to this action; assuring him of the protection of angels. The passage cited is Ps 91:11 which expresses God's tender care and concern for his people, in charging the angels with the guardianship and preservation of them, in all their ways, that they might be secured from sin and danger. It does not appear that Satan was wrong in the application of this passage to Christ; for since it respects all the righteous in general, why not Christ as man? the head, as well as the members? And certain it is, that angels had the charge of him, did watch over him, and were a guard about him; the angels of God ascended, and descended on him; they were employed in preserving him from Herod's malice in his infancy; they ministered

to him here in the wilderness, and attended him in his agony in the garden: but what Satan failed in, and that wilfully, and wickedly, was, in omitting that part of it,

to keep thee in all thy ways;

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

Matthew 4:7

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

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

ye shall not tempt the Lord your God,

thereby tacitly showing, that he had produced scripture to a very wrong purpose, since that could never contradict itself; and also, that for a person to neglect the ordinary means of safety, and to expect, that as God can, so he will, preserve without the use of such means, is a tempting him. The Hebrew word תָּנִי "tempt", as Manasseh ben²⁰⁵ Israel observes, is always taken in an ill part, and is to be understood of such who would try the power, goodness, or will of God. And which, as it is not fitting it should be done by any man, so not by himself; and perhaps he hereby intimates too, that he himself was God; and therefore as it was not right in him to tempt God the Father, by taking such a step as Satan solicited him to; nor would it be right in any other; so it was iniquitous in the devil to tempt him who was God over all, blessed for ever.

Matthew 4:8

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

That is, he took him off from the pinnacle of the temple, and carried him through the air, to one of the mountains which were round about Jerusalem; or to

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

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

some very high mountain at a greater distance; but what mountain is not certain; nor can it be known; nor is it of any moment; it has been said²⁰⁶ to be Mount Lebanon: here he

sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and glory of them.

By “all the kingdoms of the world” are meant, not only the Roman empire, as Dr. Lightfoot thinks, though that was, to be sure, the greatest in the world at that time; but all the kingdoms in the whole world, which subsisted in any form, whether within, or independent of the Roman empire; or whether greater or lesser: and by “the glory of them”, is meant, the riches, pomp, power, and grandeur of them. Now the view which Satan gave Christ of all this, was not by a representation of them in a picture, or in a map, or in any geographical tables, as²⁰⁷ some have thought; since to do this there was no need to take him up into a mountain, and that an exceeding high one; for this might have been done in a valley, as well as in a mountain: and yet it could not be a true and real sight of these things he gave him; for there is no mountain in the world, from whence can be beheld anyone kingdom, much less all the kingdoms of the world; and still less the riches, glory, pomp, and power of them: but this was a fictitious, delusive representation, which Satan was permitted to make; to cover which, and that it might be thought to be real, he took Christ into an high mountain; where he proposed an object externally to his sight, and internally to his imagination, which represented, in appearance, the whole world, and all its glory. Xiphilinus²⁰⁸ reports of Severus, that he dreamed, he was had by a certain person, to a place where he could look all around him, and from thence he beheld *πασαν μεν την γην, πασαν δε την θαλασσαν* “all the earth, and also all the sea”; which was all in imagination. Satan thought to have imposed on Christ this way, but failed in his attempt. Luke says, this was done

in a moment of time,

in the twinkling of an eye; as these two phrases are joined together, 1Co 15:52 or “in a point of time”. The word *stigmh*, used by Luke 4:5 sometimes signifies a mathematical point, which Zeno says²⁰⁹ is the end of the line, and the least mark; to which the allusion may be here, and designs the smallest part of time that can be conceived of. Antoninus the emperor uses the word, as

here, for a point of time; and says²¹⁰ {l}, that the time of human life, and the whole present time, is but *stigmh* a point. Would you know what a moment, or point of time is, according to the calculation of the Jewish doctors, take the account as follows; though in it they differ: a moment, say they²¹¹, is the fifty six thousandth, elsewhere²¹² {n}, the fifty eight thousandth, and in another place²¹³ {o}, the fifty three thousandth and eight hundredth and forty eighth, or, according to another account ²¹⁴{p}, eighty eighth part of an hour. If this could be thought to be a true and exact account of a moment, or point of time, it was a very short space of time indeed, in which the devil showed to Christ the kingdoms of this world, and their glory; but this is not more surprising than his vanity, pride, and impudence, in the following verse.

Matthew 4:9

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

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

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

I will, I give it--all shall be thine. In which words he sets up himself to be the God of this world, and the sovereign disposer of it: he pretends it was delivered to him by the true God, who had left it to his arbitrary disposal; and that he could invest Christ with the power and government of it, and put him in possession of all its glory, and make good and support his title to it, and interest in it. Never was such monstrous arrogance expressed as this; when this poor, proud, wretched creature, has not the disposal, at his pleasure, of anyone single thing; no not the least in the whole universe. He could not touch, neither Job's person, nor any of his substance, without divine permission; nor enter into an herd of swine without Christ's leave; and yet had the front to make an offer of the whole world, as if he had a despotic power over it; and that upon this horrid and blasphemous condition,

if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

This was the highest degree of effrontery and impudence. The devil is not content to be worshipped by men, but seeks for adoration from the Son of God:

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

211 T. Hieros. Beracot, fol. 2. 4.

212 T. Bab Beracot. fol. 7. 1.

213 Avoda Zara, fol. 4. 1.

214 T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 7. 1.

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

207 Vid. Fabricium, *ibid.* & Grotium in loc.

208 Apud Fabricium, *ib.*

209 Vid. Laertium in Vit. Zenou.

this opens at once his proud, ambitious, and aspiring views, to be as God himself; for with nothing less can he be satisfied.

Matthew 4:10

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

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

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

The place referred to is in De 6:13

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

to fear the Lord, and to worship him, is the same thing. Worship includes both an internal and external reverence of God: the word “only” is not in the original text, but is added by our Lord; and that very justly; partly to express the emphasis which is on the word “him”; and in perfect agreement with the context, which requires it; since it follows, ye shall not go after other Gods. Moreover, not to take notice of the Septuagint version, in which the word “only” is also added, Josephus²¹⁵, the Jewish historian, referring to this law, says, because God is one, אנכי הוא, “therefore he only is to be worshipped”. And Aben Ezra²¹⁶, a Jewish writer, explaining the last clause in the verse,

and thou shalt swear by his name, uses the word “only”; and which indeed, of right, belongs to every clause in it. The meaning of our Lord in citing it is; that since the Lord God is the alone object of worship, it was horrid blasphemy in Satan to desire it might be given to him, and which could not be done without the greatest impiety.

Matthew 4:11

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

In Luke 4:13 it says,

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

or until a season. That is, having tempted him with

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

behold, angels came and ministered to him.

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

Matthew 4:12

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

John was cast into prison by Herod; the reason of it may be seen in Mt 14:3. The prison into which he was cast, according to Josephus²¹⁷ {s}, was the castle of Machaeras: here he continued some time before he was put to death; for from hence he sent two disciples to Jesus, to know if he was the Messiah, Mt 11:2. Now when Jesus heard of this his imprisonment,

he departed into Galilee;

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

Matthew 4:13

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

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

215 Antiq. Jud. l. 3. c. 5. sect. 5.

216 In Deut. vi. 13.

217 Antiq. l. 18. c. 7.

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

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

he came and dwelt in Capernaum

a city of Galilee. Luke 4:31

which is upon the sea-coast

by the sea of Tiberias, or Genesareth

in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim:

it bordered on both these tribes; it signifies “the village of consolation”²¹⁸; and so it was, whilst the consolation of Israel dwelt there. The Jews speak very evilly of it: no doubt because it was the dwelling place of Christ; and because there might be some in it who believed in him: they represent the inhabitants of it as very great sinners, heretics, and dealers in magic art. Chanina, the brother’s son of R. Joshua, they say²¹⁹, went to Capernaum, and the heretics did something to him; according to the gloss, they bewitched him: and elsewhere²²⁰ explaining the words in Ec 7:26

Who so pleaseth God,

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

Matthew 4:14

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

Christ’s dwelling in Capernaum accomplished a prophecy of the prophet Isa 9:1 and he went and dwelt there, that it might be fulfilled which he had spoken: the meaning of which prophecy is²²¹, that as those parts of the land of Israel, there mentioned, had suffered much by Tiglathpileser, who had carried them captive, 2Ki 15:29 and is “the vexation” referred to; so they should be honoured, and made very glorious, by the presence and conversation of the Messiah among them, and which now had its literal fulfilment: for Christ now came and dwelt in Capernaum, which lay between the lands and

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

219 Midrash Koheleth. fol. 63. 1.

220 Ib. fol. 77. 1.

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

upon the borders both of Zabulon and Nephthalim; was situated by the sea of Tiberias, beyond Jordan, and in, “Galilee of the nations”; the upper Galilee, which had in it people of other nations besides Jews. The ancient Jews expected the Messiah to make his first appearance in Galilee; which expectation must be grounded on this prophecy; for so they say²²² expressly,

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

And in another place²²³ explaining Isa 2:19 they paraphrase it thus,”

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

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

Matthew 4:15

See Gill on “Mt 4:14”

Matthew 4:16

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

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

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

the same persons who sit in darkness, sit also in the region of death; for such are dead in trespasses and sins: where there is no spiritual light, there is no spiritual life, and such are in danger of the second death; but the happiness of these people was, that to them “light is sprung up”, like the rising sun, and this without their asking or seeking for: Christ, the sun of righteousness, arose upon them, without any desert, desire, or expectation of theirs, with healing in his wings; and cured them of their darkness and deadness, turned them from darkness to light, and caused them to pass from

222 Zohar in Gen. fol. 74. 3.

223 Ib. in Exod. fol. 3. 3. & 88. 3.

death to life. "Light" is not only a character under which Christ frequently goes in the New Testament, see Joh 1:4 but is one of the names by which the Messiah was known under the Old Testament; see Da 2:22 and which the Jews give unto him: says R. Aba²²⁴ Serungia, "and the light dwelleth with him"; this is the king Messiah. The note of R. Sol. Jarchi on these words, "send forth thy light", is, the king Messiah; who is compared to light, according to Ps 132:17 the days of the Messiah are by them said to²²⁵ (ימי אורה "days of light"; and so these Galilaeans found them to be; as all do, to whom the Gospel of Christ comes with power and demonstration of the Spirit. And these days of light first begun in the land of Zabulon which, according to Philo the Jew²²⁶, was "sumbolon fwtoy, "a symbol of light"; since (adds he) its name signifies the nature of night; but, the night removing, and departing, light necessarily arises."As did, in a spiritual sense, here, when Christ the light arose.

Matthew 4:17

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

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

Matthew 4:18

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

Not for his recreation and diversion, or by accident: but on purpose to look out for, and call some, whom he had chosen to be his disciples. And as he was walking about, to and fro, he "saw two" persons; and as soon as he saw them, he knew them to be those he had determined to make his apostles: and these are described by their relation to each other, "brethren"; not merely because they were of the same nation, or of the same religion, or of the same employ and business of life, but because they were of the same blood; and by their names, "Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother". Simon is the same

name with שמעון, "Simeon"; and so he is called, Ac 15:14 and which, in the Jerusalem dialect, is read ימון, "Simon". His surname "Peter", which was afterwards given him by Christ, Mt 16:18 is Greek, and answers to "Cephas", signifying a "rock": though this name is to be met with in the Talmudic²²⁷ writings, where we read of פיטר סטת בר, "bar Petros". This his surname is added here, to distinguish him from Simon, the Canaanite. The name of his brother Andrew is generally thought to be Greek; though some have derived it from נדר, "to vow", and is also to be observed in the writings of the Jews²²⁸; where mention is made of R. Chanina, בר אנדריי bar Andrei. They are further described by the work they were at, or business they were employed in,

casting a net into the sea;

either in order to catch fish in it, or to wash it, Luke 5:2 and the reason of their so doing is added; "for they were fishers". Of this mean employment were the very first persons Christ was pleased to call to the work of the ministry; men of no education, who made no figure in life, but were despicable and contemptible: this he did, to make it appear, that they were not qualified for such service of themselves; that all their gifts and qualifications were from him; to show his own power; to confound the wisdom of the wise; and to let men see, that none ought to glory in themselves, but in him. The Jews have a notion of the word of God and prophecy being received and embraced only by such sort of persons: says R. Isaac Arama²²⁹

"his word came to heal all, but some particular persons only receive it; and who of all men are of a dull understanding, דיינים בדי הימ, "fishermen, who do business in the sea": this is what is written; "they that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters, these see the works of the Lord": these seem not indeed fit to receive anything that belongs to the understanding, because of their dulness; and yet these receive the truth of prophecy and vision, because they believe his word."

I cannot but think, that some respect is had to these fishers, in Eze 47:10 "it shall come to pass that fishers shall stand upon it": that is, upon, or by the river of

²²⁷ T. Hieros. Moed Katon, fol 82. 4. Avoda Zara, fol 42. 3.

²²⁸ T. Hieros. Megilla, fol. 75. 2. & Geracot, fol. 2. 3.

²²⁹ Apud Galatin. de Arcan. Cathol. ver. l. 3. c. 5. p. 119. & Crocium de Messia Thes. 213. p. 62, 63.

²²⁴ Bereshith Rabba, fol. 1. 3. & Echa Rabbati, fol. 50. 2.

²²⁵ Baal Hatturim in Gen. fol. 2. 2.

²²⁶ De Somniis, p. 1113.

waters, said in Eze 47:8 to “issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert”: which both R. Jarchi and Kimchi understand of the sea of Tiberias; the same with the sea of Galilee, by which Christ walked; and where he found these fishers at work, and called them. See also Jer 16:16

Matthew 4:19

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

These two brethren had been the disciples of John, as Theophylact thinks, and which seems agreeable to Joh 1:35 and though through John's pointing out Christ unto them, they had some knowledge of him, and conversation with him, yet they abode with him but for that day, Joh 1:37 and afterwards returned to their master; and upon his imprisonment, betook themselves to their former employment: from whence Christ now calls them to be his disciples, saying “follow me”, or “come after me”: that is, be a disciple of mine; see Luke 14:27. And to encourage them to it, makes use of this argument; “and”, or “for”, I “will make you fishers of men”: you shall be fishers still, but in a higher sense; and in a far more noble employment, and to much better purpose. The net they were to spread and cast was the Gospel, see Mt 13:47 for Christ made them not ריני חורה, “fishers of the law”, to use the words of Maimonides²³⁰, but fishers of the Gospel. The sea into which they were to cast the net was first Judea, and then the whole world; the fish they were to catch were the souls of men, both among Jews and Gentiles; of whose conversion and faith they were to be the happy instruments: now none could make them fishers in this sense, or fit them for such service, and succeed them in it, but Christ; and who here promises it unto them.

Matthew 4:20

Ver. 20. And they straightway left their nets,

That is, as soon as he had called them, they left their worldly employment, and followed him; they gave up themselves to his service, and became his disciples; they not only left their “nets”, but their fishing boats, and fishing trade, and all that belonged to it, even all their substance; and also their relations, friends, and acquaintance, see Mt 19:27 which shows what a mighty power went along with the words and call of Christ; and what a ready, cheerful, and voluntary subjection this produces, wherever it takes place.

²³⁰ Hilcot. Talmud. Torah, c. 1. sect. 12. so Dr. Lightfoot cites the phrase, but in Ed. Amsterd. it is hrwt ynyd, “the judgments of the law”.

Matthew 4:21

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

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

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

The Jews make mention in their writings²³¹, of one ר יקב בר זבדי, “R. James, the son of Zebedee”: which Capellus²³² left to right conjectures is the very same person here mentioned: but the James they speak of as a disciple of Jesus, they call יקב מינאה, “James the heretic”²³³; who, they say, was of the village of Secaniah, and sometimes of the village of Sama. His brother's name was John, who was the Evangelist, as well as Apostle: these were

in a ship with Zebedee their father.

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

And he called them:

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

Matthew 4:22

Ver. 22. And they immediately left the ship,

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

²³¹ T. Hieros. Yebamot, fol. 9. 4. & Maaser Sheni, fol. 55. 2. Trumot. fol. 45. 2. Sheviith. fol. 35. 1. Bereshith Rab. fol. 31. 4. & 36. 2.

²³² Spicilegium in loc.

²³³ T. Bab. Megilla, 23. 1. Avoda Zara, fol 17. 1. & 27. 2. & 28. 1. Cholin. fol. 84. 1. T. Hieros. Sabbat. fol. 14. 4. & Avoda Zara, fol. 40. 4. Midrash Kohelet, fol. 62. 4. & 77. 1. Juchasin, fol. 41. 1.

expect the gracious promise of Christ to be made good unto them, Mt 19:28.

Matthew 4:23

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

Having called four of his disciples, he took a tour throughout Galilee; a country mean and despicable, inhabited by persons poor, illiterate, vile, and wicked: such had the first fruits of Christ's ministry, and messages of his grace; which shows the freeness, sovereignty, and riches, of his abounding goodness. He went about "all" this country, both upper and nether Galilee, which was very populous: Josephus says²³⁴, there were two hundred and four cities and towns in it; he means, which were places of note, besides villages. He went about, not like Satan, seeking the destruction of men; but as one that went along with him says, "doing good", Ac 10:38, both to the bodies and souls of men; for he was

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

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

healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people.

It is in the Greek text, "every sickness and every disease"; that is, all sorts of maladies, disorders and distempers, which attend the bodies of men; and is another instance, besides Mt 3:5 in which the word "all", or "every", is to be taken in a limited and restrained sense,

²³⁴ In vita ejus.

for "some", or "some of all sorts"; which teaches us how to understand those phrases, when used in the doctrine of redemption by Christ.

Matthew 4:24

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

For his ministry and miracles, especially the latter; wherefore

they brought to him,

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

The²³⁵ Rabbins teach, that in three respects Syria was like to the land of Israel, and in three to the countries with out the land: the dust defiled, as without the land; he that sold his servant to (one in) Syria, was as if he sold him to one without the land; and he that brought a bill of divorce from Syria, as if he brought it from without the land: and in three things it was like to the land of Israel; it was bound to tithes, and to the observance of the seventh year; and he that would go into it, might go into it with purity and he that purchased a field in Syria, was as if he had purchased one in the suburbs of Jerusalem.

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

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

and those which were possessed with devils;

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

And those which were lunatic;

either melancholy persons, or mad and distracted men; that retired from the conversation of men, into fields or desert places: or such, whose disorders were influenced by the change of the moon; such as those who are troubled with the falling sickness; so the Greeks²³⁶ call such persons selhniazo-menouv the word here used by the Evangelist. And those that had the palsy. These were each of them such disorders, as were incurable by

²³⁵ T. Bab. Gittin, fol. 8. 1. 2. vid. Maimon. Hileb. Tumath Meth. c. 11. sect. 6.

²³⁶ Vid. Fabricii Bibl. Graec. vol. 2. l. 3. c. 26. p. 656-658.

the art of medicine; or for which rarely, and with great difficulty, any manner of relief could be obtained; and

he healed them;

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

Matthew 4:25

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

Some on one account, and some on another; some out of good will, others out of ill will; some for the healing of their bodies, others for the good of their souls; some to see his miracles, others to hear his doctrine; and what with one and another, the concourse of people that followed him was greater than that which followed John. The Greek word for “multitude” is adopted into the Talmudic language, and is often used by the doctors; who have a tradition to this purpose, that *אבר מששים* *אין אוכלין פחותה*, “there is no multitude less than sixty myriads”²³⁷; but we are not to imagine, that when here, and elsewhere, a multitude is said to follow, or attend on Christ, that he had such a number of people after him as this; only that the number was very large. The places from whence they came are particularly mentioned, as “from Galilee”; where he had called his disciples, had been preaching the Gospel, and healing all manner of diseases; and therefore it is not to be wondered at that he should have a large number of followers from hence. This country was divided into²³⁸ three parts:

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

Frequent mention is made in the Talmudic²³⁹ writings of upper Galilee, as distinct from the other.

And from Decapolis;

a tract of land so called, from the “ten cities” that were in it; and which, according to Pliny²⁴⁰ {r} were these following; Damascus, Opaton, Philadelphia, Raphana, Scythopolis, Gadara, Hippondion, Pella, Galasa, and

Canatha; see Mark 5:20 “And from Jerusalem”; the metropolis of the whole land; for his fame had reached that great city, and there were some there, curious and desirous to see him, and hear him; though he was got into those distant and obscure parts.

And from Judea;

from the other parts of it:

and from beyond Jordan;

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

”Again²⁴¹ ,”

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

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

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

The country beyond Jordan was not so much esteemed as what was properly the land of Canaan, or Israel; for the Jews²⁴² say, “the land of Israel is holier than all lands; because they bring out of it the sheaf, the first fruits, and the showbread, which they do not bring from other lands: the land of Canaan is holier than beyond Jordan; the land of Canaan is fit to be the habitation of the Shekinah; beyond Jordan is not.”This, they say²⁴³, was not the land flowing with milk and honey.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

CHAPTER V

1 Christ beginneth his sermon in the mount. 3 declareth who are blessed. 13 who are the salt of the earth. 14 the light of the world, the city on a hill. 15 the

237 T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 58. 1.

238 Misn. Sheviith. c. 9. sect. 2.

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

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

241 Misn. Sheviith. c. 9. sect. 2.

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

243 Misn. Bicurim, c. 1. sect. 10.

candle. 17 that he came to fulfill the law. 21 What it is to kill, 27 to commit adultery. 33 to swear. 38 exhorteth to suffer wrong. 44 to love even our enemies. 48 and to labour after perfectness.

Matthew 5

- [1] And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:
- [2] And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,
- [3] Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- [4] Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.
- [5] Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.
- [6] Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.
- [7] Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.
- [8] Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.
- [9] Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.
- [10] Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- [11] Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.
- [12] Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.
- [13] Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.
- [14] Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.
- [15] Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.
- [16] Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.
- [17] Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.
- [18] For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.
- [19] Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.
- [20] For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.
- [21] Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:
- [22] But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.
- [23] Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;
- [24] Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.
- [25] Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.
- [26] Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.
- [27] Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:
- [28] But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.
- [29] And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.
- [30] And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.
- [31] It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:
- [32] But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.
- [33] Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but

shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:

- [34] But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:
- [35] Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.
- [36] Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.
- [37] But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.
- [38] Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:
- [39] But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.
- [40] And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.
- [41] And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.
- [42] Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.
- [43] Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.
- [44] But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;
- [45] That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.
- [46] For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?
- [47] And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?
- [48] Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

JOHN GILL'S COMMENTARY ON MATTHEW CHAPTER IV

Matthew 5:1

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

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

he went up into a mountain;

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

and when he was set:

not for rest, but in order to teach; for sitting was the posture of masters, or teachers, see Mt 13:2 Luke 4:20. The form in which the master and his disciples sat is thus described by Maimonides²⁴⁴.

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

With respect to this latter custom, the Talmudists say²⁴⁵, that

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

His disciples came unto him;

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

Matthew 5:2

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

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

and taught them;

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

Matthew 5:3

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

Not the poor in purse, or who are so with respect to things temporal: for though God has chosen and called

²⁴⁴ Hilch. Talmud Torah, c. 4. sect. 2.

²⁴⁵ T. Bab. Megilla, fol. 21. 1. Vid. Misn. Sota, c. 9. sect. 15. & Jarchi, Maimon, & Bartenora in ib.

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

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven;

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

Matthew 5:4

Ver. 4. Blessed are they that mourn,

For sin, for their own sins; the sin of their nature, indwelling sin, which is always working in them, and is a continual grief of mind to them; the unbelief of their hearts, notwithstanding the many instances, declarations, promises, and discoveries of grace made unto them; their daily infirmities, and many sins of life, because they are committed against a God of love, grace, and mercy, grieve the Spirit, and dishonour the Gospel

of Christ: who mourn also for the sins of others, for the sins of the world, the profaneness and wickedness that abound in it; and more especially for the sins of professors, by reason of which, the name of God, and ways of Christ, are evil spoken of: who likewise mourn under afflictions, spiritual ones, temptations, desertions, and declensions; temporal ones, their own, which they receive, either more immediately from the hand of God, or from men; such as they endure for the sake of Christ, and the profession of his Gospel; and who sympathize with others in their afflictions. These, how sorrowful and distressed soever they may appear, are blessed

for they shall be comforted:

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

Matthew 5:5

Ver. 5. Blessed are the meek,

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

"Wisdom, fear, and meekness, say²⁴⁶ they, are of high esteem; but הַנּוֹךְ, "meekness", is greater than them all."

246 Piske Tosaphot Yebamot, art. 196.

They had two very considerable doctors in the time of Christ, Hillell and Shammai; the one was of a meek, the other of an angry disposition: hence, say they²⁴⁷,

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

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

they shall inherit the earth;

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

Matthew 5:6

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

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

after righteousness;

by which is meant, not justice and equity, as persons oppressed and injured; nor a moral, legal righteousness, which the generality of the Jewish nation were eagerly pursuing; but the justifying righteousness of Christ, which is imputed by God the Father, and received by

247 T. Bab. Sabbat. fol. 30. 2.

faith. To “hunger and thirst” after this, supposes a want of righteousness, which is the case of all men; a sense of want of it, which is only perceived by persons spiritually enlightened; a discovery of the righteousness of Christ to them, which is made in the Gospel, and by the Spirit of God; a value for it, and a preference of it to all other righteousness; and an earnest desire after it, to be possessed of it, and found in it; and that nothing can be more grateful than that, because of its perfection, purity, suitableness, and use: happy souls are these,

for they shall be filled:

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

Matthew 5:7

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

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

they shall obtain mercy;

from man, whenever they are attended with any uncomfortable circumstances of life; *כָּל מוֹרְחָם מוֹרְחָם לֵיּוֹ* “whoever is merciful”, men show mercy to him²⁴⁸ {d}; and from God, through Christ; which is free, sovereign, abundant, and eternal. Men are said to obtain this, when they are regenerated, and called by grace; and when they have a discovery, and an application, of the forgiveness of their sins: but here, it seems to design those supplies

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

of grace and mercy, which merciful persons may expect to find and obtain, at the throne of grace, to help them in time of need; and who shall not only obtain mercy of God in this life, but in the world to come, in the great day of the Lord; for which the Apostle prayed for Onesiphorus, 2Ti 1:18.

Matthew 5:8

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

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

for they shall see God;

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

Matthew 5:9

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

Not between God and man, for no man can make his own peace with God; nor can any mere creature, angels, or men, make it for him; Christ, in this sense, is the only

peace maker: but between men and men; and such are they, who are of peaceable dispositions themselves; live peaceably with all men, and with one another, as their relation obliges to, and their mutual comfort requires; and with the men of the world; and who are ready, willing, and very serviceable, in composing differences, and making peace between their fellow creatures and fellow Christians. The Jews speak very highly, and much, in the commendation of peace making; they reckon this among the things which shall be of use to a man, both in this, and the other world.

“These are the things, (say they²⁴⁹ ,) the fruit of which a man enjoys in this world, and his lot or portion remains for him in the world to come; honouring father and mother, liberality, להבירו, “and making peace between a man and his neighbour.”

This, they say²⁵⁰ , Aaron was much disposed to.

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

Hence that saying of Hillel²⁵¹,

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

Now of such persons it is said, that

they shall be called the children of God;

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

Matthew 5:10

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

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

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

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

251 Pirke Abot. c. 1. sect. 12.

and evildoers, but

for righteousness sake:

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

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven:

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

Matthew 5:11

Ver. 11. **Blessed are ye when men shall revile you,** These words are particularly directed to the disciples of Christ, and are designed to inform them, that they should not be exempted from reproach and persecution, and to animate and fortify them against it; and are prophetic of what they, and the first Christians particularly, were to endure for Christ’s sake. Men should “revile” them, speak very reproachfully of them, brand them with infamy, and load them with disgrace; and

persecute you

from place to place, by ill usage of all sorts;

and shall say all manner of evil against you:

the worst things they could think of and invent, and all of them; such as that they were seditious persons, enemies to the commonwealth, and the public good,

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

“חַדָּה לֹוֹטָא וְלֹא חַדָּה לְאַשָּׁא, “be thou cursed”, or bearing curses, but do not curse²⁵². The gloss upon it is, it is better to be one of them that are cursed, than to be of them that curse; for, at the end, the curse causeless returns to him that curseth.”

Again²⁵³,

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

Once more²⁵⁴,

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

Matthew 5:12

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

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

for great is your reward in heaven;

not of debt, but of grace; for there is no proportion or comparison between what the saints suffer for Christ, and the glory that shall be revealed in them by him; not in earth, but in heaven. Saints must not expect their reward here, but hereafter, when God himself will be their reward; he will be all in all; Christ and all his glory,

²⁵² T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 49. 1.

²⁵³ T. Bab. Bava Kama, fol. 93. 1. Maimon. Hilch. Deyot. c. 5. sect. 13.

²⁵⁴ T. Bab. Sabbat. fol. 88. 2. Yoma, fol. 23. 1. & Gittin, fol. 36. 2.

glory and all the riches of it will be the reward of the inheritance, and which must needs be a “great” one. And the more to animate them to suffer with joyfulness, and to support them under all their reproaches and persecutions, it is added;

for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you;

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

Matthew 5:13

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

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

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

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

if the salt,

and proves no matter of fact; and the Jews have a

saying²⁵⁵, that all that season lose their savour מפינה טמה ומלח אינה but salt does not lose its savour”. Should it do so,

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

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

Matthew 5:14

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

What the luminaries, the sun and moon, are in the heavens, with respect to corporal light, that the apostles were in the world with regard to spiritual light; carrying and spreading the light of the Gospel not only in Judea, but all over the world, which was in great darkness of ignorance and error; and through a divine blessing attending their ministry, many were turned from the darkness of Judaism and Gentilism, of sin and infidelity, to the marvellous light of divine grace. The Jews were wont to say, that of the Israelites in general, and particularly of their sanhedrim, and of their learned doctors, what Christ more truly applies here to his apostles; they observe²⁵⁶, that

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

And in another place²⁵⁷, say they,

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

So. R. Meir, R. Akiba his disciple, and R. Judah the

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

256 Tzeror Hammor, fol. 1. 3.

257 Targum in Cant. iv. 1.

prince, are each of them called²⁵⁸ אור הַיָּלָמָה, “the light of the world”; as R. Jochanan ben Zaccai is by his disciples, נר הַיָּלָמָה, “the lamp of the world”²⁵⁹; and it was usual for the head of a school, or of an university to be styled רִלְמָא, “the light of the world”; but this title much better agrees and suits with the persons Christ gives it to, who, no question, had a view to those exalted characters the Jews gave to their celebrated Rabbins. A city that

is set on an hill cannot be hid;

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

exalted unto heaven,

Mt 11:23 or to the city of Jerusalem, which was situated on a very considerable eminence. The land of Israel, the Jews say²⁶¹, was higher than all other lands; and the temple at Jerusalem was higher than any other part of the land of Israel. And as a city cannot be hid which is built on a high place, so neither could, nor ought the doctrines which the apostles were commissioned to preach, be hid, or concealed from men: they were not to shun to declare the whole counsel of God, nor study to avoid the reproaches and persecutions of men; for they were to be “made a spectacle”; to be set as in a public theatre, to be seen by “the world, angels, and men”.

Matthew 5:15

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

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

258 Juchasin, fol. 63. 2.

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

260 Juchasin. fol. 121. 1.

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

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

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

as on the candlestick in the temple, a type of the church; where Christ has set the light of the Gospel, where it is held forth particularly by the ministers of the word, to illuminate the whole house and family of God; by the light of which poor sinners, the lost pieces of silver, are looked up; straggling souls are brought home; hypocrites and formalists are detected; and saints are enlightened, directed, and comforted. Much such a proverbial saying is used by the Jews²⁶²:

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

Matthew 5:16

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

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

that they may see your good works:

meaning their zeal and fervency; their plainness and openness; their sincerity, faithfulness, and integrity; their courage and intrepidity; their diligence, industry,

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

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

and glorify your Father which is in heaven;

that is, that when the ministration of the Gospel has been blessed, for the illumination of the minds of men, to a thorough conviction of their state; and for their regeneration, conversion, sanctification, and comfort; they may give praise to God, and bless his name for qualifying and sending such Gospel ministers to show unto them the way of salvation; and that the word has been made useful to them for communicating spiritual light, life, joy, and comfort, אבינו שבשמיים, “Our and your Father which is in heaven”, is a name, appellation, or periphrasis of God, frequently used by Jewish writers²⁶³; and is often expressed by Christ in these his sermons on the mount.

Matthew 5:17

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

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

I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

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

perfect obedience to all its commands, whereby he became “the end”, the fulfilling end of it. By “the prophets” are meant the writings of the prophets, in which they illustrated and explained the law of Moses; urged the duties of it; encouraged men thereunto by promises; and directed the people to the Messiah, and to an expectation of the blessings of grace by him: all which explanations, promises, and prophecies, were so far from being made void by Christ, that they receive their full accomplishment in him. The Jews²⁶⁴ pretend that these words of Christ are contrary to the religion and faith of his followers, who assert, that the law of Moses is abolished; which is easily refuted, by observing the exact agreement between Christ and the Apostle Paul, Ro 3:31 and whenever he, or any other of the apostles, speaks of the abrogation of the law, it is to be understood of the ceremonial law, which in course ceased by being fulfilled; or if of the moral law, not of the matter, but of the ministry of it. This passage of Christ is cited in the Talmud²⁶⁵, after this manner:”

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

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

Matthew 5:18

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

Or “I Amen say unto you”, which is one of the names of Christ; see Re 3:14 or the word “Amen” is only used by Christ as an asseveration of what he was about to say; and which, for greater confirmation, is usually doubled in the Evangelist John, “Amen, Amen”, or “verily, verily”. The word is used by the Jews²⁶⁶ for an oath; they swore by it; and it is a rule with them, that whoever answers “Amen” after an oath, it is all one as if he had pronounced the oath itself. The thing so strongly affirmed in this solemn manner is,

264 R. Isaac Chizuk Emuna, par. 2. c. 10. p. 401.

265 T. Bab. Sabbat. fol. 116. 2.

266 T. Hieros. Kiddushin, fol. 60. 4. Misn. Bava Kama, c. 9. sect. 7, 8. T. Bab. Shebuot, fol. 36. 1. Debarim Rabba, fol. 242. 2. Maimon Hilch. Shebuot, c. 2. sect. 1.

263 Vid. Misn. Sota, c. 9. sect. 15. & Yoma, c. 8. sect. 9.

till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

The $\omega\tau\alpha$ “or jot”, in the Greek language, answers to “jod” in the Hebrew, the least of all the letters in the alphabet; hence a little city is called by this name, and this reason is given for it,²⁶⁷ $\text{שׁוּרֵי קָטְנָה בְּאוֹתוֹת}$, “because that jod is the least among letters”. We read also of Rabbi Jod²⁶⁸, perhaps so called because הָיָה קָטַן , he was little, as the author of Juchasin observes²⁶⁹. This shows in what language the law was written; not in the Samaritan language, for the jod in that is a large letter, but in the Hebrew, in which it is very small; and particularly is written in a very diminutive character, in De 32:18 “by one tittle” some think is meant one of those ducts, dashes, or corners of letters, which distinguish one letter from another, that are much alike; others have thought that one of the pricks or vowel points is intended; others, one of those little strokes in the tops of letters, which the Jews call²⁷⁰ “crowns” and “spikes”, is here meant, in which they imagined great mysteries were contained; and there were some persons among them, who made it their business to search into the meaning of every letter, and of everyone of these little horns, or pricks, that were upon the top of them. So says R. Meir²⁷¹,

”in the time of the prophets there were such who very diligently searched every letter in the law, and explained every letter by itself; and do not wonder at this that they should expound every letter by itself, for they commented כָּל אוֹת וְאוֹת כל אוֹת וְאוֹת ל, upon everyone of the tops of each letter.”

Such an expounder was Akiba ben Joseph²⁷². To which custom Christ is here supposed to have respect: however, certain it is that he speaks very much in the language, and agreeably to the mind of the Jewish doctors; and some things in their writings will serve to illustrate this passage,

”If, (say they²⁷³), all the nations of the world were gathered together, “to root one word out of the

law”, they could not do it; which you may learn from Solomon, who sought to root “one letter out of the law”, the letter “jod”, in De 17:16 but the holy blessed God said, Solomon shall cease, and an hundred such as he (in the Talmud²⁷⁴ it is a thousand such as he) $\text{וַיִּדְרַמְמַם אֵינָהּ בְּטִילָהּ לְגַלְמֵי}$, “but, jod shall not cease from thee (the law) for ever””

And elsewhere the same expression is used²⁷⁵, and it is added, “ $\text{וְקוּהָ מִמֶּנּוּ אֵינִי מִבְּטָל}$, but a tittle from thee shall not perish.”” The design of Christ, in conformity to the language of the Jews, is to declare, that no part of the law, not one of the least commandments in it, as he explains himself in the next verse, should be unaccomplished; but all should be fulfilled before “heaven and earth pass” away, as they will, with a great noise and fervent heat, as to their present form and condition; or sooner shall they pass away, than the least part of the law shall: which expresses the perpetuity of the law, and the impossibility of its passing away, and the superior excellency of it to the heavens and the earth. It is a saying of one of the Jewish doctors²⁷⁶, that

”the whole world is not equal even to one word out of the law,”

in which it is said, there is not one letter deficient or superfluous.

Matthew 5:19

Ver. 19. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments,

Which are to be understood not of the beatitudes in the preceding verses, for these were not delivered by Christ under the form of commandments; nor of any of the peculiar commands of Christ under the Gospel dispensation; but of the precepts of the law, of which some were comparatively lesser than others; and might be said to be broke, loosed, or dissolved, as the word here used signifies, when men acted contrary to them.

And shall teach men so;

not only teach them by their example to break the commandments, but by express orders: for however gross and absurd this may seem to be, that there should be any such teachers, and they should have any hearers, yet such there were among the Jews; and our Lord here manifestly strikes at them: for notwithstanding the great and excellent things they say of the law, yet they tell us,

267 T. Bab. Taanith, fol. 21. 2. & Gloss. in ib.

268 T. Bab. Taanith, fol. 22. 2.

269 Fol. 93. 2.

270 T. Bab. Menachot, fol. 29. 2.

271 In Semitis fidei, fol. 104. 4. & 105. 1. apud Capell. in loc.

272 T. Bab. Menachot, fol. 29. 2.

273 Vajikra Rabba, fol. 160. 3. Shirhashirim Rabba, fol 20. 2.

274 T. Hieros. Sanhedrim, fol. 20. 3.

275 Shemot Rabba, fol. 96. 1.

276 T. Hieros. Peah, fol. 15. 4.

that the doctors of the sanhedrim had power to root anything out of the law; to loose or make void any of its commands, for a time, excepting in the case of idolatry; and so might any true prophet, or wise man; which they pretend is sometimes necessary for the glory of God, and the good of men; and they are to be heard and obeyed, when they say, transgress anyone of all the commands which are in the law²⁷⁷. Maimonides says²⁷⁸, that the sanhedrim had power, when it was convenient, for the time present, to make void an affirmative command, and to transgress a negative one, in order to return many to their religion; or to deliver many of the Israelites from stumbling at other things, they may do whatsoever the present time makes necessary: for so, adds he, the former wise men say, a man may profane one sabbath, in order to keep many sabbaths. And elsewhere²⁷⁹ he affirms,

”if a prophet, whom we know to be a prophet, should order us מותר מכל אהה ל לבור ל, “to transgress anyone of the commands”, which are mentioned in the law, or many commands, whether light or heavy, for a time, we are ordered to hearken to him; and so we learn from the former wise men, by tradition, that in everything a prophet shall say to thee דברי תורה בור ל, “transgress the words of the law”, as Elias on Mount Carmel, hear him, except in the case of idolatry.”

And another of their writers says²⁸⁰,

it is lawful sometimes to make void the law, and to do that which appears to be forbidden.’

“Nay, they even²⁸¹ say, that if a Gentile should bid an Israelite transgress anyone of the commands mentioned in the law, excepting idolatry, adultery, and murder, he may transgress with impunity, provided it is done privately. You see what reason Christ had to express himself in the manner he does, and that with resentment, saying,

he shall be called,

or be

the least in the kingdom of heaven;

meaning either the church of God, where he shall have neither a name, nor place; he shall not be in the least esteemed, but shall be cast out as a worthless man; or the ultimate state of happiness and glory, in the other world, where he shall not enter, as is said in the next verse; but,

on the other hand,

whosoever shall do and teach;

whose doctrine and conversation, principles and practices agree together; who both teach obedience to the law, and perform it themselves: where again he glances at the masters in Israel, and tacitly reproves them who said, but did not; taught the people what they themselves did not practise; and so were unworthy of the honour, which he that both teaches and does shall have: for

the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven;

he shall be highly esteemed of in the church here, and be honoured hereafter in the world to come. The Jews have a saying somewhat like this;

”he that lessens himself for the words of the law in this world, נשזה גדול, “he shall become great” in the world to come²⁸²,”

or days of the Messiah.

Matthew 5:20

Ver. 20. **For I say unto you,**

These words are directed, not to the true disciples of Christ in general, or to his apostles in particular, but to the whole multitude of the people; who had in great esteem and admiration the Scribes and Pharisees, for their seeming righteousness and holiness; concerning which Christ says,

that except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.

He mentions the Scribes, because they were the more learned part of the people, who were employed in writing out, and expounding the law; and the Pharisees, because they were the strictest sect among the Jews for outward religion and righteousness; and yet, it seems, their righteousness was very defective; it lay only in an external observance of the law; did not arise from a purified heart, or the principles of grace; nor was it performed sincerely, and with a view to the glory of God; but for their own applause, and in order to obtain eternal life: besides, they neglected the weightier matters of the law, and contented themselves with the lesser ones; and as they were deficient in their practice, so they were very lax in their doctrines, as appears from the foregoing verse. Wherefore Christ informs his hearers, that they must have a better righteousness than these men had, if ever they expected to enter into

282 T. Bab. Bava Metzia, fol. 85. 2.

277 T. Bab. Yebamot, fol. 79. 1. & 89. 2. & 90. 2.

278 Hilch. Memarim, c. 2. sect. 4.

279 Hilch. Yesode Hattorah, c. 9. sect. 3.

280 Bartenora in, Misn. Beracot, c. 9. sect. 5.

281 T. Hicros. Sheviith, fol. 35. 1.

the kingdom of heaven. There will be no admission into heaven without a righteousness: it was the loss of righteousness which removed Adam out of his earthly paradise; and it is not agreeable to the justice of God, to admit man into his heavenly paradise without one; yea, it is contrary to his nature, and would be destructive to the comfort of saints, to receive an unrighteous person into his kingdom and glory. A "pharisaical" righteousness will never bring a person thither; nor will any righteousness of man's, be it what it will, because the best is imperfect; it must be a righteousness exceeding that of the Scribes and Pharisees; and such is the righteousness of the saints: indeed their inherent righteousness, or the sanctification of the Spirit, is preferable to any righteousness of a natural man; it exceeds it in its author, nature, effects, and usefulness; yea, even works of righteousness done by believers are greatly preferable to any done by such men as are here mentioned: but, above all, the righteousness of Christ, which is imputed to them, and received by faith, is infinitely more excellent in its author, perfection, purity, and use; and which is their only right and title to eternal glory; and without which no man will be admitted into that glorious state.

Matthew 5:21

Ver. 21. **Ye have heard,**

That is, from the Scriptures being read to them, and the explanations of the ancients, which were called **אתעמש**, "hearing", being read in the schools, and heard by the scholars²⁸³; so that to "hear", was along with the recital of the text, to receive by tradition, the sense the elders had given of it: of this kind is the instance produced by Christ. Thus Onkelos, and Jonathan ben Uzziel, render the phrase, "him shall ye hear", in De 18:15 by **מניה חקבלינ**, "from him shall ye receive"; so those phrases²⁸⁴, **מפי השמועה**, "they learn from hearing", or by report from others; and **העומשה יפמ ורמא** "they speak from hearing", or from what they have heard, are often used for receiving and reporting things as they have them by tradition. That "it was said", or "it hath been said"; this is also a Talmudic form of expression; often is this phrase to be met with in the **דמלאמר דמלאה**, "it has been said"²⁸⁵; that is, by the ancient doctors, as here, "by them of old time", or "to the ancients", **לקדמונינ**, so in Munster's Hebrew Gospel; not to the Israelites in the time of Moses, but to the ancestors of the Jews, since the times of Ezra; by the elders, who

283 Vid. Buxtorf. Lex. Rabbin, fol. 2453.

284 Maimon. Hilch. Issure Mizbeach, c. 1. sect. 2, 4, 5, 7, 10. & passim, & T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 88. 1.

285 Vid. Edzardi Not. in Avoda Zara, c. 2. p. 284.

were contemporary with them; and who by their false glosses corrupted the law, when they recited any part of it to the people; or "by the ancients", the ancient doctors and commentators, which preceded the times of Christ, whom the Jews often call **קדמונינו**, "our ancients"²⁸⁶. Now, upon that law, "thou shalt not kill", they put this gloss, or added this by way of interpretation,

and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment;

which they understood only of actual murder, either committed in their own persons, or by the means of others. Their rules for the judgment of such persons were these;

"everyone that kills his neighbour with his hand; as if he strikes him with a sword, or with a stone that kills him; or strangles him till he die; or burns him in fire; seeing he kills him in any manner, in his own person, lo! such an one must be put to death **סינומדיקל**, "by the house of judgment", or the sanhedrim²⁸⁷."

Not that which consisted of three persons only, but either that which consisted of twenty three, or the supreme one, which was made up of seventy one; which two last had only power of judging capital offences. Again,

"if a man hires a murderer to kill his neighbour, or sends his servants, and they kill him, or binds him, and leaves him before a lion, or the like, and the beast kills him, everyone of these is a shedder of blood; and the sin of slaughter is in his hand; and he is guilty of death by the hand of heaven, i.e. God; but he is not to be put to death by the house of judgment, or the sanhedrim²⁸⁸."

"A little after, it is said, "their judgment" is delivered to heaven, i.e. to God; and this seems to be the sense of the word "judgment" here, namely, the judgment of God, or death by the hand of God; since it is manifestly distinguished from the council, or sanhedrim, in the next "verse". The phrase, in danger of judgment, is the same with²⁸⁹ **חייב דינ** "guilty of judgment", or deserves condemnation.

Matthew 5:22

Ver. 22. **But I say unto you,**

This is a Rabbinical way of speaking, used when a

286 Vid. R. Aben Ezra in Exod. xxi. 17. & in Isa. lii. 13. & lxvi. 24.

287 Maimon. Hilch. Rotseach, c. 2. sect. 1.

288 Maimon. Hilch. Rotseach, c. 2. sect. 2.

289 In Targ. in 2 Chron. xix. 10.

question is determined, and a false notion is refuted; it is a magisterial form of expression, and well suits with Christ, the great teacher and master in Israel; who spake as one having authority, opposing himself, not to the law of "Moses, thou shalt not kill"; but to the false gloss the ancient doctors had put upon it, with which their later ones agreed. You say, that if one man kills another himself, he is to be put to death by the sanhedrim; and if he does it by proxy, he is to be left to the judgment of God, so wholly restraining the law to actual murder; but I affirm, that

whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of judgment.

By "brother" is meant, not in a religious sense, one that is of the same faith, or in the same church state; nor, in a strict natural sense, one that is so in the bonds of consanguinity; but in a large sense, any man, of whatsoever country or nation: for we are to be angry with no man; that is, as is rightly added,

without a cause:

for otherwise there is an anger which is not sinful, is in God, in Christ, in the holy angels; and is commendable in the people of God, when it arises from a true zeal for religion, the glory of God, and the interest of Christ; and is kindled against sin, their own, or others, all manner of vice, false doctrine, and false worship: but it is causeless anger which is here condemned by Christ, as a breach of the law, "thou shalt not kill"; and such persons are

in danger of judgment;

not of any of the courts of judicature among the Jews, as the sanhedrim of three, or of twenty three, or of seventy one, which took no notice of anger, as a passion in the mind, only of facts committed; but of the judgment of God, as in the preceding "verse", it being distinguished from the sanhedrim, or council, in the next clause. And whosoever shall say to his brother Raca, shall be in danger of the council, or "sanhedrim". The word Raca is expressive of indignation and contempt; it was used as a term of reproach. Some derive it from ריקק to "spit upon"; as if the person that used it thought the man he spoke to deserved to be spit upon, and treated in the most contemptuous manner: but rather the word signifies "empty" and "vain", and denotes a worthless, empty headed man; a man of no brains; a foolish, witless, fellow: so it is often used in Jewish writings. Take a few instances, as follow:

"a certain person said to R. Jochanan²⁹⁰, Rabbi,

290 T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 100. 1. T. Bava Bathra, fol. 75.

expound, for it becomes thee to expound; for as thou hast said, so have I seen: he replied to him, ריקא Reka, if thou hadst not seen, thou wouldst not have believed."

Again²⁹¹, it happened to R. Simeon ben Eliezer of Migdal Edar, who went from the house of Rabbi; and he met with a certain man very much deformed; he says unto him, ריקא, how many are the deformed sons of "Abraham our father?" Many more instances might be given²⁹². Now I do not find that the use of this reproachful word was cognizable by the Jewish sanhedrim, or great council; nor is it our Lord's meaning that it was, only that it ought to have been taken notice of in a proper manner, as well as actual murder. He adds,

but whosoever shall say thou fool, shall be danger of hell fire.

The word "fool" does not signify a man of weak parts, one that is very ignorant in things natural; this the word Raca imports; but a wicked reprobate man; in which sense Solomon often uses the word. The Persic version renders it here "wicked". There is a manifest gradation in the text from causeless anger in the breast, or reproachful words; and from thence to a censorious judging of a man's spiritual and eternal estate, which is what is here condemned. "Thou fool", is, thou wicked man, thou ungodly wretch, thou graceless creature, whose portion will be eternal damnation. Calling a man by such names was not allowed of by the Jews themselves, whose rules are:

"he that calls his neighbour a servant, let him be excommunicated; a bastard, let him be beaten with forty stripes; רש, "a wicked man", let him descend with him into his life or livelihood²⁹³."

The gloss upon it is,

"as if he should say, to this the sanhedrim is not obliged, but it is lawful to hate him, yea to lessen his sustenance, and exercise his trade,

"which was done to bring him to poverty and distress. So, it seems, the sanhedrim were not obliged to take notice of him. Again, they say,

"it is forbidden a man to call his neighbour by

1.

291 Massechet Derach Eretz, c. 4. fol. 18. 1.

292 Vid. T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 32. 2. Zohar in Exod. fol.

50. 2.

293 T. Bab. Kiddushin, fol. 28. 1. Bava Metzia, fol. 71.

1.

a name of reproach²⁹⁴ everyone that calls his neighbour רשע, “a wicked man”, shall be brought down to hell;”

which is pretty much what Christ here says,

shall be in danger of hell fire;

or deserving of hell fire; or liable to, and in danger of punishment, even “unto hell fire”. An expression much like this may be observed in Jarchi, on Isa 24:23 where he speaks of some persons מְדוּוּיִיבֵי גִּהֶנֶם לְגִהֶנֶם, “who are guilty”, deserving, or in danger of “hell unto hell”. The wordgeenna, here used, and which is often used in the New Testament for “hell”, is but the Hebrew גִּיּוֹן הַנֶּמֶץ, “Ge-Hinnom”, the valley of Hinnom, where the children were caused to pass through the fire to Moloch. This place, the Jewish writers²⁹⁵ say,”

“Was a place well known, near to Jerusalem, a valley, whose fire was never quenched; and in which they burned the bones of anything that was unclean, and dead carcasses, and other pollutions.”

Hence the word came to be used among them, as might be shown in innumerable instances, to express the place and state of the damned; and very fitly describes it.

Matthew 5:23

Ver. 23. Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, The Jews obliged such who had done any damage to their neighbours, by stealing from them, to make satisfaction before they brought their offering; concerning which they say²⁹⁶ ,”

he that brings what he has stolen, before he brings his trespass offering, is right; he that brings his trespass offering, before he brings that which he has stolen, is not right.”

Again²⁹⁷ ,

”they do not bring the trespass offering before the sum of what is stolen is returned, either to the owners, or to the priests.”

Some have thought Christ refers to this; only what they restrained to pecuniary damages, he extends to all sorts of offences. But not a trespass offering, but a freewill offering, seems to be designed by “the gift”: which, when a man either intended to bring, or was going to bring,

²⁹⁴ Zohar in Exod. fol. 50. 3.

²⁹⁵ Sepher Cosri, fol. 57. 2. Vid. Kimchi in Psal. xxvii.

13.

²⁹⁶ Misn. Bava Kama, c. 9. sect. 12.

²⁹⁷ Maimon. Hilch. Gezela, c. 8. sect. 13.

or had already brought, as a voluntary sacrifice to be offered unto God; and it came into his mind, that he had offended any man by showing any undue passion, or by any reproachful words, then he was to do what is advised in the following verse: “and there”, whilst going, or when at the altar,

rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee:

hath anything to charge thee with; any just ground of complaint against thee; if thou hast done him any injury, or given him any offence: particularly, if he had at any time said Raca to him, or called him “fool” for those words have reference to what goes before, and are a corollary, or conclusion from them, as appears from the causal particle “therefore”.

Matthew 5:24

Ver. 24. **Leave there thy gift before the altar,**

This might easily be done, and the business soon dispatched, at some seasons; particularly, at their public feasts, as the passover, pentecost, and feast of tabernacles, when all the Israelites were together:and

go thy way;

make what haste thou canst,

first be reconciled to thy brother:

use all means to reconcile him; acknowledge the offence; ask his pardon; assure him that thou wishest well to him, and not ill;

and then come and offer thy gift,

by putting it on the altar, before which it was left. This shows, that acts of love and friendship are preferable to sacrifices; and that sacrifices offered up in wrath, and whilst unreconciled to others, are unacceptable to God, and of no avail: and so much the Jews themselves seem to acknowledge; when they say²⁹⁸ :

”that transgressions, which are between a man and God, the day of atonement expiates; the transgressions which are between a man and his neighbour, the day of atonement does not expiate את חבירו ,” “until he hath reconciled his neighbour.””

Which is enlarged upon, and explained by Maimonides²⁹⁹ , after this manner:

”the day of atonement does not expiate any transgressions, but those that are between a man and God, as when one eats anything that is forbidden, and lies with anything that is forbid-

²⁹⁸ Misn. Yoma, c. 8. sect. 9.

²⁹⁹ Hilchot Teshuba, c. 2. sect. 9. Vid. T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 87. 1.

den, or the like; but transgressions which are between a man and his neighbour, as he that hurts his neighbour, or curses his neighbour, or steals from him, and the like, are never forgiven, until he has given his neighbour what he owed him, and has “reconciled” him; yea, though he has returned to him the money he owed him, he ought to “reconcile” him, and desire him to forgive him; yea, even though “he has only provoked him by words”, (which is the very case in the text before us,) רִיב לַפִּיּוֹ “he ought to reconcile him”, and to meet him until he forgives him: if his neighbour will not forgive, he must bring with him three of his friends, and meet him, and entreat him; and if he will not be reconciled by them, he must bring them a second, and a third time.”

So that he was to use all means to obtain a reconciliation.

Matthew 5:25

Ver. 25. **Agree with thine adversary quickly**

These words are not to be understood in an allegorical sense, as if “the adversary” was the justice of God, demanding payment of debts; “the way”, this present life; “the judge”, God himself; “the officer”, the devil; “the prison”, the pit of hell; and “the uttermost farthing”, the least sin, which will never be remitted without satisfaction: but the design of them is to prevent lawsuits about debts, which may be in dispute; it being much better for debtor and creditor, especially the former, to compose such differences among themselves, than to litigate the matter in a court of judicature. By “the adversary” is meant not an enemy, one that bears hatred and ill will, but a brother that has ought against a man; a creditor, who demands and insists upon payment of what is owing to him; and for this purpose has taken methods towards bringing the debtor before a proper magistrate, in order to oblige him to payment: wherefore it is better for him to make up and agree the matter directly, as soon as possible,

whilst thou art in the way with him;

that is, whilst the creditor and debtor are going together to some inferior magistrate, or lesser court, as the sanhedrim, which consisted of three persons only, before whom such causes might be tried: for hwlvב דיני ממונות, pecuniary causes, or causes relating to money matters, were tried “by the bench of three”³⁰⁰: and the

selfsame advice is given in the Talmud³⁰¹, as here, where it seems to be a common proverb; for it is said,

”there are men that say, or men usually say, רבבב אגב אורחב לבל, “whilst thou art in the way with thine adversary, be obedient”.

Lest at any time the adversary should deliver thee to the judge,

a superior magistrate in a higher court; for if the creditor would, he could oblige the debtor to go with him to the supreme court of judicature, and try the cause there; for so say the Jewish³⁰²; canons:

”if the creditor says we will go to the great sanhedrim, they compel the debtor, and he goes up with them, as it is said, “the borrower is servant to the lender”,

where it might go harder with the poor debtor; and therefore it was advisable to prevent it by an agreement, lest

the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.

”It was an affirmative command in the law, says Maimonides, to appoint “judges” and “officers” in every country and province, as it is said, De 16:18. שופטים “judges” they are the judges that are fixed in the sanhedrim, and such that engage in law suits come before them: מירטוש, “officers”; these are the masters of the rod and scourge, i.e. who beat and scourge delinquents; and these stand before the judges--and all they do, is by the order of the judges.”

Now it is one of these that is meant by “the officer”; in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel, he is called רטוש; who, when he had authority from the judge, could cast into prison, and that for debt; of which we have no account in the law of Moses.

Matthew 5:26

Ver. 26. **Verily, I say unto thee,** This may be depended upon, you may assure yourself of it, that

thou shalt by no means come out thence,

from prison,

till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing,

or “last farthing”; or as the Ethiopic version reads it, “till thou hast exactly paid all”; which seems to express the inexorableness of the creditor, and the impossibility of the debtor’s release.

301 T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 95. 2.

302 Maimof. Hilch. Sanhedrim, c. 6. sect. 7.

300 Misn. Sanhedrim, c. 1. sect. 1.

Matthew 5:27

Ver. 27. **Ye have heard that it was said,**

These forms of speech, as well as what follows,

by them of old time,

have been explained, in ver. 21. The law here mentioned,

thou shalt not commit adultery,

is recorded in Ex 20:14 and the meaning of our Lord is, not that the then present Jews had heard that such a law had been delivered “to the ancients”, their fathers, at Mount Sinai; for that they could read in their Bibles: but they had received it by tradition, that the sense of it, which had been given to their ancestors, by the ancient doctors of the church, was, that this law is to be taken strictly, as it lies, and only regards the sin of uncleanness in married persons; or, what was strictly adultery, and that actual; so that it had no respect to fornication, or unchaste thoughts, words, or actions, but that single act only.

Matthew 5:28

Ver. 28. **But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman,**

Many and severe are the prohibitions of the Jews, concerning looking upon a woman, which they aggravate as a very great sin: they say³⁰³, it is not lawful to look upon a beautiful woman, though unmarried; nor upon another man’s wife, though deformed; nor upon a woman’s coloured garments: they forbid³⁰⁴ looking on a woman’s little finger, and say {m}, that he that tells money to a woman, out of his hand into her’s, that he may look upon her, though he is possessed of the law and good works, even as Moses, he shall not escape the damnation of hell: they affirm³⁰⁵, that he that looks upon a woman’s heel, his children shall not be virtuous; and that a man may not go after a woman in the way, no, not after his wife: should he meet her on a bridge, he must take her to the side of him; and whoever goes through a river after a woman, shall have no part in the world to³⁰⁶ come: nay, they forbid³⁰⁷ a man looking on the beauty of his own wife. Now these things were said by them, chiefly to cover themselves, and because they would be thought to be very chaste; when they were, as Christ calls them, an “adulterous generation” in a literal sense: they usually did

303 T. Bab. Avoda Zara, fol. 1. 2.

304 T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 24. 1. Sabbat. fol. 64. 2.

305 T. Bab. Nedarim, fol. 20. 1. T. Hieros. Challa, fol. 58.

3. Derech Eretz. c. 1. fol. 17. 3.

306 T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 61. 1. Eruvin, fol. 18. 2.

307 Zohar in Lev. fol. 34. 4.

what our Lord observes, “strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel”. We read in the Talmud³⁰⁸, of חיד שיטה, a “foolish saint” and it is asked, who is he? and it is answered, one that sees a woman drowning in a river, and says it is not lawful for me לא איתכולי בה, “to look” upon her, and deliver her. It was not any looking upon a woman, that is forbid by Christ as criminal; but so to look, as “to lust after her”; for such an one

hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

But these men, who forbid external looking upon a woman, generally speaking, had no notion of heart sins; and which was the prevailing opinion of the Pharisees, in Christ’s time.”

A good thought, they³⁰⁹ allow, is reckoned as if done; as it is said, Mal 3:16. Upon which it is asked, what is the meaning of that, and “that thought” upon “his name?” Says R. Ase, if a man thinks to do a good work, and is hindered, and does it not, the Scripture reckons it to him, as if he did it; but an evil thought, the holy blessed God does not account of it as if done, as is said, Ps 66:18.”

Upon which words, a noted commentator³¹⁰ of their’s has this remark:

”Though I regard iniquity in my heart to do it, even in thought, yea, against God himself, as if I had expressed it with my lips, he does not hear it; that is לא השב לי הן, “he does not reckon it to me for sin”; because the holy blessed God does not account an evil thought for an action, to them that are in the faith of God, or of the true religion.”

For it seems, this is only true of the Israelites; it is just the reverse with the Gentiles, in whom God does not reckon of a good thought, as if it was done, but does of an evil one, as if it was in act³¹¹. It must be owned, that this is not the sense of them all; for some of them have gone so far as to say³¹², that”

the thoughts of sin are greater, or harder, than sin itself:

”by which they mean, that it is more difficult to

308 T. Bab Sota, fol. 21. 2.

309 T. Bab. Kiddushin, fol. 40. 1.

310 R. David Kimchi, in Psal. lxvi. 18.

311 T. Hieros. Peah, fol. 16. 2.

312 T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 29. 1.

subdue sinful lusts, than to refrain from the act of sin itself; and particularly, some of them say things which agree with, and come very near to what our Lord here says; as when they affirm³¹³, that

”everyone that looks upon a woman בכוונה, with intention, it is all one as if he lay with her.”

And that נואפּ בניי נקרא נואפּ, “he that committeth adultery with his eyes, is called an adulterer”³¹⁴. Yea, they also observe³¹⁵, that a woman may commit adultery in her heart, as well as a man; but the Pharisees of Christ’s time were of another mind.

Matthew 5:29

Ver. 29. **And if thy right eye offend thee,**

Or “cause thee to offend”, to stumble, and fall into sin. Our Lord has no regard here to near and dear relations seeking to alienate us from God and Christ, and hinder us in the pursuit of divine things; whose solicitations are to be rejected with the utmost indignation, and they themselves to be parted with, and forsaken, rather than complied with; which is the sense some give of the words: for both in this, and the following verse, respect is had only to the law of adultery; and to such members of the body, which often are the means of leading persons on to the breach of it; particularly the eye and hand. The eye is often the instrument of ensnaring the heart this way: hence the Jews have a³¹⁶ saying,

”whoever looks upon women, at the end comes into the hands of transgression.”

Mention is only made of the right eye; not but that the left may be an occasion of sinning, as well as the right; but that being most dear and valuable, is instanced in, and ordered to be parted with:

pluck it out, and cast it from thee:

which is not to be understood literally; for no man is obliged to mutilate any part of his body, to prevent sin, or on account of the commission of it; this is no where required, and if done, would be sinful, as in the case of Origen: but figuratively; and the sense is, that persons should make a covenant with their eyes, as Job did; and turn them away from beholding such objects, which may tend to excite impure thoughts and desires; deny themselves the gratification of the sense of seeing, or

feeding the eyes with such sights, as are graceful to the flesh; and with indignation and contempt, reject, and avoid all opportunities and occasions of sinning; which the eye may be the instrument of, and lead unto:

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

This is still a continuation of the figure here used; and the meaning is, that it will turn to better account, to lose all the carnal pleasures of the eye, or all those pleasing sights, which are grateful to a carnal heart, than, by enjoying them, to expose the whole man, body and soul, to everlasting destruction, in the fire of hell.

Matthew 5:30

Ver. 30. **And if thy right hand offend thee,**

Or “cause thee to offend”; that is, is the means of ensnaring thine heart; and of drawing thee into either mental, or actual adultery; for, as before, all unchaste looks, so here, all unchaste touches, embraces, &c. are condemned. As adultery may be committed in the heart, and by the eye, so with the hand:”

says R. Eliezer³¹⁷ what is the meaning of that Scripture, “your hands are full of blood”, Isa 1:15? It is replied, אלו המנאפים ביד, “these are they, that commit adultery with the hand”. It is a tradition of the house of R. Ishmael, that the sense of that command, “thou shalt not commit adultery”, is, there shall be none that commits adultery in thee, whether “with the hand”, or “with the foot”.

Like orders are given as before,

cut it off, and cast it from thee;

as a man would choose to do, or have it done for him, when such a part of the body is mortified, and endangers all the rest. The Jews enjoined cutting off of the hand, on several accounts; if in a morning, before a man had washed his hands, he put his hand to his eye, nose, mouth, תיק רא, it was to be “cut off”³¹⁸; particularly, the handling of the “membrum virile”, was punishable with cutting off of the hand.”

Says R.³¹⁹ Tarphon, if the hand is moved to the privy parts, תק ידו, “let his hand be cut off to his navel”.

313 T. Hieros. Challa, fol. 58. 3. Massechet Calah, fol. 16. 4. Vid. Maimon. Issure Bia, c. 21. sect. 2. & Moses Kotsensis Mitzvot Tora precept. neg. 126.

314 Vajikra Rabba, sect. 23. fol. 265. 1.

315 Bemidbar Rabba, sect. 9. fol. 196. 1.

316 T. Bab. Nedarim, fol. 20. 1.

317 T. Bab. Nidda, fol. 13. 2. Vid. Maimon. Issure Bia, c. 21. sect. 18.

318 T. Bab. Sabbat. fol. 108. 2. Massechet Callah, fol. 17. 1.

319 T. Bab. Nidda, fol. 13. 2.

That is, that it may reach no further; for below that part of the body the hand might not be put³²⁰; lest unclean thoughts, and desires, should be excited. In the above³²¹ place it is added,

”what if a thorn should be in his belly, must he not take it away? It is replied, no: it is further asked, must not his belly be ripped up then? It is answered, it is better that his belly be ripped up, ואל ירד לבאר שחת, dry law, “than that he should go down to the pit of corruption.”

A way of speaking, much like what our Lord here uses; and to the above orders and canons, he may be very well thought to allude: but he is not to be understood literally, as enjoining the cutting off of the right hand, as they did; but of men’s refraining from all such impure practices, either with themselves, or women, which are of a defiling nature; and endanger the salvation of them, body and soul; the same reason is given as before.

Matthew 5:31

Ver. 31. **It hath been said,**

It is not added here, as in the former instances, “by them of old time”; nor prefaced with these words, “ye have heard”; because the case of divorce was not any law of Moses, or of God by him; but only a permission, because of the hardness of the hearts of the Jews: and as to the controversy, about the causes of divorce, this was not debated by them of old time, but was a new thing, just started in the time of Christ; and was a controversy then agitating, between the schools of Hillel and Shammai: the one allowing it upon any frivolous cause; the other, only on account of adultery.

Whosoever shall put away his wife,

dissolve the marriage bond, dismiss her from his bed, and send her from his house, see De 24:1 “let him give her a writing of divorcement”, פֶּרֶד כְּרִיתָה , “a bill of divorcement”, or “a book of cutting off”. For though a wife was obtained by several ways, there was but one way of dismissing her, as the Jews observe³²², and that was, by giving her a bill. The form of a writing of divorcement, as given by Maimonides³²³, is as follows:

”On such a day of the week, in such a month, of such a year, either from the creation, or the epocha of contracts, according to the usual way of

320 Maimon. Issure Bia, c. 21. sect. 23.

321 T. Bab. Nidda, fol. 13. 2.

322 Baal Hatturim in Deut. xxiv. 1. Maimon. Hilchot Ishot, c. 1. sect. 2, 3.

323 Hilchot Gerushin, c. 4. sect. 12.

computation, which we observe in such a place; I such an one, the son of such an one, of such a place; or if I have any other name, or surname, or my parents, or my place, or the place of my parents; by my own will, without any force, I put away, dismiss, and divorce thee. Thee, I say, who art such an one, the daughter of such an one, of such a place; or if thou hast any other name, or surname, or thy parents, or thy place, or the place of thy parents; who wast my wife heretofore, but now I put thee away, dismiss and divorce thee; so that thou art in thine own hand, and hast power over thyself, to go, and marry any other man, whom thou pleasest; and let no man hinder thee in my name, from this day forward and for ever; and lo! thou art free to any man: and let this be unto thee, from me, a bill of divorce, an instrument of dismissal, and a letter of forsaking, according to the law of Moses and Israel.”

”Such an one, the son of such an one, witness. Such an one, the son of such an one, witness.” Would you choose to have one of these bills, filled up in proper form, take it in manner³²⁴ following.

”On the fourth day of the week, on the eleventh day of the month Cisleu, in the year five thousand four hundred and fifty four, from the creation of the world; according to the computation which we follow here, in the city of Amsterdam, which is called Amstelredam; situated by the sea side, called Taya, and by the river Amstel; I Abraham, the son of Benjamin, surnamed Wolphius, the priest; and at this time dwelling in the city of Amsterdam, which is called Amstelredam, which is situated by the sea side, called Taya, and by the river Amstel; or if I have any other name, or surname, or my parents, or my place, or the place of my parents; by my own free will, without any compulsion, I put away, dismiss, and divorce thee, my wife Rebecca, the daughter of Jonas the Levite; who at this time abides in the city of Amsterdam, called Amstelredam, situated by the sea side, called Taya, and by the river Amstel; or if thou hast any other name, or surname, or thy parents, or thy place, or the place of thy parents, who wast heretofore my wife; but now I put thee away, dismiss, and divorce thee; so that thou art

324 In Surenhusii Misna, Vol. III. p. 324. Vid. Moses Kotsensis Mitzvot Tora pr. affirm. 50.

in thine own hands, and hast power over thyself, to go and marry any other man, whom thou pleasest: and let no man hinder thee in my name, from this day forward, and for ever; and lo! thou art free to any man. Let this be to thee, from me, a bill of divorce, an instrument of dismissal, and a letter of forsaking, according to the law of Moses and Israel.”

“Sealtiel, the son of Paltiel, witness. Calonymus, the son of Gabriel, witness.” This bill being written in twelve lines, neither more nor less, and being sealed by the husband, and signed by the witnesses, was delivered, either by him, or by a messenger, or deputy of his or hers, into her hand, lap, or bosom, in the presence of two persons; after which, she might, if she would, enrol it in the public records, and marry whom she pleased.

Matthew 5:32

Ver. 32. **But I say unto you; that whosoever shall put away his wife,**

Christ does not infringe, or revoke the original grant, or permission of divorce; only frees it from the false interpretations, and ill use, the Pharisees made of it; and restores the ancient sense of it, in which only it was to be understood: for a divorce was allowable in no case,

saving for the cause of fornication;

which must not be taken strictly for what is called fornication, but as including adultery, incest, or any unlawful copulation; and is opposed to the sense and practices of the Pharisees, who were on the side of Hillell: who admitted of divorce, upon the most foolish and frivolous pretences whatever; when Shammai and his followers insisted on it, that a man ought only to put away his wife for uncleanness; in which they agreed with Christ. For so it is written³²⁵,

“The house of Shammai say, a man may not put away his wife, unless he finds some uncleanness in her, according to De 24:1 The house of Hillell say, if she should spoil his food, (that is, as Jarchi and Bartenora explain it, burns it either at the fire, or with salt, i.e. over roasts or over salts it,) who appeal also to De 24:1. R. Akiba says, if he finds another more beautiful than her, as it is said, De 24:1 “and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes.”

’The commentators³²⁶ on this passage say that the

³²⁵ Misn. Gittin, c. 9. sect. 10. Vid. T. Hieros. Gittin, fol. 49. 4. & Sota, fol. 16. 2. & Bemidbar Rabba, sect. 9. fol. 195. 2.

³²⁶ Maimon. & Bartenora in Gittin, c. 9. sect. 10.

determination of the matter is, according to the school of Millell; so that, according to them, a woman might be put away for a very trivial thing: some difference is made by some of the Jewish doctors, between a first and second wife; the first wife, they say³²⁷, might not be put away, but for adultery; but the second might be put away, if her husband hated her; or she was of ill behaviour, and impudent, and not modest, as the daughters of Israel. Now our Lord says, without any exception, that a man ought not to put away his wife, whether first or second, for any other reason than uncleanness; and that whoever does, upon any other account,

causeth her to commit adultery;

that is, as much as in him lies: should she commit it, he is the cause of it, by exposing her, through a rejection of her, to the sinful embraces of others; and, indeed, should she marry another man, whilst he is alive, which her divorce allows her to do, she must be guilty of adultery; since she is his proper wife, the bond of marriage not being dissolved by such a divorce: and

whosoever shall marry her that is divorced, committeth adultery;

because the divorced woman he marries, and takes to his bed; is legally the wife of another man; and it may be added, from Mt 19:9 that her husband, who has put her away, upon any other account than fornication, should he marry another woman, would be guilty of the same crime.

Matthew 5:33

Ver. 33. **Again, ye have heard that it hath been said,** Besides what has been observed, in ver. 21 and 27 you know it has also been said,

by, or to them of old time,

what is written in Le 19:12. “And ye shall not swear by my name falsely”; which seems to be referred to, when it is said, “thou shalt not forswear thyself”: and is the law forbidding perjury, or false swearing; and was what the Jews were chiefly, if not only concerned about; little regarding the vanity, only the truth of an oath: for they took swearing vainly, to be the same as swearing falsely; wherefore so long as what they swore was truth, they were not careful whether it was of any importance or not: moreover, these men sinned, in that they swore by the creatures, which they thought they might do, and not sin; and when they had so done, were not under obligation to perform; because they made no

³²⁷ T. Bab. Gittin, fol. 90. 2. Maimon. Hilch. Gerushin, c. 10. sect. 21, 22.

use of the name of God, to whom only vows and oaths were to be performed, “but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths”, Nu 30:2 which they understood of vows only made to the Lord, and not to others; and of oaths, when in his name, and not by others; which they did do, and yet thought themselves not obliged by them.

Matthew 5:34

Ver. 34. **But I say unto you, swear not at all,**

Which must not be understood in the strictest sense, as though it was not lawful to take an oath upon any occasion, in an affair of moment, in a solemn serious manner, and in the name of God; which may be safely done: but of rash swearing, about trivial matters, and by the creatures; as appears by what follows,

neither by heaven;

which is directly contrary to the Jewish canons {m}, which say,

”they that swear בַּשָּׁמַיִם, “by heaven”, and by earth, are free.

”Upon the words in So 2:7, “I adjure you”, &c. it is asked³²⁸,

“by what does she adjure them? R. Eliezer says, by the heavens, and by the earth; by the hosts, the host above, and the host below.”

So Philo the Jew says³²⁹ that the most high and ancient cause need not to be immediately mentioned in swearing; but the “earth”, the sun, the stars, οὐρανόν, “heaven”, and the whole world. So R. Aben Ezra, and R. David Kimchi, explain Am 4:2. “The Lord God hath sworn by his holiness”; that is, say they, בַּשָּׁמַיִם, “by heaven”: which may be thought to justify them, in this form of swearing; though they did not look upon it as a binding oath, and therefore if broken they were not criminal³³⁰.

”He that swears בַּשָּׁמַיִם by heaven, and by the earth, and by the sun, and the like; though his intention is nothing less than to him that created them, this is no oath.

”The reason why it is forbidden by Christ to swear by heaven, is,

for it is God’s throne;

referring to Isa 66:1 where he sits, the glory of his majesty shines forth, and is itself glorious and excellent, and not to be mentioned in a vain way; and especially, for the reason Christ elsewhere gives, Mt 23:22 that “he that

shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon”; so that they doubly sinned, first, by openly swearing by that which is God’s creature; and then, by tacitly bringing God into their rash and vain oaths.{m} Misn. Shebuot, c. 4. sect. 13.

Matthew 5:35

Ver. 35. **Nor by the earth, for it is his footstool,**

That the Jews were wont to swear by the earth, is clear from the above mentioned instances; and is condemned by Christ for this reason, because the earth is God’s “footstool”, referring, as before, to Isa 66:1 on which he treads; and where he also manifests forth his glory, and is a considerable part of the work of his hands.

Neither by Jerusalem,

which the Jews used to swear by: such forms of vows as these are to be met with in their writings³³¹;

”as the altar, as the temple, כִּירוּשָׁלַיִם, “as Jerusalem”;

”that is, by Jerusalem, I vow I will do this, or the other thing.”

R. Judah says, he that says Jerusalem (i.e. as Bartenora observes³³², without the note of comparison, as) says nothing.

”In the Gemara³³³ it is,

”he that says as Jerusalem, does not say anything, till he has made his vow concerning a thing, which is offered up in Jerusalem.”Dr. Lightfoot³³⁴ has produced forms of vowing and swearing, which have not occurred to me.”Jerusalem; לְיִרוּשָׁלַיִם “for”, or “unto Jerusalem”, which exactly answers to εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα, here; and “by Jerusalem”;

The reason given for prohibiting this kind of oath, is;

for it is the city of the great king:

not of David, but of the King of kings, the Lord of hosts; who had his residence, and his worship, here; see Ps 48:2.

Matthew 5:36

Ver. 36. **Neither shalt thou swear by thy head,**

This also was a common form of swearing among the Jews: take a few instances.

”If anyone is bound to his friend by an oath, and says to him, vow unto me בְּחַיֵּי רֵאשִׁי, “by the life

328 Shirhashirim Rabba, fol. 10. 4.

329 De Special. leg. p 770.

330 Maimon. Hilch. Shebuot, c. 12. sect. 3.

331 Misn. Nedarim, c. 1. sect. 3.

332 In. ib.

333 T. Bab. Nedarim, fol. 11. 1.

334 In loc. ex Tosapht. in Nedarim, c. 1.

of thy head"; R. Meir says³³⁵, he may retract it; but the wise men say, he cannot."

Again³³⁶, a certain Rabbi said to Elijah,

"I heard "Bath Kol" (or the voice from heaven) mourning like a dove, and saying, woe to my children; for, because of their sins, I have destroyed my house, and have burnt my temple, and have carried them captive among the nations: and he (Elijah) said unto him ראשכ וחיית, "by thy life, and by the life of thy head", not this time only it says so, but it says so three times every day."

Once more³³⁷, says R. Simeon ben Antipatras, to R. Joshua,

"I have heard from the mouth of the wise men, that he that vows in the law, and transgresses, is to be beaten with forty stripes: he replies, blessed art thou of God, that thou hast so done ראשכ וחיית, "by thy life, and by the life of thy head", he that is used to do so is to be beaten.

"This form of swearing is condemned, for this reason, because thou canst not make one hair white or black: which shows, that a man's head, nor, indeed, one hair of his head, is in his own power, and therefore he ought not to swear by it; as he ought not to swear by heaven, or earth, or Jerusalem, because these were in the possession of God. Some copies read, "canst not make one white hair black".

Matthew 5:37

Ver. 37. **But let your communication be yea, yea.**

That is, let your speech, in your common conversation, and daily business of life, when ye answer to anything in the affirmative, be "yea"; and when ye answer to anything in the negative, "nay": and for the stronger asseveration of the matter, when it is necessary, double these words; but let no oaths be joined unto them: this is enough; a righteous man's yea, is yea, and his no, is no; his word is sufficient. Hence it appears, that our Lord is here speaking of rash swearing, and such as was used in common conversation, and is justly condemned by him. The Jews have no reason to reject this advice of Christ, who often use and recommend the same modes of expression. They endeavour to raise the esteem of their doctors and wise men, by saying, that their words, both in doctrines and dealings with men, are "yea, yea"³³⁸

335 Misn. Sanhedrim, c. 3. sect 2.

336 T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 3. 1.

337 Derech. Eretz, c. 6. fol. 18. 2.

338 T. Bab. Moed Katon, fol. 20. 1. Maimon. Hilch. Dayot. c. 5. sect. 13.

. One of their³³⁹ commentators on the word "saying", in, Ex 20:1 makes this observation;

"hence we learn, that they used to answer, לאו לאו, ל' הן הן ו'ל, "concerning yea, yea, and concerning nay, nay".

"This way of speaking, they looked upon equivalent to an oath; yea, they affirm it was one.

"Says R. Eliezer³⁴⁰, לאו שבויה הן שבויה, "nay is an oath; yea is an oath", absolutely; "nay" is an oath, as it is written, Ge 9:11 and Isa 54:9. But that "yea" is an oath, how does it appear? It is concluded from hence, that "nay" is an oath; saith Rabba, there are that say "nay, nay", twice; and there are that say "yea, yea", twice; as it is written, Ge 9:11 and from hence, that "nay" is twice, "yea" is also twice said.

"The gloss upon it is,"he that says either "nay, nay", twice, or "yea, yea", twice; lo! it is כשבויה מאחר "as an after oath", which confirms his words."For whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil: that is, whatever exceeds this way of speaking and conversation, in the common affairs of life, is either from the devil, who is the evil one, by way of eminency; or from the evil heart of man, from the pride, malice, envy, &c. that are in it.

Matthew 5:38

Ver. 38. **Ye have heard that it hath been said,**

That is, to, or by them of old time, as is expressed in some of the foregoing instances,

an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, Ex 21:24.

This is "lex talionis", the "law of retaliation"; which, whether it is to be understood literally, or not, is a matter of question. The Baithuseans, or Sadducees, among the Jews, took it in a literal sense, and so does Josephus, who says³⁴¹, he that shall blind, i.e. put out a man's eyes, shall suffer the like. But the Jewish doctors generally understood it of paying a price equivalent to the damage done, except in case of life. R. Sol. Jarchi³⁴² explains the law thus:

"He that puts out his neighbour's eye, must give him יְיָוִי, "the price of his eye", according to the price of a servant sold in the market; and so the same of them all; for, not taking away of the

339 R. Sol. Jarchi, in Exod. xx. 1.

340 T. Bab. Shebuot, fol. 36. 1. Vid. Maimon. Hilch.

Shebuot, c. 2. sect. 1.

341 Antiq. Jud. l. 4. c. 8. sect. 35.

342 In Exod. xxi. 24.

member is strictly meant.

”And, says Maimonides³⁴³,

”if a man cuts off his neighbour’s hand, or foot, he is to be considered as if he was a servant sold in a market; what he was worth then, and what he is worth now; and he must pay the diminution which is made of his price; as it is said, “eye for eye”. From tradition it is learned, that this for, spoken of, is to be understood of paying money; this is what is said in the law, “as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again”. Not that he is to be hurt, as he has hurt his neighbour; but inasmuch as he deserves to want a member, or to be hurt as he has done; therefore he ought to pay the damage.”

And Josephus himself {e} says, that he must be deprived of that, which he has deprived another of, except he that has his eye put out is willing to receive money; and which, he observes, the law allows of. The controversy about the sense of this law may be seen in a few words, as managed between R. Sandish Hagson, and Ben Zeta³⁴⁴.

”Says R. Sandish, we cannot explain this verse according to its literal sense; for if a man should smite the eye of his neighbour, and the third part of the light of his eye should depart, how will he order it, to strike such a stroke, as that, without adding or lessening? perhaps he will put out the whole light of his eye. And it is yet more difficult with respect to burning, wound, and stripe; for should they be in a dangerous place the man might die but that is intolerable. Ben Zeta answers him, is it not written, in another place, “as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again?” To which Hagson replies, ן “in”, is instead of ך, “upon”, or against; and lo! the sense is, so shall the punishment be upon him. Ben Zeta answers him again, as he does, so shall it be done to him. Hagson replies, behold Samson said, “as they have done to me, so will I do to them”; but Samson did not take their wives, and give them to others, he only rendered to them their reward: but Ben Zeta replies, if a poor man should smite, what must be his punishment? Hagson answers him, if a blind man should put

out the eye of one that sees, what shall be done to him? as for the poor man, he may become rich, and pay, but the blind man can never pay.”

Now our Lord here, does not find fault with the law of retaliation, as delivered by Moses, but with the false gloss of the Scribes and Pharisees; who, as they interpreted it of pecuniary mulcts, as a compensation for the loss of a member, which sometimes exceeded all just and due bounds; so they applied it to private revenge, and in favour of it: whereas this law did not allow of a retaliation to be made, by private persons, at their pleasure, but by the civil magistrate only.

Matthew 5:39

Ver. 39. **But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil,**

This is not to be understood of any sort of evil, not of the evil of sin, of bad actions, and false doctrines, which are to be opposed; nor of the evil one, Satan, who is to be resisted; but of an evil man, an injurious one, who has done us an injury. We must not render evil for evil, or repay him in the same way; see Jas 5:6. Not but that a man may lawfully defend himself, and endeavour to secure himself from injuries; and may appear to the civil magistrate for redress of grievances; but he is not to make use of private revenge. As if a man should pluck out one of his eyes, he must not in revenge pluck out one of his; or should he strike out one of his teeth, he must not use him in the same manner; but patiently bear the affront, or seek for satisfaction in another way.

But whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also:

which is to be understood comparatively, rather than seek revenge, and is directly contrary to the Jewish canons, which require, in such a case, a pecuniary fine³⁴⁵.

”He that strikes his neighbour (which Maimonides explains, he that strikes his neighbour with his hand shut, about the neck) he shall give him a “sela”, or “shekel”: R. Judah says, in the name of R. Jose the Galilean, one pound: if he smite him (i.e. as Maimonides says, if he smite him with his double fist upon the face; or, as Bartenora, with the palm of his hand, ך, “on the cheek”, which is a greater reproach) he shall give him two hundred “zuzim”; and if he does it with the back of his hand, four hundred “zuzim”.

343 Hilchot Chebel. c. 1. sect. 2, 3.

344 In Aben Ezra in Exod. xxi. 24.

345 Misn. Bava Kama, c. 8. sect. 6. Vid. Maimon. & Bartenora in ib.

”R. Isaac Sangari³⁴⁶ manifestly refers to this passage of Christ’s, when he says to the king he is conversing with,

”I perceive that thou up braidest us with poverty and want; but in them the great men of other nations glory: for they do not glory but in him, who said, “Whosoever smiteth thee thy right cheek, turn to him the left; and whosoever taketh away thy coat, give him thy cloak””

Matthew 5:40

Ver. 40. **And if any man will sue thee at the law,**

Or “will contend with thee”, or as the Syriac renders it, Kme Nwdnd, “will strive”, or “litigate with thee”; not contest the matter, or try the cause in an open court of judicature, a sense our version inclines to; but will wrangle and quarrel in a private way, in order to

take away thy coat,

by force and violence,

let him have thy cloak also;

do not forbid, or hinder him from taking it; see Luke 6:29. The “coat”, is the same with טלית, “the upper garment”: and what we render a “cloak”, answers to תלויק “the inward garment”; by which words Sangari expresses the passage in the place before cited: and the sense is, if a wrangling, quarrelsome man, insists upon having thy coat, or upper garment, let him take the next; and rather suffer thyself to be stripped naked than engage in a litigious broil with him. This also is contrary to the above canon of the Jews³⁴⁷, which says;

”If a man should pull another by his ear, or pluck off his hair, or spit, and his spittle should come to him, הַבִּיר טְלִיתוֹ מִמֶּנּוּ or “should take his coat from him”, or uncover a woman’s head in the street, he shall pay four hundred “zuzim”, and all this is according to his dignity; says R. Akiba; even the poor in Israel, they consider them as if they were noblemen, who are fallen from their estates, for they are the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

Matthew 5:41

Ver. 41. **And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile,**

The word ἀγγαρεύσει, rendered “compel”, is generally said to be of Persic original; the “Angari”, among

the Persians, were the king’s messengers, or those who rode post, and were maintained at the king’s expenses; and had power to take horses, and other carriages, and even men, into their service, by force, when they had occasion for them: hence the word is used to force, or compel persons to do this or the other thing; the word אנגרייא is often to be met with in the Jewish writings, and is in them expounded to be³⁴⁸, the taking of anything for the service of the king. David de Pomis renders it by גל, “a yoke”³⁴⁹; meaning, any servile work, which such, who were pressed into the king’s service, were obliged unto. And אנגרייא³⁵⁰ hve is used to compel persons to go along with others, to do any service; in which sense it is here used: and Christ advises, rather than to contend and quarrel with such a person, that obliges to go with him a mile, to

go with him twain:

his meaning is, not to dispute such a matter, though it may be somewhat laborious and disagreeable, but comply, for the sake of peace. The Jews³⁵¹, in their blasphemous book of the birth of Christ, own that he gave advice in such words as these, when they introduce Peter thus speaking of him.

”He, that is, Jesus, hath warned and commanded you to do no more evil to a Jew; but if a Jew should say to a Nazarene, go with me one mile, he shall go with him two miles; and if a Jew shall smite him on the left cheek, he shall turn to him also the right.”

Can a Jew find fault with this advice?

Matthew 5:42

Ver. 42. **Give to him that asketh thee,**

To every man, Luke 6:30 whether Jew or Gentile; friend or foe; believer or unbeliever; a good, or a bad man; worthy or unworthy; deserving or not, that asketh alms, whether food or money; give it freely, readily, cheerfully, according to your abilities, and as the necessity of the object requires: for such rules are always supposed, and to be observed; and though all are to be relieved, yet the circumstances of persons, and their relation to men, are to be considered, and special regard is to be had to the household of faith.

348 Vid. Maimon. & Bartenora in Misn. Bava Metzia, c. 6. sect. 3.

349 {Tzemach David, fol. 8. 4.

350 Vid. Buxtorf. Lex. Rabb. p. 131, 132.

351 Toldos Jesu, p 22.

346 Sepher Cosri, Orat. 1. Sign. 113. fol. 56. 1.

347 Misn. Bava Kama, c. 8. sect. 6.

And from him that would borrow of thee, turn not away;

refuse him not, turn not away from him with a frown, or without speaking to him, or with a denial; look upon him with a pleasant countenance, cheerfully lend him what he wants, whether he be a Jew, from whom it was not lawful to take usury, or a stranger, from whom it, was lawful to take it, yet take it not; lend him freely, “hoping for nothing again”, Luke 6:35 which must not be understood of not hoping for the money lent, for then it would be giving, and not lending; but of not hoping for any reward for lending it: and indeed the money itself is not to be hoped for again, when the circumstances of the borrower are such, that he is not able to make a return.

Matthew 5:43

Ver. 43. **Ye have heard that it hath been said,**

By, or to them of old time. This law has been delivered to them,

thou shalt love thy neighbour,

with this appendage to it, or false gloss upon it,

and hate thine enemy;

for the first of these only is the law of Moses, Le 19:18 Moses, Leviticus 19:18, the other is the addition, or wrong interpretation of the Scribes and Pharisees: wherefore the Jew³⁵² has no reason to charge Christ, or the Evangelist, with a false testimony, as he does, because the latter is no where written in the law, nor in the prophets: nor does Christ say it is; he only observes, that it had been traditionally handed down to them from the ancients, by the masters of the traditions of the elders, that the law of loving the neighbour was so to be understood as to allow, and even enjoin, hatred of enemies: in proof of which, take the following instances³⁵³.

“When one man sins against another, he may not hate him in his heart, and be silent, as is said of the wicked; Absalom spoke not with Amnon: but it is commanded to make it known to him, and to say to him, why hast thou done to me so and so? As it is said, “rebuking, thou shalt rebuke thy neighbour”; and if he returns, and desires him to pardon him, he shall not be implacable and cruel; but if he reproves him many times, and he does not receive his reproof, nor turn from his sin,

352 R. Isaac Chizuk Emunah, par. 2. c. 11. p. 402. {p} Moses Kotsensis Mitzvot Tora precept. neg. 5. Vid. Maimon. Hilchot Rotseach, c. 13. sect. 14.

353 Moses Kotsensis Mitzvot Tora precept. neg. 5. Vid. Maimon. Hilchot Rotseach, c. 13. sect. 14.

then מותר לשנא אותו, “it is lawful to hate him”

Again, they say³⁵⁴,

“Every disciple of a wise man, נוקב ונוטר כנחש, שאינו, “who does not revenge, and keep as a serpent”; that is, as the gloss explains it, “enmity in his heart”, as a serpent, is no disciple of a wise man.’

And so Maimonides³⁵⁵, one of their better sort of writers, says;

“A disciple of a wise man, or a scholar, whom a man despises and reproaches publicly, it is forbidden him to forgive him, because of his honour; and if he forgives him, he is to be punished, for this is a contempt of the law; but “he must revenge, and keep the thing as a serpent”, until the other asks pardon of him, and then he may forgive him.’

Thus they bred their scholars in hatred and malice against their enemies. This arises from a mistaken sense of the word “neighbour”, which they understood only of a friend; and concluded, that if a friend was to be loved, an enemy was to be hated; not the Gentiles only, but anyone, among themselves, which could come under that name.

Matthew 5:44

But I say unto you, love your enemies,

That is, as the Apostle Paul may be thought to interpret the words of Christ, Romans 12:20. “If thine enemy hunger, feed him: if he thirst, give him drink”: unless our Lord should be supposed rather to regard the internal affection of the mind; since outward expressions of love, by words and works, are urged in the following exhortations: the actions of a man may be hated, and just indignation be expressed against them, and yet his person be loved, tenderness be used to him, and pity shown him: all men, even enemies, are to be loved with a natural love, as men; though they cannot be loved with a spiritual affection, as brethren in Christ: and in natural affection there are degrees, according to the relation and circumstances that persons stand in to one another.

Bless them that curse you:

when wicked men curse you, as Shimei cursed David, do not “render evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing”; give good words, use kind

354 T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 22. 2. & 23. 1.

355 Maimon. Hilch. Talmud Tora, c. 7. sect. 13.

language, mild and soft expressions; such as may either win upon them, or put them to shame and silence: “bless, and curse not”; the latter belongs to them, the former to you; “let them curse, but bless thou”: curses better fit their mouths, and blessings thine. Blessing here, does not signify praising them, for that would be sinful, which is sometimes the sense of the word; nor wishing, or praying for a blessing on them, which is right and good; but this is mentioned afterwards, as distinct from blessing; wherefore, it is better to understand it of a sweet and engaging address unto, and behaviour and conduct towards such, whose mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.

Do good to them that hate you;

such as hate you in their hearts, and discover their hatred by their actions; do not make returns in the same way, but on the contrary, do them all the good you can; perform all the kind offices that lie in your power; let them partake of your bounty and liberality; if poor, feed, clothe, and supply them, as you are able, with the necessaries of life; and give them wholesome advice for the good of their souls: by “so doing”, you will “heap coals of fire on their heads”; of enemies, make them friends; engage their affections to you, and you may be happy instruments in doing them good, both in soul and body:

and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you.

What Christ here commands and advises to, he himself did; for as he hung upon the cross, he prayed for his crucifiers, who were then using him in the most despiteful, as well as cruel manner; saying, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”: and in this he has left us an example, that we should tread in his steps; and here in he was quickly followed by his holy martyr Stephen; who, whilst he was being stoned, prayed for his persecutors and murderers, saying, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge”. This breathes out the true spirit of Christianity, and is peculiar to it. The whole of this is directly opposite to the tenets of the Jews, particularly the Scribes and Pharisees; who allowed of revenge, and keeping anger against any person that had done them an injury, as has been observed: and which were also the sentiments of the Karaites, or Scripturarians, another sect among them who kept to the letter of the Scriptures, and rejected the traditions of the elders, which the Pharisees held: but in this they agreed with them,

“that it was right to do good to their friends, and to forgive them that asked pardon of them; but to

such men who rendered evil, and did not return to do well, that they might receive forgiveness, *אֵינוֹ אָוֵר לְנַקּוּם וּלְנַשׂוּר מִהֶם* “it is not forbidden to revenge, and to keep anger against them”.³⁵⁶

It is indeed said³⁵⁷ of their former holy men, **חַסִּידִים**, “Hasideans”, which some have thought to be the same with the “Essenes”, and a sort of Christians; however, were a better sort of Jews; that these

“heard their reproach, but did not return it; and not only so, but they pardoned him that reproached them, and forgave him.”

And it is reported of these men, that they used to pray to God to pardon and forgive all that disturbed them. But the Pharisees, whom Christ had to do with, and against whom he inveighs, were men of another complexion.

Matthew 5:45

That ye may be the children of your father,

Not that any became the children of God, by doing things in imitation of him: for as in nature no man becomes the son of another by imitating him, or by doing the things he does but either by birth, or by adoption; so in grace no man becomes a child of God by the works he does, as a follower of God, but by adopting grace; and which is discovered in regeneration. Christ’s meaning is, that they might appear, and be known to be the children of God, by doing those things in which they resemble their heavenly Father; and which are agreeable to his nature and conduct; as the tree is known by its fruit, and the cause by its effect: for where adoption and regenerating grace take place, the fruit of good works is brought forth to the glory of God. Some copies, instead of *טוֹט*, “children”, read *טוֹטוֹט* “like”: and accordingly, the Persic version renders it thus, “that ye may be like your Father, which is heaven”. Our Lord seems to have respect to the Jews, often having in their mouths this expression, *אֲבִינוֹ בְּשָׁמַיִם*, “our Father which is in heaven”; and to their frequent boasting that they were the children of God; and therefore he would have them make this manifest by their being like him, or acting in imitation of him;

for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil, and on the good.

Christ instances in one of the greatest blessings in

³⁵⁶ R. Eliahu in Adderet, c. 3. apud Trigland. de Sect. Karaeorum, c. 10. p. 166, 167.

³⁵⁷ Maimon. Hilch. Talmud Tora. c. 7. sect. 13.

nature, the sun, so useful to the earth, and so beneficial to mankind for light and heat; which he calls “his sun”: his own, and not another’s; which he has made, and maintains, orders to run its race, and commands it to rise morning by morning, and that upon good and bad men; one, as well as another; all equally share in, and partake of its benign influences, and enjoy the comfortable effects and blessings of it:

and sendeth rain on the just and unjust;

that is, on the fields of persons of such different characters, even both the early and the latter rain; which makes the earth fruitful, crowns it with goodness, and causes it to bring forth bread to the eater, and seed to the sower. This is one of the most considerable blessings of life; the gift of it is God’s sole prerogative; it is peculiar to him; it is what none of the vanities of the Gentiles can give; and yet is bestowed by him on the most worthless and undeserving. This flows from that perfection of God, which the Cabbalists³⁵⁸ call

”chesed, mercy”, or benignity, to which it is essential to give largely to all, both “to the just and unjust”.

The Jews have a saying³⁵⁹, that

“greater is the day of rain, than the resurrection of the dead; for the resurrection of the dead is for the just; but rain is **סיעשׁרל יוב סיקדצל יוב**, “both for the just, and for the wicked”:

a way of speaking much like this here. They also used to praise God for rain, on this consideration, because it was given to unworthy persons.

³⁶⁰R. Jose Bar Jacob went to visit R. Joden of Magdala; whilst he was there, rain descended, and he heard his voice, saying, thousands of thousands, and millions of millions are bound to praise thy name, O our king, for every drop thou causest to descend upon us, **שׁאח גומל טובה לחייבינו**, “because thou renderest good to the wicked”.

Now our Lord instances in things which could not be denied, and they themselves allowed; and makes use of their own words, to engage them to imitate God, whom they call their Father, by doing good to their enemies, and them that hated them, as well as to their friends and neighbours: yet sometimes they could scarcely allow, that the Gentiles had the same share in this divine favour

with themselves; for they say³⁶¹, that

“God works by way of miracle, that rain should not be wanting in his land, although it is wanting in the countries of the Heathen; as he says, Job 5:10 “who giveth rain on the earth”, which is the land of Israel; for on that **רב מטר**, “a great rain” descends, and “sendeth waters”, **מטינו**, “a great rain” descends, and “sendeth waters”, **ימינו מטי**” few (which is added to the text) upon the fields”; which relates to what is without the land, whereupon it does not descend, but the substance of the land of Israel; therefore he saith, the Lord will open to thee his good treasure, and not to others.’

Matthew 5:46

For if ye love them which love you,

That is, if ye only love such that love you; for that such who love should be loved again, is both natural and just: our Lord’s meaning is not, that ye ought not to love them that love you, but that these should not be the only objects of your love; for should this be the case,

what reward have ye?

or “shall ye have?” Do you deserve any thanks for your love now? none at all, it is what you are obliged to by your friend’s love to you. Do you expect any hereafter with God? if you do, you will be mistaken; you have your reward with men, who have loved you as much as you have done them, and therefore none can be due to you, either from God or men: besides,

do not even the publicans the same?

men of the worst characters, and who were most hateful to the Jews, upon many accounts; partly because of their business, which was to collect the Roman tax, and carry it to the proper officers appointed to receive it, and of whom they sometimes farmed it. Now the Roman yoke was very grievous to the Jews, who boasted of their being a free people; nor did they willingly pay their tribute money; and some of them would refuse to do it, under a pretence of religion; wherefore those publicans, or tax gatherers, which were oftentimes men of their own nation, as appears from the instances of Levi and Zacchaeus, were very odious to them; because they looked upon them as joining with the Romans, in oppressing them, and abridging them in their liberty: and partly because of their character and conduct, being men of great improbity, rapine, and covetousness: hence, as in the New Testament, they are frequently

358 Sepher Shaar Hassamaim, Tract. 7. c. 12. p. 155

359 T. Bab. Taanith, fol. 7. 1.

360 Tzeror Hammor, fol. 152. 4.

361 Tzeror Hammor, fol. 152. 4.

joined with “sinners”, as being notorious ones themselves; so in the Talmudic writings, with thieves³⁶², and are reckoned as thieves, with murderers, and robbers³⁶³; they were not allowed as witnesses³⁶⁴ in any of their courts of judicature; nor were they to be kept company³⁶⁵ with in private houses. Now our Lord instances in these men who were the most profligate part of the nation, and had in greatest contempt by the rest; and yet these, by the very dictates of nature, loved such as loved them: wherefore it must be shameful and scandalous in the Pharisees, and others, who pretended to great sanctity and religion, to do no more than these persons did.

Matthew 5:47

And if you salute your brethren only

This does not mean salutation by embraces or kisses, but by words, asking of each other’s welfare, and wishing prosperity and happiness to one another.

‘The manner of salutation among the wise men was this³⁶⁶ ; he that salutes says, a good day to my lord; and he replies, saying, a good, and long day to my lord: always he that replies doubles the salutation.’

The persons they usually gave their salutations to were those of their own nation, their countrymen, relations, and friends; and who are here designed by “brethren”; meaning, not brethren in the strict sense, but any kindred, acquaintance, or any of their own nation. Some copies read it “friends”, who, generally speaking, only partook of such favours.

‘A man, (says Maimonides³⁶⁷ ,) might not salute his master, nor return a salutation to him in the manner they gave a salutation לריב, to “friends”: and they return it to one another.’

They were not very free in saluting any persons, as strangers and Gentiles: such advice as this is indeed given ארמ 368, “prevent every man with a salutation”, or be first in saluting every man; upon which passage their commentators³⁶⁹ say, even a Gentile in the

streets. Accordingly, it is elsewhere³⁷⁰ observed, that

R. Abai used to say, let a man be always cunning with fear, for “a soft answer turns away wrath”; and multiply salutation with his brethren, and with his relations, and with every man, even with a stranger in the streets.”

But this proceeded not from any cordial hearty respect, but out of policy, and from fear; and in order to maintain peace; and for selfish ends, and with sinister views: otherwise their salutations were confined to their brethren and kinsfolk after the flesh. Now, this being the case, says Christ,

what do ye more than others? do not even publicans so?

Or, as some copies read it, Gentiles or Heathens; and accordingly the Ethiopic version, and the Vulgate Latin so render it: the Arabic renders it “idolaters”. Now, what great matter was this to salute their brethren and their friends, when even the very Heathens, who had nothing but the light of nature to guide them, did the same?

Matthew 5:48

Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father,... This perfection is to be restrained to the subject Christ is upon, love to men, and not to be referred to any, or every other thing; wherefore, in Luke 6:36 it is, “be ye merciful, as your Father also is merciful”; and regards not a perfection of degree in that, but objects and quality: that is to say, not that men may, or can, or ought to be as perfect in love, as to the degree of it, as God is; that is impossible: the “as” here, is not a note of equality, but of likeness: such, who profess God to be their Father, ought to imitate him, particularly in their love to men, which ought to be extended to the same objects, as the divine goodness is; that, as he shows regard in a providential way to all men, good and bad, just and unjust, and his tender mercies are over all his works; so ought they to love all men with a natural affection, and hate no man, no, not their enemies: for he that loves only his friends, and not his enemies, loves imperfectly; he does not take in the whole compass of objects his love is to extend unto; and as God loves sincerely, and without dissimulation, so should they. To be “perfect”, is to be sincere and upright: in this sense is the word often used, and answers to the Hebrew word **יִמֵּת**, which signifies the same: see Deuteronomy 18:13 which is the passage Christ seems to refer to here; and

370 T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 17. 1.

362 Maimon. Hilch. Gezela, c. 5. sect. 9. 11.

363 Misn. Nedarim, c. 3. sect.

364 T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 25. 2. Maimon. Hilch. Eduth,

365 Maimon. Hilch. Mishcab, c. 10. sect. 8.

366 Sepher Chasidim, fol. 5. col. 2. apud Buxtorf.

Florileg. Heb. p. 300, 301.

367 Hilch. Talmud Tora, c. 5. sect. 5

368 Pirke Abot, c. 4. sect. 15.

369 Jarchi & Bartenora in ib.

the sense is, be ye sincere and upright in your love to all men, as your heavenly Father is hearty and sincere in his affections to them.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW CHAPTER VI

1 Christ continueth his sermon in the mount speaking of alms. 5 prayer, 14 forgiving our bretheren. 16 fasting, 19 where our treasure is to be laid up. 24 of serving God, and mammon. 25 exhourteth not to be carefull for worldly things. 33 but to seek God' kingdom.

Matthew 6

- [1] Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.
- [2] Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.
- [3] But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:
- [4] That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.
- [5] And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.
- [6] But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.
- [7] But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.
- [8] Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.
- [9] After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.
- [10] Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.
- [11] Give us this day our daily bread.
- [12] And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
- [13] And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.
- [14] For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:
- [15] But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.
- [16] Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.
- [17] But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face;
- [18] That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.
- [19] Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:
- [20] But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:
- [21] For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.
- [22] The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.
- [23] But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!
- [24] 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.
- [25] Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?
- [26] Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?
- [27] Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?
- [28] And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:
- [29] And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.
- [30] Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?
- [31] Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we

eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

[32] (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

[33] But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

[34] Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

JOHN GILL'S COMMENTARY ON MATTHEW CHAPTER VI

Matthew 6:1

Ver. 1. Take heed that ye do not your alms before men,.... Some copies read, "take heed that ye do not your righteousness", &c. which is a very good reading: but then, by "righteousness", is not meant righteousness, as comprehending all other righteous acts, as particularly alms, prayer, and fasting, hereafter mentioned; but alms only; nothing being more common with the Jews than to call alms **הקדש**, "righteousness": and whatever word Matthew made use of, there is no doubt to be made of it, but this was the word Christ used. Now alms was so called, because it is a righteous action, which ought to be performed; and to withhold from the poor what is meet, is to deal unrighteously: hence we read of the "mammon of unrighteousness"; by which is meant, not money unrighteously got, but that which is unrighteously kept from the poor: also it might be so called, because the Jews very much placed their justifying righteousness before God in the performance of it: let us first see how, according to them, it was to be done, and then what confidence they placed in it, and how much they made use of it. The account Maimonides³⁷¹ gives is as follows, who observes: that "we are bound to take heed to the commandment of alms more than all the affirmative commands; because alms is a sign of a "righteous" man, the seed of Abraham our father; as it is said, in Ge 18:19. Nor is the throne of Israel established, nor can the law of truth stand, but by alms; as it is said, Pr 16:19. Nor shall Israel be redeemed, but by alms, according to Isa 1:27. There are (says he) eight degrees in giving alms, the one above another; the highest, than which there is none higher, is this; when one relieves an Israelite,

³⁷¹ Hilch. Mattanot Anayim, c. 10. sect. 1. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14.

and gives him a gift, or lends to him, or takes him into partnership, or finds him work, so that he strengthens his hands before he stands in need of asking; and of this it is said, and "thou shalt relieve him, a stranger and a sojourner, that he may live with thee": which is as much as to say, relieve him before he falls, and is brought to necessity. The next to this is, when a man gives alms to the poor, and he knows not to whom he gives; nor does the poor man know of whom he receives; for, behold, this is doing it for the sake of it; as the chamber of secrets, which was in the sanctuary, into which righteous men privately put, and the poor children of good men were privately supported: and the next to this is, when a man puts into the alms chest: and a man does not put into the alms chest except he knows that the governor is faithful and wise, and knows how to manage as should be; such an one as R. Chananiah ben Tradion. The next to this is, when the giver knows to whom he gives, but the poor man does not know from whom he receives; as the great ones of the wise men, who used to go secretly, and cast their money at the doors of the poor; and this is right to do, and a good method it is when the governors of alms do not dispose aright. The next to this is, when the poor man knows of whom he takes, but does not know the giver; as the great men among the wise men, who used to bind up their money in linen cloths, and put them behind them, and the poor came and took them, that they might not be ashamed. The next to this is, when a man puts it into his hands before he asks. The next to this is, when he gives to him after he has asked. The next to this is, when he gives to him less than is proper, with a pleasant countenance. The next to this is, when he gives with grief." Now this work, or duty, they magnify at a very great rate: not content to say³⁷², that "he that does alms, does that which is more excellent than all offerings;" they further affirm³⁷³, that "giving of alms and beneficence **הלוך הרוחה דגנך**, "are equal to the whole law"; or, it is all one as if a man performed the whole law. Moreover, they give³⁷⁴ out, "that whoever takes of his goods, and does alms with them, he shall be delivered from the "damnation of hell"."

Yea, they reckon that this gives a right and title to eternal life³⁷⁵. "He that says, let this "sela", or "shekel", be for alms, that his children may live, and that he may

³⁷² T. Bab. Succa, fol. 49. 2.

³⁷³ T. Hieros. Peah, fol. 15. 2, 3.

³⁷⁴ T. Bab. Gittin, fol. 7. 1, 2.

³⁷⁵ T. Bab. Roshhashanah, fol. 4. 1. Bava Bathra, fol. 10. 2.

be worthy of the life of the world to come, lo! this is **רומג קידיצ**, “a perfect righteous man.” Or, as elsewhere³⁷⁶ expressed, “let this sela be for alms, that my son may live, and that he may be a son of the world to come; lo! this is a perfect righteous man.”

Thus, you see, they looked upon it as their righteousness; and what made them heirs of heaven, and gave them a title to eternal glory. Now our Lord advises them to take heed, as what would be of bad consequence, and very detrimental to them, that they did not their alms before men, to be seen of them; not but alms may be lawfully done before, or in the sight of men, and a good end may be answered by it; namely, to stir up others to acts of liberality; but then this must not be done with this view, to be seen of men, in order to gain their applause, and a good name among them, otherwise, ye have no reward of your Father, which is in heaven. You expect a reward, and a very great one, for your alms; but if you do them only to raise your credit, and gain esteem among men, you have your reward already with men: nor must you expect any from God, since you seek not his glory, but your own. When a man's self, and not the glory of God, is the chief end of any action, that cannot be called a good work, nor will it have any reward; whereas a good work, which springs from a principle of grace, and is directed to the glory of God, will have a reward, not of debt, but of grace, from whence it arises.

Matthew 6:2

Ver. 2. Wherefore, when thou dost thine alms,... Christ proceeds to give some directions and cautions about giving of alms, that they might be done aright, and answer some valuable purposes for the glory of God, the good of others, and their own: do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do, in the synagogues, and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. The persons Christ has reference to were the Scribes and Pharisees, who did all they did to be seen of men; whom he calls “hypocrites”; as he often does, because they put on an appearance of religion and holiness, but inwardly, and otherwise, were very wicked men. It does not appear that any such practice was literally performed, as blowing a trumpet before them, when they gave their alms; though the collectors of alms did, by some means, publicly notify to the people when they were about that service: for one of their rules is³⁷⁷, “the collectors of alms do not proclaim on a feast, as they proclaim on a common day;

but they collected **העניצב**, “privately”, and put it into their bosom, and distributed it to everyone by himself.”

Wherefore this must be understood proverbially; and the sense is, that when they did their alms, they chose public places for it, such as the “synagogues”, where was a large concourse of people met together for religious worship; or the open “streets” of the city, where people were continually walking to and fro, so that nothing could be done in this way, but what must be seen and observed: and moreover, they took care, either by themselves, or others, to proclaim their good actions, that they might “have glory of men”; not only of the poor, or the collectors for them, but of the spectators. R. Aben Ezra³⁷⁸ says, that “a man that gives alms to the poor, must not give it because of the glory of the collector, i.e. that he may have glory of him; nor that the children of men may praise him.”

But his ancestors were of another mind: but what did they get by it? verily I say unto you, they have their reward; and a poor one it is, the applause of men: however, it is what they seek after, and is all their empty performances deserve, and all they will have. “He that glories in anything done by himself, **ורכש תא לטון אה** “he takes”, or receives “his reward”³⁷⁹; for as for any reward from God, they will have none;” in this sense, as the Ethiopic version reads it, “they have lost their reward”: and, as a learned critic has thought, is the sense of the Greek word, “they forbid”, or “hinder their reward”. By seeking the glory of men, they lay impediments in the way of receiving honour from God.

Matthew 6:3

Ver. 3. But when thou dost alms,... Do it so privately, and with so much secrecy, that, if it was possible, thou mightest not know it thyself, much less make it known to others: let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth; acquaint not thy nearest and dearest friend with it; let not one that sits at thy left hand know what thou art doing with thy right hand; it is a proverbial and hyperbolical phrase, expressing the secrecy of the action. It is a Jewish canon³⁸⁰, that “he that gives a gift to his friend out of love, may make it known, **הקדצב אל לבא**, “but not if it be by way of alms”.”

Matthew 6:4

Ver. 4. That thine alms may be in secret,... May be done in secret, and be kept a secret. The allusion seems

376 T. Bab. Pesachim, fol. 8. 1, 2.

377 T. Hieros. Demai, fol. 23. 2.

378 In Exod. xx. 3.

379 R. Jona apud Capell. Spicileg. in loc.

380 Piske Tosephot in Sabbat. c. 1. art. 134.

to be to the secret chamber, where money was brought privately for the relief of the poor.

“There were two chambers in the sanctuary, the one was **מִיֵּאֲשֶׁה תַּכְשֵׁל**, “the chamber of secrets”, and the other the chamber of vessels: the chamber of secrets was that into which pious persons put **יֵאֲשֶׁה**, “in secret”, and the poor children of good men were maintained out of it privately³⁸¹.”

The Jews say many things in favour of doing alms privately.³⁸⁶

“Greater, (say they³⁸²),) is he that gives alms **רַחֲסָב** in secret, than Moses our master.”

They tell us³⁸³, that “R. Jannai seeing a certain man give Zuz (a piece of money) to a poor man publicly, said unto him, it would have been better, if thou hadst not have given him anything, than to have given him in this manner.”

This was the practice of the ancient religious Jews, to give their alms privately; but the Scribes and Pharisees had brought that practice into disuse, and which our Lord labours to restore; adding, for encouragement, and thy Father, which seeth in secret; beholds all secret actions, and knows the secret springs of actions, himself shall reward thee openly; in the great day of account, before angels and men, when all secret things shall be brought to light, and every good man have praise of God. This duty, of giving alms to the poor, is mentioned by Christ before prayer to God; it may be for this reason, because it was usual to give alms before prayer.

“The great, or famous men, among the wise men, used to give a Prutah (a small piece of money) to a poor man before every prayer, and after that they prayed; as it is said, “I shall behold thy face in righteousness”³⁸⁴.”

Matthew 6:5

Ver. 5. **And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites,**

As the Scribes and Pharisees; whose posture in prayer, the places they chose to pray in, and the view they had therein, are particularly taken notice of:

for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men.

It was their usual custom to pray “standing”; nay, it is established by their canons.

381 Misn. Shekalim, c. 5. sect. 6. Mainnon. Hilch. Eracin, c. 2. sect. 12.

382 T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 9. 2.

383 T. Bab. Chagiga, fol. 5. 1.

384 Maimon. Hilch. Mattanot Anayin, c. 10. sect. 15.

“There are eight things, (says Maimonid³⁸⁵),) that a man that prays ought to take heed to do; and the first he mentions is “standing”; for, says he, no man may pray **אַלֵּא מִיָּמַד** “but standing”; if he is sitting in a ship, or in a cart, if he can stand, he must stand; if not, he may sit in his place and pray.”

Several hints of this custom there are in the Misna

“On their fast days they used to bring out the ark into the streets-- **הַלְפֵתָב וְדַמַּע**, “and they stood in prayer”, or praying; and caused an old man to go down before the ark, who was used to recite prayers, and he said them.”

Again³⁸⁷,

“whoever **וְיָמַד בְּתַפְלָה** “stood praying”, and remembered that any uncleanness attended him, he might not break off, but he might shorten.”

Yea, standing itself is interpreted of praying; for it is said³⁸⁸,

“and Abraham rose up early in the morning to the place, where he stood **וְאֵינִי תַפְלָה אֵלֶּא בְּיָמֵדָה** “and there is no prayer but standing”; though sometimes they prayed sitting, as David did, 2Sa 7:18 so it is said of R. Jose, and R. Eleazar, that **יָתְבוּ וְלֵי**, “they sat and prayed”, and afterwards rose up and went on their way³⁸⁹. So it was likewise customary to go to the synagogues, and there pray; and indeed they were places built and appointed for this purpose.

“Wherever there were ten Israelites, a house ought to be provided, in which they may go to prayer at every time of prayer; and this place is called a synagogue³⁹⁰.”

Hence some have thought, that not such places are here designed, but any assembly, or concourse of people gathered together upon any occasion; but such an interpretation will find no place, when the following things are observed.

“For ever let a man go, morning and evening,

385 Hilch. Tephilla. c. 5. sect. 1, 2.

386 Misn. Taanith, c. 2. sect. 1, 2.

387 Misn. Beracot, c. 3. sect. 5.

388 Zohar in Lev. fol. 47. 1. T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 26. 2.

389 {Zohar in Exod. fol. 4. 4.

390 Maimon. Hilch. Tephilla, c. 11. 1.

to the synagogue; for no prayer is heard at any time, but in the synagogue; and everyone that hath a synagogue in his city, and does not pray in it with the congregation, is called a bad neighbour³⁹¹ .”

Again³⁹² ,

“he that prays in the house of the Lord, is as if he offered up a pure offering.”

Now, partly on account of the publicness of the place, and partly because they thought their prayers were only heard there, therefore they chose to pray in the synagogues; and also in

the corners of the streets,

where two streets met, and they might be the more easily seen. This was also a common thing to pray in the streets:

“says R. Jochanan, I saw R. Jannai stand and pray in the streets of Tzippore³⁹³ .”

And a little after, it is said of another, that he stood and prayed **אִיטְרוֹסָב**, “in the streets”; though such places were not reckoned holy, as the synagogues were.

“The street of a city, (says Maimonides³⁹⁴ ,) although the people pray in it at fasts and stations, because that there is a great collection of people, and the synagogues cannot hold them, has no holiness in it, because it is accidental, and not appointed for prayer.”

Wherefore streets were only used in case of necessity, or by such of the Pharisees, who chose to be seen of men. A reason is given for this practice in another place³⁹⁵ , where it is asked,

“why do they go out to the streets, i.e. on their fast days? to show that we are reckoned as if we were carried captive before thee: says Joshua ben Levi, because they prayed in “secret”, and were not answered; therefore they went without, **וּמִסְרֵפְתִּי**, “that they might be made public.””

Now let it be observed, that neither the posture, nor places of prayer, are condemned by our Lord, but their

view in all to

be seen of men;

and a considerable emphasis lies upon the word “love”; they loved “standing” in prayer, rather than any other posture, because they could be better seen; and they loved to be in the synagogues and streets, rather than in their closets; they liked public better than private prayer, because it gained them applause among men.

Verily I say unto you, they have their reward;

they gain their point; they have what they seek for; and this is all they will have.

Matthew 6:6

Ver. 6. **But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet,**

Or “chamber”, a secret place, fit for private retirement, meditation, and prayer.

And when thou hast shut thy door;

see some such like phrases in Isa 26:20 where they are used to express security, here secrecy. Our Lord does not mean to exclude and condemn public prayer, in joining with few, or more persons, in such service; for he himself directs to it, and approves of it, Mt 18:19 but his view is to instruct persons that they should not only pray in public, but in private also; and especially the latter, which is more suitable and fitting for their particular cases, and less liable to pride, hypocrisy, and vanity.

Pray to thy Father, which is in secret;

who is invisible; not to be seen with the eyes of the body, but to be approached with a true heart, in faith and fear, through his Son Jesus Christ, the only mediator between God and man; and who is the image of the invisible God, and in whom he is pleased to manifest himself to his people, so as he does not unto the world:

and thy Father, which seeth in secret,

observes and takes notice of the secret breathings, pantings, desires, and requests of thy heart and lips,

shall reward thee openly,

both here and hereafter; by pouring into thy bosom all the good things thou hast been praying for, both for time and eternity. This is agreeable to what the Jews sometimes say,

“that a man ought not to cause his voice to be heard in prayer; but should pray **שְׁחֹלֵב**, “silently”, with a voice that is not heard; and this is the prayer which is daily accepted³⁹⁶.”

396 Zohar in Gen. fol. 114. 4.

391 lb. c. 8. sect. 1. T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 8. 1. & Piske Tosephot Beracot, c. 1. art. 7.

392 T. Hieros. Beracot, fol. 8. 4.

393 lb. fol. 8. 3. & 9. 1.

394 Hilch. Tephilla, c. 11. sect. 21. Vid. Maimon. & Bartenora in Misn. Megilla, c. 3. sect. 1.

395 T. Hieros. Taanot, fol. 65. 1.

Matthew 6:7

Ver. 7. **But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions,**
Saying the same things over and over again,
as the Heathens do,

as the worshippers of Baal, from morning till noon, 1Ki 18:26. This our Lord observes, to dissuade from such practices, because the Gentiles, who were odious to the Jews, used them, and the Jews were guilty of the same; had they not, there would not have been any need of such advice:

for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking;

as did the Jews, who, under pretence of “long prayers”, devoured widows’ houses; and with whom it is an axiom, that “everyone *הַמְרַבֵּה בְּתַפִּילָה נִנְהָ*, that multiplies prayer is heard”³⁹⁷; and whoever prolongs his prayer, his prayer does not return empty; and he that is long in prayer, his days are prolonged³⁹⁸; and, according to their canons, every day a man ought to pray eighteen prayers. Moreover, their prayer books abound in tautologies, and in expressing the same things in different words, and by a multiplicity of them.

Matthew 6:8

Ver. 8. **Be not ye therefore like unto them,**

Do not be imitators of them, and follow their ways, who have only the dim light of nature to guide them; it would be shameful in you to do as they do, when you have a divine revelation for your direction; and especially, because

your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him;

and therefore have no need to make use of many words, or much speaking, or long prayers. The omniscience of God is a considerable argument, and a great encouragement to prayer; he knows our persons and our wants before hand; and as he is able to help us, we have reason to believe he will; especially since he stands in the relation of a Father to us.

Matthew 6:9

Ver. 9. **After this manner therefore pray ye,**

That is, in such a concise and short way, without much speaking and vain repetitions; making use of such like words and expressions as the following: not that Christ meant to pin down his disciples to these express words, and no other; for this prayer is not a strict form, but a pattern of prayer, and a directory to it, both as to brevity,

order, and matter; for we do not find the disciples ever making use of it in form; and when it is recited by another Evangelist, it is not in the selfsame words as here; which it would have been, had it been designed as an exact form. Besides, Christ does not bid them pray in these very words, but “after this manner”; somewhat like this: not but that it is very lawful to use the very express words of this prayer in any of the petitions here directed to; and which indeed were no other than what good people among the Jews did frequently make use of; and which were collected and singled out by Christ, as what he approved of, in distinction from, and opposition to, other impertinent expressions, and vain repetitions, which some used; as will appear by a particular consideration of them.

Our Father which art in heaven.

This may be looked upon as the preface and introduction to the prayer, and regards the object of it, and his character, which is an epithet of God, often to be met with in Jewish writings, and particularly in their prayers; for thus they³⁹⁹ say,

מְדוּ בְּתַפִּילָה “our Father which art in heaven”, show mercy “to us, because thy great name is called upon us.”

Again⁴⁰⁰, let the prayers and the requests of all Israel be received by *יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ*, “their Father, which is in heaven”. They seem to have a regard to this prayer, when they apply that passage in Pr 3:35 “shame shall be the promotion of fools”, to the nations of the earth, who, they say⁴⁰¹,

“do not consider the glory of the law; and how, say they, “our Father which art in heaven”, hear our voice, have mercy on us, and receive our prayer?”

So in confessions, thanksgivings, and sacrifices of praise, they required, and looked upon it, as the main thing, for a man to direct his heart *לְאֵבֵי שְׂבָשְׁמִי*, “to his Father which is in heaven⁴⁰².” By “father”, our Lord means the first person in the Trinity, who is the Father of all men by creation, and of the saints by adoption; who are to address him in prayer under the character of “our Father”, partly to command a reverential fear of him, and partly to secure boldness and liberty of speech before him; and also to express fiducial confidence in

399 Seder Tephillot, fol. 4. 2. Ed. Basil.

400 Ib. fol. 33. 2.

401 Raya Mehimna in Zohar in Lev. fol. 34. 1.

402 T. Bab. Shebuot, fol. 15. 1.

397 T. Hieros. Taaniot, fol. 67. 3.

398 Zohar in Exod. fol. 104. 4.

him, faith of interest in him, and relation to him; which arises from some experience of his paternal love, and requires the witnessings of the Spirit of adoption; and inasmuch as the direction is not to say “my Father”, but “our Father”; it shows that we should pray for others as well as for ourselves, even for all the dear children of God. It is a rule⁴⁰³ with the Jews,

“that a man ought always to join himself in prayer with the church;”

upon which the gloss says,

“let him not pray the short prayer *אלה בלשון רבים* “in the singular, but in the plural number”, that so his prayer may be heard.”

The object of prayer is further described by the place of his residence, “in heaven”; not that he is included in any place, but that the heaven of heavens is the place where he most eminently displays his glory: and this may teach us to look upwards in prayer, and seek those things which are above; and also, that this earth, on which we dwell, is not our native country, but heaven is, where our Father dwells. Next follows the first petition,

hallowed, or sanctified be thy name;

so the Jews⁴⁰⁴ in their prayers,

תקדש שמו “let thy name be hallowed”, or “sanctified by us”, O Lord our God, before the eyes of all living.’

And very often⁴⁰⁵,

“let his great name be magnified and sanctified in the world, which he hath created according to his will.”

And again⁴⁰⁶,

“let us sanctify thy name in the world, as they sanctify it in the highest heavens.”

By the “name” of God is meant he himself, the perfections of his nature, and the several names by which he is known, and which we are to think and speak of with holy reverence. By sanctifying his name, is not meant a making him holy, but acknowledging, and declaring him to be holy, and a glorifying him, and all his perfections. He is sanctified by himself, by declaring himself to be holy; by glorifying his perfections in his works; by implanting grace and holiness in the hearts of his people; by restoring the purity of his worship; by

403 T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 30. 1.

404 Seder Tephillot, fol. 78. 1. Ed. Amstelod. Zohar in Exod. fol. 43. 4.

405 Seder Tephillot, fol. 17. 2, Ed. Basil. & passim.

406 Seder Tephillot, fol. 22. 1. & passim.

diffusing the knowledge of himself in the world; and by taking vengeance on the wicked: and he is sanctified by others, when they fear him, believe in him, call upon his name, use it reverently, submit to his will, acknowledge his mercies, regard his commands and ordinances, and live a holy life and conversation; all which is earnestly desired by truly gracious souls.

Matthew 6:10

Ver. 10. **Thy kingdom come,**

The form of expression used by the ancient Jews, relating to this article, before the coming of Christ, doubtless was, as it now stands in their prayers⁴⁰⁷, *יבא מלכות משיח*, “the kingdom of thy Messiah come”. Christ alters the expression, leaves out the word “Messiah”, and puts it thus, “thy kingdom come”, to let them know that the Messiah was come; and that it was the kingdom of the Father, in the power of his grace, upon the souls of men, they must pray for and expect: however, he conformed to a rule of their’s in this, as well as in the former petition⁴⁰⁸; that

“every blessing, or prayer, in which there is *השם* זכרה “mention made of the name”, i.e. of God, is no prayer; and that every prayer, in which there is not *תוכלם*, “the kingdom”, is no prayer.”

In this petition the disciples were taught to pray for the success of the Gospel, both among Jews and Gentiles; for the conversion of God’s elect, in which the kingdom of God would greatly appear, to the destruction of the kingdom of Satan, and the abolition of the kingdom of the beast, in the latter day; which will usher in the kingdom, of the mediator, he will receive from his Father, and this will terminate in the kingdom of glory: in a word, not the kingdom of nature and providence is meant, which always was; but the kingdom of heaven, which was at hand, nay had taken place, though as yet was not very visible, and which is spiritual in the hearts of God’s people, Jews and Gentiles; and which will appear exceeding glorious in the latter day, and at last be swallowed up in the ultimate glory; all which must be very desirable by the sincere lovers of Jesus Christ.

Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

There is some appearance of this petition still remaining, in what the⁴⁰⁹ Jews call the short prayer:

”what is the short prayer? R. Eliezer says, *השע*

407 Seder Tephillot, fol. 128. 2. Ed. Basil.

408 T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 40. 2.

409 Ib. fol. 29. 2.

םימשב רנוצר, “do thy will in heaven”; and give quietness of spirit, or acquiescence of spirit in thy will, to them that fear thee below.

”Christ says “thy will”; not the will of wicked men, nor the will of Satan, nor a man’s own will, but the will of God: by which is meant either his secret will, which is the rule of all his proceedings both in providence and grace; is unknown to us, till facts make it appear; is always fulfilled in heaven and in earth; and sometimes is fulfilled by those who have no regard to his revealed will; and is what ought to be submitted to patiently, and without murmuring: or rather his revealed will, which consists partly in the declarations of his grace and mercy; as that salvation is by Christ, whoever believes in him shall be saved, that all the redeemed be sanctified, persevere to the end, and be glorified; and partly in the commands enjoined his people, which will of his is good, perfect, and acceptable. The will of God may be said to be done by us, when our wills are resigned to his; when we patiently submit to every adverse dispensation of providence; when our hearts and actions are, in some measure, conformed to his law; when what is done, is done in faith, with a view to his glory, and without dependence upon it; of which such only are capable who have a spiritual understanding of the will of God, believe in Christ, receive grace and strength from him, and are assisted by his Spirit. These desire to do the will of God, as it is done in heaven; meaning not so much by the inanimate creatures, the sun, and moon, and stars, as glorified saints and holy angels, who do it voluntarily and cheerfully; speedily, and without delay; constantly, and without any interruption; and perfectly and completely.

Matthew 6:11

Ver. 11. **Give us this day our daily bread.**

The Arabic version reads it, “our bread for tomorrow”; and Jerom says, that in the Hebrew used by the Nazarenes, he found the word **מחר**, which signifies “tomorrow”: but this reading and sense seem to be contradicted by Christ, Mt 6:34 were it not that it may be observed, that this signifies the whole subsequent time of life, and so furnishes us with a very commodious sense of this petition; which is, that God would give us, “day by day”, as Luke expresses it, Luke 11:3 that is, every day of our lives, to the end thereof, a proper supply of food: or the meaning of it is, that God would give us, for the present time, such food as we stand in need of; is suitable to us, to our nature and constitution, state and condition, and is sufficient and convenient for us: to which agrees

the petition of the⁴¹⁰ Jews:

”The necessities of thy people are great, and their knowledge short; let it be thy good will and pleasure, O Lord, our God, that thou wouldst give to everyone **כדי פְּרִנְתוֹ**, “what is sufficient for his sustenance”, and to every one’s body what it wants.”

Says R. Jose⁴¹¹, all the children of faith seek “every day” **לשאלא מוזנייהו** “to ask their food” of the Lord, and to pray a prayer for it.”

By “bread” is meant all the necessaries of life, and for the support of it: it is called “our’s”; not that we have a right unto it, much less deserve it, but to distinguish it from that of beasts; and because it is what we need, and cannot do without; what is appointed for us by providence, is our’s by gift, and possessed by labour. It is said to be “daily” bread, and to be asked for “day by day”; which suggests the uncertainty of life; strikes at all anxious and immoderate cares for the morrow; is designed to restrain from covetousness, and to keep up the duty of prayer, and constant dependence on God; whom we must every day ask to “give” us our daily bread: for he is the sole author of all our mercies; which are all his free gifts; we deserve nothing at his hands: wherefore we ought to be thankful for what we have, without murmuring at his providences, or envying at what he bestows on others. All kind of food, everything that is eatable, is with the Jews called **לחם**, “bread”⁴¹².

Matthew 6:12

Ver. 12. And forgive us our debts,... Nothing is more frequent in the Jewish writings than to call sins **חובי** “debts”; and the phrase, of forgiving, is used both of God and men. Thus the prayer of Solomon is paraphrased⁴¹³ by the Targumist: “and hear thou the petition of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, which they shall make before this place; and do thou receive it from the place of the house of thy Shekinah, from heaven; and do thou accept their prayer **להוביהו** “and forgive their debts””

So Joseph’s brethren signify to him, that it was their father’s orders to say unto him, “forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin”; which is

410 T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 29. 2.

411 Zohar in Exod. fol. 26. 2.

412 Jarchi in Job, vi. 7.

413 Targum in 2 Chron. vi. 21.

rendered by the Chaldee paraphrasts⁴¹⁴ שבוק לחובי “forgive the debts” of thy brethren, and their sins. Accordingly, by “debts” are meant sins here, as appears from Luke 11:4 where it is read, “and forgive us our sin”. These are called “debts”; not because they are so in themselves, for then it would be right to do them; debts should be paid; they are not debts we owe to God, but are so called, because on account of them we owe satisfaction to the law and justice of God: the proper debts we owe to God are love, obedience, and gratitude; and in default of these, we owe the debt of punishment. Now these debts are numerous, and we are incapable of paying, nor can any mere creature pay them for us; wherefore, we are directed to pray, that God would forgive them, or remit the obligation to punishment we lie under, on account of sin. This petition supposes a sense, acknowledgment, and confession of sin, and of inability to make satisfaction for it; and that God only can forgive it, who does, for Christ’s sake, and on account of his blood, sacrifice, and satisfaction: what is here requested is a manifestation and application of pardon to the conscience of a sensible sinner; which, as it is daily needed, is daily to be asked for. The argument, or reason used, is,

as we forgive our debtors;

which is to be understood not so much of pecuniary debtors, though they are to be forgiven, when poor and unable to pay; but of such who have offended, or done real injuries to others, either by word or deed: the injuries of enemies, the unkindness of friends, all sorts of offences, are to be forgiven by us; and not only so, but we are to pray to God to forgive them also. Now this is mentioned, not as if our forgiving others is the cause of God’s forgiving us, or the model of it, or as setting him an example, or as if his and our forgiving were to be compared together, since these will admit of no comparison; but this is an argument founded upon God’s own promise and grace, to forgive such who have compassion on their fellow creatures.

Matthew 6:13

Ver. 13. And lead us not into temptation,... Such a petition as this is often to be observed in the prayers of the Jews⁴¹⁵,

”אל תביאני” “do not lead me” neither into sin, nor

⁴¹⁴ Targum Onkelos & Jon. ben Uzziel in Gen. i. 17. Vid. Targum in 1 Chron. iv. 18. & in Cant. i. 1. & in Gen. iv. 13. & passim.

⁴¹⁵ Seder Tephillot, fol. 3. 1. Ed. Basil. fol. 4. 2. Ed. Amstelod. Shaare Zion, fol. 73. 1. T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 60. 2.

into transgression and iniquity, ולא לירי ניינו, “nor into temptation”, or “into the hands of temptation”;

that is, into the power of it, so as to be overcome by it, and sink under it; in which sense the phrase is to be understood here. We are not here taught to pray against temptations at all, or in any sense, for they are sometimes needful and useful; but that they may not have the power over us, and destroy us. There are various sorts of temptations. There are the temptations of God; who may be said to tempt, not by infusing anything that is sinful, or by soliciting to it; but by enjoining things hard and disagreeable to nature, as in the case of Abraham; by afflicting, either in body or estate, of which Job is an instance; by permitting and letting loose the reins to Satan, and a man’s own corruptions; by withdrawing his presence, and withholding the communications of his grace; and sometimes by suffering false prophets to arise among his people: his ends in them are on his own account, the display of his power; grace, wisdom, and faithfulness; on account of his Son, that his saints might be like him, and he might have an opportunity of exercising his power and pity: and on his people’s account, that they might be humbled; their faith and patience tried; might see their weakness, and need of Christ, and be excited to prayer and watchfulness. There are also the temptations of Satan; which lie in soliciting to evil, suggesting hard and blasphemous thoughts of God, and filling with doubts and fears; which are cunningly formed by him, and are very afflictive. There are moreover the temptations of the world, which arise from poverty and riches, from the men of the world, the lusts of it, and from both its frowns and flatteries: add to all this, that there are temptations arising from a man’s own heart. Now, in this petition, the children of God pray, that they may be kept from every occasion and object of sinning; from those sins they are most inclined to; that God would not leave them to Satan, and their own corrupt hearts; nor suffer them to sink under the weight of temptations of any sort; but that, in the issue, they might have a way to escape, and be victorious over all.

But deliver us from evil.

This petition, with the Jews, is in this⁴¹⁶ form:”ר ותילני מפני” “but deliver me from an evil accident”, and diseases; and do not trouble me with evil dreams, and evil imaginations.”R. Juda, after his prayer, or at the close

⁴¹⁶ T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 60. 2.

of it, as is this petition, used⁴¹⁷ to say;

”let it be thy good pleasure, O Lord our God, and the God of our fathers, שְׁתִּילֵנִי, “that thou wouldst deliver us” from impudent men, and impudence; from an “evil” man, and from an “evil” accident; from the “evil” imagination, i.e. the corruption of nature; from an “evil” companion; from an “evil” neighbour; and from Satan the destroyer; and from hard judgment; and from an hard adversary, whether he is the son of the covenant, or is not the son of the covenant.”

And most, if not all of these things, may be very well thought to be comprised in the word “evil” here: particularly Satan may be meant, by “evil”, or “the evil one”, as the word may be rendered; who is eminently, originally, and immutably evil; his whole work and employment is nothing else but evil: and to be delivered from him, is to be rescued out of his hands, preserved from his snares, and delivered from his temptations. Evil men may also be intended: all men are naturally evil, and unalterably so, without the grace of God; and some are notoriously wicked; from whose company, sinful lusts, and pleasures, to which they are addicted, as well as from their rage and persecution, good men cannot but desire deliverance; as also from the evil of afflictions, and especially from the evil of sin; as that they may be kept from the commission of it; have the guilt of it removed; be preserved from its power and dominion; and, at last, be freed from the very being of it.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever, Amen.

This conclusion is left out in the Arabic and Vulgate Latin versions, as it is in Luke 11:4. It stands thus in the Jewish prayers⁴¹⁸,

”כִּי הַמְּלֻכּוֹת שֶׁלֶךָ הֵיאָה“, “for the kingdom is thine”, and thou shalt reign in glory for ever and ever.”

The usual response at the close of prayers, and reading the Shema, instead of “Amen”, was⁴¹⁹ this:

”Blessed be the name of the glory of his kingdom, for ever and ever.”

Which bears some resemblance to this concluding

expression, which ascribes everlasting kingdom, power, and glory, to God: which may be considered either as a doxology, or an ascription of glory to God, which is his due; and ought be given him in all our prayers to him; or as so many reasons strengthening our faith in prayer; or as many arguments with God, with respect to the petitions made; since the kingdom of nature, providence, grace, and glory, is his: he is omnipotent, he has power to give us our daily bread; to forgive our sins; to preserve from, support under, and deliver out of temptation; to keep from all evil, and preserve from a total and final falling away: whose glory is concerned in all, to whom the glory of all is, and to whom it must, and shall be given; and all this for ever: and the whole is concluded with the word “Amen”; which is a note of asseveration, of the truth herein contained; is added by way of assent to every petition made; is expressive of an hearty wish, and desire to have all fulfilled; and also of faith and confidence, that they will be answered. And this word being retained, and kept the same in all languages, signifies the unity of the spirit, and faith in prayer, in all the saints, in all ages. I leave this prayer with one observation, and that is, whereas it has been so long, and so often said, that this is the Lord’s prayer, it can never be proved that he ever made use of it; and it is certain that he did not make it, as appears from what has been cited out of the Jewish records: the several petitions in it were in being and use before he directed to them; and not only the petitions, but even the very preface and conclusion, are manifestly of Jewish original: what our Lord did was, he took the most proper and pertinent petitions, that had been used by good men among that people; which, with some alterations much for the better, he put together in this order, and gave his approbation of; and that with this view, to point out to his disciples some of the best and most suitable petitions to be made; and to give them a pattern of brevity and conciseness in prayer; and teach them to pray after such a manner, or in some such like words and expressions. This I observe, not to lessen the usefulness of this excellent pattern of sound words; the whole, and every part of it, being exceedingly instructive, and worthy of imitation; but to rectify a vulgar mistake, and to abate the formal and superstitious observance of it.

Matthew 6:14

Ver. 14. For if ye forgive men their trespasses,

Christ here refers to the petition in Mt 6:12 which is enforced with this reason and argument, “as”, or “for”,

417 Ib. fol. 16. 2. {d} Seder Tephillot, fol. 280. 1. Ed. Basil.

418 Seder Tephillot, fol. 280. 1. Ed. Basil.

419 Misn. Yoma, c. 4. sect. 1. & 6. 2. T. Bab. Pesachim, fol. 56. 1. & Taanith, fol. 16. 2. Seder Tephillot, fol. 70. 2. Ed. Basil.

so Luke 11:4 “we forgive our debtors”; which he repeats and explains: and the reason why he singles out this particularly is, because he knew the Jews were a people very subject to revenge; and were very hardly brought to forgive any injuries done them: wherefore Christ presses it upon them closely to “forgive men their trespasses”; all sorts of injuries done them, or offences given them, whether by word or deed; and that fully, freely, from the heart; forgetting, as well as forgiving; not upbraiding them with former offences; and even without asking pardon, and though there might be no appearance of repentance. Now to this he encourages by saying,

your heavenly Father will also forgive you;

will hear your prayers, and manifest his forgiving love to you: not that the forgiveness of others is the procuring cause of forgiveness with God, which is the blood of Christ; or of the manifestation and application of it, that is, the advocacy of Christ; nor the moving cause of it, that is, the free grace of God: but this enters into the character, and is descriptive of the persons, to whom God is pleased to make a comfortable discovery, and give a delightful sense of his pardoning grace; such persons, so disposed and assisted by his grace, may expect it of him.

Matthew 6:15

Ver. 15. **But if you forgive not men their trespasses,**

On the other hand, where men are not of a forgiving temper to their fellow creatures and fellow Christians, how can they expect forgiveness at the hands of God? or what sense of pardoning grace can there be upon their minds? Had they any right apprehensions of the grace and goodness of God, in the forgiveness of their sins, this would influence their minds, and engage their hearts to forgive such who have offended them: wherefore, where this is wanting, it may be concluded of, and said to such persons, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. It is a plain case, that your Father has not given you a true sense of the pardon of your sins, nor can you be certain that he will; nor have you any reason to expect it, when you are so cruel and revengeful to others. There is a considerable emphasis lies upon the word “men”, to which “heavenly Father” is opposed, and the sense, according to it, is, that if men, who are upon an equal foot with each other, should not forgive one another, how should it be expected that our Father which is in heaven, who is so much above, and no ways obliged to us, should forgive us?

Matthew 6:16

Ver. 16. **Moreover when ye fast,**

This is to be understood, not so much of their public stated fasts, and which were by divine appointment, as of their private fasts; which, with the Jews, were very frequent and numerous, and particularly every Monday and Thursday; see Luke 18:12 in which they affected great severity, and is here condemned by Christ:

**be not as the hypocrites,
the Scribes and Pharisees,
of a sad countenance;**

who put on very mournful airs, and dismal looks; made wry faces, and distorted countenances; banished all pleasantry and cheerfulness from them, so that they looked quite like other men than they really were;

for they disfigure their faces;

not by covering them out of sight, by putting a veil over them, as some have thought; but they neglected to wash their faces, and make them clean, as at other times; and not only so, but put ashes upon their heads, and other methods they used: they discoloured their faces, or “made” them “black”, as the Arabic version reads it; that they might look as if they became so through fasting: and such persons were in great esteem, and thought to be very religious. It is said⁴²⁰, in commendation of R. Joshua ben Chanamah, that all his days פניו הושחרו “his face was black”, through fastings; and this is said⁴²¹ to be the reason of Ashur’s name, in 1Ch 4:5 because “his face was black” with fasting: yea, they looked upon such a disfiguring of the face to be meritorious, and what would be rewarded hereafter.

”Whoever (say they⁴²²) פניו המושחרים, “makes his face black”, on account of the law in this world, God will make his brightness to shine in the world to come.”

Now these practices they used, that they might appear unto men to fast: so that either they did not really fast, when they pretended to it; only put on these outward appearances, that men might think they did; or, not content with real fasting, which they must be conscious of themselves, and God knew, they took such methods, that it might appear to men that they fasted, and that they might be taken notice of, and applauded by them: for their view in fasting was not to satisfy their own consciences, or please God, but that they might have

⁴²⁰ Juchasin, fol. 59. 1.

⁴²¹ T. Bab. Sota, fol. 12. 1. {h} T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 100. 1.

⁴²² Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 100. 1.

glory of men. Hence, says Christ,

verily I say unto you, they have their reward;

they obtain what they seek for, honour from men, and that is all they will have.

Matthew 6:17

Ver. 17. **But thou, when thou fastest,**

Christ allows of fasting, but what is of a quite different kind from that of the Jews; which lay not in an outward abstinence from food, and other conveniences of life, and refreshments of nature; but in an abstinence from sin, in acknowledgment and confession of it; and in the exercise of faith and hope in God, as a God pardoning iniquity, transgression and sin; wherefore cheerfulness, and a free use of the creatures, without an abuse of them, best became such persons.

Anoint thine head, and wash thy face;

directly contrary to the Jewish canons, which forbid these things, with others, on fast days:

”On the day of atonement, (say⁴²³ they,) a man is forbidden eating and drinking, וברחהו ביכה “and washing and anointing”, and putting on of shoes, and the use of the bed.

“And the same were forbidden on other fasts: in anointings, the head was anointed first, and this rule and reason are given for it:

”he that would anoint his whole body, תחילה “let him anoint his head first”, because it is king over all its members⁴²⁴.

Anointing and washing were signs of cheerfulness and joy; see Ru 3:3.

Matthew 6:18

Ver. 18. **That thou appear not unto men to fast,**

Which is just the reverse of the hypocrites, the Scribes and Pharisees; and quite contrary to the customs of the Jews, who when they fasted, particularly on their noted fasts⁴²⁵,

“brought out the ark into the street of the city, and put burnt ashes upon it, and upon the head of the prince, and upon the head of the president of the sanhedrim, and every man upon his own head.

423 Misn. Yoma, c. 8. sect. 1. & Taanith, c. 1. sect. 4, 5, 6. T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 77. 2. Taanith, fol. 12. 2. Moses Kotsensis Mitzvot Tora, pr. affirm. 32

424 T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 61. 1.

425 Misn. Taanith, c. 2. sect. 1.

“All which was done, to be seen of men to fast; but Christ directs to such sorts of fasting, and which is to be done in such a manner, as only to be seen by God: but **unto thy Father which is in secret;**

who is invisible, and who sees what is done in secret, and takes notice of the internal exercise of grace; which he approves of, and prefers to outward fastings; and

thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly:

and to have honour from God, is infinitely more than to have the applause of men; for as God delights in, so he will reward his own grace with glory.

Matthew 6:19

Ver. 19. **Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth,**

Meaning either treasures that are of an earthly nature and kind, the more valuable and excellent things of the earth, worldly wealth and riches; or the things and places, in which these are laid up, as bags, chests, or coffers, barns and other treasuries, private or public. Christ here dissuades from covetousness, and worldly mindedness; an anxious care and concern, to hoard up plenty of worldly things for themselves, for time to come, making no use of them at present for the good of others: and this he does, from the nature of the things themselves; the places where they are laid up; the difficulty of keeping them; and their liableness to be corrupted or lost.

Where moth and rust doth corrupt, and thieves break through and steal.

Garments, formerly, were a considerable part of the treasures of great men, as well as gold and silver; see Job 27:16. So according to the⁴²⁶ Targumist, Haman is bid to go למלכה “to the king’s treasury”, and take from thence one of the purple garments, the best, and raiment of the best silk, &c. and these were liable to be eaten with the moth, Jas 5:2. The word translated rust, does not here signify the rust of metals, as gold and silver; by which there is not so much damage done, so as to destroy them, and make them useless; but whatever corrupts and consumes things eatable, as blasting and mildew in corn, or any sort of vermin in granaries: for gold and silver, or money, with jewels and precious stones, which make a very great part of worldly treasure, seem to be more particularly designed, by what thieves break through into houses for, and carry away. So that here are three sorts of earthly treasures

426 Targum Sheni. in Esth. vi. 10.

pointed at, which are liable to be corrupted, or taken away: garments, which may be destroyed, and rendered useless for wearing; provisions of things eatable, as all sorts of corn and grain, which may be so corrupted by smut and vermin, as not to be fit for use; and money and jewels, which may be stolen by thieves: so that no sort of worldly riches and treasure is safe, and to be depended on; and therefore it is a great folly and vanity to lay it up, and trust in it.

Matthew 6:20

Ver. 20. **But lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven,**

That is, either be concerned for, and seek after heavenly treasure, the riches of glory, the joys and glories of another world, which infinitely excel everything that is valuable on earth; and which can never be corrupted, or taken away: or rather, lay up your earthly treasures in heaven; that is, put them into the hands of God in heaven; and this is done, by liberally communicating to the poor; by which means men “provide themselves bags which wax not old, and a treasure in heaven that faileth not”, Luke 12:33. They shall never want any good thing here, and they “lay up in store for themselves, a good foundation against the time to come”, 1Ti 6:18. This is the way to have worldly treasure secured from moth, rust, and thieves; for to lay it up in heaven with God, to give it to him, to his poor, to make use of it for his glory, is to lay it up in a place,

where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.

Treasures are safer here than in our own hands, and will turn to better account, and more to our own advantage, both in this life, and that which is to come: see Mt 19:21. In this way, though not for it, men come to have treasure in heaven, even the treasure of eternal life, glory, and happiness. Heaven is often represented by the Jewish writers as a treasury; and the treasures which are in it are said⁴²⁷ to be

גְּנוּזֵי חַיִּים, “treasures of life”, and treasures of peace, and treasures of blessing; and the souls of the righteous, and the spirits and souls that shall be created, and the dew with which God will quicken the dead.”

Those words in De 31:16. “And the Lord said unto Moses, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers”, are thus⁴²⁸ paraphrased.

”And the Lord said unto Moses, lo! thou shalt sleep in the dust with thy fathers, and thy soul shall be treasured לְמֵאפֶּי חַיִּי בְּגֵזֵי, “in the treasury of eternal life”, with thy fathers.

”They tell us⁴²⁹ of a story of Monbaz the king, who was son to queen Helena; in which are many things agreeable to these words of Christ, and which may serve to illustrate them.

”Monbaz the king stood and gave all his goods to the poor: his relations sent to him, and said, thy fathers added to that which was their’s, and to that which was their fathers; but thou hast given away that which was thine, and that which was thy father’s: he replied to them all thus: my fathers גָּזְזוּ בְּאֵרֵי וְאֵי גְנוּזֵי בְּשָׂמַיִם, “laid up treasure on earth, but I have laid up treasure in heaven”, according to Ps 85:11. My fathers laid up treasures, which do not bring forth fruit; but I have laid up treasures, which bring forth fruit, according to Isa 3:10. My fathers gathered in a place, where the hand, i.e. of man rules, (where thieves break through and steal,) but I have gathered in a place where the hand of man does not rule, according to Ps 97:2. My fathers gathered mammon, money, but I have gathered souls, according to Pr 11:30. My fathers gathered for others, but I have gathered ymuel, for myself, according to De 24:13. My fathers gathered in this world, but I have gathered “for the world to come”.

One of their commentators⁴³⁰ on the phrase, “my fathers laid up treasures below”, as it is in the Babylonish Talmud⁴³¹, has this remark:”for lo! all that they treasured up was for the necessaries of this world; which is מְקוֹמָא פֶּר רְמוּהַ תּוֹלָה, “a place of dust and vermin”, which corrupt and destroy everything; “but I have laid up treasures above”, a place secure and firm, and which preserves everything that is put into it.”

Matthew 6:21

Ver. 21. **For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.**

This seems to be a proverbial expression, and contains in it another reason, dissuading from worldly mindness; because of the danger the heart is in of

429 T. Hieros. Peah, fol. 15. 2.

430 Caphtor, fol. 97. 1.

431 T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 11. 1.

427 T. Bab. Chagiga, fol. 12. 2.

428 Targum Jon. ben Uzziel, in Deut. xxxi. 16.

being ensnared and ruined thereby: and the sense of it is, if your treasure is on earth, and lies in earthly things, your hearts will be set upon them, and be in them, in your bags, your coffers and storehouses; and so your souls will be in danger of being lost; which loss will be an irreparable one, though you should gain the whole world. But if your treasure is put into the hands of God, your hearts will be with him, and be settled on him; your desires will be after heavenly things; your affections will be set on things above; your conversation will be in heaven, whilst you are on earth; and that will be the place and seat of your happiness, to all eternity.

Matthew 6:22

Ver. 22. **The light of the body is the eye,**

Or, the “candle of the body is the eye”; for the eye is that in the body, as a candle is in the house; by the light of it, the several members of the body perform their office; and what is said of the eye of the body, is transferred to the eye of the mind:

if therefore thine eye be single:

that is, if thy mind be liberal, generous, and bountiful: for Christ is still upon the same subject of liberality, and against covetousness; and here speaks entirely in the language of the Jews, who could easily understand him; in whose writings we read of three sorts of eyes; a good eye, a middling one, and an evil one; so in the offerings of the first fruits⁴³²,

”גַּי יִפְהַר, “a good eye” gave the fortieth, the house Shammai say, the thirtieth part; a middling one, the fiftieth; and an evil one, the sixtieth part.

”Upon which the commentators say⁴³³, a “good eye” means one that is liberal, and an “evil eye” the contrary: hence you often read {u} of “trading, dedicating”, and “giving with a good” or “an evil eye”; that is, either generously, liberally, or in a niggardly and grudging manner; which may help us to the sense of our Lord in these words; whose meaning is, that if a man is not covetous, but his mind is disposed to generosity and liberality; if this be the case, as if he should say,

thy whole body shall be full of light:

all thy actions will be influenced by this noble principle; thy whole life will be illuminated, guided and governed by it; thy mind will be cheerful and pleasant, and thy estate and condition will be prosperous and successful.

432 Misn. Trumot, c. 4. sect. 3.

433 Maimon. Bartenora & Ez. Chayim in ib. {u} T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 37. 2. & 71. 1. & 72. 1

Matthew 6:23

Ver. 23. **But if thine eye be evil,**

If thou art of a sordid disposition, of an avaricious temper, if the sin of covetousness prevails over thee,

thy whole body will be full of darkness:

thy judgment will be so influenced by that sordid principle, that thou wilt not be able to discern what is agreeable to the law of God, or human reason; what is fitting to be done for thyself, for God, or for thy fellow creatures; all the powers and faculties of thy soul will be enslaved by it, and all be intent upon, and employed in the gratification of it: thy mind will be always sad and sorrowful, harassed and distressed; and thy estate, and condition, will be most miserable and uncomfortable:

if therefore the light that is in thee be darkness,

how great is that darkness! as it is in the body, so it is with the mind; as when the eye, the light of the body, is put out by any means, all the members of the body are in entire darkness; so when the light of reason in the mind is so far extinguished by any prevailing iniquity, particularly the sin of covetousness, so that it is wholly influenced and governed by it, what irregular actions is it led into! What deeds of darkness does it perform! and what will be the consequence of it, but utter and eternal darkness, if grace prevent not!

Matthew 6:24

Ver. 24. **No man can serve two masters,**

Whose orders are directly contrary to one another: otherwise, if they were the same, or agreed, both might be served; but this is rarely the case, and seldom done. This is a proverbial expression, and is elsewhere used by Christ, Luke 16:13. The Jews have sayings pretty much like it, and of the same sense as when they say⁴³⁴,

”אדם זוכה לשתי שולחנות
כל, “any man is fit for two tables.”

’And again⁴³⁵,

”that it is not proper for one man to have two governments:”

their meaning is, that two things cannot be done together:

for, either he will hate the one, and love the other;

he will have less affection and regard to the one, than to the other; as the service or orders of the one, are less agreeable to him than the others;

or else he will hold to the one;

434 Praefat. Celi Jaker, fol. 3. 1. {x} Piske Tosephot Cetubot, art. 359.

435 Piske Tosephot Cetubot, art. 359.

hearken to his commands, obey his orders, and abide in his service; and despise the other; show disrespect to his person, neglect his orders, and desert his service:

ye cannot serve God and mammon.

The word “mammon” is a Syriac word, and signifies money, wealth, riches, substance, and everything that comes under the name of worldly goods. Jerom says, that riches, in the Syriac language, are called “mammon”; and so the word is often used in the above senses, in the Chaldee paraphrases⁴³⁶, and in the Talmudic writings; where⁴³⁷ דיני ממונות, “pecuniary judgments”, or causes relating to money affairs, in which were pecuniary mulcts, are opposed to דיני נפשות, “judgment of souls”, or causes relating to life and death. The account and interpretation Irenaeus⁴³⁸ gives of the word, is very wide and foreign; who says, that

”Mammon, according to the Jewish way of speaking, which the Samaritans used, is one that is greedy, and would have more than he ought; but, according to the Hebrew language, it is called adjectively Mam, and signifies one that is gluttonous; that is, who cannot refrain himself from gluttony.”

Whereas it is not an Hebrew word, nor an adjective, but a substantive, and signifies riches; which are opposed to God, being by some men loved, admired, trusted in, and worshipped, as if they were God; and which is incompatible with the service of the true God: for such persons, whose hearts go after their covetousness, and are set upon earthly riches, who give up themselves to them, are eagerly and anxiously pursuing after them, and place their confidence in them; whatever pretensions they may make to the service of God, as did the Scribes and Pharisees, who are particularly struck at by this expression, both here and elsewhere, they cannot truly and heartily serve the Lord. “Mammon” is the god they serve; which word may well be thought to answer to Pluto, the god of riches, among the Heathens. The Jews, in Christ’s time, were notorious for the love of “mammon”; and they themselves own, that this was the cause of the destruction of the second temple: the character they give of those, who lived under the second temple, is this:

”we know that they laboured in the law, and took care of the commandments, and of the tithes, and

436 Vid. Targum Onkelos & Jon. in Gen. xiii. 13. & in Jud. v. 19. & in Prov. iii. 9. & in Isa. xlv. 13. & passim.

437 Misn. Sanhed. c. 1. sect. 1. & c. 4. sect. 1.

438 Adv. Haeres. l. 3. c. 8. p. 249.

that their whole conversation was good; only that they אוהבין את הממונ, “loved the mammon”, and hated one another without a cause⁴³⁹.”

Matthew 6:25

Ver. 25. **Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life,**

Since ye cannot serve both God and “mammon”, obey one, and neglect the other. Christ does not forbid labour to maintain, support, and preserve, this animal life; nor does he forbid all thought and care about it, but all anxious, immoderate, perplexing, and distressing thoughts and cares; such as arise from diffidence and unbelief, and tend to despair; which are dishonourable to God, as the God of nature and providence, and uncomfortable to men:

what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on.

The several and the only things, which are necessary for the support and comfort of human life, are mentioned; as meat, drink, and clothing; Eating and drinking are necessary to preserve life; and raiment, to cover and defend the body, from the injuries of the heavens: and having these, men have everything necessary, and ought herewith to be content; nor should they be anxiously thoughtful about these: for

is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

And yet, God has given these without man’s thought: and since these are better, and much more excellent, than food and raiment, as all must and will acknowledge; and God has given these the greater gifts, it may be depended upon, that he will give the lesser; that he will give meat and drink; to uphold that valuable life, which he is the author of; and raiment to clothe that body, which he, with so much wisdom and power, has accurately and wonderfully made.

Matthew 6:26

Ver. 26. **Behold the fowls of the air,**

Not such as are brought up in houses, but which fly abroad in the air, wild; and are not supported by their own, or any human care, but by the care of God: Lu 12:24 particularly mentions the “ravens”, referring probably to Ps 147:9, and because they are very voracious creatures: and there it is said, “consider the ravens”; look attentively upon them, and with observation,

for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns. This is not said, that men should not sow, nor

439 T. Hieros. Yoma, fol. 38. 3.

reap, nor gather into barns: but to reprove their diffidence and unbelief: who, though they have the opportunity of sowing, reaping, and gathering in, year by year, yet distrust the providence of God; when the fowls of the air do none of these,

yet your heavenly Father feedeth them;

see Ps 145:15. The Jews acknowledge this, that the least and meanest of creatures are fed by God."Mar says⁴⁴⁰, the holy blessed God *וְיָיִן סִתֵּם* "and feeds", i.e. all creatures, and takes care of them."

Are ye not much better than they?

Do not you differ from them? are ye not much more excellent than they? And if God feeds and provides for inferior creatures, such as are very mean and contemptible, how much more will he not provide for you? There is a passage in the Talmud, which has great affinity to this of Christ's, and appears to have in it pretty much of the like kind of reasoning. In the Misna⁴⁴¹ it is said, that R. Simeon ben Eleazer should say,

"Did you ever see a beast, or a fowl, that had a trade? but they are fed without trouble."

In the Gemara⁴⁴² is added,

"Did you ever see a lion bearing burdens, an hart gathering summer fruits, a fox a money changer, or a wolf selling pots? And yet *מִתְפָּרְנִי בְלֵאָה*, "they are nourished without labour"; and wherefore are they created? To serve me, and I am created to serve my Maker: and lo! these things have in them an argument, "from the less to the greater"; for if these, which are created to serve me after this manner, are supported without trouble; I, who am created to serve my Maker, is it not fit that I should be supplied without trouble? And what is the reason that I am sustained with trouble? My sins."

Matthew 6:27

Ver. 27. **Which of you by taking thought,**

As Christ argued before, from the unnecessariness of anxious thoughts and cares, about the provisions of life; so here, from the unprofitableness of them; it being impossible for a man, with all his care and thought, to

add one cubit unto his stature,

or "to his age"; so the word is rendered, Joh 9:21 to

the days of his life, he is so solicitous about; for a cubit may as well be applied to a man's age, as an "hand's breadth" is to his days, Ps 39:5. Nor is it so reasonable to think, that Christ should be speaking of making such an addition to a man's height; though that, to be sure, is an impossible thing: since the far greater part of Christ's hearers must be come to their full growth, and could not hope to have any addition made to their height; though they might hope to add to their days; much less such a monstrous one as that of a cubit, and which is a strong reason against the other sense of the word, and for this: for our Lord is speaking of something very small, which men cannot do; as appears from what Luke says, Luke 12:26 "If ye then be not able to do that which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?" Whereas, to add a cubit to a man's height, is a great deal:

"the stature of a middling man (says ⁴⁴³ Barteno-ra) is three cubits.

"And to add one more, makes a large addition to his stature; but to apply this to a man's age, is a small matter, and yet is what men cannot do: the sense of the words is this, that no man, by all the care and thought he can make use of, is ever able to add one cubit, or the least measure to his days; he cannot lengthen out his life one year, one month, one day, one hour; no, not one moment.

Matthew 6:28

Ver. 28. **And why take ye thought for raiment,**

Having exposed the folly of an anxious and immoderate care and thought, for food to support and prolong life, our Lord proceeds to show the vanity of an over concern for raiment:

consider the lilies of the field

or "the flowers of the field", as the Arabic version reads it, the lilies being put for all sorts of flowers. The Persic version mentions both rose and lily; the one being beautifully clothed in red, the other in white. Christ does not direct his hearers to the lilies, or flowers which grow in the garden which receive some advantage from the management and care of the gardener; but to those of the field, where the art and care of men were not so exercised: and besides, he was now preaching on the mount, in an open place; and as he could point to the fowls of the air, flying in their sight, so to the flowers, in the adjacent fields and valleys: which he would have them look upon, with their eyes, consider and contemplate in their minds,

how they grow;

⁴⁴³ In Misn. Erubim, c. 4. sect. 5. & Negaim, c. 13. sect. 11.

440 T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 107. 2. Avoda Zara, fol. 3. 2.

441 Kiddushin, c. 4. sect. 14.

442 T. Hieros. Kiddushin, fol. 66. 2. Vid. T. Bab. Kiddushin, fol. 82. 1, 2

in what variety of garbs they appear, of what different beautiful colours, and fragrant odours, they were; and yet **they toil not,**

or do not labour as husbandmen do, in tilling their land, ploughing their fields, and sowing them with flax, out of which linen garments are made:

neither do they spin;

the flax, when plucked and dressed, as women do, in order for clothing; nor do they weave it into cloth, or make it up into garments, as other artificers do.

Matthew 6:29

Ver. 29. **And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory,**

This is a certain truth, to be affirmed in the strongest manner, and to be believed, that not only men and kings too in general; but even particularly Solomon, the richest and most magnificent of all the kings of Israel, whose grandeur, and glory, exceeded all the princes of the earth; that even he, not in his common dress, but when “in his glory”, and in “all” his glory, when arrayed with his royal and richest robes, with his crown on his head, and when seated on his throne,

was not arrayed like one of these

lilies, or flowers of the field: for the glory and beauty of his garments were purely from art, but their’s by nature; which can never be equalled by art. This phrase, “Solomon in all his glory”, is the same which the Jewish doctors, in their writings, express by *שלמה בשתו*, “Solomon in his hour”⁴⁴⁴: that is as their commentators explain it⁴⁴⁵, *wtwklm teb*, “in the time of his reign”; for they say he was first a king, and then a private person. Now, not whilst he was a private person, but when a king, in the height of his grandeur and magnificence, and when dressed out in the most splendid manner, he was exceeded in array by a single lily: or the sense is, in his royal apparel. For as the same doctors say,

”what is a man’s “glory?” It is his clothing that is his outward glory; and again, garments are the glory of a man⁴⁴⁶.”

Matthew 6:30

Ver. 30. **Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field.**

These words are a conclusion from the former, and contain an argument from the lesser to the greater; that

444 Misn. Bava Metzia, c. 7. sect. 1. T. Bab. ib. fol. 49. 1. & 83. 1. & 86. 2.

445 Jarchi & Bartenora in ib

446 Tzeror Hammor, fol. 95. 1. & 99. 4. & 110. 4.

if God, for this is solely his work, so clothes the lilies, the flowers of the field, and whatever grows up out of the earth, in such a beautiful and splendid manner, as even to outdo Solomon, in his richest apparel; there’s no doubt to be made of it, or at least ought not, but that he will much more provide clothing for men. The argument is illustrated, by the short continuance of the grass of the field, which is so clothed; and the use it is put to, when cut down;

which today is

in being, but abides not long, as it were but for a day: it flourishes in the morning, continues for the day in its glory and verdure, is cut down at evening, and withers and dies,

and tomorrow is cast into the oven,

to heat it with, or as the Syriac version reads *בַּתּוּרָא* “in the furnace”. And so Munster’s Hebrew edition of this Gospel. For furnaces used to be heated with straw and stubble, and such like things, as were gathered out of the fields; so, we read in the Misna⁴⁴⁷, that pots and furnaces were heated;

”a pot which they heat “with straw and stubble”, they put into it that which is to be boiled--a furnace which they heat “with straw and stubble”, they put nothing into it, nor upon it (i.e. till they have removed the coals or ashes): a little furnace, which they heat *בַּקֶּשׁ וּבַגִּבָּא*, “with straw and stubble”, is as the pots.”

The last word, *גִּבָּא*, Bartenora says, signifies wood, or sticks, small as stubble, which they gather out of the field; that is, the stalks of some sort of herbs and plants, that grow in the field: now if God clothes these plants, which are so short lived, and at last used for such mean purposes;

shall he not much more clothe you

men, his people, who are of a much longer life, and designed for greater ends and purposes; for the worship and service of God, for his honour and glory here, and for eternal life and happiness hereafter,

O ye of little faith?

As such persons are, who distrust the providence of God, with respect to food and raiment, The phrase, *אֲנָשֵׁי קִטְנֵי*, “men of little faith”, is often to be met with in the Rabbinical writings: so Noah is represented by them, as one of “little faith”, who believed, and did not believe the flood; and therefore did not go into the ark, till the

447 Sabbat, c. 3. sect. 1, 2.

waters drove him⁴⁴⁸ : and though he is said to be perfect, this was not by his works, but by the grace of God⁴⁴⁹ . So the Israelites at the Red Sea, who thought that when they came out on one side, the Egyptians would come out on the⁴⁵⁰ other. So the little children that mocked Elisha, are said to be so called, because they were men “of little⁴⁵¹ faith”. So everyone that exalts his voice in prayer, is reckoned such an one⁴⁵² . But what comes nearest to the case before us, is the following⁴⁵³ passage;

”Says R. Eliezer the Great, whoever has a morsel in his basket, and says, what shall I eat tomorrow? is no other than *hnma ynmqm*, “one of those of little faith””

Matthew 6:31

Ver. 31. **Therefore take no thought,**

That is, for the morrow, as it is explained, Luke 6:34 for it is lawful to take proper care and thought for present food, drink, and raiment; but not to be anxiously concerned for futurity;

saying, what shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed?

These are a repetition of the several things instanced in, and are the very language and expressions of men of little faith; as in the above citation, *מה אוכל למחר*, “what shall I eat tomorrow?”

Matthew 6:32

Ver. 32. **For after all these things do the Gentiles seek,**

Or “the nations of the world”, as in Luke 12:30. The Syriac reads it so here: the phrase, *אומות העולם* “the nations of the world”, is used of the Gentiles, in distinction from the Israelites, thousands of times in the Jewish writings; it would be endless to give instances. These knew not God, nor acknowledged his providence; the greater part of them thought, that the soul perished with the body; few of them thought, that anything remained after death; and they that did, spoke very doubtfully of it: wherefore it is no wonder, that such persons should greedily seek after, and be anxiously concerned for all these things, food, raiment, and riches, and a great plenty of them; since this is all the happiness they expect; and imagine,

448 Jarchi in Gen. vii. 7.

449 Tzeror Hammor, fol. 10. 2.

450 T. Bab. Pesachim, fol. 118. 2. Erachin, fol. 15. 1.

451 T. Bab. Sota, fol. 46. 2. Zohar in Exod. fol. 90. 2.

452 T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 24. 2. Zohar in Num. fol. 93. 2.

453 T. Bab. Sota, fol. 48. 2.

that this is to be acquired by their care, thought, diligence, and industry; having no regard to a superior being, and his all wise providence: but for the Jews, and so Christians, who have a divine revelation, the knowledge of God, and his providence, and of a future state after this life, to act the same part the Heathens do, is exceedingly unbecoming, absurd, and wicked: and besides, such greedy desires, immoderate care, and anxious solicitude, are altogether unnecessary;

for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

Every word almost, carries in it an argument, to strengthen the faith of God’s children, to encourage them to believe, that he will bestow upon them, whatever is needful, for meat, drink, and clothing: he is a “father”, and will take care of his children; “their father”; they have interest in him, being related to him, and need not doubt of his paternal care, and affectionate regard to them: their “heavenly” Father, or their Father in heaven; who has all things at his command, who sits there, and does whatever he pleaseth on earth: “he knoweth that they have need”; he knows all things, all their straits, difficulties, wants and necessities; he knows they need every day, “all these things”, food and raiment, and cannot do without them: and therefore they may depend upon it, that as it is in his power to relieve them, and their persons and cases are not unknown to him; he who stands in the relation of a father to them, will supply them with whatever is proper and convenient for them.

Matthew 6:33

Ver. 33. **But seek first the kingdom of God,**

Meaning either the Gospel, and the ministration of it; in which sense this phrase is often used, see Mt 21:43 and which is diligently to be sought after, and into; to be constantly attended on, and to be preferred to our necessary food, to raiment, or riches, or any enjoyment of life: or else the kingdom of glory, which is prepared by God, and is his gift; for which he makes his people meet here, and will introduce them into it hereafter.

And his righteousness;

the righteousness of God, which is revealed in the Gospel, and is what gives a right and title to the kingdom of heaven. This is not the righteousness of man, but of God; and is no other than the righteousness of Christ; so called, because he is God who has wrought it; it is what God approves of, accepts, and imputes, and which only can justify in his sight, and give an abundant entrance

into his kingdom and glory. Heaven is to be sought for in the first place, as the perfection of the saints' happiness; and Christ's righteousness is to be sought for, and laid hold on by faith, as the way and means of enjoying that happiness; without which, there will be no entering into the kingdom of heaven.

And all these things shall be added unto you:

of the free bounty, goodness, and liberality of God, without your thought and care, and much less merit; even "all these things", meat, drink, clothing, or whatsoever worldly sustenance else is necessary for you: which are not parts of the happiness of saints, only appendages thereunto; which they have over and above what they are, or should be chiefly seeking after. The Hebrews⁴⁵⁴

say; that no good sign will be shown to Israel, until they return and "seek" three things: "afterwards the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord"; Mymv twklmwz, "this is the kingdom of heaven"; and "David their king", according to its literal sense; "and shall fear the Lord and his goodness"; this is the house of the sanctuary, as it is said, "this goodly mountain", and Lebanon."

Matthew 6:34

Ver. 34. **Take therefore no thought for the morrow,**

Reference is had to Pr 27:1. "Boast not of thyself tomorrow": a man cannot promise or assure himself, that he shall have a morrow, and therefore it is great weakness and folly to be anxiously thoughtful about it. This is expressed in the Talmud⁴⁵⁵, nearer the sense of Christ's words, after this manner:

"אל תחַר רַת מוֹחַר", "do not distress thyself with tomorrow's affliction, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth"; perhaps tomorrow may not be, and thou wilt be found distressing thyself, for the time which is nothing to thee."

And should it come, it is unnecessary to be thoughtful of it in a distressing manner before hand;

for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.

The morrow is here introduced by a "prosopopeia", as if it was a person sufficiently thoughtful and careful for the necessities of it: every day brings along with it fresh care and thought, being attended with fresh wants and troubles; and therefore, it is very unadvisable, to

bring the cares and troubles of two days upon one; as he does, who is anxiously concerned today, for the things of tomorrow; sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. This proverb is thus expressed in the Talmud⁴⁵⁶, בַּשִּׁתָּה לְרֵיָה לְרֵיָה, "sufficient for distress", or "vexation, is the present time"; which the gloss explains thus, "sufficient for the vexation it is, that men should grieve for it, at the time that it comes upon them." It is very wrong to anticipate trouble, or meet it before hand; if it was for no other reason but this, that every day's trouble is enough, and should not be needlessly added to, by an over concern what shall be done for tomorrow; or how shall the necessities of it be answered, or the trials of it be endured.

**THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW
CHAPTER VII**

1 Christ continueth his sermon in the mount, speaking of alms. 5 prayer, 14 forgetting our bretheren, 16 fasting, 19 where our treasure is to be laid up. 24 of serving God, and mammon, 25 exhorteth not to be careful for worldly things, 33 but to seek God's kingdom.

Matthew 7

- [1] Judge not, that ye be not judged.
- [2] For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.
- [3] And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?
- [4] Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?
- [5] Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.
- [6] Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.
- [7] Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:
- [8] For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.
- [9] Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?
- [10] Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?

⁴⁵⁴ Jarchi & Kimchi, in Hos. iii. 5.

⁴⁵⁵ T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 100. 2. {t} T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 9. 2.

⁴⁵⁶ T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 9. 2.

- [11] If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?
- [12] Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.
- [13] Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:
- [14] Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.
- [15] Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.
- [16] Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?
- [17] Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.
- [18] A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.
- [19] Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.
- [20] Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.
- [21] Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.
- [22] Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?
- [23] And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.
- [24] Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:
- [25] And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.
- [26] And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:
- [27] And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.
- [28] And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine:
- [29] For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

JOHN GILL'S COMMENTRY MATTHEW CHAPTER VII

Matthew 7:1

Ver. 1. **Judge not, that ye be not judged.**

This is not to be understood of any sort of judgment; not of judgment in the civil courts of judicature, by proper magistrates, which ought to be made and pass, according to the nature of the case; nor of judgment in the churches of Christ, where offenders are to be called to an account, examined, tried, and dealt with according to the rules of the Gospel; nor of every private judgment, which one man may make upon another, without any detriment to him; but of rash judgment, interpreting men's words and deeds to the worst sense, and censuring them in a very severe manner; even passing sentence on them, with respect to their eternal state and condition. Good is the advice given by the famous Hillel ⁴⁵⁷, who lived a little before Christ's time;

“Do not judge thy neighbour, (says he,) until thou comest into his place.”

It would be well, if persons subject to a censorious spirit, would put themselves in the case and circumstances the persons are in they judge; and then consider, what judgment they would choose others should pass on them. The argument Christ uses to dissuade from this evil, which the Jews were very prone to, is, “that ye be not judged”; meaning, either by men, for such censorious persons rarely have the good will of their fellow creatures, but are commonly repaid in the same way; or else by God, which will be the most awful and tremendous: for such persons take upon them the place of God, usurp his prerogative, as if they knew the hearts and states of men; and therefore will have judgment without mercy at the hands of God.

Matthew 7:2

Ver. 2. **For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged,**

Both by God and men; to which agree those proverbial sentences used by the Jews;

“He that judgeth his neighbour according to the balance of righteousness, or innocence, they judge him according to righteousness.” ⁴⁵⁸

And a little after,

“As ye have judged me according to the balance

457 Pirke Abot, c. 2. sect. 4.

458 T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 127. 2.

of righteousness, God will judge you according to the balance of righteousness.”

Hence that advice of Joshua ben Perachiah⁴⁵⁹, who, by the Jewish writers, is said to be the master of Christ;

“Judge every man according to the balance of righteousness.”

Which their commentators explain thus⁴⁶⁰; when you see a man as it were in “equilibrio”, inclining to neither part, it is not clear from what he does, that he is either good or evil, righteous or unrighteous; yet when you see him do a thing which may be interpreted either to a good or a bad sense, it ought always to be interpreted to the best.

And with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again.

This was an usual proverb among the Jews; it is sometimes delivered out thus, מדה כנגד מדה, “measure against measure”⁴⁶¹; but oftener thus, and nearer the form of it here, במדה שאדם מודד בה מודדין לו, “with what measure a man measures, they measure to him”: one might fill up almost a page, in referring to places, where it is used in this form: besides those in the⁴⁶² margin, take the following, and the rather, because it gives instances of this retaliation⁴⁶³:

”With what measure a man measures, they measure to him”; so the woman suspected of adultery, she adorned herself to commit sin, and God dishonoured her; she exposed herself to iniquity, God therefore stripped her naked; the same part of her body in which her sin begun, her punishment did. Samson walked after his eyes, and therefore the Philistines plucked out his eyes. Absalom was lifted up in his mind, with his hair, and therefore he was hanged by it; and because he lay with his father’s ten concubines, they therefore pierced him with ten lances; and because he stole away three hearts, the heart of his father, the heart of the sanhedrim, and the heart of Israel, therefore he was thrust with three darts:

459 Pirke Abot, c. 1. sect. 6.

460 Maimon. & Bartenora in ib

461 Bereshit Rabba, sect. 9. fol. 7. 4.

462 T. Bab. Megilla, fol. 12. 2. Sota, fol. 8. 2. Sanhedrim, fol. 100. 1. Zohar in Gen. fol. 87. 4. & in Lev. fol. 36. 1. & 39. 3. & in Num. fol. 67. 3. Bemidbar Rabba, fol. 194. 1. Misn. Beracot, c. 9. sect. 5.

463 Misn. Sota, c. 1. sect. 7, 8, 9. Vid. Tzeror Hammor, fol. 99. 1, 2.

and so it is with respect to good things; Miriam waited for Moses one hour, therefore the Israelites waited for her seven days in the wilderness; Joseph, who was greater than his brethren, buried his father; and Moses, who was the greatest among the Israelites took care of the bones of Joseph, and God himself buried Moses.”

Matthew 7:3

Ver. 3. **And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye?**

By “mote” is meant, any little bit of straw, or small splinter of wood, that flies into the eye, and does it damage, hinders its sight, and gives it pain; and designs little sins, comparatively speaking, such as youthful follies, human frailties, and infirmities, inadvertencies and imprudencies; which may be said to be light faults, in comparison of others: and though not to be vindicated, nor continued in, yet not to be severely looked upon and chastised. To scrutinize diligently into, aggravate, dwell upon, and sharply reprove the lighter faults of others, is a conduct, which is here inveighed against, and condemned by Christ; and more especially, when it may be said with the greatest truth and justice to such,

but considerest not the beam

that is in thine own eye: by the “beam” is meant, greater sins, grosser abominations, and such as were more peculiar to the Pharisees; as pride, arrogance, a vain opinion of themselves, confidence in their own righteousness, hypocrisy, covetousness, and iniquity; things they did not advert to in themselves, when they loudly exclaimed against lesser evils in others. Such men must be of all persons inexcusable, who condemn that in others, which either they themselves do, or what is abundantly worse.

Matthew 7:4

Ver. 4. **Or how wilt thou say to thy brother?**

This is not so much an interrogation, as an expression of admiration, at the front and impudence of such censorious remarkers, and rigid observators; who not content to point at the faults of others, take upon them to reprove them in a very magisterial way: and it is as if Christ had said, with what face canst thou say to thy friend or neighbour,

let me pull out the mote out of thine eye?

give me leave to rebuke thee sharply for thy sin, as it deserves,

and behold a beam is in thine own eye;

thou art guilty of a far greater iniquity: astonishing

impudence! Art thou so blind, as not to see and observe thy viler wickedness? Or which, if conscious of, how canst thou prevail upon thyself to take upon thee to reprove and censure others? Dost thou think thy brother cannot see thy beam? And may he not justly retort thine iniquities upon thee, which exceed his? and then what success canst thou promise thyself? Such persons are very unfit to be reprovers of others.

Matthew 7:5

Ver. 5. **Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye**

Very rightly does our Lord call such a man an hypocrite, who is very free in remarking and reprovng other men's sins, and covering his own; and indeed, one end of his critical observations, rigid censures, and rash judgments is, that he might be thought to be holier than he is. Christ very manifestly points at the Scribes and Pharisees, who were men of such a complexion; and whom he often, without any breach of charity, calls hypocrites. The meaning of this proverbial expression is, that a man should first begin with himself, take notice of his own sins, reprove himself for them, and reform; and then it will be soon enough to observe other men's.

And then shalt thou see clearly, to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye: then will he, and not before, be a proper person to reprove others; all objections and impediments to such a work will then be removed. Our Lord here speaks in the language of the Jewish nation, with whom such like expressions were common, and of long standing⁴⁶⁴

"In the generation that judged the judges, one said to another, טול קימ מבני יניב, "cast out the mote out of thine eye"; to whom it was replied, מבני יניב טול קורה "cast out the beam from thine eye": one said to another, "thy silver is become dross": the other replies, "thy wine is mixed with water"

Again ⁴⁶⁵,

"R. Taphon said, I wonder whether there is any in this generation, that will receive reproof; if one should say to him, "cast out the mote out of thine eye", will he say to him, "cast out the beam out of thine eye?" Says R. Eleazer ben Azariah, I wonder whether there is any in this generation, that knows how to reprove."

From whence it is clear, that these phrases were used

in the same sense they are by Christ; and which is still more evident by the gloss upon them: for upon the word "mote", it observes,

"That it is as if it had been said, וְנִי קָטָן "a little sin", which is in thine hand (i.e. which thou hast committed): the other could say to him, cast thou away וְנִי גָדוֹל "the great sin", which is in thine hand; so that they could not reprove, because they were all sinners."

Agreeable to these, are some other proverbs used by the Jews, such as "a vice which is in thyself, do not speak of to thy neighbour,"⁴⁶⁶

or upbraid him with it: and⁴⁶⁷ again,

"adorn thyself, and afterwards adorn others."

Which is produced by a noted commentator⁴⁶⁸ of their's, to illustrate the text in Zep 2:1 on which he also makes this remark;

"inquire first into your own blemishes, and then inquire into the blemishes of others."

The sense of each of them is, that a man should first reform himself, and then others; and that he that finds faults with others, ought to be without blame himself.

Matthew 7:6

Ver. 6. **Give not that which is holy to the dogs,**

Dogs were unclean creatures by the law; the price of one might not be brought into the house of the Lord, for a vow, De 23:18 yea, these creatures were not admitted into several temples of the Heathens⁴⁶⁹. Things profane and unclean, as flesh torn by beasts, were ordered to be given to them, Ex 22:31 but nothing that was holy was to be given them, as holy flesh, or the holy oblations, or anything that was consecrated to holy uses; to which is the allusion here. It is a common maxim⁴⁷⁰ with the Jews,

שְׂאִינֵי פוֹרִינֵי אֶת הַקֹּדְשִׁים לְהַאכִּילָן לְכַלְבִּימַ "that they do not redeem holy things, to give to the dogs to eat."

Here the phrase is used in a metaphorical sense;

466 T. Bab. Bava Metzia, fol. 59. 2.

467 T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 19. 1.

468 R. David Kimchi in Zeph. ii. 1. Vid. Tzeror Hammor, fol. 142. 4.

469 Vid. Alex. ab. Alex. Gaeial. Dier. l. 2. c. 14.

470 T. Bab. Temura, fol. 17. 1. & 31. 1. & 33. 2. Becorot, fol. 15. 1. Hieros. Pesachim, fol. 27. 4. & Maaser Sheni, fol. 53. 3.

464 T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 15. 2.

465 T. Bab. Erachin, fol. 16. 2.

and is generally understood of not delivering or communicating the holy word of God, and the truths of the Gospel, comparable to pearls, or the ordinances of it, to persons notoriously vile and sinful: to men, who being violent and furious persecutors, and impudent blasphemers, are compared to “dogs”; or to such, who are scandalously vile, impure in their lives and conversations, and are therefore compared to swine;

neither cast ye your pearls before swine.

But since the subject Christ is upon is reproof, it seems rather to be the design of these expressions, that men should be cautious, and prudent, in rebuking and admonishing such persons for their sins, in whom there is no appearance or hope of success; yea, where there is danger of sustaining loss;

lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you:

that is, despise the admonitions and reproofs given, and hurt the persons who give them, either by words or deeds; see Pr 9:7. The Jews have some sayings much like these, and will serve to illustrate them ⁴⁷¹;

אֵל תְּשַׁלְּכוּ הַפְּנִינִים לִפְנֵי הַחֲזִירִים “do not cast pearls before swine”, nor deliver wisdom to him, who knows not the excellency of it; for wisdom is better than pearls, and he that does not seek after it, is worse than a swine.”

Matthew 7:7

Ver. 7. **Ask and it shall be given you,**

This is to be understood of asking of God in prayer, for such things as are wanting; whether of a temporal nature, as food and raiment, which Christ, in the former chapter, had warned against an immoderate and anxious concern for; or of a spiritual nature, as grace, and wisdom to behave in a proper manner, both towards God and men: and such, who ask according to the will of God, in the name of Christ, and under the direction, guidance, and influence of the Spirit, who ask in faith and fear, and with submission to the divine will, shall have what they ask for; not as what they deserve, but as a free gift.

Seek, and ye shall find.

This is still meant of prayer, and of seeking God, his face and favour: which such shall find, who seek in a right way, by Christ, and with their whole hearts, diligently: knock and it shall be opened unto you as beggars do, who use much importunity for relief and assistance. So men should stand and knock at the door of mercy, which

⁴⁷¹ Mischar Happeninim apud Buxtorf. Florileg. Heb. p. 306.

will not always be shut against them. Faith in prayer is a key that opens this door, when a poor soul finds grace and mercy to help it in time of need. Our Lord’s design is to express the nature, fervour, and constancy of prayer, and to encourage to it.

Matthew 7:8

Ver. 8. **For everyone that asketh receiveth,**

For God is no respecter of persons; whoever makes application, be he a Jew, or a Gentile, rich or poor, bond or free, a man of great gifts, or mean parts, provided he asks aright, from right principles, and with right views, shall not lose his labour; but shall receive all such good things at the hand of God, as are suitable and convenient for him.

And he that seeketh findeth;

he that seeks for God in Christ, the grace and mercy of God, the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; that seeks after the true riches, both of grace and glory, shall be sure to find them; see Pr 21:21.

And to him that knocketh it shall be opened:

that is, to him that is constant at the throne of grace, who continues knocking at the door of mercy, and will have no denial, it shall be opened to him; and he shall have entrance into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus.

Matthew 7:9

Ver. 9. **Or what man is there of you,**

“That is a father”, as in Luke 11:11 that is, is in the relation, and has the affections of a father; and indeed is a man, and has the nature and passions of a man; unless he is become a mere brute, and devoid of all humanity,

whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?

No, by no means; no man can act such a merciless, cruel part as this to a child: for though he might impose upon him by the likeness of some sort of stones with bread; yet could not hope to satisfy his hunger, or stop his mouth this way; but must expect to hear from him again with bitter complaints.

Matthew 7:10

Ver. 10. **Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?**

Which is somewhat like a fish, especially an eel. Fish and bread are mentioned, because these were common food; see Mark 6:41, Joh 21:13 and particularly in Galilee, a fish country, where Christ now was, and from whence he had called his disciples, who were fishermen. In Luke 11:12 it is added, “or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?” which is used, as the rest, to show the absurdity and inhumanity of such conduct; and that indeed nothing of this kind is to be found among men,

unless it be among monsters in nature.

Matthew 7:11

Ver. 11. **If ye then being evil,**

As all mankind in general are, both by nature and practice: they are conceived in sin, shapen in iniquity; are evil from their youth, and transgressors from the womb; are corrupt, and do abominable things; and such these Jews were Christ speaks unto; and who, very likely, has respect chiefly to the evil of covetousness they were addicted to. The argument is taken from the lesser to the greater, and runs thus; that if ye, who are but men, men on earth, yea evil men, not over liberal and beneficent, nay covetous and niggardly,

know how to give good gifts unto your children;

can find in your hearts, having it in the power of your hands, to give suitable provisions for the support and sustenance of your children;

how much more shall your Father, which is in heaven;

who is omniscient and omnipotent; who knows the persons and wants of his children, and what is proper for them, and is able to relieve them, being Lord of heaven and earth,

give good things to them that ask him?

Not only temporal good things, as meat, drink, and clothing; but all spiritual good things; every supply of grace; all things pertaining to life and godliness. In Luke 11:13 “the Holy Spirit” is mentioned, and so seems to design his gifts and graces, everything that is necessary for the spiritual and eternal good of his people: but for these things he must be inquired of, and sought after; and it is the least saints can do to ask for them; and they have encouragement enough to ask; for it is but ask and have.

Matthew 7:12

Ver. 12. **Therefore all things whatsoever,**

These words are the epilogue, or conclusion of our Lord’s discourse; the sum of what he had delivered in the two preceding chapters, and in this hitherto, is contained in these words; for they not only respect the exhortation about judging and reproof; but every duty respecting our neighbour; it is a summary of the whole. It is a golden rule, here delivered, and ought to be observed by all mankind, Jews and Gentiles. So the Karaite Jews⁴⁷² say,

“all things that a man would not take to himself,

⁴⁷² R. Eliahu Addaret, c. 3. apud Trigland de sect. Karaeorum, c. 10. p. 166. Vid. Tzeror Hammor, fol. 146. 4.

אין ראוי לשתומ לאדחי, “it is not fit to do them to his brethren”.

And Maimonides⁴⁷³ has expressed it much in the same words our Lord here does;

“all things whatsoever ye would that others should do to you, (says he,) do you the same to your brethren, in the law, and in the commandments:”

only there seems to be a restriction in the word “brethren”; the Jews, perhaps, meaning no other than Israelites; whereas our Lord’s rule reaches to all without exception, “all things whatsoever”

ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them:

let them be who they will, whether brethren, or kinsmen, according to the flesh, or what not; “for this is the law and the prophets”: the sum of the law and the prophets; not the whole sum of them, or the sum of the whole law: but of that part of it which respects our neighbours. Remarkable is the advice given by Hillel⁴⁷⁴ to one who came to be made a proselyte by him;

“whatsoever is hateful to thee, that do not thou to thy neighbour; זו היא כל התורה כולה, “this is all the whole law”, and the rest is an explication of it, go and be perfect:”

yea, this rule is not only agreeable to the law of Moses, and the prophets, but even to the law and light of nature. Aristotle being asked, how we ought to carry ourselves to our friends, answered⁴⁷⁵, as we would wish they would carry it to us. Alexander Severus, a Heathen emperor, so greatly admired this rule of Christ’s, that he ordered it to be written on the walls of his closet.

Matthew 7:13

Ver. 13. **Enter ye in at the strait gate,**

By the “strait gate” is meant Christ himself; who elsewhere calls himself “the door”,

Joh 10:7 as he is into the church below, and into all the ordinances and privileges of it; as also to the Father, by whom we have access unto him, and are let into communion with him, and a participation of all the blessings of grace; yea, he is the gate of heaven, through which we have boldness to enter into the holiest of all by

⁴⁷³ Hilch. Ebel. c. 14. sect. 1.

⁴⁷⁴ T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 31. 1. Maimon. in Misn. Peah, c. 1. sect. 1.

⁴⁷⁵ Diog. Laert. in Vit. Aristotel. l. 5.

faith and hope now; as there will be hereafter an abundant entrance into the kingdom and glory of God, through his blood and righteousness. This is called “strait”; because faith in Christ, a profession of it, and a life and conversation agreeable to it, are attended with many afflictions, temptations, reproaches, and persecutions. “Entering” in at it is by faith, and making a profession of it: hence it follows, that faith is not the gate itself, but the grace, by which men enter in at the right door, and walk on in Christ, as they begin with him.

For wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction;

so that the one may be easily known from the other. There is no difficulty in finding out, or entering in at, or walking in the way of sin, which leads to eternal ruin. The gate of carnal lusts, and worldly pleasures, stands wide open,

and many there be which go in thereat;

even all men in a state of nature; the way of the ungodly is “broad”, smooth, easy, and every way agreeable to the flesh; it takes in a large compass of vices, and has in it abundance of company; but its end is destruction. Our Lord seems to allude to the private and public roads, whose measures are fixed by the Jewish canons; which say ⁴⁷⁶, that “a private way was four cubits broad, a way from city to city eight cubits, a public way sixteen cubits, and the way to the cities of refuge thirty two cubits.”

Matthew 7:14

Ver. 14. **Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way,**

And so, difficult to enter in at; and when entered, the way is unpleasant to the flesh to walk in, being hedged up on each side with afflictions and tribulations; and moreover, is like the “narrow place”, or στενωπον, “the strait place”, as the Septuagint in Nu 22:26 render it; in which the angel that met Balaam stood; and in which there was no turning to the right hand or the left; and such is the way to eternal happiness. The great encouragement to walk on in it is, because it is that way

which leadeth unto life:

unto eternal life: it certainly leads thither; it never fails of bringing persons to it; believers in Christ, all that walk in Christ the way, though they are said to be “scarcely” saved, by reason of their afflictions and trials, they meet with in their way to the kingdom; yet they are, and shall be certainly saved: they shall be safely brought

⁴⁷⁶ T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 100. 1, 2. Vid. Maimon. & R. Sampson in Misn. Peah, c. 2. sect. 1. & Maimon in Sabbat. c. 1. sect. 1.

to glory; which will be an abundant recompense for all the troubles and sorrows that have attended them in their journey.

And few there be that find it;

the way, and so consequently the life it leads to. “The gate is strait”; small and little, and so unobserved: there is but one way to heaven, and the generality of men neglect it. “The way is narrow”, and so disagreeable; the company few, and not engaging. Men choose large gates, broad ways, and much company. The flesh loves to walk at liberty, unconfined, and uncontrolled, and with a multitude to do evil: hence, Zion’s ways are thin of passengers; a small number, comparatively speaking, walk thereto, and will be saved; a remnant, a little flock, a little city, and few men in it. It is asked in the Talmud ⁴⁷⁷,

“why is the world to come created with “jod?” (the least of the letters in the “Hebrew alphabet”) the answer is, because דִּיקוּמָ שְׁבוּ מוֹשִׁימָ “the righteous which are in it are few”.”

Some read the words, as the Syriac, Arabic, and Vulgate Latin, with a note of admiration, “how strait is the gate!” &c. and so some copies.

Matthew 7:15

Ver. 15. **Beware of false prophets,**

Or false teachers; for not such who pretended to foretell things to come, but such who set up themselves to be teachers of others, are here meant; see 2Pe 2:1. It may be queried, whether our Lord has not respect to the Scribes and Pharisees, who sat in Moses’s chair, and taught, for doctrines, the commandments of men? and of whose doctrines he elsewhere bids men beware: for whatever plausible pretences for holiness and righteousness might appear in them, they were repugnant to the word of God, and destructive to the souls of men; such as their doctrines of free will, justification by the works of the law, the traditions of the elders, &c. since it follows,

which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves;

for these “loved to go in long clothing”, Mark 12:38 בטלית, in a garment which reached to the feet, and was made of the wool of sheep. The Babylonish garment Achan saw and stole, Rab says ⁴⁷⁸, was איטלא דמילתא, a garment called “melotes”: which is the very Greek word the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews uses for sheep skins, persecuted saints wandered about in, Heb 11:37 and the gloss upon the place, in the Talmud referred to,

⁴⁷⁷ T. Bab. Menachot, fol. 29. 2.

⁴⁷⁸ T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 41. 1.

says, that this was *מִן־נֶקִי מֵרֵיב*, “a talith”, or “garment of pure wool”; and Jarchi⁴⁷⁹ says, that

“it was the way of deceivers, and profane men, to cover themselves, *בְּטַלְיֹתָם*, “with their talith”, or long garment, “as if they were righteous men”, that persons might receive their lies.”

All which agrees very well with the Pharisees, who would have been thought to have been holy and righteous, humble, modest, and self-denying men; when they were inwardly full of hypocrisy and iniquity, of rapine, oppression, and covetousness; and, under a pretence of religion, “devoured widows’ houses”. Though, it seems, by what follows, that Christ has respect, at least also, to such, who bore his name, and came in his name, though not sent by him, and called him Lord, and prophesied, and cast out devils, and did many wonderful works in his name; who, that they might get the good will and affections of the people, clothed themselves, not in garments made of sheep’s wool, but in the very skins of sheep, with the wool on them, in imitation of the true prophets, and good men of old; pretending great humility, and self-denial, and so “wore a rough garment to deceive”, Zec 13:4 when they were inwardly greedy dogs, grievous wolves, of insatiable covetousness; and, when opportunity offered, spared not the flock to satisfy their rapacious and devouring appetites. The Jews speak of a “wolfish humility”; like that of the wolf in the fable, which put on a sheep skin.”

There are some men, (says one of their {t} writers,) who appear to be humble, and fear God in a deceitful and hypocritical way, but inwardly lay wait: this humility our wise men call *גִּוְהַ זֹאֲבִית*, “wolfish humility”.

Such is this our Lord inveighs against, and bids his followers beware of.

Matthew 7:16

Ver. 16. **Ye shall know them by their fruits,**

By “fruits” are meant, not so much their external works in life and conversation; for a false prophet may so behave, as not to be discovered thereby. So the Pharisees were outwardly righteous before men; and false teachers among Christians may have the form of godliness, and keep it up, though they are strangers to, and even deny the power of it: but their doctrines are here meant, and the effects of them. When doctrines are contrary to the perfections of God, repugnant to the Scriptures of

⁴⁷⁹ In Zech. xiii. 4. {t} Abarbinel Nachalath Abot, fol. 192. 1.

truth, tend to depreciate the person and offices, blood, righteousness, and sacrifice of Christ, to lessen the glory of God’s grace, to exalt the creature, and to fill men’s minds with notions of the purity, self-sufficiency, and ability of human nature; when they are calculated to feed the pride and vanity of men, to get money, and gain applause, to serve their own interests, and gratify men’s lusts and passions, they may be easily discerned who they are, and from whence they come. The Jews have a proverb pretty much like this⁴⁸⁰ *בִּוּיַן מִקְטָפֶיהָ יָדֵי*, “a gourd is known by its branches”. The gloss upon it is,

”it is, as if it was said, from the time it buds forth, and goes out of the branch, it is known whether it is good or not;”

i.e. the goodness of the gourd is known by the fruit its branches bear. So a good preacher is known by the good doctrine he brings, and a bad one, by his unsound doctrine. Christ is not speaking of these false prophets, as men, or as private professors of religion, but as prophets, or teachers. “Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?” Grapes and figs were common fruit; there was great plenty of them in Judea; we often read of the “gathering” of them. It is a matter in dispute with the doctors⁴⁸¹,

”if a man intends *לְלַקֵּט הָאֵינִים* וְלוֹקֵט *לְלַקֵּט*, “to gather figs, and he gathers grapes”, black ones, and he gathers white ones, white ones, and he gathers black ones, whether he is guilty of a sin offering or not.”

One says he is, another says he is not. These words of Christ put me in mind of another passage, which seems to speak of grapes of thorns⁴⁸²;

“he that marries his daughter to a scholar, it is like to grapes of the vine, with grapes of the vine, a thing beautiful and acceptable; but he that marries his daughter to a plebeian, it is like to grapes of the vine, *בְּגִבְיָהוּנָה*, “with grapes of the thorn”, a thing ugly, and unacceptable.”

Though *גִּבְיָ*, in the last sentence, must be taken for berries which grow on some thorn bushes, and not what are properly grapes; for grapes do not grow upon, and are not to be gathered from thorns, and bramble bushes. The meaning of our Lord is, that from the false doctrines of men comes no good fruit of faith, holiness,

⁴⁸⁰ T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 48. 1.

⁴⁸¹ T. Bab. Ceritot, fol. 19. 1, 2. & 20. 1.

⁴⁸² T. Bab. Pesachim, fol. 49. 1.

joy, peace, and comfort. Their doctrines are like “thorns”, which prick and pierce, give pain and uneasiness; and, like “thistles”, choke, and are unprofitable, afford no solid food and nourishment; yea, their words eat as do a canker, are contrary to vital religion and powerful godliness. This sense I prefer; because, on the one hand, it is possible for a false teacher to do works, which may be externally good; though indeed no good works, properly speaking, can be performed by an unregenerate man, because he has neither good principles to act from, nor good ends in view: and, on the other hand, a man who is destitute of the grace of God, and lives ill, may yet have right notions of the Gospel, though he has no experimental knowledge and relish of it; but where false doctrines are imbibed, and propagated, no good fruit can follow upon it.

Matthew 7:17

Ver. 17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit,

As is the tree, so is its fruit; if the tree is good, it will bring forth good fruit. The tree that brings forth good fruit, is good antecedent to the fruit it produces; it is first good, and then puts forth good fruit: it is not the fruit that makes the tree good, but makes it appear to be so; but it is the goodness of the tree that makes the fruit good. As a good man does, and will do good works, but his works do not make him a good man; he is so before he performs good works, or he would never be able to do them; these make him appear to be a good man: so a good preacher, that has an experimental knowledge of the doctrines of the Gospel, will deliver out sound doctrine, who is first made so by the gifts and graces of the Spirit of God; and by searching the Scriptures, and examining his doctrines by them, he will be known and appear to be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine; and such a good minister of the Gospel, out of the good treasure of Gospel truths put into his earthen vessel, will bring forth, from time to time, good and excellent truths, to the edification and profit of those that hear: “but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit”; if the tree is corrupt, the fruit will be corrupt; and as is the preacher, so will be his doctrines: if he is a corrupt preacher, or a man of a corrupt mind, destitute of the truth, his preaching will be such as will tend to corrupt both the principles and practices of men; for such evil men and seducers, out of the evil treasure of false doctrines, which they have received into their judgments, will bring forth, either more secretly or openly, evil tenets in their ministry, which prove of bad

consequence to the souls of men.

Matthew 7:18

Ver. 18. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit,

A man that is unprincipled with the grace of God, has an experimental acquaintance with the Gospel of Christ, and is guided by the Spirit of God into all truth, as it is in Jesus, cannot knowingly deliver, maintain, and abide by any doctrine that is contrary to the glory of God’s grace, and the person of Christ, the work of the Spirit, the fundamental doctrines of the Bible; or what is repugnant to the experiences of God’s people, and prejudicial to their souls.

Neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

A corrupt preacher, one destitute of the truth of the Gospel, reprobate concerning the faith, who never had any experience of the doctrines of grace, and denies them in the theory of them, cannot, consistent with himself, and his own principles, deliver, or preach good doctrine; or that which tends to produce any good fruit, either in the experience or lives of men. It is true, a corrupt man, that is, an unregenerate man, may preach sound doctrine, it being what he believes, though he has no experience of it: but then this man is not a corrupt tree, that is, a corrupt preacher, though a corrupt man. As our Lord means by “a good tree”, not a good man, barely, or one that is made so by the grace of God; but a good minister, one that is furnished by the Spirit of God, and is well instructed in the kingdom of heaven: so by “a corrupt tree” he does not mean a corrupt man, a man that is in a state of nature, habitually and practically evil; but a corrupt preacher, a false prophet or teacher, that has sucked in corrupt principles, and has nothing else in him, and therefore can bring forth no other.

Matthew 7:19

Ver. 19. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit,

Every preacher and teacher that does not bring the Gospel of Christ with him, and plainly and faithfully preach it to the people, sooner or later,

is hewn down:

however he may have appeared as a tall lofty cedar, and have carried it with a high hand against Christ and his Gospel, spoke “great swelling words of vanity”, and behaved with much “loftiness” and “haughtiness”; yet the time comes on, when all this is bowed and made low, “and the Lord alone is exalted”: such preachers are either cut off from the churches of Christ, or hewn down by death,

and cast into the fire;

into the fire of hell; into the lake of fire and brimstone, “where the beast and false prophet shall be”.

Matthew 7:20

Ver. 20. **Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.**

This is the conclusion of the whole, and a repetition of what is before said, the more to fix the rule of judgment upon their minds, and engage them to try men by their doctrines, and their doctrines by the standard of the Scriptures, and not believe every spirit; for with some care and diligence such persons may be detected, and the malignant influence of their ministry be prevented. The sum of the whole is, that ordinarily, and generally speaking, as men are, so are the doctrines they preach, and by them they may be known, and judged to be what they are. Christ here, and in the preceding verses, is speaking not of men of bad lives and conversations, who take upon them to teach others; for there is not so much reason to caution good men against these; they are easily detected, and generally discarded; but of men that put on sheep’s clothing, who pretended to much holiness of life and conversation, and strictness of religion; and under that disguise delivered out the most corrupt and unwholesome doctrines; which tended greatly to depreciate him and his grace, and to do damage to the souls of men.

Matthew 7:21

Ver. 21. **Not everyone that saith unto me Lord, Lord,**

Not every one that calls Christ his Lord and Master, professes subjection to him, or that calls upon his name, or is called by his name; or makes use of it in his public ministrations. There are many who desire to be called, and accounted Christians, and who make mention of the name of Christ in their sermons, only to take away their reproach, to cover themselves, and gain credit with, and get into the affections and goodwill of the people; but have no hearty love to Christ, nor true faith in him: nor is it their concern to preach his Gospel, advance his glory, and promote his kingdom and interest; their chief view is to please men, aggrandize themselves, and set up the power of human nature in opposition to the grace of God, and the righteousness of Christ. Now not everyone of these, no, not any of them,

shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.

This is to be understood not of the outward dispensation of the Gospel, or the Gospel church state,

or the visible church of Christ on earth, in which sense this phrase is sometimes used; because such persons may, and often do, enter here; but of eternal glory, into which none shall enter, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. This, as it may regard private Christians, intends not merely outward obedience to the will of God, declared in his law, nor barely subjection to the ordinances of the Gospel; but more especially faith in Christ for life and salvation; which is the source of all true evangelical obedience, and without which nothing is acceptable to God. He that seeth the Son, looks unto him, ventures on him, commits himself to him, trusts in him, relies on him, and believes on him for righteousness, salvation, and eternal life, he it is that does the will of the Father, and he only; and such an one, as he is desirous of doing the will of God in all acts of cheerful obedience to it, without dependence thereon; so he shall certainly enter the kingdom of heaven, and have everlasting life; see Joh 6:40 but as these words chiefly respect preachers, the sense of them is this, that only such who are faithful dispensers of the word shall enter into the joy of their Lord. Such do the will of Christ’s Father, and so his own, which are the same, who fully and faithfully preach the Gospel of the grace of God; who declare the whole counsel of God, and keep back nothing that is profitable to the souls of men; who are neither ashamed of the testimony of Christ, nor afraid of the faces of men; but as they are put in trust with the Gospel, so they speak it boldly, with all sincerity, not as pleasing men, but God, and commend themselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God: such as these shall have an abundant entrance into the kingdom and glory of God. The Vulgate Latin adds this clause, “he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven”, and so does Munster’s Hebrew edition of the Gospel according to Matthew.

Matthew 7:22

Ver. 22. **Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord,**

That is, in the last day, the day of judgment, the great and famous day, fixed by God, unknown to angels and men, which will be terrible to some, and joyful to others; the day in which the faithful ministers of the Gospel shall be owned by Christ, and received into the kingdom of heaven: “many”, not of the common people only, but of the preachers of the word, who have filled up the highest station in the church below; not one, or two, or a few of them only, but many of them “will say to

me”; to Christ, who will appear then as the judge of quick and dead, to which he is ordained by his Father,

Lord, Lord;

not “my Lord, my Lord”, as the Syriac version reads it; for they will not be able to claim any interest in him, though they will be obliged to own his dominion, power, and authority over them. The word is repeated to show their importunity, sense of danger, the confusion they will be in, the wretched disappointment they will have; and therefore speak as persons amazed and confounded, having expected they would have been the first persons that should be admitted into heaven. Their pleas follow;

have we not prophesied in thy name?

This may be understood either of foretelling things to come; which gift wicked men may have, who have never had any experience of the grace of God, as Balaam, and Caiaphas, and others; or rather of preaching the word, which is sometimes called prophesying, Ro 12:6 and which may be done in the name of Christ, pretending mission and authority from him, and to be preachers of him, and yet be no better than “sounding brass”, or “a tinkling cymbal”; yea, nothing at all as to true grace, or spiritual experience.

And in thy name have cast out devils?

Diabolical possessions were very frequent in the times of Christ; no doubt but they were suffered, that Jesus might have an opportunity of showing his power over Satan, by dispossessing him from the bodies, as well as the souls of men; and of giving proof of his deity, divinity and Messiahship: and this power of casting out devils was given to others, not only to the twelve apostles, among whom Judas was, who had the same power with the rest, and to the seventy disciples; but even to some who did not follow him, and his disciples, Mark 9:38 and some did this in the name of Jesus, who do not appear to have any true faith in him, and knowledge of him; as the vagabond Jews, exorcists, and the seven sons of Sceva, Ac 19:13. An awful consideration it is, that men should be able to cast out devils, and at last be cast to the devil.

And in thy name done many wonderful works?

that is, many miracles; not one, or a few only, but many; such as speaking with tongues, removing mountains, treading on serpents and scorpions, and drinking any deadly thing without hurt, and healing all manner of diseases and sicknesses. Judas, for one, was capable of pleading all these things; he had the gift of preaching, and a call from Christ to it, and yet a castaway; he had the power of casting out devils, and yet could not prevent the devil from entering into him; he

could perform miracles, do wonders in Christ’s name, and yet, at last, was the betrayer of him. These pleas and arguments will be of no use to him, nor of any avail to any at the great day. It may be observed, that these men lay the whole stress of their salvation upon what they have done in Christ’s name; and not on Christ himself, in whom there is salvation, and in no other: they say not a syllable of what Christ has done and suffered, but only of what they have done. Indeed, the things they instance in, are the greatest done among men; the gifts they had were the most excellent, excepting the grace of God; the works they did were of an extraordinary nature; whence it follows, that there can be no salvation, nor is it to be expected from men’s works: for if preaching the word, which is attended with so much study, care, and labour, will not be a prevailing argument to admit men into the kingdom of heaven; how can it be thought that ever reading, or hearing, or any other external performance of religion, should bring persons thither?

Matthew 7:23

Ver. 23. **Then will I profess unto them,**

Publicly before men and angels, at the day of judgment,

I never knew you;

which must be understood consistent with the omniscience of Christ; for as the omniscient God he knew their persons and their works, and that they were workers of iniquity; he knew what they had been doing all their days under the guise of religion; he knew the principles of all their actions, and the views they had in all they did; nothing is hid from him. But, as words of knowledge often carry in them the ideas of affection, and approbation, see Ps 1:6 the meaning of Christ here is, I never had any love, or affection for you; I never esteemed you; I never made any account of you, as mine, as belonging to me; I never approved of you, nor your conduct; I never had any converse, communication, nor society with you, nor you with me. The Persic version reads it, “I have not known you of old”, from ancient times, or from everlasting; I never knew you in my Father’s choice, and my own, nor in my Father’s gift to me, nor in the everlasting covenant of grace; I never knew you as my sheep, for whom, in time, I died, and called by name; I never knew you believe in me, nor love me, or mine; I have seen you in my house, preaching in my name, and at my table administering mine ordinance; but I never knew you exalt my person, blood, righteousness, and sacrifice; you talk of the works

you have done, I never knew you do one good work in all your lives, with a single eye to my glory; wherefore, I will neither hear, nor see you; I have nothing to do with you. In this sense the phrase is used in the Talmud ⁴⁸³:

”Bar Kaphra went to visit R. Juda; he says to him,
אֵינִי מְכִירְךָ מִוֹלְמֵ אֶרְהַפְאֵךְ רַבּ “I never knew thee”.

The gloss upon it is,

”he intimates, that he would not see him.”

So here, Christ declares, he knew them not; that is, he did not like them; he would not admit them into his presence and glory; but said,

depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.

The former of these expressions contains the awful sentence pronounced by Christ, the judge; which is, banishment from his presence, than which nothing is more terrible: for as it is his presence that makes heaven, it is his absence that makes hell; and this supposes a place and state, whither they are banished; which is elsewhere called their “own place, the lake” which burns with fire and brimstone; “everlasting fire”, prepared for the devil and his angels. Departure from Christ’s presence is the punishment of loss, and being sent to everlasting burnings, is the punishment of sense; and the whole, as it is an instance of strict justice, so a display of Christ’s almighty power. The latter expression contains the character of these persons, and in it a reason of their punishment; they were “workers of iniquity”: it may be, neither adulterers, nor murderers, nor drunkards, nor extortioners, nor thieves, or any other openly profane sinners; but inasmuch as they did the work of the Lord deceitfully, preached themselves, and not Christ; sought their own things, and not his; what they did, they did with a wicked mind, and not with a view to his glory; they wrought iniquity, whilst they were doing the very things they pleaded on their own behalf, for their admission into the kingdom of heaven. Some copies read, “all the workers of iniquity”, as in Ps 6:8 from whence the words are taken.

Matthew 7:24

Ver. 24. **Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine,**

The comparison in this, and the following verses, is the concluding part of our Lord’s discourses upon the mount, which are meant by these sayings, or doctrines, he here speaks of; and as he had in some foregoing verses

chiefly respect to preachers, so here, to hearers, his disciples and followers in general. The subject of this comparison, in Luke 6:47 is, “whosoever cometh unto me”; as all that are given to Christ by the Father will do, sooner or later: such whom he encourages to come to him, are they that labour and are heavy laden; and they that come aright, come as poor perishing sinners; they believe in him, give up themselves to him, to be saved by him with an everlasting salvation; all which is owing to efficacious grace. These hear his sayings, as doctrines, not merely externally, but internally, having ears to hear given unto them, so as to understand them, love them, believe them, feel the power, taste the sweetness, and have a delightful relish of them; and such an one hears them,

and doth them:

he is not only an hearer, but a doer of the word of the Gospel; the doctrines of it he receives in the love of them, and exercises faith on them; upon Christ, his grace and righteousness held forth in them, which is the great work and business of a Christian, he is to do, and does do in this life: the ordinances of it he cheerfully obeys; and all the duties of religion he performs from love to Christ, without any view to obtain eternal life hereby, which he only expects from Christ, as his sayings and doctrines direct him. The comparison follows,

I will liken him to a wise man, which built his house upon a rock.

Luke says, “he is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation a rock”. Every believer is a builder; the house he builds, is his own soul, and the salvation of it; in order to which he digs deep, till he comes to a rock, to a good foundation; he searches diligently into the Scriptures of truth; he constantly attends the ministry of the word; he inquires of Gospel preachers, and other saints, the way of salvation; which having found, he lays the whole stress of his salvation on the rock of ages, which rock is Christ: he makes him the foundation of all his hopes of eternal life and happiness; which is the foundation God has laid in Zion; and which has been laid ministerially by the prophets of the Old, and the apostles of the New Testament; and by believers themselves, when they build their faith and hope upon it. This foundation, the person, blood, and righteousness of Christ, is as a rock, firm and strong, will bear the whole weight that is laid upon it; it is sure and certain, it will never give way; it is immoveable and everlasting; the house built upon it stands safe and sure.

483 T. Bab. Moed Katon, fol. 16. 1.

Matthew 7:25

Ver. 25. **And the rains descended, and the floods came,**

These several metaphors of “rain”, “floods”, “stream”, and “winds”, may design the temptations of Satan, the persecutions of the world, the corruptions of a man’s own heart, and the errors and false doctrines of men; from all which such a man is safe, who is built upon the rock Christ Jesus; see Isa 32:2 not but that the rain of temptation may descend upon him, with great violence and force, but shall not beat him down; he shall be made able to bear the whole force of it; the gates of hell cannot prevail against him; the floods of persecution may be cast after him, but shall not carry him away; the stream of corruption may run strong against him, yet shall not over set him; and the wind of divers and strange doctrines may blow hard upon him, but not cast him down: some damage he may receive by these several things, but shall not be destroyed; he may be shaken by them, but not so as to be removed off of the foundation, on which he is laid; yea, he may fail from some degree of the steadfastness of his faith, but not so as to fail totally and finally; the reason is, because he is founded on the rock Christ Jesus, which is sure and immoveable: whence it appears that such a man acts the wise and prudent part, and may be truly called “a wise man”.

Matthew 7:26

Ver. 26. **And everyone that heareth these sayings of mine,**

Who only externally hears them, but has no understanding of them; do not believe them, nor like and approve of them, but hates and despises them; or if not, depends upon his external hearing of them, and contents himself with a speculative knowledge, without the practice of them,

and doth them not;

does not yield the obedience of faith to the doctrines of the Gospel, nor submits to the ordinances of it, but neglects them, and all other duties of religion: or if he does obey, it is only outwardly, not from the heart; nor from a principle of love; nor in faith; nor in the name and strength of Christ; nor for the glory of God, but in order to obtain life for himself: such

shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand;

or, as Luke has it, “without a foundation upon the earth”; upon the surface of the earth, without digging into it for a foundation: and such may be said to build

without a foundation,

who pretend to make their peace with God by their own works; who hope for pardon on the foot of the mercy of God, and their own repentance; seek for justification by their own, and not the righteousness of Christ; look for acceptance with God, for the sake of their own worthiness; and who expect salvation in any other way than by Christ: as in each of these articles, they leave out Christ, they may be said to build without a foundation indeed, and to build “upon” the surface of “the earth”; as they do, who build their hope of salvation upon anything that is merely external; as, their riches and grandeur, their wisdom and learning, their natural descent, and religious education, their civility, courteousness, and what is called good nature, their liberality and alms deeds, their morality, common justice and honesty, their legal righteousness, whether moral or ritual, and a round of religious duties; and such may be said to “build upon the sand”, on that which will bear no weight, but gives way, and sinks. The salvation of the soul is a weighty thing; and that which is like sand, as is everything of a man’s own, can never support it: God has therefore laid the salvation of his people on his own Son; and he must be a “foolish man” that builds on anything short of him.

Matthew 7:27

Ver. 27. **And the rain descended, and the floods came,**

Such builders, and such a building, cannot stand against the violent rain of Satan’s temptations, the floods of the world’s persecutions, the stream and rapid torrent of their own heart’s lusts, nor the blowing winds of heresy and false doctrine, and much less the storms of divine wrath and vengeance. They are in a most dangerous condition; they cannot support themselves; they must fall, and great will be their fall; their destruction is inevitable, their ruin is irrecoverable. The Jews make use of some similes, which are pretty much like these of Christ’s.

“R. Eliezer ben Azariah used to say⁴⁸⁴, he whose wisdom is greater than his works, to what is he like? to a tree, whose branches are many, and its roots few, “and the wind comes”, and roots it up, and overturns it; as it is said, Jer 17:6 but he whose works are greater than his wisdom, to what is he like? to a tree, whose branches are

⁴⁸⁴ Pirke Abot, c. 3. sect. 17. & Abot R. Nathan, c. 22. fol. 6. 1, 2.

few, and its roots many, “against which, if all the winds in the world were to come and blow”, they could not move it out of its place: as it is said, Jer 17:8.”

Again⁴⁸⁵,

”Elisha ben Abuijah used to say, a man who hath good works, and learns the law much, to what is he like? to a man that “builds with stones below”, and afterwards with bricks; and though hbrh Mym Myab, “many waters come”, and stand at their side, they cannot remove them out of their place; but a man who hath no good works, and learns the law, to what is he like? to a man that “builds with bricks first”, and afterwards with stones; and though few waters come, they immediately overturn them.”

The same used to say,”

a man who hath good works, and learns the law much, to what is he like? to mortar spread upon bricks; and though יורדני לוי נשמימ “the rains descend upon it”, they cannot remove it out of its place: a man that hath no good works, and learns the law much, to what is he like? to mortar thrown upon bricks; and though but a small rain descends upon it, it is immediately dissolved, and “falls”.”

Matthew 7:28

Ver. 28. **And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings,**

Delivered in this, and the two foregoing chapters, concerning true happiness; the duty and usefulness of Gospel ministers; the true sense and meaning of several commandments in the law; concerning alms, prayer, and fasting; concerning the care of worldly things, rash judging, rigid censures, and reproofs; the straitness and narrowness of the way to eternal life, and the largeness and breadth of the way to destruction; concerning false prophets, and the right hearing of the word.

The people were astonished at his doctrine;

it being something new, and unheard of, what they had not been used to; and coming in the demonstration of the Spirit, and of power, it carried its own evidence along with it, wrought conviction in their minds, and obliged them to acknowledge the truth of it.

Matthew 7:29

Ver. 29. **For he taught them, as one having authority,**

485 Abot R. Nathan, c. 24. fol. 6. 2.

This does not so much respect the subject matter of his ministry, the gravity, weight, and solidity of his doctrine; which, to be sure, was greatly different from that of the Scribes, which chiefly lay in proposing and handling things trivial, and of no moment; such as the rituals of the law, the traditions of the elders, or washing of the hands and cups, &c. nor merely the manner of his delivery, which was with great affection, ardour, and fervency of spirit, with much liberty and utterance of speech, and with wonderful perspicuity and majesty; in which also he differed from the Scribes, who taught in a cold and lifeless manner, without any spirit and power; but this chiefly regards the method he used in preaching, which was by delivering truths of himself in his own name, and by his own authority; often using those words, “but I say unto you”: he spoke as a lawgiver, as one that had authority from heaven, and not from men;

and not as the Scribes,

who used to say, when they delivered any thing to the people, “our Rabbins”, or “our wise men say” so and so: such as were on the side of Hillell made use of his name; and those who were on the side of Shammai made use of his name; scarce ever would they venture to say anything of themselves, but said, the ancient doctors say thus and thus: almost innumerable instances might be given, out of the Talmud, in which one Rabbi speaks in the name of another; but our Lord spoke boldly, of himself, in his own name, and did not go about to support his doctrine by the testimony of the elders; but spake, as having received power and authority, as man, from his Father, “and not as the Scribes”. Some copies add, and Pharisees; these generally going together; and so read the Vulgate Latin, the Syriac, the Persic versions, and the Hebrew edition of Matthew by Munster.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW CHAPTER VIII

2 Christ cleanseth the leper. 5 healeth the centurian's servant. 14 Peter's mother in law. 16 and many other diseased. 18 sheweth how he is to be followed. 23 stilleth the tempest on the sea. 28 deriveth the devils out of two men possessed. 31 and suffereth them to go into the swine.

Matthew 8

- [1] When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him.
- [2] And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me

clean.

- [3] And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.
- [4] And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.
- [5] And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him,
- [6] And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.
- [7] And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.
- [8] The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.
- [9] For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.
- [10] When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.
- [11] And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.
- [12] But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
- [13] And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.
- [14] And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever.
- [15] And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them.
- [16] When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick:
- [17] That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.
- [18] Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side.
- [19] And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.
- [20] And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man

hath not where to lay his head.

- [21] And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.
- [22] But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.
- [23] And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him.
- [24] And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.
- [25] And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.
- [26] And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.
- [27] But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!
- [28] And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.
- [29] And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?
- [30] And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding.
- [31] So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.
- [32] And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters.
- [33] And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils.
- [34] And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts.

JOHN GILL'S COMMENTARY ON MATTHEW CHAPTER VIII

Matthew 8:1

Ver. 1. **When he was come down from the mountain,**

Into which he went up, and preached the sermon

recorded in the “three” preceding chapters:

great multitudes followed him:

which is mentioned, partly to shew, that the people which came from several parts, still continued with him, being affected with his discourses and miracles; and partly on account of the following miracle, of healing the leper, which was not done in a corner, but before great multitudes, who were witnesses of it: though some think this miracle was wrought more privately.

Matthew 8:2

Ver. 2. **And behold there came a leper,**

As soon as he came down from the mountain, and whilst he was in the way; though Luke says, Luke 5:12 “when he was in a certain city”; in one of the cities of Galilee; one of their large towns, or unwalled cities, into which a leper might come: he might not come into walled⁴⁸⁶ towns, at least they might turn him out, though without punishment: for the canon runs thus⁴⁸⁷,

“a leper that enters into Jerusalem is to be beaten; but if he enters into any of the other walled towns, though he has no right, as it is said, “he sitteth alone”, he is not to be beaten.”

Besides, this leper, as Luke says, was “full of leprosy”, Luke 5:12 see the note there; and he might be pronounced clean by the priest, though not healed, and so might go into any city or synagogue: the law concerning such an one, in Le 13:1 is a very surprising one; that if only there were some risings and appearances of the leprosy here and there, the man was unclean; but if “the leprosy covered all his flesh”, then he was pronounced clean; and such was this man: he was a very lively emblem of a poor vile sinner, full of sin and iniquity, who is brought to see himself all over covered with sin, when he comes to Christ for pardon and cleansing; and is so considered by Christ the high priest, when he applies his justifying righteousness and sin purging blood to his conscience. A leper, by the Jews⁴⁸⁸, is called *evr*, “a wicked” man; for they suppose leprosy comes upon him for evil speaking. This account is ushered in with a “behold”, as a note of admiration and attention, expressing the wonderfulness of the miracle wrought, and the seasonableness of it to confirm the doctrines Christ had been preaching to the multitude. This man came of his own accord, having

⁴⁸⁶ Misn. Celim. c. 1. sect. 7.

⁴⁸⁷ Maimon. Biath Hamikdash, c. 3. sect. 8. & in Misn. Celim. c. 1. sect. 8.

⁴⁸⁸ Maimon. in Misn. Negaim, c. 12. sect. 5. & Bartenora in ib. sect. 6.

heard of the fame of Christ;

and worshipped him

in a civil and respectful way, showing great reverence to him as a man; which he did by falling down on his knees, and on his face; prostrating himself before him, in a very humble and submissive manner, as the other evangelists relate: for that he worshipped him as God, is not so manifest; though it is certain he had an high opinion of him, and great faith in him; which he very modestly expresses,

saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean:

he was fully assured of his power, that he could make him clean, entirely rid him of his leprosy, which the priest could not do; who could only, according to the law, pronounce him clean, so that he might be admitted to company, but could not heal him of his disease: this the poor man was persuaded Christ could do for him, and humbly submits it to his will; of which, as yet, he had no intimation from him. And thus it is with poor sensible sinners under first awakenings; they can believe in the ability of Christ to justify them by his righteousness, cleanse them by his blood; and save them by his grace to the uttermost: but they stick at, and hesitate about his willingness, by reason of their own vileness and unworthiness.

Matthew 8:3

Ver. 3. **And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him,**

This is a wonderful instance both of the grace, and goodness of Christ, in touching this loathsome creature; and of his unspotted purity and holiness, which could not be defiled by it; and of his mighty power in healing by a touch, and with a word of his mouth,

saying, I will, be thou clean:

in which he expresses at once his willingness, “I will”, of which the leper before was not certain; and his power by a word of command, “be thou clean”; and in which also is shown the readiness of Christ to do it: he did not stand parleying with the man, or making any further trial of his faith, or objecting to him his uncleanness; but at once stretches out his hand, touches his filthy flesh, and commands off the disorder. A great encouragement this, for poor sensible sinners to betake themselves to Christ, under a sense of their guilt and filth; who readily receives such, in no wise casts them out, but gives immediate discoveries of his power and grace unto them:

And immediately his leprosy was cleansed,

or he was cleansed from it; he was not only pronounced clean, but was made so; he was thoroughly healed of the disease of leprosy. The Jews, themselves acknowledge this fact; for so they tell us in their wicked and blasphemous book⁴⁸⁹, that Jesus should say,

“bring me a leper, and I will heal him; and they brought him a leper, and he healed him also by Shemhamphorash,”

i.e. by the ineffable name Jehovah. Though they greatly misrepresent the matter; for this man was not brought by others, at the request of Christ, but came of his own accord; nor was he healed by the use of any name, as if it was done by a sort of magic, but by a touch of his hand, and the word of his mouth. Whether this was the same man with Simon the leper, Mt 26:6 as some have thought, is not certain.

Matthew 8:4

Ver. 4. **And Jesus saith unto him, see thou tell no man,**

Not that this fact could be concealed, if it was done publicly, before the multitude; nor was it Christ's design that it should be; only it was his counsel to this man, that whilst he was on the road to Jerusalem, and when he was come there, that he would speak of it to no man, before he came to the priest, or priests: lest out of ill will to Christ, they should refuse to pronounce him clean:

but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

The man was now in one of the cities of Galilee; from hence Christ orders him to make the best of his way, directly to Jerusalem; and present himself to one of the priests, by him to be examined, whether he was free of his leprosy; and then offer what was ordered by the law of Moses in such cases: for as yet the ceremonial law was not abolished: and therefore, as Christ was subject to it himself, so he enjoins others the observance of it. There was a two fold offering, according to the law of Moses, on account of the cleansing of the leper;

Le 14:1 the one was on the first day of his cleansing, when he first showed himself to the priest, and consisted of two birds, alive and clean, cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop; the other, and which was properly the offering on the eighth day, was, if the man was able, two he lambs and one ewe lamb, with a meat offering; but if poor, one lamb, with a meat offering, and two turtle doves, or two young pigeons. The Jewish canons, concerning this

489 Toldos Jesu, p. 8.

matter, are as follow⁴⁹⁰ :

“when a leper is healed of his leprosy, after they have cleansed him with cedarwood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and the two birds, and have shaved all his flesh, and bathed him; after all this he enters into Jerusalem, and numbers seven days; and on the seventh day he shaves a second time, as he shaved at first, and bathes--and on the morrow, or eighth day, he bathes a second time, and after that they offer his offerings--he bathes on the eighth day in the court of the women, in the chamber of the lepers, which is there--if it is delayed, and he shaves not on the seventh day, but he shaves on the eighth, or some days after, on the day that he shaves, he bathes, and his sun sets; and on the morrow he brings his offerings, after he hath bathed a second time, as we have declared: how do they do unto him? The leper stands without the court of Israel, over against the eastern gate, in the gate of Nicanor and his face to the west: and there stand all they that want atonement; and there they give the bitter waters to the suspected women: and the priest takes the leper's trespass offering, while it is alive, and waves it with the log of oil, towards the east, according to the way of all wave offerings; and if he waves this by itself, and this by itself, it is right: after that he brings the leper's trespass offering to the door, and he brings it in both his hands into the court, and layeth them upon it; they slay it immediately, and two priests receive its blood: the one receives it in a vessel, and sprinkles it upon the top of the altar; and the other, in his right hand, and pours it into his left hand, and sprinkles with his finger the right hand; and if he repeats it, and receives it in his left hand first, it is unlawful. The priest that receives some of the blood in a vessel, carries it, and sprinkles it upon the altar first; and after that comes the priest, who receives the blood in the palm of his hand, to the leper, the priest being within, and the leper without; and the leper puts in his head, and the priest puts of the blood that is in the palm of his hand, upon the tip of his right ear; after that he puts in his right hand, and he puts of it on the thumb of his hand; and after that he putteth in his right foot, and he puts of it

490 Maimon. Hilchot Mechosre Capporah, c. 14. per totum.

upon the toe of his foot, and if he puts of it upon the left, it is not right; and after that he offers his sin offering, and his burnt offering: and after that he hath put the blood upon his thumb and toe, the priest takes of the log of oil, and pours it into the left hand of his fellow priest; and if he pours it into his own hand, it will do: and he dips the finger of his right hand into the oil, which is in his hand, and sprinkles it seven times towards the most holy place: at every sprinkling there is a dipping of the finger in the oil; and if he sprinkles, and does not intend it, over against the holy place, it is right; and after that, he comes to the leper, and puts of the oil upon the place of the blood of the trespass offering, on the tip of the ear, and on the thumb of his hand, and toe of his foot; and that which is left of the oil, that is in his hand, he puts it on the head of him that is to be cleansed; and if he puts it not, atonement is not made; and the rest of the log is divided among the priests; and what remains of the log is not eaten, but in the Court, by the males of the priests, as the rest of the holy things; and it is forbidden to eat of the log of oil, until he has sprinkled it seven times, and has put of it upon the thumb and toe; and if he eats, he is to be beaten, as he that eats holy things before sprinkling.”

Now these were the things which, as the other evangelists say, this leper was ordered to offer for his cleansing, “for a testimony unto them”; meaning either to the priests; for the Syriac and Persic versions read the former clause, “show thyself to the priests”, in

Luke 17:14 that they being satisfied of the healing and cleansing of this man, and accordingly pronouncing him clean, and accepting his offerings, this might be either a convincing testimony to them, that Jesus was the Son of God, and true Messiah, and that he did not deny or oppose the law given by Moses; or might be a standing testimony against them, should they continue in unbelief; or else to the Jews, who saw the miracle, and heard the orders Christ gave to the man after he had healed him; or to the lepers that they were cleansed; or this law of Moses was for a testimony or statute to be always observed by them in such cases.

Matthew 8:5

Ver. 5. **And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum,** Was returned from his journey through Galilee, to the place where he before dwelt, and is called his own

city, Mt 9:1

there came unto him a centurion,

a Roman officer, שָׂר מֵאָה “a commander of an hundred men”, as the Hebrew Gospel by Munster reads it: though the number of men under a “centurion” was more, according to some accounts.

“A band (it is said ⁴⁹¹) made two centuries, each of which consisted of an hundred and twenty eight soldiers; for a doubled century made a band, whose governor was called an ordinary “centurion”.”

Such an one was Cornelius, a centurion of a band, Ac 10:1. The other person that was healed was a Jew. The next instance of Christ’s power and goodness is the servant of a Gentile; he came to do good both to Jews and Gentiles;

beseeching him,

not in person, but by his messengers; see Luke 7:3 and the Jews ⁴⁹² say, שְׁשִׁלוּחוֹ שֶׁל אֶדְמוֹן כְּמוֹתוֹ, “that a man’s messenger is as himself”.

Matthew 8:6

Ver. 6. **And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home,**

It would be a difficulty whether it was a son or a servant he was so concerned for; since שָׂאָב the word here used, more commonly signifies a “son” or “child”; but that Luke, supposing it to be the same case he relates, expressly calls him δούλωσ, “a servant”, Luke 7:2. The concern of the “centurion” for him, shows him to have been a good servant, faithful and obedient to his master; since he was so much affected with his case, and took so much care of him; and Luke says, he “was dear unto him”; in great esteem, highly valued, and much beloved: and also, that the centurion was a good master; he does not put his sick servant from him, but takes care of him at home, and seeks out for relief for him, being greatly desirous of his life. And as his keeping him at home discovered a tender regard to him; so his not bringing him forth, or ordering him to be brought out to Christ, which was sometimes done in such cases, shows his great faith in Christ, that he was as able to cure him lying at home, as if brought before him; absent, as well as present. It is in the original text, “is cast”; or, as it is rendered, Mt 8:14 “laid in the house”, as if he was dead, speechless, and without motion; and Luke says, that he was “ready to die”, being as one laid out for dead. The phrase answers to מוֹשָׁל, a word often used by the Rabbins; sometimes of sick

⁴⁹¹ Alex. ab Alex. Genial. Dier. l. 6. c. 13.

⁴⁹² T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 34. 2.

persons, as when they say ⁴⁹³ of anyone, that he is *hjm* *b* חולה ומוטל, “sick, and laid upon the bed”; and sometimes of a person really dead, and laid out: and often this phrase is to be met with, מי שמתו מוטל לפניו, “he that hath his dead cast”, or “laid out before him”⁴⁹⁴; concerning whom they dispute many things; as what he is free from, the reading of Shema, prayer, and the phylacteries; and where he ought to eat and drink till such time his dead is buried out of his sight. But this man’s servant was not dead, but lay as one dead; sick of the palsy, his nerves all relaxed, and he stupid, senseless, motionless, grievously tormented, or “punished”, or rather “afflicted”; as the Ethiopic version, and Munster’s Hebrew edition read it; for paralytic persons do not feel much pain and torment: but the meaning is, that he was in a miserable afflicted condition. The account of his disorder is given to move Christ’s compassion, and recorded to show the greatness of the miracle.

Matthew 8:7

Ver. 7.

And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.

This answer of Christ’s, which is short and full, not only shows the readiness of Christ to do good, how soon and easily he complied with the centurion’s request, it being a prayer of faith, and so effectual, and was heard as soon as delivered; but also contains an absolute promise that he would heal him. He does not say that he would come and see him, and what his case was, and do what he could for him, as ordinary physicians do; but he would come and heal him at once: and indeed it is a proposal of more than what was asked of him; his presence was not asked, and yet he offered it; though Luke says, that he besought him by the messengers to “come and heal his servant”; and so this is an answer to both parts of the request; the whole is granted. Christ cannot deny anything to faith, his presence or assistance.

Matthew 8:8

Ver. 8. **The centurion answered, and said,**

This, according to Luke 7:6 was said by his friends in his name, when he understood that Christ had agreed to come to his house, with the elders of the Jews, he first sent to him; and after he was actually set out with them, and was in the way to his house; who, conscious of his

own unworthiness, deputed some persons to him, to address him in this manner,

Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof.

This is not said as rejecting and despising the presence and company of Christ; but is expressive of his great modesty and humility, and of his consciousness of his own vileness, and unworthiness of having so great a person in his house: it was too great a favour for him to enjoy. And if such a man was unworthy, having been an idolater, and lived a profane course of life, that Christ should come into his house, and be, though but for a short time, under his roof; how much more unworthy are poor sinful creatures (and sensible sinners see themselves to be so unworthy), that Christ should come into their hearts, and dwell there by faith, as he does, in all true believers, however vile and sinful they have been?

But speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.

As the former expression declares his modesty and humility, and the mean apprehensions he had of himself; so this signifies his great faith in Christ, and the persuasion he had of his divine power: he does not say pray, and my servant shall be healed, as looking upon him barely as a man of God, a prophet, one that had great interest in God, and at the throne of grace; but speak, command, order it to be done, and it shall be done, which is ascribing omnipotence to him; such power as was put forth in creation, by the all commanding word of God; “he spake, and it was done, he commanded, and it stood fast”, Ps 33:9 yea, he signifies that if he would but speak a word, the least word whatever; or, as Luke has it, “say in a word”; let but a word come out of thy mouth, and it will be done.

Matthew 8:9

Ver. 9. **For I am a man under authority,**

Of Caesar the Roman emperor, and of superior officers under him, as a tribune,

having soldiers under me;

an hundred of them at least, for military service, and some of them were used by him as his domestics:

and I say unto this man go, and he goeth, and to another come, and he cometh:

for there is no disputing the commands of officers, by soldiers, in anything, in exercises, marches, battles,

and to my servant,

that was more properly his domestic servant, who

⁴⁹³ T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 146. 2. 147. l. Cetubot, fol. 103. 2.

⁴⁹⁴ Misn. Beracot, c. 3. sect. 1. T. Bab. Moed. Katon, fol. 23. 2. Maimon. Hilch. Ebel, c. 4. sect. 7.

waited upon him, and did those things for him which every soldier under him was not employed in,

do this, and he doth it;

immediately, without any more ado; as indeed a servant ought. The Jews ⁴⁹⁵ have a saying, that

“a servant over whom his master אֵינִי רִשׁוּת, “hath no power”, is not called a servant.”

Now, these words are not a reason excusing Christ's coming to his house, or showing how unworthy it was, and how unfit it would be for him to come thither, since he was a man that held soldiers under him, and his house was encumbered with them; for these were not with him, but quartered out elsewhere: but they are an argument, from the lesser to the greater, that seeing he was a man, and Christ was God, he was under the authority of others. Christ was subject to none; and yet he had such power over his soldiers and servants, that if he bid one go, and another come, or ordered them to stand in such a place, and in such a posture, or do this and the other servile work, his orders were immediately obeyed: how much more easily then could Christ, who had all power in heaven and in earth, command off this distemper his servant was afflicted with? He suggests, that as his soldiers were under him, and at his command; so all bodily diseases were under Christ, and to be controlled by him, at his pleasure; and that, if he would but say to that servant of his, the palsy, remove, it would remove at once.

Matthew 8:10

Ver. 10. When Jesus heard it, he marvelled,... Which must be understood of him as man; for as God, nothing could present itself unto him at unawares, unthought of, and not known before; and so could not raise admiration in him, and which cannot properly fall on a divine person: or he behaved, both by words and gesture, as persons do when they are astonished at anything; and this he might do, to raise the attention and wonder of those that were with him: and said to them that followed. This agrees perfectly with the account that Luke gives, that Christ was set out, with the messengers the centurion sent unto him, in order to come to his house, and heal his servant, and these that followed him were his disciples, and so some copies read, and others that were following him thither to see the miracle.

Verily, I say unto you;

a strong asseveration, and which Christ used, when

⁴⁹⁵ T. Bab. Kiddushin, fol. 72. 2.

he was about to deliver anything of considerable importance, and required attention:

I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel:

that is, among the people of Israel: so the Arabic version reads it, “in any of Israel”; and the Persic, “among the children of Israel”; and is to be understood, not of the patriarchs and prophets, and other eminent believers, which were in Israel formerly; but of the men of the then present generation, his mother and his apostles being excepted: though it may be questioned, whether the apostles themselves as yet, had expressed such a strong faith in him, as this man: or it may have a particular respect to them in Israel, who had applied to him for healing, and had been healed by him; that he had not met with and observed any such expression of faith, in his divine power from them, as this centurion had delivered. And it was the more remarkable, that it came from a Gentile, and from a soldier too: but as great as it was, he did not exceed it; he did not ascribe more to Christ than was proper, and which, by the way, is a clear proof of our Lord's divinity: for had he not been truly God, he would have rebuked, and not have commended this man's faith in him: who ascribed that power to him, which is peculiar to God: he is so far from finding fault with him, for thinking or speaking so highly of him, that he praises him for it, and prefers his faith in him, to any instance of it he had met with among the Israelites; who yet had far greater advantages of knowing him, and believing in him. There is a phrase in the Talmud ⁴⁹⁶ somewhat like this, only used of a person of a different character; where a certain Jew, observing another called by some of his neighbours Rabbi, thus expressed himself;

“If this be a Rabbi, אֵל יִרְבוּ כְמוֹתוֹ בִּישְׂרָאֵל, “let there not be many such as he in Israel.””

And it is said ⁴⁹⁷ of Nadab and Abihu,

“that two such were not found בִּישְׂרָאֵל כְּוֹחֵיהֶם, “as they in Israel.””

Matthew 8:11

Ver. 11. **And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west,**

On occasion of the faith of the centurion, who was a Gentile, our Lord makes a short digression, concerning the call of the Gentiles; and suggests, that what was seen in that man now, would be fulfilled in great numbers of

⁴⁹⁶ T. Bab. Taanith, fol. 20. 2. Derech Eretz. fol. 18. 1

⁴⁹⁷ Zohar in Lev. fol. 24. 1. & 25. 4.

them in a little time: that many of them from the several parts of the world, from the rising of the sun to the setting of it, from the four points of the heaven, east, west, north, and south, as in Luke 13:29 and from the four corners of the earth, should come and believe in him;

and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven:

signifying, that as the Gospel would be preached in a short time to all nations, many among them would believe in him, as Abraham, and the rest of the patriarchs did; and so would partake of the same blessings of grace with them; such as, adoption, justification, pardon of sin, and the like; for “they which be of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham”, Ga 3:9 now, under the Gospel dispensation, though Gentiles; and shall enjoy with him the same eternal glory and happiness he does, in the other world. Which shows, that the faith of Old and New Testament saints, Jews and Gentiles, is the same; their blessings the same, and so their eternal happiness; they have the same God and Father, the same Mediator and Redeemer, are actuated and influenced by the same Spirit, partake of the same grace, and shall share the same glory. The allusion is to sitting, or rather lying along, which was the posture of the ancients at meals, and is here expressed, at a table, at a meal, or feast: and under the metaphor of a feast or plentiful table to set down to, are represented the blessings of the Gospel, and the joys of heaven; which are not restrained to any particular nation, or set of people; not to the Jews, to the exclusion of the Gentiles. Our Lord here, goes directly contrary to the notions and practices of the Jews, who thought it a crime to sit down at table, and eat with the Gentiles; see Ac 11:3 and yet Gentiles shall sit at table and eat with the principal men, the heads of their nation, in the kingdom of heaven, and they themselves at the same time shut out.

Matthew 8:12

Ver. 12. **But the children of the kingdom,**

The Jews, who were subjects of the kingdom, and commonwealth of Israel, from which the Gentiles were aliens; and who were also in the church of God, which is his kingdom on earth; and besides, had the promise of the Gospel dispensation, sometimes called the kingdom of heaven, and by them, often the world to come; and were by their own profession, and in their apprehension and expectation, children, and heirs of the kingdom of glory. These phrases, בן הַיְלָמָה הַבָּא, “a son of the world to come”, and בְּנֵי לְמַא דְּאַתֵּי, “children of the world to come”

⁴⁹⁸, are frequent in their writings: these, Christ says,

shall be cast out;

out of the land of Israel, as they were in a few years after, and out of the church of God: these branches were broken off, and the Gentiles grafted in, in their room; and will be excluded from the kingdom of heaven, where they hoped to have a place,

and cast into outer darkness:

into the Gentile world, and into judicial blindness, and darkness of mind, and into the blackness of darkness in hell,

where shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth.

Phrases expressive of the miserable state and condition of persons out of the kingdom of heaven; who are weeping for what they have lost, and gnashing their teeth with the pain of what they endure. The Jews say ⁴⁹⁹,

“he that studies not in the law in this world, but is defiled with the pollutions of the world, he is taken וישליכו אותו הברה, “and cast without”: this is hell itself, to which such are condemned, who do not study the law.”

The allusion in the text is, to the customs of the ancients at their feasts and entertainments; which were commonly made in the evening, when the hall or dining room, in which they sat down, was very much illuminated with lamps and torches; but without in the streets, were entire darkness: and where were heard nothing but the cries of the poor, for something to be given them, and of the persons that were turned out as unworthy guests; and the gnashing of their teeth, either with cold in winter nights, or with indignation at their being kept out. Christ may also be thought to speak in the language, and according to the notions of the Jews, who ascribe gnashing of teeth to the devils in hell; for they say ⁵⁰⁰, that

“for the flattery with which they flattered Korah, in the business of rioting, “the prince of hell שניי חרק, gnashed his teeth at them.””

The whole of this may be what they call רִיב וְגִהוּמָה “the indignation”, or “tumult of hell” ⁵⁰¹.

Matthew 8:13

⁴⁹⁸ T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 4. 2. Taanith, fol. 22. 1. Megilla, fol. 28. 2. Yoma, fol. 88. 1. & Sanhedrim, fol. 88. 2. Raziell, fol. 37. 1. & 38. 1. Caphtor, fol. 15. 1. & 18. 2. & 60. 1. & 84. 2. Raya Mehimna, in Zohar in Lev. fol. 34. 2.

⁴⁹⁹ Zohar in Gen. fol. 104. 3.

⁵⁰⁰ T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 52. 1.

⁵⁰¹ Targum in Job, iii 17.

Ver. 13. **And Jesus said unto the centurion,**

Christ having finished the digression, returns an answer to the centurion, agreeably to his desire, saying to him,

go thy way;

not as displeased with him, but as granting his request: for it follows,

and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee.

As he had faith to believe, that Christ could cure his servant by a word speaking, it was done accordingly. Christ by his almighty “fiat” said, let him be healed, and he was healed: just as God in the creation said, “let there be light, and there was light”. He does not say according to thy prayer, or according to thy righteousness, and goodness, but according to thy faith: and it is further to be observed, that this cure was wrought, not so much for the sake of the servant, as his master; and therefore Christ says, “be it done unto thee”; let him be healed for thy sake, and restored unto thee, to thy use, profit, and advantage.

And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour,

at the very exact time, even in that moment. Some copies add, “and when the centurion returned to his house, in the selfsame hour he found his servant healed”; which the Ethiopic version has, and it agrees with Luke 7:10.

Matthew 8:14

Ver. 14. **And when Jesus was come into Peter’s house,**

And which was also Andrew’s, Mark 1:29 for these two brothers lived together, and this was in Capernaum, as appears from the context. Though Andrew and Peter were originally of Bethsaida, a place not far from this, but had removed hither since their call by Christ, this being his city; though probably this house was Peter’s wife’s mother’s, and only called their’s, because they lodged there, whilst in this city: into this house Christ entered, with James and John, and others;

when he saw his (Peter’s) wife’s mother, laid,

or “cast” on a bed, See Gill “Mt 8:6”.

and sick of a fever:

Luke says, Luke 4:38 that she “was taken”, or rather held, or “detained with a great fever”; the distemper was very raging and furious, it had got to a very great height. The other evangelists say, that the persons in the house told him of her, and besought him for her, that he would heal her, having a very great affection for her, and desire of her life, which seemed to be in great danger. Hence it

may be observed against the Papists, that ministers of the Gospel may lawfully marry; Peter, an apostle, and from whom they pretend to derive their succession of bishops, was a married man, had a wife, and that after he was called to be an apostle. His wife’s mother is expressly mentioned, being the person labouring under a violent fever, and whom Christ cured in the following manner.

Matthew 8:15

Ver. 15. **And he touched her hand,**

Sometimes he healed by a word, as the centurion’s servant; and sometimes by a touch, as here; and sometimes by both, as the leper. Luke says, that he “stood over her”, reached over her to take her by the hand, and lift her up, “and rebuked the fever”. Just as he did the winds and sea, having all diseases, as well as the elements, at his beck and control;

and the fever left her

immediately, as the other evangelists say.

And she arose and ministered unto them:

the former of these actions is a proof of her being restored to health and strength, in so much that she could rise and walk about of herself; whereas generally, persons after fevers continue very weak a considerable time; which shows what a miracle was wrought upon her by Christ: and the latter of them expresses her gratitude, for the mercy she had received; she rises and serves him and his friends, preparing proper and suitable provisions for them.

Matthew 8:16

Ver. 16. **When the even was come,**

The other evangelists say, when “the sun was set”, or “setting”; which circumstances are observed, not as some think, because the cool of the evening, and when the sun was set, it was more seasonable and convenient, in those hot countries, to bring out their sick, than in the heat of the day: nor are they remarked, as others think, because it was an unseasonable time to bring them to Christ, when he had been fatigued all day long, and yet he healed them; such was his goodness and compassion: but the true reason of the mention of them is, because it had been their sabbath day, as appears from Mark 1:21 and they could not, according to their canons, bring them sooner. Their sabbath began at sun setting; hence they say⁵⁰², that on the eve of the sabbath, that is, immediately preceding it, when the sabbath is about to begin, it is lawful to work *החמה* *ההמה* *ההמה*, “until

502 T. Hieros. Sheviith, fol. 33. 1.

the sun sets"; and so it ended at sun setting the next day, which they judged of by the appearance of three stars ⁵⁰³.

"R. Phinehas, in the name of R. Aba Bar Papa, says, if but one star appears, it is certainly day; if two, it is a doubt whether it is night or not; if three, it is certainly night. On the eve of the sabbath, if he sees one star and does any work, he is free; if two, he brings a trespass offering for a doubt; if three, he brings a sin offering; at the going out of the sabbath, if he sees one star, and does any work, he brings a sin offering; if two, he brings a trespass offering for a doubt; if three, he is free."

So that till the sun was set, and three stars appeared as a proof of it, it was not lawful to do any sort of business; but as soon as it was out of doubt, that the sun was set, they might do anything: and this being the case,

they brought to him (Christ) many that were possessed with devils;

whose bodies Satan had been suffered to enter into, and were acted, and governed, and thrown into strange disorders by him. Such possessions, through divine permission, were frequent; that Christ, who was come in the flesh, might have an opportunity of showing his power over Satan, and giving proof of his deity and Messiahship.

And he cast out the spirits with his word;

only by speaking to them; who were obliged, at his command, and by his orders, to quit their tenements, though unwillingly enough.

And healed all that were sick; whoever they were, without any respect of persons, of whatsoever disease attended them: the most stubborn, inveterate, and otherwise incurable disorder, was not too hard for him, which he cured without the help of medicine, and where that could be of no use, and either by speaking, or touching, or some such like means.

Matthew 8:17

Ver. 17. **That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet,**

In Isa 53:4 "He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows", here rendered,

himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses:

very agreeable to the Hebrew text, הוּא, "he himself";

⁵⁰³ T. Hieros. Beracot, fol. 2. 2. Maimon. Sabbat, c. 5. sect. 4.

not another; נָשָׂא, "took up", upon himself voluntarily, freely, as a man lifts up a burden, and takes it on his shoulders; הַלִּינוּ, "our infirmities", diseases, sicknesses, whether of body or soul, וּמְכַאֲבֵינוּ בְּלֵנוּ, "and bare", or carried, as a man does a burden upon his back, "our sicknesses", or diseases, which occasion pain and sorrow. And that these words are spoken of the Messiah, the Jews themselves own; for among the names they give to the Messiah, "a leper" is one; which they prove from this passage ⁵⁰⁴."

The Rabbins say, "a leper" of the house of Rabbi is his name; as it is said, "surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted". Says R. Nachman, if he is of the living, he is as I am, as it is said, Jer 30:21 Says Rab, if of the living, he is as our Rabbi, the holy."

Upon which last clause the gloss is,

"If the Messiah is of them that are alive, our Rabbi the holy is he, "because Myawlxt lbwod he bears infirmities"."

Elsewhere ⁵⁰⁵ they say,

"There is one temple that is called the temple of the sons of afflictions; and when the Messiah comes into that temple, and reads all the afflictions, all the griefs, and all the chastisements of Israel, which come upon them, then all of them shall come upon him: and if there was any that would lighten them off of Israel, and take them upon himself, there is no son of man that can bear the chastisements of Israel, because of the punishments of the law; as it is said, "surely he hath borne our griefs", &c." And in another ancient book ⁵⁰⁶ of their's, God is represented saying to the Messiah,

"תְּבֹרַל יִשְׂרָאֵל "wilt thou bear chastisements", in order to remove their iniquities? (the iniquities of the children of God,) as it is written, "surely he hath borne our griefs": he replied, "I will bear them with joy"

Hence it is manifest, that according to the mind of the ancient Jews, this passage belongs to the Messiah, and is

⁵⁰⁴ T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 98. 2.

⁵⁰⁵ Zohar in Exod. fol. 85. 2.

⁵⁰⁶ Pesikta in Abkath Rochel, l. 1. par. 2. p. 309. Ed. Huls.

rightly applied to him by the evangelist. But the difficulty is, how it had its accomplishment in Christ's healing the bodily diseases of men; since Isaiah speaks not of his actions and miracles, but of his sufferings and death; and not of bearing the diseases of the body, as it should seem, but of the diseases of the mind, of sins, as the Apostle Peter interprets it, 1Pe 2:24. To remove which, let it be observed, that though the prophet chiefly designs to point out Christ taking upon him, and bearing the sins of his people, in order to make satisfaction for them, and to save them from them; yet so likewise, as to include his bearing, by way of sympathy, and taking away by his power, the bodily diseases of men, which arise from sin; and which was not only an emblem of his bearing and taking away sin, but a proof of his power and ability to do it: for since he could do the one, it was plain he could do the other.

Matthew 8:18

Ver. 18. Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him,

Who got together, partly out of novelty to see his person, of whom they had heard so much; and partly to see the miracles he wrought: some came to have their bodily diseases healed; few, if any, to hear the Gospel preached by him, and for the good of their immortal souls: the most part came with some sinister, selfish, and carnal views, wherefore

he gave commandment to depart unto the other side.

Different were the reasons, which at certain times moved Christ to depart from the multitude; as that he might have an opportunity of private prayer, or to preach, to others, or to show he sought not popular applause, and to avoid seditions: his reasons here seem to be with respect to himself, that being wearied as man, with the work of the day, he might have an opportunity of refreshing himself with sleep; with respect to his disciples, that he might have a trial of their faith, when in danger at sea; and with respect to the multitude, because of their carnality, and sole concern for their temporal, and worldly good. The persons he gave commandment to, must be either the multitude, or the disciples; not the former, because he studiously avoided their company, and his concern was to be rid of them; but the latter, and so the Vulgate Latin and Munster's Hebrew Gospel read, "he commanded his disciples". The place he would have them go to was, the other side of the lake of Tiberias, or Genesareth; not over the river Euphrates, as says the

author of the old Nizzachon ⁵⁰⁷

Matthew 8:19

Ver. 19. And a certain Scribe came,... "As they went in the way", Luke 9:57 to go to the sea side, in order to take shipping, and pass to the other shore; and said unto him, Master, or Rabbi, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. One would have thought, that this man desired in good earnest to be a disciple of Christ, were it not for Christ's answer to him, who knew his heart: from whence it appears, that he, seeing the miracles which Christ wrought, and observing the fame of him among the people, began to think that he would be generally received as the Messiah; and by joining himself to him, promised himself much ease, honour, and wealth. These seem to be the motives, which prevailed upon him to take so sudden and hasty a step; for he did not wait to be called to follow Christ, as the other disciples were, but offers himself to be one; that is, to be one of his intimates, one of his apostles; and besides, he rashly promises to do that, which he knew nothing of, and which in some cases is impossible to be done.

Matthew 8:20

Ver. 20. And Jesus saith unto him,... Knowing his heart, and the carnal and worldly views with which he acted; the foxes have holes in the earth, where they hide themselves from danger, take their rest, and secure their whelps; and the birds of the air have nests, where they sit, lay, and hatch their eggs, and bring up their young; but the son of man has not where to lay his head, when he is weary, and wants rest and sleep, as he did at this time. So that though he was Lord of all, as being the mighty God; yet as "the son of man", a phrase, expressive both of the truth and meanness of his human nature, the most despicable of creatures in the earth and air, were richer than he. This he said, to convince the Scribe of his mistake; who expected much worldly grandeur and wealth, by becoming his disciple. When Christ styles himself "the son of man", it is no contradiction to his being God; nor any objection to trust and confidence in him, as the Jew ⁵⁰⁸ suggests; for he is truly and properly God, as well as really man, having two natures, human and divine, united in his person; so that he is, as was prophesied of him, Emmanuel, God with us, in our nature, God manifested in the flesh: and since he is so, it cannot be unlawful to trust in him; which it would

⁵⁰⁷ Pesikta in Abkath Rochel, l. 1. par. 2. p. 205. Ed. Huls.

⁵⁰⁸ R. Isaac Chizzuk Emuna, par. 2. c. 12. p. 403.

be indeed, was he a mere man. The Jews ought not to object to this name and title of the "Messiah, the son of man": since he is so called, as their own writers and commentators acknowledge, in ⁵⁰⁹ Ps 80:17 and ⁵¹⁰ Da 7:13. And whereas it is further urged against these words of Christ, that if he was God, why does he complain of want of place? Is not the whole world his, according to Ps 24:1? It may be replied, that it is very true, that the whole world is his, nor could he be in want of anything, as God; but yet, as man, for our sakes he became "poor", that we "might be rich": nor should this be any difficulty with a Jew, when they themselves say, as some have thought, if he (the Messiah) should come, *hyb anbytyd atkwd yl*, "there's no place in which he can sit down" ⁵¹¹. Unless it be understood of Nebuchadnezzar, as the gloss explains it; let the learned inspect the place, and judge: the coming of the Messiah is immediately spoken of.

Matthew 8:21

Ver. 21. And another of his disciples said unto him,.... That is, one of his disciples; for this does not suppose, that the other, the Scribe before mentioned, was one. It is possible, he might be one of the twelve. The Persic version makes him one of the disciples, whom they call "Hawarion", apostles; and, according to ancient tradition, it was ⁵¹² Philip. And certain it is, that he was one, who was called to preach the Gospel; so that he was not a common ordinary disciple; nor could he be one of the seventy disciples, since it was after this, that they were called and sent forth; as appears from Luke's account, Luke 9:60. But who he particularly was, cannot be certainly known, nor is it of any great importance to know it: his address to Christ is made with great respect and reverence, and in a very modest and humble manner, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father: for it seems, according to Luke, that Christ had bid him "follow" him: he had given him a call to be his disciple, and to go and preach the Gospel, which he did not refuse; but desires leave "first" to attend his father's funeral, who was now dead; as his requests, and Christ's answer, both suppose: though some conjecture, that he was only very aged, or was dangerously ill; and therefore it could not be thought he would live long: hence he was desirous of

⁵⁰⁹ Targum & Aben Ezra in loc, Abarbinel Mashmia Jeshua, fol. 81. 2.

⁵¹⁰ R. Jeshua in Aben Ezra in loc. & Saadiah Gaon & Jarchi in loc. Zohar in Gen. fol. 85. 4.

⁵¹¹ T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 96. 2.

⁵¹² Clement. Alex. Strom. l. 3. p. 436.

doing this last good office, before he entered on his public work; but these are conjectures, without any foundation: it is plain, his father was dead, and what he requested was, to go home, which perhaps might not be a great way off, and perform the funeral rites, and then return. This may seem very reasonable, since burying the dead was reckoned by the Jews, not only an act of kindness and respect to the deceased, but an act of piety and religion; and in which, men are followers of God, and imitate him, who himself buried the body of Moses ⁵¹³. And though this man was called to preach the Gospel, yet he might think he would be easily excused for the present, on this account; since, according to the Jewish canons, such whose dead lay before them, who were as yet unburied, were excused reading the Shema, they were free from performing the duty of prayer, and were not obliged to wear their phylacteries ⁵¹⁴.

Matthew 8:22

Ver. 22. But Jesus said unto him, follow thou me,.... Christ would not excuse him on this account, but insists on what he had before called him to; to attend upon him, and give himself up to the ministry of the word: which was done, partly to shew, that a greater regard ought to be had to him, than to the nearest relation and friend whatever; and partly, on account of the dignity of the Gospel ministry, which greatly exceeds any such services; as also to signify, of what little account were the traditions of the elders with him; wherefore he says, let the dead bury the dead. Our Lord is not to be understood, as speaking against, or disrespectfully of burying the dead; his words suppose it ought to be done: only it was not proper, that this person should be concerned in it at this time, who was called to an higher employment; and therefore should leave this to be done by persons, whom it better became. And however strange and odd such a phrase may sound in the ears of some, of one dead man's burying another, it was easily understood by a Jew; with whom it is common to say, *tmk bwvx ajwxh*, "that a sinner is counted as ⁵¹⁵ dead, and that ungodly persons, even while they are alive", *Mytm Nywyrq*, are "called dead" ⁵¹⁶. And in this sense is the word used, in the former part of this phrase; and Christ's meaning is,

⁵¹³ T. Bab. Bava Metzia, fol. 30. 2. & Sota, fol. 14. 1.

⁵¹⁴ Misn. Beracot, c. 3. sect. 1.

⁵¹⁵ Tzeror Hammor, fol. 6. 2.

⁵¹⁶ T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 18. 2. Jarchi in Gen. 11. 32. Baal Hatturim, in Deut. xvii. 6. Tzeror Hammor, fol. 58. 3. Midrash Kohelet. fol. 78. 2. Caphtor, fol. 79. 1, 2. & 84. 1.

let such who are dead in trespasses and sins, and to all that is spiritually good, bury those who are dead in a natural or corporal sense. It is likely the deceased was an unregenerate man; however, it is plainly suggested, that many of the relations were; and there were enough of them to take care of this service: and therefore, there was no need why he should neglect the ministry of the Gospel to attend that; but, ought to leave it to persons who were fitter for it.

Matthew 8:23

Ver. 23. **And when he was entered into a ship,**

Which was got ready by his disciples, or hired by them for his use, according to the directions he had given,

his disciples followed him

into the ship, and they only; for as for the men hereafter mentioned, they were the men that belonged to the ship, and had the management of it: the multitude were dismissed, and in order to be clear of them, Christ took this method; and being desirous also of trying the faith of his disciples, he ordered it so, that they should be alone with him.

Matthew 8:24

Ver. 24. **And behold, there arose a great tempest,**

“A great concussion”, or “shaking” of the sea; the stormy wind moved the sea, and the waves thereof; and both wind and sea shook the ship, and the men that were in it. Luke calls this tempest a “storm wind”, Luke 8:23 and Mark says, it was “a great storm of wind”, Mark 4:37 and both use the word “loelaps”, which signifies a particular kind of wind, which is suddenly whirled about upwards and downwards; or rather, a conflict of many winds: it seems to be a whirlwind, or hurricane. It is said, that this tempest “arose”, not by chance, nor by the power of Satan, but by divine providence; for the trial of the faith of Christ’s disciples, and that he might have an opportunity of giving proof of his deity on the sea, as he had lately done in several instances on the dry land. Luke says, that this storm of wind “came down”; referring to the motion and course of the winds, which are exhalations from the earth, raised up into the middle region of the air, from whence they are expelled by a superior force to the lower region, and from thence move in an oblique, slanting manner, downwards. The place where this tempest arose, or into which this storm of wind came down, is here said to be

in the sea.

Luke calls it a “lake”, and it was the lake of Genesareth.

But both Matthew and Mark call it the sea, and is what is sometimes called the sea of Tiberias, and the sea of Galilee; see Joh 6:1 agreeably to the language of the Jewish ⁵¹⁷ writers. To all this, the word “behold!” is prefixed; which is sometimes used, when anything extraordinary and preternatural is spoken of: and this storm seems to be more than an ordinary one; at least, it was very sudden and unexpected: when the disciples entered the ship, the air was serene, and the sea still and quiet; but as soon as they had set sail, at once, on a sudden, this storm came down, with great force into the sea, and lifted up its waves;

insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves;

it was just sinking to the bottom, so that they were in the utmost extremity: and what added to their distress was,

but he,

Christ,

was asleep.

Mark mentions the place where he was asleep, “in the hinder part of the ship”; that is in the stern: where he, as Lord and Master, should be, though to the great concern of his disciples, there asleep; and that in a deep sound sleep, as the word which Luke makes use of signifies; and as appears by the loud repeated call of his disciples to awake him: and though this sleep doubtless arose from natural causes, he being greatly fatigued with the business of the day past; yet was so ordered by the providence of God, to come upon him in such a manner at this time, for the trial of the faith of his disciples. Christ’s body needing sleep, and refreshment by it, shows that it was a real human body he assumed; subject to the same infirmities as our’s; excepting sin; and is no contradiction to the truth of his divinity, as the Jew ⁵¹⁸ suggests. He slept as man, though, as God, he is Israel’s keeper, who neither slumbers nor sleeps.

Matthew 8:25

Ver. 25. **And his disciples came unto him,**

From some other part of the ship, being in great consternation, and distress,

and awoke him; saying, Lord, save us, we perish.

They awoke him by their loud cries, and repeated calls; for in Luke, the form of address is doubled, “Master, Master!” expressing their distress, importunity, and haste for deliverance saying, “save us, we perish”, or

⁵¹⁷ T. Bob. Moed. Katon, fol. 18. 2. Bava Kama, fol. 81. 2. Bereshit Rabba, fol. 86. 2.

⁵¹⁸ Vet. Nizzachon, p. 210.

“we are lost”: which shows the apprehensions they had of their condition; not only that they were in danger of being lost, or were ready to be lost, but were lost: they saw no probability of escaping by any natural, rational methods: wherefore they apply to Christ, believing that he was able to save them, in this their extremity; as they had indeed a great deal of reason to conclude, from the miracles they had that day seen performed by him.

Matthew 8:26

Ver. 26. **And he saith unto them, why are ye fearful?**

Though they had some faith in him, yet there was a great deal of fear and unbelief, for which Christ blames them, saying,

O ye of little faith: See Gill on “Mt 6:30”. In Luke, the phrase is, “where is your faith?” what is become of it? You professed but just now to believe in me, is your faith gone already? In Mark it is, “how is it that ye have no faith?” That is, in exercise, their faith was very small, it could hardly be discerned: some faith they had, as appears by their application to him, but it was very little. They had no faith in him, as sleeping, that he could deliver them; but had some little faith in him that he might, could he be awaked out of sleep; and for this Christ blames them; for he, as the eternal God, was as able to save them sleeping as waking.

Then he arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm:

being awaked by his disciples, he raises his head from his pillow, stands up, and with a majestic voice, in an authoritative manner, showing some kind of resentment at the wind and sea, as if they had exceeded their commission; and the one had blown, and the other raged too much and too long; he rebukes them in such language as this, “peace, be still”; *siwpa pefimwso*, as it is in Mark, be silent, hold your peace, stop your mouth, put a bridle on it, as the words used signify; and go on no longer to threaten with shipwreck and loss of lives; upon which the wind ceased, the sea became calm, and the ship moved quietly on.

Matthew 8:27

Ver. 27. **But the men marvelled,**

Mark says, “they feared exceedingly”; and Luke, “they being afraid, wondered”: they were filled with astonishment and fear, or reverence: there was such a shine of majesty, such a lustre of divine power appeared in this affair. The other two evangelists seem to refer this to the disciples, which Matthew seems to ascribe to the men, the mariners that were in the ship; it is likely it

had the same effect on both; and both were abundantly convinced of his deity and dignity, saying,

**what manner of man,
or person
is this?**

For the word “man”, is not in the text; of what qualities, perfections and powers, is he possessed? Surely he must be more than a mere man; he can be no other than the mighty God, that even the winds and the sea obey him: which can be said of no other, than the most high God: never was such a thing heard of, that the winds and sea should be rebuked by a mere creature, and should obey. That man must be infidel to “revelation”, that can read this account, and deny the deity of Christ; to one or other of these he must be drove, either to deny the truth of the fact, and the circumstances of it, or believe that Jesus Christ is truly and properly God, as the disciples and mariners did.

Matthew 8:28

Ver. 28. **And when he was come to the other side,**

Of the lake, or sea of Tiberias, right over against Galilee,

into the country of Gergesenes,

the same with the Gergashites, Ge 15:21 whom Joshua drove out of the land of Canaan; and who, as a Jewish writer⁵¹⁹ says, left their country to the Israelites, and went to a country, which is called to this day, גורגשטן, “Gurgestan”, of which these people were some remains: both in Mark 5:1 it is called “the country of the Gadarenes”; and so the Syriac and Persic versions read it here; which is easily reconciled by observing, not that Gergesa and Gadara were one and the same city, called by different names; but that these two cities were near each other, in the same country, which was sometimes denominated from the one, and sometimes from the other. Origen⁵²⁰ has a remarkable passage, showing the different situations of Gadara and Gergesa; and that the latter cannot be Gerasa in Arabia; and also the signification of the name, for the sake of which, I shall transcribe it.

”Gerasa (says he) is a city of Arabia, having neither sea nor lake near it; wherefore the evangelists, who well knew the countries about Judea, would never have said so manifest an untruth: and as to what we find in some few copies, “into the country of the Gadarenes”, it must be said,

⁵¹⁹ Juchasin, fol. 135. 2.

⁵²⁰ Comment. in Joannem, T. 2. p. 131. Ed. Huet.

that Gadara indeed was a city of Judea, about which were many famous baths; but there was no lake, or sea in it, adjacent with precipices; but Gergesa, from whence were the Gergasenes, is an ancient city about the lake; now called Tiberias; about which is a precipice adjacent to the lake, from whence is shown, that the swine were cast down by the devils. Gergesa is interpreted, *παροικια εκβεβληκοτων*, “the habitation of those that cast out”; being called so perhaps prophetically, for what the inhabitants of those places did to the Saviour, beseeching him to depart out of their coasts.

”Dr. Lightfoot suggests, that this place might be so called, from *גרגסא*, which signifies “clay” or “dirt”, and mentions Lutetia for an example. But to pass this, as soon as Christ was got out of the ship, and come to land in this country,

there met him two possessed with devils.

Both Mark and Luke mention but one, which is no contradiction to Matthew; for they do not say that there was only one; and perhaps the reason why they only take notice of him is, because he was the fiercest, had a legion of devils in him, and was the principal one, that spake to Christ, and with whom he was chiefly concerned. This is to be understood, not of any natural disease of body, but of real possession by Satan. These possessed men met him, not purposely, or with design, but accidentally to them, and unawares to Satan too; for though he knows much, he is not omniscient: had he been aware of Christ’s coming that way, and what he was about to do, he would have took care to have had the possessed out of the way; but so it was ordered by providence, that just as Christ landed, these should be

coming out of the tombs.

Their coemeteria, or burying places, were at some distance from towns or cities; wherefore Luke says, the possessed met him “out of the city”, a good way off from it; for the Jews⁵²¹ say, *שלא היו בתי הקברות מוכני ליר*, “that the sepulchres were not near a city”; see Luke 7:12 and these tombs were built so large, that persons might go into them, and sit and dwell in them, as these “demoniacs” did, and therefore are said to come out of them. The rules for making them are⁵²² these;”

He that sells ground to his neighbour to make a burying place, or that receives of his neighbour,

521 Misn. Bava Bathra, c. 6. sect. 8.

522 T. Bab. Kiddushin. fol. 80. 2. Gloss.

to make him a burying place, must make the inside of the cave four cubits by six, and open in it eight graves; three here and three there, and two over against them; and the graves must be four cubits long, and seven high, and six broad. R. Simeon says, he must make the inside of the cave six cubits by eight, and open within thirteen graves, four here, and four there, and three over against them; and one on the right hand of the door, and one on the left: and he must make *rux*, “a court”, at the mouth of the cave, six by six, according to the measure of the bier, and those that bury; and he must open in it two caves, one here and another there: R. Simeon says, four at the four sides. R. Simeon ben Gamaliel says, all is according to the nature of the rock.”

Now in the court, at the mouth, or entrance of the cave, which was made for the bearers to put down the bier or coffin upon, before the interment, there was room for persons to enter and lodge, as these possessed with devils did: which places were chosen by the devils, either because of the solitude, gloominess, and filthiness of them; or as some think, to confirm that persuasion some men had, that the souls of men after death, are changed into devils; or rather, to establish a notion which prevailed among the Jews, that the souls of the deceased continue for a while to be about their bodies; which drew persons to necromancy, or consulting with the dead. It is a notion that obtains among the Jews⁵²³, that the soul for twelve months after its separation from the body, is more or less with it, hovering about it; and hence, some have been induced to go and dwell among the tombs, and inquire of spirits: they tell us⁵²⁴,

”it happened to a certain holy man, that he gave a penny to a poor man, on the “eve” of the new year; and his wife provoked him, and he went *ירוח* “and lodged among the tombs”, and heard two spirits talking with one another.”

Or the devil chose these places, to render the persons possessed the more uncomfortable and distressed; to make them wilder and fiercer, by living in such desolate places, and so do more mischief to others: which was the case of these, who were

exceeding fierce,

wicked, malignant, mischievous, and troublesome,

523 Nishmat Chayim, par. 2. c. 22. p. 81. 2. c. 24. p. 85. 1. & c. 29. p. 93. 1. p. 94. 1, 2.

524 T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 18. 2.

through the influence of the devils in them;

so that no man might pass that way,
without being insulted or hurt by them.

Matthew 8:29

Ver. 29. **And behold they cried out, saying,**

This is an instance and proof, of the wonderful power of Christ over the devils; and has therefore the note of admiration, “behold!” prefixed to it, that the devils themselves who had took possession of these men, and made them so fierce and cruel, and outrageous, that there was no passing the way for them; yet upon the sight of Christ, and especially at hearing his orders to come out from them, not only say, but cry out, as being in great consternation, horror, and fear, and with the utmost subjection to him,

what have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God?

They had nothing indeed to do with him; they had no interest in his grace, blood, righteousness, and salvation; he was no Saviour for them: but he had to do with them, and that was what they dreaded; and therefore mean, that he would let them alone, in the quiet possession of these men, and not disturb and dislodge them; for they knew that he was Jesus, the Saviour of sinful men, though none of their’s, the true Messiah; and that he was also “the Son of God”, a divine person, possessed of almighty power, and so an overmatch for them; at whose presence they trembled, and whose all commanding voice they were obliged to obey, though sorely against their wills.

Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?

This question implies the apprehension the devils had of Christ as a judge, and their sense of his authority, and power, to punish them; as also that they deserved it, and expected it, nor do they say anything against it; only imagine that the time of their full torment was not yet come; which is generally referred unto the day of judgment, to which they were reserved by the appointment of God; which they had some notion of, and as at a distance; and therefore complain of Christ’s coming to them now, and expostulate with him about it: though it may be understood of the time they had proposed to themselves, to abide in the men they had possessed, and which they concluded they had a permission for; and nothing could give more torment, pain, and uneasiness, than to be turned out, and remanded to their prison, and restrained from doing more mischief to the bodies and souls of men. Or whether this may not have some respect

to the time of the preaching of the Gospel, and setting up the kingdom of Christ among the Gentiles, the devils might have some hint of, as not yet to be, I leave to be considered, with this observation; that there seems to be a considerable “emphasis” on the word “hither”, meaning the country of the Gergesenes, an Heathen country, at least where many Gentiles inhabited: and it is as if they had said, is it not enough, that thou turnest us out of the land of Judea, and hast dispossessed us out of the bodies of men dwelling there; but thou pursuest us hither also, and will not let us have any rest, even in this Heathenish land; though the time is not yet come, for the dissolution of our empire and government in the Gentile world?

Matthew 8:30

Ver. 30. **And there was a good way off from them,**

“Nigh unto the mountains”, as Mark says, or “on the mountain”, as Luke, bordering on the sea shore; so that though it was at some distance, yet within sight. The Vulgate Latin, and the Hebrew edition of Munster read, “not far off”; and the Persic version, “near them”: which agree with the accounts of Mark and Luke, who say, that there were “there”, or hard by, “an herd of many swine feeding”. Since swine’s flesh was forbidden the Jews to eat, Le 11:7 it may be asked, how came it to pass, that there should be any number of these creatures, or that such a herd of them should be kept in the land of Israel? To which may be replied, that though the Jews might not eat swine’s flesh, they were not forbid to bring them up; which they might do, in order to sell to the Gentiles, who dwelt among them; and particularly to the Romans, under whose government they now were, and with whom swine’s flesh was in great esteem: but still a difficulty remains; for it was not only forbidden by the law of God to eat swine’s flesh, but, by the Jewish canons, to bring them up, and make any advantage of them in any shape: their law was this, יגדל ישראל חזירימ בכל מקומ לא “an Israelite might not bring up hogs in any place”⁵²⁵: the reasons of this canon were many, partly because of the uncleanness of these creatures; hence one of their writers⁵²⁶ observing, that next to those words, they “are unclean unto you”, are, “and the swine”, says, that this is to teach us, that “it is forbidden to bring up hogs”; and partly, because of the damage which these creatures do to other men’s fields: hence⁵²⁷

525 Misn. Bava Kama, c. 7. sect. 7. Midrash Kohelet, fol. 77. 2.

526 Baal Hatturim, in Deut. xiv. 7, 8.

527 Maimon. Nezike Mammon, c. 5. sect. 9.

”the wise men say, cursed is he that brings up dogs and hogs, מפני שהזיקן מרובה, “because they do much hurt”.

”But the chief reason given by the Gemafists⁵²⁸ for this prohibition, was the fact following:

”When the Hasmonean family, or Maccabees, were at war with one another, Hyrcanus was within (Jerusalem), and Aristobulus without, and every day they let down to them money in a box; and they sent up to them the daily sacrifices: there was one old man who understood the wisdom of the Greeks, and he said unto them, as long as they employ themselves in the service (of God), they will not be delivered into your hands: on the morrow they let down their money, and they sent them up a hog; and when it came to the middle of the wall, he fixed his hoofs in the wall, and the land of Israel shook, &c. at that time they said, cursed be the man שיגרל הזירים, “that breeds hogs”; and cursed is the man that teaches his son the learning of the Grecians.

”Before this time, it seems to have been lawful to bring them up, and trade with them: but now it was forbid, not only to breed them, but to receive any gain or profit by them; for this is another of their rules⁵²⁹.

”It is forbidden to bring up a hog, in order to get any profit by his skin, or by his lard, or fat, to anoint with, or to light (lamps) with; yea, though it may fall to him by inheritance.

”And nothing was more infamous and reproachful among them, than a keeper of these creatures: when therefore they had a mind to cast contempt upon a man, they would call him מגרל הזירי⁵³⁰, “a breeder of hogs”, or הזריא⁵³¹, “a hog herd”. But after all, it was only an Israelite that was forbid this; a stranger might bring them up, for this is one of their canons⁵³². ”A man may sell fetches to give to a stranger that breeds hogs, but to an Israelite it is forbidden to breed them.”

Yea, they say⁵³³,

528 T. Bab. Bava Kama, fol. 82. 2. Menachot, fol. 64. 2. Sota, fol. 49. 2.

529 Tosaphot in Pesach, art. 62.

530 T. Hieros. Shekalim, fol. 47. 3.

531 lb. Trumot, fol. 46. 3.

532 Piske Tosaphot in Sabbat, art. 317.

533 Yom. Tob. & Ez. Chayim, in Misn. Bava Kama, c. 7. sect. 7.

”If others breed them to anoint skins with their lard, or to sell them to an Israelite to anoint with them, it was lawful: all fat may be sold, which is not for eating.

”And so some cities are supposed to have hogs in them, concerning which they observe⁵³⁴,

that”a city that has hogs in it, is free from the “mezuzah”;

”the schedules which were fastened to the posts of doors and gates: but now supposing this herd of swine belonged to Jews in these parts, it may easily be accounted for; for since they lived among Heathens, they might not have so great a regard to the directions of their Rabbins; and especially, since it was so much for their profit and advantage, they might make no scruple to break through these ordinances. Though this herd of swine may well enough be thought to belong to the Gentiles, that dwelt in this country; since Gadara was a Grecian city, and then inhabited more by Syrians, than by Jews, as Josephus relates⁵³⁵.

Matthew 8:31

Ver. 31. **So the devils besought him, saying,**

All the devils, the whole legion of them, who perceiving that they must be obliged to go out of these men, and after they had earnestly entreated they might not be sent out of the country where they had long been, and had made themselves masters of the tempers, dispositions, and circumstances of the inhabitants, and so capable of doing the more mischief, begged hard,

if thou cast us out

of these men, or “from hence”, as the Vulgate Latin, the Ethiopic, and Munster’s Hebrew Gospel read, or “out of our place”, as the Persic; since we must depart, and cannot be allowed to enter into other men,

suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.

This request shows the weakness of the infernal spirits, they are not able to do anything without leave, and the superior power of Christ over them, and their acknowledgment of it; as well as the wretched malignity of their nature, who must be doing mischief, if not to the bodies and souls of men, yet to their property and goods; and if they cannot vent their malice on rational creatures, are desirous of doing it on irrational ones. Many reasons have been thought of, why the devils should desire to go into the herd of swine; as because of the filthiness of these creatures, these impure spirits

534 lb. art. 130.

535 De Bello Jud. l. 2. c. 33.

delighting in what is impure; or out of pure hatred to the inhabitants of this country, who, because they could no longer hurt their persons, would destroy their goods; or that by so doing, they might set the people against Christ, and so prevent his usefulness among them; which last seems to be the truest reason, and which end was answered.

Matthew 8:32

Ver. 32. **And he said unto them, go,**

He gave them leave, as God did to Satan, in the case of Job; for without divine permission, these evil spirits cannot do anything to the bodies, souls, or estates of men: they could not enter into the swine without leave, and much less do things of greater moment and consequence; and therefore are not to be feared, or dreaded by men, especially by the people of God. It may be asked, why did Christ suffer the devils to enter the herd of swine, and destroy them, which was a considerable loss to the proprietors? To which may be answered, that if the owners were Jews, and these creatures were brought up by them for food, it was a just punishment of their breach of the law of God; or if to be sold to others, for gain and filthy lucre's sake, it was a proper rebuke, both of the avarice and the contempt of the laws of their own country, which were made to be a hedge or fence for the law of God: or if they were Gentiles, this was suffered to show the malice of the evil spirits, under whose influence they were, and who would, if they had but leave, serve them as they did the swine; and to display the power of Christ over the devils, and his sovereign right to, and disposal of the goods and properties of men; and to evince the truth of the dispossession, and the greatness of the mercy the dispossessed shared in; and to spread the fame of the miracle the more.

And when they were come out of the men that had been possessed by them, they went into the herd of swine;

which shows the real existence of these spirits, the truth of possessions and dispossessions; and that by these devils cannot be meant the sins and corruptions of men's hearts, such as pride, covetousness, uncleanness, envy, malice, cruelty, &c. for these could never be said to enter into a herd of swine, or be the authors of their destruction:

and behold, the whole herd of swine,

and which was a very large one, consisting of about two thousand,

ran violently down a steep place;

a precipice of one of the rocks, by the sea side, into the sea of "Tiberias", or lake of Genesareth, which were the same, and over which Christ had just now passed;

and perished in the waters

of the sea, or lake, and not any other waters near Gadara, and afar off from hence.

Matthew 8:33

Ver. 33. **And they that kept them fled,**

The hog herds, men of very low life, and whose employment was very infamous and reproachful, as has been observed. These, amazed at what they had seen, distressed with the loss of the swine, and so of their employment, and frightened also lest they should incur the blame and displeasure of their masters, ran away in great haste, fear, and astonishment;

and went their way into the city;

either of Gergesa, or Gadara. Mark and Luke say, they "went and told it in the city, and in the country": in their fright and distress, some ran one way, and some another; some went into the city, others into the country, and so spread the affair far and near, and the fame of Christ, which was designed by this miracle;

and told everything

they saw and heard; how the devils entered into the swine, and they ran headlong into the sea, and were drowned: this they told first, as being done last, and with which they were most affected, and what chiefly concerned their employers; and after they had told every circumstance of the affair, next they gave a narrative of

what was befallen to the possessed of the devils,

and which was the occasion of the loss of their swine; how subject the devils, that were in them, were to Christ; how easily he dispossessed them by a word of command; how they entreated they might have leave to go into the herd of swine, which was granted; and how perfectly whole, and in health, both in body and mind, the men were.

Matthew 8:34

Ver. 34. **And behold, the whole city,**

The inhabitants of it, not every individual person, but the greater number of them, or, at least, a very great number of them. Luke says, "the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about": for as the news was carried both into the city and country, great numbers flocked from all parts,

and came out to meet Jesus:

not out of any love and respect to him, and in order to invite him, and conduct him into their city, and

there receive him kindly, and treat him with due honour and reverence; but either out of curiosity to see such an extraordinary person, which, doubtless, was the case of many; or, else being terrified at the report concerning him, and distressed with their present loss, which was the case of others, went out to prevent his coming any further, lest they should suffer something worse: accordingly,

when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts;

which was done not as though they thought themselves unworthy the presence of so great a person, as did the "centurion", in the former part of this "chapter", or, as Peter, when he said, "depart from me, I am a sinful man"; but as fearing, lest some greater punishment should be inflicted on them for their sins, of which they were conscious; and therefore make no complaint of any injustice being done them by the loss of their swine; though these they preferred to the presence of Christ, and even to any cures wrought, or which might have been wrought, either upon the bodies, or souls of men.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

CHAPTER IX

2 Christ curing one sick of the palsy. 9 calleth Matthew from the receipt of custom. 10 eateth with publicans and sinners. 14 defendeth his disciples for not fasting. 20 cureth the bloody issue, 23 raiseth from death Jairus' daughter. 27 giveth sight to two blind men. 32 healeth a dumb man possessed of a devil, 36 and hath compassion of the multitude.

Matthew 9

- [1] And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city.
- [2] And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.
- [3] And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.
- [4] And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?
- [5] For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?
- [6] But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.
- [7] And he arose, and departed to his house.

- [8] But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.
- [9] And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.
- [10] And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.
- [11] And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?
- [12] But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.
- [13] But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.
- [14] Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?
- [15] And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.
- [16] No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse.
- [17] Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.
- [18] While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live.
- [19] And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did his disciples.
- [20] And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment:
- [21] For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.
- [22] But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.

- [23] And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise,
- [24] He said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn.
- [25] But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose.
- [26] And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land.
- [27] And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us.
- [28] And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord.
- [29] Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you.
- [30] And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it.
- [31] But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country.
- [32] As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.
- [33] And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel.
- [34] But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.
- [35] And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.
- [36] But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.
- [37] Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few;
- [38] Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

JOHN GILL'S COMMENTARY ON MATTHEW CHAPTER IX

Matthew 9:1

Ver. 1. And he entered into a ship,.... Or "the ship", the selfsame ship he came over in, with his disciples. The Gergesenes, or Gadarenes, or both, having desired him to depart their coasts, showing an unwillingness to receive him, and an uneasiness at his company, he immediately turned his back upon them, as an ungrateful

people, being no better than their swine; and who, by their conduct, judged themselves unworthy of his presence, ministry, and miracles: he returned to the sea side, took shipping, and passed over the sea of Tiberias again, and came into his own city; not Bethlehem, where he was born, nor Nazareth, as Jerom thought, where he was educated, but Capernaum, as is clear from Mark 2:1 where he much dwelt, frequently conversed, and his disciples: here he paid tribute as an inhabitant, or citizen of the place, which he was entitled to by only dwelling in it twelve months, according to the Jewish canons; where it is asked ⁵³⁶,

"how long shall a man be in a city ere he is as the men of the city? It is answered, "twelve months"; but if he purchases a dwelling house, he is as the men of the city immediately;"

that is, he is a citizen, and obliged to all charges and offices, as they are: though they seem to make a distinction between an inhabitant and a citizen ⁵³⁷.

"A man is not reckoned כבני הירך, "as the children of the city", or as one of the citizens, in less than twelve months, but he may be called, or accounted, מיושב הירך, "as one of the inhabitants" of the city, if he stays there thirty days."

One or other of these Christ had done, which denominated this city to be his, and he to be either an inhabitant, or a citizen of it.

Matthew 9:2

Ver. 2. **And behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy,**

That is, some of the inhabitants of Capernaum, four men of that city particularly; for Mark says, Mark 2:3 he "was borne of four": these brought him to Jesus,

lying on a bed,

or couch, he being so enfeebled by the disease upon him, his nerves so weak, and the members of his body in such a tremor, that he was not able to walk himself, nor even to be carried by others in any other way than this.

And Jesus seeing their faith; the faith

of the bearers of him, his friends, who brought out a man to be healed, who was otherwise incurable; and though they could not, for the multitude, bring him directly to Christ, they were not discouraged, but took the pains to carry him to the top of the house, and there let him down through the roof, or tiling; as both

⁵³⁶ Misn. Bava Bathra, c. 1. sect. 5.

⁵³⁷ Gloss. in T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 112. 1.

Mark and Luke say; and then set him down before him, believing he was able to cure him: moreover, Christ took notice not only of their faith, but of the sick man's too, who suffered himself to be brought out in this condition, and was contented to go through so much fatigue and trouble, to get at him; when he

said unto the sick of the palsy, son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.

He calls him son, either meaning by it no more than "man"; see Luke 5:20 or using it as a kind, tender, and endearing appellation; or as considering him in the grace of adoption, as one that God had put among the children, had given to him as such, and whom he should bring to glory. He bids him "be of good cheer", whose animal spirits were fainting through the disease that was upon him, and the fatigue he had undergone in being brought to him; and his soul more distressed and dejected, under a sense of his sins and transgressions; which Jesus knowing, very pertinently says, "thy sins be forgiven thee"; than which, nothing could be more cheering and reviving to him: or Christ says this to show, that sin was the cause of the disease and affliction that were upon him, for אין יורין בלא, "there are no chastisements without sin", as the Jews say ⁵³⁸; and that the cause being removed, the effects would cease; of both which he might be assured, and therefore had good reason to cheer up, and be of good heart. This was a wonderful instance of the grace of Christ, to bestow a blessing unasked, and that of the greatest moment and importance.

Matthew 9:3

Ver. 3. **And behold, certain of the Scribes said within themselves,**

And of the Pharisees also, as Luke says; for there were at this time Pharisees and doctors of the law, who were come out of every town of Galilee and Judea, and out of Jerusalem, sitting and hearing him teach, and observing what he said, and did; who upon hearing him pronounce the sentence of pardon, upon this "paralytic" man, reasoned and concluded in their own minds, though they did not care to speak it out, that

this man blasphemeth:

the reason was, because they thought he ascribed that to himself, which was peculiar to God: and so he did, and yet did not blaspheme; because he himself was God, of which he quickly gave convincing proofs.

Matthew 9:4

⁵³⁸. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 55. 1. Midrash Hohelet, fol. 70. 4. Tzeror. Hammor, fol. 99. 1.

Ver. 4. **And Jesus knowing their thoughts,**

Which was a clear evidence, and full demonstration of his deity; for none knows the thoughts of the heart but God; and since he knew the thoughts of men's hearts, it could be no blasphemy in him to take that to himself which belonged to God, even to forgive sins. And this, one would think, would have been sufficient to have approved himself to them as the true Messiah; since this is one of the ways of knowing the Messiah, according to the Jews, and which they made use of to discover a false one.

"Bar Coziba, (they say ⁵³⁹.) reigned two years and a half: he said to the Rabbins, I am the Messiah; they replied to him, it is written of the Messiah, that he is "of quick understanding, and judges", (referring to Isa 11:3) let us see whether this man is of quick understanding, and can make judgment, i.e. whether a man is wicked, or not, without any external proof; and when they saw he was not of quick understanding, and could not judge in this manner, they slew him."

But now Christ needed not any testimony of men; he knew what was in the hearts of men, of which this instance is a glaring proof: hence he said,

wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?

it was no evil in them to think that God only could forgive sin; but the evil was, that they thought Christ was a mere man, and ought not to have took so much upon him; and that, for so doing, he was a wicked man, and a blasphemmer.

Matthew 9:5

Ver. 5. **For whether is easier to say,**

Christ proceeds to clear himself of the charge of blasphemy, and to prove his power to forgive sins, by putting a case to them, of which he makes themselves Judges, and is this: which is easiest to be said,

thy sins are forgiven thee? or to say, arise and walk?

Neither of them were easy to a mere creature, but both of them easy to God; and he that could say the one with power and efficacy going along with his word, could say the other as effectually: and whereas it was a plain case, and out of all question, that he could bid this "paralytic" man, though in this weak condition, arise from his bed, stand upon his feet, and go home of himself; and since he had already healed many that were sick of the palsy, and particularly the "centurion's"

⁵³⁹ T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 93. 2.

servant, by a word speaking, he must have equal power to forgive sin. For to heal the diseases of the body in such a wonderful manner, was a very sensible proof of his power to heal the maladies of the soul; and though these are greater than those of the body, yet since both require divine power, he that is able to do the one, is able to do the other. And that it might appear he did not say this in a boasting manner, he adds,

Matthew 9:6

Ver. 6. **But that ye may know that the son of man,**

That they might have a visible proof, an ocular demonstration, that though he was the son of man, truly and really man, yet not a mere man; but also as truly and properly God, God and man in one person, and so

hath power on earth to forgive sins:

not only ability as God, but even authority to do it as mediator, even whilst he was on earth, in a state of humiliation, in fashion as a man, in the form of a servant, conversing with sinful mortals.

Then saith he to the sick of the palsy;

turning himself from the Scribes, unto him, and without putting up any prayer to God, but by a mere word of command, says to him,

arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house:

he ordered him to “arise” from his bed, on which he was carried by four men, and “take up his bed”, and carry it himself; which would be not only an evidence that the disease had left him, but that he was in full strength, and perfect health; and to “go” to his own “house”, not only that the multitude might see that he could walk home himself, whom they had seen brought by others; but that those in the house, who had been eyewitnesses of his great disorder and weakness, might be also of his cure.

Matthew 9:7

Ver. 7. **And he arose, and departed to his house.**

Immediately, at the command of Christ, believing he was able to heal him by a word speaking; and, upon his attempt to arise, found himself perfectly healed of his disease, and endued with such strength, that he could, not only with the greatest ease, arise from his bed, stand upon his feet, and walk alone, without any help; but, as the other evangelists declare, took up his bed, on which he lay, carried it home on his shoulders, in the sight of all the people, praising, and giving glory to God for this wonderful cure, which he had received.

Matthew 9:8

Ver. 8. **But when the multitude saw it,**

The miracle that was wrought; when they saw the

man take up his bed, and carry it home, which was done by Christ, as a proof of his having power to forgive sin,

they marvelled, and glorified God:

they were struck with amazement and astonishment at the sight, it being what was strange and unusual; the like to which they had never seen before, nor heard of: and concluding it to be more than human; they ascribed it to God; they praised, and adored the divine goodness, **which had given such power unto men;**

of working miracles, healing diseases, and delivering miserable mortals from such maladies, as were otherwise incurable; still looking upon Christ as a mere man, by whom God did these things; not knowing yet the mystery of the incarnation, God manifest in the flesh.

Matthew 9:9

Ver. 9. **And as Jesus passed forth from thence,**

That is, from Capernaum to the sea side; where, as Mark says, the multitude resorted, and he taught them;

he saw a man named Matthew;

the writer of this Gospel. The other evangelists call him Levi, who was the son of Alphaeus: he went by two names; Mark and Luke call him by the name, which perhaps was the more honourable, or the least known, on purpose to conceal the former life of the apostle, which might expose him to the contempt of some; but he himself chooses to mention the name by which he was most known, as an apostle, and that the grace of God might appear the more illustrious in his calling and conversion. The Jews say⁵⁴⁰, that one of Christ's disciples was called **מתי**, Matthew, which, as Levi, is an Hebrew name; for though he was a publican, yet a Jew; for it was common with the Jews either to be employed by the Roman officers in collecting the toll or tribute, or to farm it of them.

Sitting at the receipt of custom,

or “at the custom house”, or “toll booth”; which both the Syriac version, and Munster's Hebrew Gospel, call **okm**, or **בית מוכה**, the “publican's house”. In the⁵⁴¹ Talmud mention is made of it, in the following parable, upon citing Isa 61:8

“it is like, (say the doctors,) to a king of flesh and blood, who passing by **בית המכ** “the toll booth”, or “publican's house”, says to his servants, give “toll to the publicans”: they reply to him, is not all the toll thine? he says to them, all that pass by the ways will learn of me, and will not avoid the toll;

⁵⁴⁰ T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 43. 1.

⁵⁴¹ T. Bab. Succa, fol. 30. 1.

so says the holy blessed God, &c.”

The publicans had houses, or booths built for them, at the foot of bridges, at the mouth of rivers, and by the sea shore, where they took toll of passengers that went to and fro: hence we read⁵⁴² of bridges being made to take toll at, and of publicans being at the water side⁵⁴³, and of קישרי מוכ⁵⁴⁴, “the tickets”, or “seals of the publicans”; which, when a man had paid toll on one side of a river, were given him by the publican, to show to him that sat on the other side, that it might appear he had paid: in which were written two great letters, bigger than those in common use⁵⁴⁵. Thus Matthew was sitting in a toll booth, near the seashore, to receive the toll of passengers that came, or went in ships or boats.

And he saith unto him, follow me;

notwithstanding the infamous employment he was in, as accounted by the Jews: this was no bar in the way of his call to be a disciple of Christ; and shows, that there was no merit and motive in him, which was the reason of this high honour bestowed upon him; but was entirely owing to the free, sovereign, and distinguishing grace of Christ, and which was powerful and efficacious: for without telling him what work he must do, or how he must live, and without his consulting with flesh and blood, at once, immediately

he arose, and followed him:

such a power went along with the call, that he directly left his employment, how profitable soever it might be to him, and became a disciple of Christ.

Matthew 9:10

Ver. 10. **And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house,**

That is, as the Arabic version reads it, in the house of Matthew, not in the toll house, but in his own house; for he immediately quitted the toll booth, and his office there, and followed Christ, and had him to his own house, where he made a great feast for him, as Luke says, to testify the sense he had of the wondrous grace which was bestowed on him; and also, that other publicans and sinners might have an opportunity of hearing Christ, and conversing with him, whom he invited to this feast; his

⁵⁴² T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 33. 2.

⁵⁴³ Jarchi in Jud. v. 10.

⁵⁴⁴ Misn. Sabbat, c. 8. sect. 2. T. Hieros. Sabbat, fol. 11. 2. T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 78. 2. & Bechorot, fol. 30. 2. & Avoda Zara, fol. 39. 1.

⁵⁴⁵ Jarchi, Maimonides, & Bartenora in Misn. Sabbat, c. 8. sect. 2. & Gloss. in T. Bab. Bechorot, fol. 30. 2.

bowels yearning towards them, and sincerely desiring their conversion, which is the nature of true grace: for, when a soul is made a partaker of the grace of God, it is earnestly desirous that this might be the case of others, especially its sinful relations, friends, or companions; and it takes every opportunity of using, or bringing them under the means; so did Matthew: hence it is said,

behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples;

not of their own accord, but by the invitation of Matthew, and with the good will, and full consent of Christ, who was far from being displeased with their company and freedom; but gladly embraced every opportunity of doing good to the souls of the worst of men; for such as these he came to call and save.

Matthew 9:11

Ver. 11. **And when the Pharisees saw it,**

The feast Matthew made, the guests that were invited, and particularly that Christ sat down to meat with such vile and wicked company; they and the Scribes, as Mark and Luke add, who generally were together, of the same complexion, equally enemies to Christ, and watchful observers of his conduct, and pretending to a more strict and religious way of life, were offended at all this;

and said to his disciples,

which they chose to do, rather than to Christ himself; partly, because they were afraid to engage in a dispute with him, who had just given them a full proof of his omniscience, that he knew the very thoughts and reasonings of their minds, and had so confounded them already, both by his arguments and miracles; and partly, because they might think themselves a match for the disciples, and might hope to stumble and ensnare them, and prevail upon them to quit their profession, and leave following him, whom they would suggest could not be a good man, that was guilty of so evil an action; which, with them, was very unlawful and abhorrent, as that for which they accuse and reprove him,

why eateth your master with publicans and sinners?

The “publicans”, or gatherers of the Roman tax, toll, or tribute of any sort, whether Jews or Gentiles, were persons of a very infamous character; and, as here, so often, in Jewish writings, are ranked with “sinners”, and those of the worst sort: so false swearing was allowed to be made לְהוֹרְגִים וְלַמּוֹכֵי “to murderers, and to robbers, and to publicans”⁵⁴⁶; and so “publicans and

⁵⁴⁶ Mis. Nedarim, c. 3. sect. 4.

thieves” are joined together by Maimonides ⁵⁴⁷, and a publican is said by him to be as a thief. And indeed this was not only the sense of the Jews, but also of other people, according to those words of Zeno the poet, *pantev telwnai pantev eisin arpagev* ⁵⁴⁸, “all publicans are all of them robbers”: though this was not originally their character; for formerly the best of the Roman gentry were employed in this office, till by malpractices it became scandalous, when the meaner sort of people, yea, even vassals, were put into it ⁵⁴⁹. Now, with such sort of men as these the Pharisees held it unlawful to have any sort of conversation; they expelled such their society, would not dwell with them in the same house, nor eat or drink with them; concerning which, their rules and methods are these;

“a companion, or friend, who becomes the king’s collector, or a “publican”, or the like, they drive him from society with them: if he abstains from his evil works, then he is as any other man ⁵⁵⁰”

Again,

“when the king’s collectors enter into a house to dwell, all that are in the house are defiled ⁵⁵¹.”

Moreover, it is ⁵⁵² said, that

“the former saints ate their common food with purity, i.e. with their hands washed, and took care of all defilements every day; and these were called Pharisees; and this sect was exceedingly holy, and was the way of piety; for such a man was separated, and he abstained from the rest of the people, and he did not touch them, *Mhme htvyw lkay alw*, “nor did he eat and drink with them”.”

It was a general rule with them, that a clean person ought not to eat with an unclean, as they judged the common people to be; nay, that a Pharisee, who was unclean himself, might not eat with another person that was so, and which they boast of, as a great degree of holiness.

“Come and see, (say they ⁵⁵³,) to what a pitch purity has arrived in Israel; for they not only teach,

⁵⁴⁷ Hilch. Gezela, c. 5. sect. 9. 11.

⁵⁴⁸ Apud Fabricii Graec. Biblioth. l. 2. c. 22. p. 755.

⁵⁴⁹ Alex. ab Alex. Genial. Dier. l. 2. c. 29.

⁵⁵⁰ Maimon. Mishcab & Moshab, c. 10. sect. 8.

⁵⁵¹ lb. c. 12. sect. 12.

⁵⁵² lb. Hilchoth Tumaot Okelim. c. 16. sect. 12.

⁵⁵³ T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 13. 1.

that a pure person may not eat with one that is defiled, but that one that has a “gonorrhoea” may not eat with another that has one, lest he should be used to transgress this way; and a Pharisee that has a “gonorrhoea” may not eat with a common person that has one, lest he should be used to do so.”

Hence they looked upon Christ and his disciples as such, and would insinuate that they were evil men, who had no regard to purity of life and conversation.

Matthew 9:12

Ver. 12. **But when Jesus heard that,**

The charge the Pharisees brought against him, and the insinuations they had made of him to his disciples; which he either overheard himself, or his disciples related to him,

he said unto them;

the Pharisees, with an audible voice, not only to confute and convince them, but chiefly to establish his disciples, they were endeavouring to draw away from him:

they that be whole need not a physician;

by which he would signify that he was a “physician”: and so he is in a spiritual sense, and that a very skilful one: he knows the nature of all the diseases of the soul, without being told them by the patient; what are the true causes of them; what is proper to apply; when is the best time, and what the best manner: he is an universal one, with regard both to diseases and to persons, that apply to him; he heals all sorts of persons, and all sorts of diseases; such as are blind from their birth, are as deaf as the deaf adder, the halt, and the lame, such as have broken hearts, yea the plague in their hearts, and have stony ones, and all the relapses of his people; which he does by his stripes and wounds, by the application of his blood, by his word and Gospel, through sinners looking to him, and touching him: he is an infallible one, none ever went from him without a cure; none ever perished under his hands; the disease he heals never returns more to prevail, so as to bring on death and destruction; and he does all freely, without money, and without price. So Philo the Jew calls the Logos, or word, *iatron kakwv*, “an healer of diseases” ⁵⁵⁴, and God our legislator, *των τηω θυχηω παψω ν αριστω ιατροω*, “the best physician of the diseases of the soul” ⁵⁵⁵. Now Christ argues from this his character, in vindication of himself; as that he

⁵⁵⁴ Allegor. l. 2. p. 93.

⁵⁵⁵ Quod Deus sit immutab. p. 303.

was with these persons, not as a companion of their's, but as a physician to them; and as it is not unlawful, but highly proper and commendable, that a physician should be with the sick; so it was very lawful, fit, and proper, yea praiseworthy in him, to be among these publicans and sinners, for their spiritual good. He suggests indeed, that "they that be whole", in perfect health and strength, as the Pharisees thought themselves to be, even free from all the maladies and diseases of sin, were strong, robust, and able to do anything, and everything of themselves; these truly stood in no "need of" him, as a physician, in their own apprehension; they saw no need of him; in principle they had no need of him, and in practice did not make use of him; and therefore it was to no purpose to attend them, but converse with others, who had need of him:

but they that are sick;

who are not only diseased and disordered in all the powers and faculties of their souls, as all Adam's posterity are, whether sensible of it or not; but who know themselves to be so, these see their need of Christ as a physician, apply to him as such, and to them he is exceeding precious, a physician of value; and such were these "publicans" and sinners. These words seem to be a proverbial expression, and there is something like it in the ⁵⁵⁶ Talmud, דכאיב ליה כאיבא אייל לבי איא, "he that is afflicted with any pain goes", or "let him go to the physician's house"; that is, he that is attended with any sickness, or disease, does, or he ought to, consult a physician.

Matthew 9:13

Ver. 13. **But go ye and learn what that meaneth,**

אָ, וְלִמַּד, "go and learn", is a phrase used by the Jews ⁵⁵⁷, when they are about to explain a passage of Scripture, and fetch an argument from the connection of the text. So the phrase τὸ ἐστίν, "what that is", or "what that meaneth", is Talmudic, as, מָהוּ "what is it?" מָהוּ דכתיב "what is that which is written?" מָהוּ קרא "what is the Scripture?" that is, what is the meaning of it? Our Lord speaks in their own dialect, and tacitly reproves their ignorance of the Scriptures; and instead of finding fault with him, and his conduct, he intimates, it would better become them to endeavour to find out the meaning of that passage in Ho 6:6 "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice"; which, if rightly understood, was sufficient to silence all their

⁵⁵⁶ T. Bab. Bava Kama, fol. 46. 2.

⁵⁵⁷ T. Bab. Succa, fol. 5. 1. & Sanhedrim, fol. 86. 1. Moses Kotsensis Mitzvot Tora pr. neg. 116. Vid. Maimon. Hilchot Melachim, c. 5. sect. 11.

cavils and objections: and which words are to be taken, not in an absolute and unlimited sense; for sacrifices even of slain beasts, which were offered up in the faith of Christ's sacrifice, and were attended with other acts of religion and piety, were acceptable to God, being his own institutions and appointments; but in a comparative sense, as the following clause in the prophet shows; "and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings"; and so the sense is given in the "Chaldee paraphrase", after this manner: "for in those that exercise mercy is my good will and pleasure", or "delight", מִמְרֵבָה, "more than in sacrifice": and the meaning is, that God takes more delight and pleasure, either in showing mercy himself to poor miserable sinners; or in acts of mercy, compassion, and beneficence done by men, to fallen creatures in distress, whether for the good of their bodies, or more especially for the welfare of their souls, than he does even in sacrifices, and in any of the rituals of the ceremonial law, though of his own appointing: and therefore must be supposed to have a less regard to sacrifices, which were offered, neither in a right manner, nor from a right principle, nor to a right end; and still less to human traditions, and customs, which were put upon a level, and even preferred to his institutions; such as these the Pharisees were so zealous of. The force of our Lord's reasoning is, that since his conversation, with publicans and sinners, was an act of mercy and compassion to their souls, and designed for their spiritual good; it must be much more pleasing to God, than had he attended to the traditions of the elders, they charge him with the breach of: besides, what he was now doing was the end of his coming into this world, and which was answered hereby;

for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.

The phrase, "to repentance", is not in the Vulgate Latin, nor in Munster's Hebrew Gospel, nor in the Syriac, Ethiopic, and Persic versions; but is in the Arabic, and in the ancient Greek copies, and is very justly retained. The "repentance" here designed, is not a legal, but an evangelical one: which is attended with faith in Christ, with views, at least hopes of pardon through his blood, and springs from a discovery and sense of his love: it lies in a true sense of sin, and the exceeding sinfulness of it, by the light of the Spirit of God; in a godly sorrow for it, and hearty loathing of it; in real shame and blushing for it, ingenuous confession of it, and departing from it; all which is brought on, influenced, heightened, and increased, by displays of the love of God through Christ. The persons called to this are not the "righteous"; meaning

either such who are really so, because these are already called to it, though, whilst in a state of imperfection, daily need the exercise of this grace; or rather such who are so in their own opinion, and in the sight of men only, not in the sight of God, which was the case of the Scribes and Pharisees, and very few of these were called and brought to repentance; but “sinners”, even the worst, and chief of sinners, who, as they stand in need of this grace, and when thoroughly convinced, see they do; so Christ came into this world as prophet and minister of the word to “call” them to it: which call of his does not suppose that they had a power to repent of themselves; for this man has not, he is naturally blind, and do not see his sin; his heart is hard and obdurate, and till his eyes are opened, and his stony heart taken away by a superior power to his own, he will never repent; though he may have space, yet if he has not grace given him, he will remain impenitent. No means will bring him to it of themselves, neither the most severe judgments, nor the greatest kindnesses, nor the most powerful ministry; repentance is entirely a free grace gift: nor does the call of Christ imply the contrary; which may be considered either as external, as a preacher of the word, and as such was not always attended to, and effectual, but often slighted and rejected: or as internal, being by the power of his grace effectual; for he who called to repentance, as a minister of the word, as a prince and a saviour, was able to give it, and which none but a divine person is able to do. The Jews have a saying⁵⁵⁸ of

“shepherds, collectors of taxes and “publicans”,
תשובתו קשה, “that their repentance is difficult”.

Now, since this was the end of his coming into the world, his conduct in conversing with publicans and sinners was in all respects highly to be justified.

Matthew 9:14

Ver. 14. **Then came to him the disciples of John,**

Of John the Baptist, to whom they had addicted themselves, and by whom they abode: though their master was in prison, and the Messiah was known to be come, yet still they were attached to John, and particularly imitated him in the austerities of his life. These, either hearing of the great entertainment made at Matthew’s house for Christ, and his disciples, at which they were offended; or else being moved, and set on by the Pharisees, with whom they were agreed in the business of fasting, came to Christ where he was, and put this question to him,

saying, why do we, and the Pharisees, fast oft, but

558 T. Bab. Bava Kama, fol. 94. 3.

thy disciples fast not?

Not that they wanted to know the reason why they and the Pharisees fasted; that they could account for themselves, but why Christ’s disciples did not: and this is said not so much by way of inquiry, as reproof; and their sense is; that Christ’s disciples ought to fast, as well as they and the Pharisees, and not eat, and drink, and feast in the manner they did. The fastings here referred to are not the public fasts enjoined by the law of Moses, or in any writings of the Old Testament; but private fasts, which were enjoined by John to his disciples, and by the Pharisees to their’s; or which were, according to the traditions of the elders, or of their own appointing, and which were very “often” indeed: for besides their fasting twice a week, on Monday and Thursday, Luke 18:12 they had a multitude of fasts upon divers occasions, particularly for rain⁵⁵⁹. If the 17th of Marchesvan, or October, came, and there was no rain, private persons kept three days of fasting, viz. Monday, Thursday, and Monday again: and if the month of Cisleu, or November, came, and there was no rain, then the sanhedrim appointed three fast days, which were on the same days as before, for the congregation; and if still there was no rain came, they added three more; and if yet there were none, they enjoined seven more, in all thirteen, which R. Acha and R. Barachiah kept themselves⁵⁶⁰. Fastings were kept also on account of many other evils, as pestilence, famine, war, sieges, inundations, or any other calamity; sometimes for trifling things, as for dreams⁵⁶¹, that they might have good ones, or know how to interpret them, or avoid any ill omen by them; and it is almost incredible what frequent fastings some of the Rabbins exercised themselves with, on very insignificant occasions. They⁵⁶² say,

”R. Jose תמוני רמיי םן “fasted fourscore fasts” to see R. Chiyah Rubba; at last he saw, and his hands trembled, and his eyes grew dim: --R. Simeon Ben Lakish תלתמאות רמיי םן “fasted three hundred fastings” to see R. Chiyah Rubba, and did not see him.”

Elsewhere it is said, that R. Ase fasted “thirty days” to

559 Misn. Taanith, c. 1. sect. 4. 5, 6. & c. 3. sect. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Maimon. & Bartenora in ib.

560 T. Hieros. Taanlot, fol. 65. 2. & 66. 4.

561 T. Bab. Sabbat. fol. 10. 1. Maimon Taanot, c. 1. sect. 12-14.

562 T. Hieros. Cilaim, fol. 32. 2. & Cetubot, fol. 35. 1.

see the same person, and saw him not ⁵⁶³. Again ⁵⁶⁴,”

R. Jonathan fasted every eve of the new year, R. Abin fasted every eve of the feast of tabernacles, R. Zeura fasted “three hundred fasts”, and there are that say “nine hundred fasts”.

This may serve to illustrate and prove the frequency of the Jewish fastings. Luke represents this question as put by the Pharisees, which is here put by the disciples of John: it was doubtless put by both agreeing in this matter; and which shows that John’s disciples were instigated to it by the Pharisees, who sought to sow discord between them, and to bring Christ and his disciples into contempt with them.

Matthew 9:15

Ver. 15. **And Jesus said unto them,**

To the disciples of John, the Pharisees being present, who both have here a full answer; though it seems to be especially directed to the former:

can the children of the bride chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom, is with them?

By the “bridegroom” Christ means himself, who stands in such a relation to his church, and to all, believers; whom he secretly betrothed to himself from all eternity, in the covenant of grace; and openly espouses in the effectual calling; and will still do it in a more public manner at the last day John, the master of those men, who put the question to Christ, had acknowledged him under this character, Joh 3:29 and therefore they ought to own it as belonging to him; so that the argument upon it came with the greater force to them. By “the children of the bride chamber” are meant the disciples, who were the friends of the bridegroom, as John also says he was; and therefore rejoiced at hearing his voice, as these did, and ought to do; their present situation, having the presence of Christ the bridegroom with them, required mirth and not mourning, John, their master, being witness. The allusion is to a nuptial solemnity, which is a time of joy and feasting, and not of sorrow and fasting; when both bride and bridegroom have their friends attending them, who used to be called בני החופה, “the children of the bride chamber”. The bride had her maidens waiting on her; and it is said ⁵⁶⁵,

”she did not go into the bridechamber but with them; and these are called, בני חופתא, “the children of the bride chamber”.

⁵⁶³ Midrash Kohelet, fol. 79. 1.

⁵⁶⁴ lb. Nedarim, fol. 40. 4. & Taanith, fol. 66. 1.

⁵⁶⁵ Zohar in Gen. fol. 6. 4.

So the young men that were the friends of the bridegroom, which attended him, were called by the same name; and, according to the Jewish canons, were free from many things they were otherwise obliged to: thus it is said ⁵⁶⁶:

”the bridegroom, his friends, and all בני החופה, “the children of the bride chamber”, are free from the booth all the seven days;

”that is, from dwelling in booths at the feast of tabernacles, which was too strait a place for such festival solemnities. And again,

”the bridegroom, his friends, and all בני החופה “the children of the bride chamber”, are free from prayer and the phylacteries;

that is, from observing the stated times of attending to these things, and much more then were they excused from fasting and mourning; so that the Pharisees had an answer sufficient to silence them, agreeably to their own traditions. Give me leave to transcribe one passage more, for the illustration of this text ⁵⁶⁷.

”When R. Lazar ben Arach opened, in the business of Mercava, (the visions in the beginning of Ezekiel,) Rabban Jochanan ben Zaccai alighted from his ass; for he said it is not fit I should hear the glory of my Creator, and ride upon an ass: they went, and sat under a certain tree, and fire came down from heaven and surrounded them; and the ministering angels leaped before them, hpwx ynbk, “as the children of the bride chamber” rejoice before the bridegroom.”

The time of Christ’s being with his disciples, between his entrance on his public ministry, and his death, is the time here referred to, during which the disciples had very little care and trouble: this was their rejoicing time, and there was a great deal of reason for it; they had no occasion to fast and mourn; and indeed the Jews themselves say ⁵⁶⁸, that

”all fasts shall cease in the days of the Messiah; and there shall be no more but good days, and days of joy and rejoicing, as it is said, Zec 8:19.”

But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them;

⁵⁶⁶ T. Bab. Succa, fol. 25. 2. & Hieros. Succa, fol. 53. 1. Maimon. Succa, c. 6. sect. 3.

⁵⁶⁷ T. Hieros. Chagiga, fol. 77. 1.

⁵⁶⁸ Maimon. Hilchot Taanot, c. 5. sect. 19.

in a forcible manner, and put to death, as he was;

and then shall they fast

and mourn, and be in great distress, as John's disciples now were, on account of their master being in prison.

Matthew 9:16

Ver. 16. **No man putteth a piece of new cloth,**

These words are, by Luke 5:36 called a "parable", as are those in the following verse; and both are commonly interpreted of the unreasonableness and danger of putting young disciples upon severe exercises of religion, as fasting, &c: and it is true, that young converts are to be tenderly dealt with, as they are by Father, Son, and Spirit, as the disciples were by Christ, and the first Christians were by the apostles: and some things in these parables may seem to agree; as that these austerities should be represented as "new", and as burdensome and troublesome, and the disciples as weak, and easily staggered: but then there are others that will not bear; as that the disciples should be compared to "old garments, and old bottles"; when they were "young" converts, and men "renewed" by the Spirit and grace of God, and had on the beautiful robe of Christ's righteousness; and that such severe exercises, under the notion of religion, should be signified by "new wine", which generally designs something pleasant and agreeable: nor were the disciples unable to bear such severities, who very probably had been trained up in them, and been used to them before their conversion; and could now as well have bore them as John's disciples, or the Pharisees, had they been proper and necessary; but the true reason why they were not required of them, was not their weakness, or danger of falling off, and perishing, of which there were none; but because it was unsuitable to their present situation, the bridegroom being with them. But our Lord, in this parable of putting "a piece of new", or "undressed cloth", such as has never passed through the fuller's hands, and so unfit to mend with,

unto an old garment,

refers not only to the fastings of the Pharisees, but to their other traditions of the elders, which they held; as such that respected their eating, drinking, and conversing with other persons mentioned in the context, and which observances they joined with their moral performances; on account of which, they looked upon themselves as very righteous persons, and all others as sinners: and to expose their folly, Christ delivers this parable. Wherefore, by "the old garment", I apprehend, is meant their moral and legal righteousness, or their obedience to the moral

and ceremonial laws, which was very imperfect, as well as impure, and might be rightly called "filthy rags"; or be compared to an old worn out garment, filthy and loathsome, torn, and full of holes, which cannot keep a person warm, nor screen him from the weather, and so old that it cannot be mended. And by the "piece of new cloth", or "garment", put unto it, or sewed upon it, are intended the traditions of the elders, these men were so fond of, concerning eating, and drinking, and fasting, and hundreds of other things, very idle and trifling, and which were new and upstart notions. Now, by putting, or sewing the new cloth to their old garment, is designed, their joining their observance of these traditions to their other duties of religion, to make up a justifying righteousness before God; but in vain, and to no purpose. Their old garment of their own works, in obedience to the laws of God, moral and ceremonial, was full bad enough of itself; but became abundantly worse, by joining this new piece of men's own devising to it;

for that which is put in to fill it up, taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse:

their new obedience to the traditions of men, making void the law of God, instead of mending, marred their righteousness, and left them in a worse condition than it found them: and besides, as it is in Luke, "the piece that was taken out of the new, agreeth not with the old"; there being no more likeness between the observance of the commandments of men, and obedience to the laws of God, than there is between a piece of new undressed cloth, that has never been washed and worn, and an old worn out garment. Much such a foolish part do those men under the Gospel dispensation act, who join the righteousness of Christ, or a part of it, with their own, in order to make up a justifying righteousness before God; for Christ's righteousness is the only justifying righteousness; it is whole and perfect, and needs nothing to be added to it, nor can it be parted, any more than his seamless coat was; nor a piece taken out of it: nor is there any justification by works, either in whole or in part; the old garment of man's righteousness must be thrown away, in point of justification; it cannot be mended in such a manner; and if any attempts are made in this way, the rent becomes worse: such persons, instead of being justified, are in a worse condition; for they not only set up, and exalt their own righteousness, which is criminal, but disparage the righteousness of Christ as imperfect, by joining it to their's; and whilst they fancy themselves in a good state, are in a most

miserable one; harlots and publicans being nearer the kingdom of heaven than these, and enter into it before them; self-righteous persons are more hardly, and with greater difficulty convinced, than such sinners. Moreover, nothing is more disagreeable than such a patch work; Christ's righteousness and a man's own bear no likeness to one another; and such a patched garment must ill become the character and dignity of a saint, a child of God, an heir of heaven.

Matthew 9:17

Ver. 17. **Neither do men put new wine into old bottles,**

As in the former parable, our Lord exposes the folly of the Scribes and Pharisees, in their zealous attachment to the traditions of the elders; so in this, he gives a reason why he did not call these persons by his Gospel, who were settled upon the old principle of self-righteousness, but sinners, whom he renews by his Spirit and grace: for by "old bottles" are meant, the Scribes and Pharisees. The allusion is to bottles, made of the skins of beasts, which in time decayed, waxed old, and became unfit for use: such were the wine bottles, old and rent, the Gibeonites brought with them, and showed to Joshua, (Joshua 9:4 Joshua 9:13) and to which the Psalmist compares himself, (Psalms 119:83) and which the Misnic doctors call *twtmx*, and their commentators⁵⁶⁹ say, were *של נר* *גורח*, "bottles made of skin", or "leather", and so might be rent. Of the use of new and old bottles, take the following hint out of the "Talmud"⁵⁷⁰.

"The bottles of the Gentiles, if scraped and *קדשימו* "new", they are free for use; if *ישנימו* "old", they are forbidden."

Now the Scribes and Pharisees may be signified by these old bottles, being natural men, no other than as they were born; having never been regenerated, and renewed in the spirit of their minds; in whom the old man was predominant, were mere formal professors of religion, and self-righteous persons: and by "new wine" is meant, either the love and favour of God compared to wine, that is neat and clean, because free from hypocrisy in him, or motives in the creature; to generous wine, for its cheering and reviving effects; and to new wine, not but that it is very ancient, even from everlasting, but, because newly manifested, in the effectual calling and

conversion: or the Gospel is signified by wine, for its purity, good flavour, and pleasant taste; for its generous effects, in reviving drooping spirits, refreshing weary persons, and comforting distressed minds; and by new wine, not that it is a new doctrine, an upstart notion, for it is an ancient Gospel, but because newly and more clearly revealed by Christ and his apostles: or the blessings of grace which spring from the love of God, and are manifested in the Gospel, such as pardon of sin, reconciliation and atonement, justifying and sanctifying grace, spiritual joy and peace, and the like. Now as the new wine is not put into old bottles,

else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish:

so the love of God, the Gospel of the grace of God, and the blessings of it, are not received and retained, nor can they be, by natural men, by self-righteous persons: they do not suit and agree with their old carnal hearts and principles; they slight and reject them, and let them run out, which proves their greater condemnation.

But they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.

By "new bottles" are meant sinners, whom Christ calls by his grace, and the Spirit regenerates and renews, who are made new creatures in Christ; who have new hearts, and new spirits, and new principles of light, life, love, faith, and holiness, implanted in them; who have new eyes to see with, new ears to hear with, new feet to walk with, to and in Christ, new hands to work and handle with, and who live a new life and conversation. Now to such as these, the love of God is manifested and shed abroad in their hearts; by these, the Gospel of Christ is truly received and valued, and these enjoy the spiritual blessings of it; and so both the doctrine of the Gospel, and the grace of God, are preserved entire, and these persons saved in the day of Christ.

Matthew 9:18

Ver. 18. **While he spake these things unto them,**

To the Scribes and Pharisees, and to John's disciples, concerning, and in vindication of his, and his disciples, eating and drinking with publicans and sinners, and their not fasting as others did; and while he spake these parables, to expose the folly of self-righteous persons, and justify his own conduct, in calling sinners to repentance,

behold, there came a certain ruler and worshipped him.

This man, as both Mark and Luke say, was named

⁵⁶⁹ Jarchi & Bartenora in Misn. Celim, c. 24. sect. 11. & Negaim, c. 11. sect. 11.

⁵⁷⁰ T. Bab. Avoda Zara, fol. 33. 1.

Jairus; and was a ruler, not of the sanhedrim, or lesser consistory, but of the synagogue that was at Capernaum; and whom the Jews call, ראש הכנה, “the head of the synagogue”. Mark says, he was “one of the rulers”: not that there were more rulers than one, in one synagogue⁵⁷¹: but as in great cities, so it is likely in Capernaum there were more synagogues than one, of which he was one of the rulers: so we read of כניוה ראשי⁵⁷², “heads”, or “rulers of synagogues”. As this is one mistake, so it is another to say, that Dr. Lightfoot speaks of this ruler, as the same with the “minister” of the congregation; when both here, and in the place referred to, he manifestly distinguishes them; as do the Jews: for, by this ruler, as their commentators⁵⁷³ say,

the necessary affairs of the synagogue were determined, as who should dismiss with a prophet, who should divide the “shema”, and who should go before the ark.”

Whereas the business of הכנה, “the minister of the synagogue”, was to bring in and out the ark, or chest, in which was the book of the law; and particularly, when the high priest read, or pronounced the blessings, “he” took the book, and gave it to “the ruler of the synagogue”; and the ruler of the synagogue gave it to the “sagan”, and the “sagan” to the high priest⁵⁷⁴. The doctor makes indeed שליח הכנה, “the messenger of the congregation”, to be the same with “the minister of the synagogue”, and which is his mistake; for these were two different officers⁵⁷⁵: the former was the lecturer, or preacher; and the latter, a sort of a sexton to keep the synagogue clean, open and shut the doors, and do other things before mentioned. This Jairus was a man of great power and significance; who in such a very humble manner prostrated himself at the feet of Jesus, and expressed such strong faith in him:

saying, my daughter is even now dead, but come and lay thine hand upon her, and she shall live.

Luke says, she was “his only daughter”: and Mark calls her his “little daughter”: though both he and Luke say, she was about “twelve” years of age, and that with strict propriety, according to the Jewish canons, which⁵⁷⁶ say; that

571 Vid. Rhenfurd. de decem otiosis dissert. 2. c. 7.

572 T. Bab. Gittin, fol. 60. 1.

573 Jarchi & Bartenora in Misn. Yoma, c. 7. sect. 1. & Sota, c. 7. sect. 7.

574 Misn. Sota, c. 7. sect. 7. & Bartenora in ib.

575 Vid. Rhenfurd, dissert. 1. p. 81, etc.

576 Maimon. Hilchot Ishot, c. 2. sect. 1. & Bartenora in Misn. Nidda, c. 5. sect. 6.

”a daughter, from the day of her birth until she is twelve years complete, is called קטנה, “a little one” and when she is twelve years of age, and one day and upwards, she is called hren, “a young woman”.”

Her case seems to be differently represented; Mark says, she was “at the point of death”, or “in the last extremity”; and Luke, that she “lay dying”: but Matthew here says, that she was “even now dead”, which may be easily reconciled: for not to observe, that ἀρτι signifies “near”, and the phrase may be rendered, “she is near dead”, or just expiring, the case was this; when Jairus left his house, his daughter was in the agony of death, just ready to give up the ghost; so, that he concluded, by the time he was with Jesus, she had made her exit; as it appears she had, by a messenger, who brought the account of her death, before they could get to the house. The ruler’s address to Christ on this occasion, is a very considerable, though not so great an instance of faith as some others; that he, who was a ruler of a synagogue, should apply to Christ, which sort of men were generally most averse to him; that he should fall down and worship him, if not as God, since as yet he might be ignorant of his deity, yet behaved with the profoundest respect to him, as a great man, and a prophet; that he should come to him when his child was past all hope of recovery; yea, when he had reason to believe she was actually dead, as she was; that even then, he should believe in hope against hope; he affirms, that he really believed, that if Christ would but come to his house, and lay his hand upon her, an action often used in grave and serious matters, as in blessing persons, in prayer, and in healing diseases, she would certainly be restored to life again.

Matthew 9:19

Ver. 19. **And Jesus arose and followed him,**

Immediately, without delay, or any more ado: he did not upbraid him with the treatment he and his followers met with, from men of his profession; who cast out of their synagogues such, who confessed him to be the Messiah: nor does he take notice of any weakness in his faith; as that he thought it necessary he should go with him to his house, when he could as well have restored his daughter to life, absent, as present; and that he should prescribe a form of doing it, by laying his hands upon her. These things he overlooked, and at once got up from Matthew’s table, and went along with him,

and so did his disciples,

to be witnesses of the miracle; and according to the other evangelists, a large multitude of people besides; even a throng of them, led by curiosity to see this wondrous performance.

Matthew 9:20

Ver. 20. And behold a woman which was diseased..... This affair happened in the streets of Capernaum, as Christ was going from the house of Matthew the publican, to the house of Jairus the ruler of the synagogue, which were both in this city. This poor woman's case was a very distressed one; she had been attended with an issue of blood twelve years; it was an uncommon flux of a long standing, was inveterate, and become incurable; though she had not been negligent of herself, but had made use of means, applied herself to regular physicians, had took many a disagreeable medicine, and had spent all her substance in this way; but instead of being better, was worse, and was now given up by them, as past all cure. This woman might be truly called *hlwdg hbz*,⁵⁷⁷ "the greater profluvius woman", in the language of the doctors; for if one that had a flux but three days was called so, much more one that had had it twelve years. She having heard of Jesus, and his miraculous cures, had faith given her to believe, that she also should receive one from him; wherefore she came behind him, through modesty, being ashamed to come before him, and tell him her case, especially before so many people; and fearing lest if her case was known, she should be thrust away, if not by Christ, yet by the company; she being according to the law an unclean person, and unfit for society: and touched the hem of his garment; which was the *tuyu*, or "fringes", the Jews were obliged to wear upon the borders of their garments, and on it a ribband of blue; see Nu 15:38 in both which places Onkelos uses the word *Nydpowrk*, the same with *kraspedon*, used here, and in Mark 6:56 and rendered "hem". The Jews placed much sanctity in the wear and use of these fringes; and the Pharisees, who pretended to more holiness than others, enlarged them beyond their common size; but it was not on account of any peculiar holiness in this part of Christ's garment, that induced this poor woman to touch it; but this being behind him, and more easy to be come at, she therefore laid hold on it; for it was his garment, any part of it she concluded, if she could but touch, she should have a cure. However, we learn from hence, that

Christ complied with the rites of the ceremonial law in apparel, as well as in other things.

Matthew 9:21

Ver. 21. **For she said within herself,**

That is, she thought within herself, she reasoned the matter in her mind, she concluded upon it, and firmly believed it; being strongly impressed and influenced by the Spirit of God, and encouraged by instances of cures she had heard were performed by persons only touching him; see Luke 6:19

if I may but touch his garment.

The Arabic version reads it, "the hem of his garment", as before; but is not supported by any copy, nor by any other version: her faith was, that if she might be allowed, or if she could by any means come at him, to touch any part of his garment, she should have a cure:

I shall be whole,

or "I shall be saved"; that is, from her disease, from which she could have no deliverance, by the advice and prescriptions of all her former physicians, and by all the means she had made use of.

Matthew 9:22

Ver. 22. **But Jesus turned him about,**

Knowing what was done behind him, that virtue was gone out of him, that the woman had touched him, and was healed; which is a clear proof of his omniscience, and so of his deity: not that he was angry with her for touching him, though she was an impure woman; for though men and garments were defiled by the touch of a profluvius⁵⁷⁸ person; yet such was the power and holiness of Christ, that as he could not be defiled by any such means, so hereby, at once, this woman's impurity was also removed: but Christ turned about to observe and point out the woman, and her cure, to the company; not for the sake of his own honour, but for the glory of God, the commendation of the woman's faith, and chiefly for the strengthening the faith of Jairus, with whom he was going to raise his daughter from the dead:

and when he saw her.

The other evangelists, Mark and Luke, record, that Jesus inquired who touched him, and what answer Peter and the disciples made to him; and how he looked around, and very likely fastened his eyes upon the woman; when she perceiving that she could not go off undiscovered, came trembling to him, fell down before him, and told him the whole matter; and then

⁵⁷⁷ Ib. Issure Bia, c. 6. sect. 7, 8. & in Misn. Nidda, c. 4. sect. 7

⁵⁷⁸ Misn. Oholot, c. 1. sect. 5. & Zabim, c. 2. sect. 4. & 3. 1. 2, 3. & 4, 5. & 5. 1. {y} Misn. Yadaim. c. 3. sect. 1.

he said, daughter be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole.

He addressed her in a kind and tender manner, calling her “daughter”; an affable, courteous way of speaking, used by the Jewish doctors ⁵⁷⁹, when speaking to women: which showed his affection, and bespoke his relation; and bidding her take heart and be of good cheer, since he meant not to blame her for what she had done, but to commend her faith in him, whereby she had received a cure: meaning, not that there was such virtue in her faith as to effect such a cure; but that he, the object of her faith, had performed it for her:

and the woman was made whole from that hour;

her disease immediately left her, and from that time forward, was no more troubled with it: the cure was so effectual, and so perfect, that the disorder never returned more.

Matthew 9:23

Ver. 23. **And when Jesus came into the ruler’s house,**

Both Mark and Luke relate, how that before this, whilst they were in the way, and just as Christ had done speaking to the poor woman, that news was brought to the ruler, that his daughter was actually dead, and therefore need not give Jesus any further trouble; when Christ encouraged him not to be cast down at the tidings, but believe, and she should be restored again; and that he suffered none to follow him, but Peter, James, and John: and

saw the minstrels,

or “pipers”; how many there were, is not known: it is certain there were more than one; and it was a rule with the ⁵⁸⁰ Jews that

”the poorest man in Israel (when his wife died) had not less מִשְׁנֵי הַלֵּילִים “than two pipes”, and one mourning woman.

”And since this was a daughter of a ruler of the synagogue that was dead, there might be several of them. These instruments were made use of, not to remove the melancholy of surviving friends, or allay the grief of the afflicted family; but, on the contrary, to excite it: for the Jewish writers say ⁵⁸¹, these pipes were hollow instruments, with which they made a known sound, והאבל לְהַרְרֵה הַבְּכִיָּה “to stir up lamentation and mourning”: and for the same purpose, they had their mourning women,

who answered to the pipe; and by their dishevelled hair, and doleful tones, moved upon the affections, and drew tears from others; and very likely are the persons, that Mark says, “wept and wailed greatly”. Sometimes trumpets were made use of on these mournful occasions ⁵⁸²; but whether these were used only for persons more advanced in years, and pipes for younger ones, as by the Heathens ⁵⁸³, at least, at some times, is not certain.

And the people making a noise;

the people of the house, the relations of the deceased, the neighbours, who came in on this occasion; and others, in a sort of tumult and uproar, hurrying and running about; some speaking in the praise of the dead, others lamenting her death, and others preparing things proper for the funeral; all which shew, that she was really dead: among these also, might be the mourners that made a noise for the dead;

”for since mourning was for the honour of the dead, therefore they obliged the heirs to hire mourning men, and mourning women, to mourn for the same ⁵⁸⁴.

Matthew 9:24

Ver. 24. **And he said unto them, give place,**

Depart, be gone; for he put them out of the room, and suffered none to be with him, when he raised her from the dead, but Peter, James, and John, and the father and mother of the child, who were witnesses enough of this miracle.

For the maid is not dead, but sleepeth:

not but that she was really dead; and Christ signifies as much, when he says, she “sleepeth”; a phrase that is often used in ⁵⁸⁵ Talmudic writings, for one that is dead: but Christ’s meaning is, that she was not so dead as the company thought; as always to remain in the state of the dead, and not to be restored to life again: whereas our Lord signifies, it would be seen in a very little time, that she should be raised again, just as a person is awaked out of sleep; so that there was no occasion to make such funeral preparations as they did. The Jews say ⁵⁸⁶ of some of their dead, that they are asleep, and not dead: it is said, Isa 26:19 “Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust”.

582 Midrash Kohelet, fol. 77. 4.

583 Vid. Kirchman. de funer. Roman. l. 2. c. 5.

584 Maimon. Hilch. Ebel, c. 12. sect. 1.

585 T. Hieros. Beracot, fol. 6. 1. Avoda Zara, fol. 42. 3. Bereshit Rabba Parash. 91. fol. 79. 3.

586 Zohar in Exod. fol. 62. 4.

579 Misn. Yadaim. c. 3. sect. 1.

580 Misn. Cetubot. c. 4. sect. 4. Maimon Ishot, c. 14. sect. 23.

581 Maimon & Bartenora in Misn. Sabbat, c. 23. sect. 4.

“These, say they, are they that sleep and die not; and such are they that sleep in Hebron, for they לא ימותו, “do not die, but sleep”, --the four couples in Hebron (Adam and Eve, &c.) they “sleep, but are not dead”.

And they laughed him to scorn;

they mocked at his words, and had him in the utmost contempt, as a very weak silly man; taking him either to be a madman, or a fool; knowing that she was really dead, of which they had all the evidence they could have; and having no faith at all in him, and in his power to raise her from the dead.

Matthew 9:25

Ver. 25. **But when the people were put forth,**

Either out of the house or room, by Christ, or, at least, by his orders: which was done, partly because he was desirous it might be kept a secret, as much as possible, and to shew, that he did not affect popular applause; and partly, because they were unworthy to be admitted spectators of such a wondrous action, who had treated him with so much scorn and contempt: he went in; not alone, but with his three disciples, Peter, James, and John, who were taken in to be witnesses of this resurrection, and the parents of the child; who were so very solicitous for its life, under whose power she was, and to whom she was to be restored: and took her by the hand; just as one would do to awake another out of sleep; and, perhaps, in compliance with her father's request, to lay his hand upon her: and though the touch of a dead body, according to the law, Nu 19:16 was defiling; yet this did not defile him, any more than his touching the leper, or the profluvial woman's touching his clothes; for these actions produced supernatural effects, which came not under the cognizance of the law. His taking her by the hand, was not all that he did, but he called, as to a person asleep, and said unto her these words, “Talitha cumi”, as recorded by Mark, and are also in Munster's Hebrew Gospel of Matthew; and which, in the Syriac language, signify, “maiden, arise”; and immediately, directly, as soon as ever he had thus said, the maid arose, as out of sleep; she revived, her soul came to her again, and she got off of the bed, and walked about house, and food was ordered to be given to her. All which most fully demonstrated that she was really restored to life, which was as clear a case, as that before she was really dead.

Matthew 9:26

Ver. 26. **And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land.**

For though he strictly charged the parents, as the other evangelists say, that they should tell no man what was done, he not affecting the applause of men; yet it was not possible the thing should be entirely concealed; since there was such a number of people, not only relations, but neighbours, who full well knew, and were assured she had been dead: when these saw her alive, walk about, eat and drink, and converse with them, they must be persuaded of the miracle, and relate it wherever they came; so that the fame of it could not but be spread all over the country in which Capernaum was.

Matthew 9:27

Ver. 27. **And when Jesus departed thence,**

From the house of Jairus, to another in the same city; two blind men followed him: very closely, by the direction of others, having heard of the miracle just now performed by him; and from thence concluded he was able to restore them to their sight; crying and saying, with great faith and fervour, with much importunity, and frequently repeating the following words, thou son of David, have mercy on us. Whence it appears, that they firmly believed, and were fully persuaded, that he was the true Messiah; for “the son of David” was a known character of the Messiah among the Jews: nothing was more common than to call him by this title, without any other additional epithet, see Gill “Mt 1:1”, and since it had been prophesied of the Messiah, that he should “open the eyes of the blind”, Isa 35:5 they might be greatly encouraged to hope and believe they should obtain mercy from him in this respect.

Matthew 9:28

Ver. 28. **And when he was come into the house,**

In which he dwelt, whilst at Capernaum: for he took no notice of them by the way; but though they followed him close, and cried vehemently, he did not stop to speak to them, or give them a cure: according to their request, but went on his way; which he did, partly to avoid the populace, and that he might not be seen by men, in what he did, and partly to try their faith, and the constancy of it.

The blind men came to him;

being directed by others, into what house he went, and where he was, and very probably with the leave of Christ:

and Jesus saith unto them, believe ye that I am able to do this?

That is, to have mercy on them, as they requested, by curing them of their blindness; which, though not

expressed, is implied, and is the thing designed: this question is put, not as being ignorant of, or as doubting their faith in him, which they had expressed, in calling him the son of David; and had shown the firmness and constancy of it, by following him, though he took no notice of them; but partly, for the further trial of their faith, and to bring them to a more open profession of it, as to this particular, his power to cure them of their blindness; and partly, for the sake of those, that were in the house:

they said unto him, yea, Lord.

They firmly believed he had power to do it, they had not the least doubt and hesitation in their minds about it; for though their bodily eyes were at present dark, the eyes of their understandings were enlightened, to see and know Jesus to be the true Messiah, David's Son, and Lord.

Matthew 9:29

Ver. 29. **Then touched he their eyes,**

Not but that he could have restored sight to them, without touching their eyes, by a word speaking, or by the secret communication of his power; but he might do this as a sign of his favour and kindness to them, and of his will to cure them; as also in compliance with their weakness, who might expect some manual operation upon them;

saying, according to your faith be it unto you:

not that faith in his person and power, was the cause or condition of this cure, or the rule and measure according to which Christ proceeded; but the sense is, that as they had believed he was able to heal them, accordingly a cure should be effected; which, upon his so saying, they immediately found performed in them.

Matthew 9:30

Ver. 30. **And their eyes were opened,**

Some copies read, "immediately"; and so do the Syriac, Persic, and Ethiopic versions: and this was certainly the true and real matter of fact, that as soon as Christ had touched their eyes, and said the above words, their sight was perfectly restored to them; and they had a clear, full, and true sight of objects, as men have, whose vision faculty is in its full strength and rigour, and their eyes open:

and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, see that no man know it.

This was a very strict charge, and according to the signification of the word here used, it was given with great austerity of countenance, and severity of

expression, in a very rough and threatening manner; which Christ might be the rather induced to, because he had given such like orders already, and they had not been observed: the reasons for concealing the miracle are not very obvious; it seems likely, that with the same view he took no notice of these blind men in the street, but went into an house, and cured them; which seems to be, to shun all appearance of vain glory, or seeking popular applause, that he gave these orders; or it may be, he did not choose to be made more known by this miracle, or at this time, or by these men; he might foresee that it would be attended with ill consequences; either the more to irritate the resentments of some persons against him; or to put others on doing things which were disagreeable to him; as setting him up for a temporal prince among them, being David's son.

Matthew 9:31

Ver. 31. **But they, when they were departed,**

That is, out of the house where they received their cure, and out of the city; for it appears, by what follows, they went into other parts, where it is probable they might originally belong; they spread abroad his fame in all that country. This they did, not in contempt of Christ and his orders; but rather out of gratitude to their benefactor, and through an honest zeal to spread his honour and glory: though they are not to be commended for disregarding the command of Christ; for, not our affection, but Christ's will, is to be the rule of our actions.

Matthew 9:32

Ver. 32. **As they went out,**

The Syriac version reads it, "when Jesus went out"; to which agrees the Arabic, against all the copies: for not he, but the men who had been blind, and now had their sight restored, went out from the house where Jesus was; which circumstance is mentioned, and by it the following account is introduced, partly to show how busy Christ was, how he was continually employed in doing good, and that as soon as one work of mercy was over, another offered; and partly, to observe how closely and exactly the prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled; in which, as it was foretold, that "the eyes of the blind" should "be opened"; so likewise, that "the tongue of the dumb" should "sing", Isa 35:5.

Behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.

The word signifies one that is deaf, as well as dumb; as does the Hebrew word קָרָא often used by the Jewish

writers for a deaf and dumb man; one, they say ⁵⁸⁷, that can neither hear nor speak, and is unfit for sacrifice, and excused many things: and indeed these two, deafness and dumbness, always go together in persons, who are deaf from their birth; for as they cannot hear, they cannot learn to speak: but this man seems to be dumb, not by nature, but through the possession of Satan, who had taken away, or restrained the use of his speech, out of pure malice and ill will, that he might not have the benefit of conversation with men, nor be able to say anything to the glory of God. This man did not come of himself to Christ, perhaps being unwilling, through the power and influence the devil had over him; but his friends, who were concerned for his welfare, and who were thoroughly persuaded of the power of Christ to heal him, by the miracles they had seen, or heard performed by him, brought him to him; and, no doubt, expressed their desire that he would cast out the devil, and cure him, which he did.

Matthew 9:33

Ver. 33. And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake,.... The cause of his dumbness being removed, the effect ceased, and the man spake as he did before, and as other men do; and this was done, according to the Persic version, "as soon as Christ saw him"; the devil not being able to bear his presence, much less withstand his power: but as soon as Christ had set his eyes upon the man possessed by him, and had given him orders to be gone, he immediately went out, and the man was restored to his speech again; and the multitude marvelled, saying, it was never so seen in Israel. The vast crowds of people, who were alarmed with the former miracles of Christ, and came along with the friends of the dumb man, when they heard him speak so suddenly and plainly, and with so much freedom, nothing being said or done to him, were surprised; and declared very frankly, that though many wonderful things had been done in Israel, in times past, by Moses, Elijah, Elisha, and others, yet never were such things seen, or heard, or known of, as were done by Christ: referring not to this miracle only, but to all the rest he had just wrought; as curing the woman of her bloody issue, raising Jairus's daughter from the dead, restoring sight to the two blind men, and now casting out a dumb devil.

Matthew 9:34

Ver. 34. **But the Pharisees said,**

⁵⁸⁷ Maimon. & Bartenora in Misn. Trumot, c. 1. sect. 2. T. Bab. Chagiga, fol. 2. 2.

Who were the sworn enemies of Christ, and were filled with envy at him, and malice against him: these men could not bear, that so much honour and glory should be given to Christ; and therefore said,

he casteth out the devils through the prince of the devils:

they could not deny matter of fact, that he had cast out a devil; nor could they say he had done an ill thing in so doing; they could not but own that it was a preternatural action, more than human; nor could they contradict what the multitude said, that no such thing had been ever seen, or known, in Israel: but that Christ might not have the glory of the action, and to fix a mark of infamy upon him, foolishly impute it to a diabolical influence, as if one devil would eject another; and to Christ's familiarity with, and the assistance he had from, not a common devil, but the prince of them. In Beza's most ancient manuscript, and in some others, this whole verse is wanting; and were it not, for the general consent of copies, one should be tempted to think these words were not said at this time, because Christ returns no answer to them; and what is observed by Luke 11:15 as following this miracle, is the selfsame as was spoken by Christ in Mt 12:24 and where this passage is more thoroughly considered.

Matthew 9:35

Ver. 35. **And Jesus went about all the cities and villages,**

He did not confine himself, and his acts of kindness and compassion, to his own city, Capernaum, but he took a circuit throughout all Galilee; and not only visited their larger and more principal cities and towns, but their villages also; doing good to the bodies and souls of men in every place, and of whatever state and condition.

Teaching in their synagogues;

which were places of public worship, where prayer was made, the law and the prophets were read, and a word of exhortation given to the people; and which, it seems, were in villages, as well as in cities and towns: and indeed it is a rule with the Jews ⁵⁸⁸, that

"in what place soever there are ten Israelites, they ought to build a house, to which they may go to prayer, at all times of prayer; and such a place is called tonkh tyb, "a synagogue".

And hence we often read of ⁵⁸⁹ בית הכנת של כפרים, "the

⁵⁸⁸ Maimon Hilchot Tephilla, c. 11. sect. 1.

⁵⁸⁹ T. Bab. Megilla. fol. 26. 1. & Gloss. in ib. Maimon.

synagogue of villages”, as distinct from the synagogues of cities and walled towns; which confutes a notion of the learned Dr. Lightfoot ⁵⁹⁰, who thought there were no synagogues in villages. Now, wherever Christ found any of these, he entered into them, and taught the people publicly,

preaching the Gospel of the kingdom;

the good news and glad tidings of peace and pardon, reconciliation and salvation, by himself the Messiah; all things relating to the Gospel dispensation; the doctrines of grace, which concern both the kingdom of grace and glory; particularly the doctrine of regeneration, and the necessity of having a better righteousness than that of the Scribes and Pharisees; the one as a meetness, the other as a title to eternal happiness:

and healing every sickness, and every disease among the people.

As he preached wholesome doctrine for the good of their souls; for their spiritual health, and the cure of their spiritual maladies; so he healed all sorts of diseases the bodies of men were incident to, that were brought unto him; and by his miracles confirmed, as well as recommended, the doctrines he preached.

Matthew 9:36

Ver. 36. **But when he saw the multitudes,**

As he took his circuit through the several cities, towns, and villages, he made his observations upon the large numbers that flocked to his ministry, and seemed to be desirous of spiritual instructions, in what an unhappy and melancholy situation they were; and

he was moved with compassion on them:

his bowels yearned for them, he was touched with a feeling of their infirmities, as the merciful high priest, the good shepherd, and faithful prophet; being heartily concerned for the souls of men, their comfort here, and everlasting happiness hereafter:

because they fainted;

being fatigued and tired, not in their bodies, through journeying from place to place, to hear the word, but in their minds; being burdened and wearied with the various traditions and doctrines of the Scribes and Pharisees:

and were scattered abroad;

thrown and tossed about, and divided through the different sects of religion among them; no due care was & Bartenora in Misn. Megilla, c. 3. sect. 1. & Maimon. Hilch. Tephilla, c. 11. sect. 16.

590 In Mark i. 38. & Chorograph. ad Matt. c. 98.

taken of them, to gather and keep them together, and feed them with wholesome doctrine; but were as abjects, outcasts, that no man regarded, and in great danger of the loss and ruin of their immortal souls: being

as sheep without a shepherd;

that was good for anything, or did the office and duty of a shepherd to them: the Scribes and Pharisees were shepherds indeed, such as they were, but very bad ones; like the shepherds of Israel of old, who fed themselves, and not the flock; who strengthened not the diseased, nor healed the sick, nor bound up that which was broken; nor brought again that which was driven away, nor sought that which was lost: but on the contrary, caused them to go astray from mountain to hill; whereby they forgot their resting place, in the Messiah promised them, and who was now come.

Matthew 9:37

Ver. 37. **Then saith he unto his disciples,**

His heart being drawn out, and filled with pity to these poor people, upon observing the miserable and sad condition they were in; he turns himself to his disciples, whom he was about to call, and send forth in a more public manner to preach the Gospel, of which we read in the following chapter; and in order to quicken them to this service, and engage their hearts in it, says unto them,

the harvest truly is plenteous;

meaning the large number of God’s elect, which were in these cities, towns, and villages, and in other places: not that these were maturely prepared by anything in themselves, or done by them, for the grace of God; and much less ripe for the kingdom of glory, and therefore called an harvest: but as there are the appointed weeks of the harvest, or a set time for the harvest to be gathered in, so there is a certain fixed time, settled in the counsel, and by the purpose of God, for the effectual calling and conversion of his elect; and this time being come, with respect to these in Galilee, and other parts, Christ calls them an “harvest”; and because of their number, a large, or “plenteous” one.

But the labourers are few:

Gospel ministers; whose calling is a laborious one; whose business is to labour in the word and doctrine; to be constant in prayer; to give up themselves to meditation and reading; to study to show themselves workmen; to preach the word in season, and out of season; and diligently discharge the several duties of their office, to the glory of Christ, and the good of souls:

but such painful and laborious ministers, who are willing to spend, and be spent for Christ and immortal souls, have been but few in all ages; generally speaking, there are more loiterers than labourers.

Matthew 9:38

Ver. 38. **Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest,**

By “the Lord of the harvest” is either meant God the Father, whose are all the elect, who has a hearty concern for them, and will have them all gathered in, not one of them shall be left; or the Lord Jesus Christ himself, who has the care and charge of the whole election of grace; and who as he must, he will bring them all in; and who has power of sending forth labourers, as the following chapter shows; and so this is a proof of prayer being made to Christ;

that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

This is the petition the disciples of Christ were put upon making to the Lord of the harvest, on consideration of the present condition multitudes of souls were in: they could not make, qualify, and send out ministers themselves; this is not man’s work, but God’s: he only is able to furnish with ministerial gifts, to work upon, and powerfully incline the hearts of men to this service, to call and send them forth into it, and to assist and succeed them in it. The persons desired to be sent are “labourers”; faithful, diligent, and industrious preachers of the Gospel; such as lay out themselves, their time, talents, and strength, in their master’s service; and do not indulge themselves in sloth and idleness: the place they are desired to be sent into is, “into the harvest”; into the field of the world, where God’s elect lie, and there labour in preaching the Gospel; hoping for a divine blessing, and an almighty power to attend their ministrations, for the conversion of sinners, and edification of saints. The request the disciples are directed to make, concerning these persons for this work, is, that the Lord of the harvest would “send”, or “thrust” them “forth”; implying power and efficacy, and authority, on the part of the sender; and backwardness on the part of those that are sent, through modesty: a sense of the greatness of the work, and of their own unworthiness and unfitness for it. Very opportunely did our Lord move his disciples to put up this petition, and was done, no question, with a view to, and to prepare for, his mission of the twelve to preach the Gospel, of which there is an account in the next chapter.

**THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW
CHAPTER X**

Matthew 10

- [1] And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.
- [2] Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;
- [3] Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus;
- [4] Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.
- [5] These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not:
- [6] But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.
- [7] And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.
- [8] Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.
- [9] Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses,
- [10] Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.
- [11] And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence.
- [12] And when ye come into an house, salute it.
- [13] And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.
- [14] And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.
- [15] Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.
- [16] Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.
- [17] But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues;
- [18] And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.

- [19] But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.
- [20] For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.
- [21] And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death.
- [22] And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.
- [23] But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.
- [24] The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.
- [25] It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?
- [26] Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.
- [27] What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops.
- [28] And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.
- [29] Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.
- [30] But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.
- [31] Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.
- [32] Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.
- [33] But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.
- [34] Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.
- [35] For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.
- [36] And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.
- [37] He that loveth father or mother more than me is not

more than me is not worthy of me.

- [38] And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.
- [39] He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.
- [40] He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.
- [41] He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.
- [42] And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

JOHN GILL'S COMMENTARY ON MATTHEW CHAPTER X

1 Christ sendeth out his twelve apostals enabling them with power to do miracles. 5 giveth them their charge, teacheth them, 16 comforteth them against persecutions. 40 and promiseth a blessing to those that receiveth them.

Matthew 10:1

Ver. 1. And when he had called to him his twelve disciples,

These persons had been for some time called by the grace of God, and were already the disciples of Christ, and such as were more familiar and intimate with him, than others, that went by that name. They had sat down at his feet, and had received of his words; they had heard his doctrines, and had seen his miracles, and had been by him training up for public work; but as yet had not been called and sent forth to enter on such service: but now all things being ready, they being properly instructed, and the time for the conversion of a large number of souls being up, he called them together privately; and gave them a commission to preach the Gospel, ordained them ministers of the word, and installed them into the office of apostleship. The number "twelve", is either in allusion to the twelve spies that were sent by Moses into the land of Canaan, or to the twelve stones in Aaron's breast plate; or to the twelve fountains the Israelites found in the wilderness; or to the twelve oxen on which the molten sea stood in Solomon's temple; or to the twelve gates in Ezekiel's temple; or rather, to the twelve patriarchs, and the tribes which sprung from them; that as they were the fathers of the Jewish nation, which was

typical of God's chosen people; so these were to be the instruments of spreading the Gospel, not only Judea, but in all the world, and of planting Christian churches there. And that they might appear to come forth with authority, and that their doctrine might be confirmed,

he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out;

or "over all devils", as Luke 9:1. It was usual with the Jews to call a demon or devil רוח טומאה, "an unclean spirit"; especially such as frequented burying places: so in one place⁵⁹¹, an unclean spirit is interpreted by the gloss, שדיו, "the spirit of the demons", or devils; and in another⁵⁹² שד בית הקברות, "the demon of the graves"; where necromancers sought to be, that these spirits might be their familiars, and assist them in their enchantments: accordingly the devils are here called, "unclean spirits"; being in themselves, in their own nature, unclean, and being the cause and means of defiling others, and delighting in impure persons, places, and things. There were many of these spirits, who, because of the great impiety of the Jews, the prevalence of magic arts among them, and by divine permission, had at this time taken possession of great numbers of persons; whereby Christ had an opportunity of giving proof of his deity, of his being the Messiah, the seed of the woman, that should bruise the serpent's head, by his ejecting them; and of confirming the mission of his disciples, and establishing the doctrine preached by them, by giving them power and authority over them, to cast them out also: and whereas various diseases frequently followed and attended such possessions; he likewise gave them power

to heal all manner of sicknesses, and all manner of diseases,

as he himself had done. The expressions are very full and strong, and include all sorts of maladies incident to human bodies, either of men or women; all distempers natural or preternatural, curable or incurable, by human methods: so that at the same time they were sent to preach the Gospel, for the cure of the souls of men, they were empowered to heal the diseases of their bodies; and which, one should think, could not fail of recommending them to men, and of ingratiating them into their affections.

Matthew 10:2

Ver. 2. **Now the names of the twelve apostles are these,**

This is the first time these disciples are called "apostles", they were learners before; now being instructed, they are sent forth to preach publicly, and therefore are called apostles, or messengers, persons that were sent: so the elders of the priesthood are called שלוחיבית דינ, "the apostles", or messengers "of the sanhedrim"⁵⁹³, to whom the high priest were delivered, before the day of atonement. So six months in the year, שלוחים "apostles", or messengers, were sent by the⁵⁹⁴ sanhedrim, throughout all the land of Israel, and to the captive Jews in other parts, to give notice of the new moon; in allusion to which, the disciples might be so called. It was proper to give the names of them, for the truth of the history, and confirmation of it; for the sake of the persons themselves, and the honour done them; and for the exclusion and detection of false apostles.

The first, Simon, who is called Peter;

his pure Hebrew name was

שמונ, Simeon, as he is called, Ac 15:14 but in the then Jerusalem dialect, and in Rabbinical language, this name is frequently read and pronounced ימון "Simon", as here: we often read of R. Simon, and of R. Juda bar Simon, in both Talmuds⁵⁹⁵. This apostle is also called Peter, to distinguish him from Simon the Canaanite, and which signifies a stone, or rock, in allusion to the object of his faith, and the steadiness of it. He is said to be the "first"; not that he was the head of the rest of the apostles, or had any primacy, dominion, and authority over them; but because he was first called, and was the first that was to open the door of faith to the Gentiles: but chiefly he is said to be so for order's sake; for, some one in the account must be named first, and he as proper as any:

and Andrew his brother;

who was called at the same time with him, and therefore are put together. This name is also to be met with in the Talmudic writings; see Gill "Mt 4:18".

James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;

these two were called next and together, and therefore are placed in this order: the former is so called, to distinguish him from another James, the son of Alphaeus, after mentioned; and the latter is the beloved disciple; these were surnamed "Boanerges", that is, "sons of thunder".

⁵⁹³ Misn. Yoma, c. 1. sect. 5.

⁵⁹⁴ Misn. Roshhashana, c. 1. sect. 3. & Maimon. & Bartenora in ib.

⁵⁹⁵ T. Hieros. Shekalim, fol. 46. 4. Bab. Sabbath, fol. 55. 1. & Bava Kama, fol. 47. 2.

⁵⁹¹ T. Bab. Chagiga, fol. 3. 2.

⁵⁹² T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 65. 2.

Matthew 10:3**Ver. 3. Philip and Bartholomew,**

The first of these was called next; his name is a Greek one, which his parents, though Jews, might take from the Greeks that dwelt among them, see Joh 12:20 mention is made of one R. Phelipi, and Phulipa, in the Jewish writings⁵⁹⁶. The latter of these, Bartholomew, is conjectured, by Dr. Lightfoot, to be the same with Nathanael, he being called next in order after Philip; and that his name was Nathanael, ymlt rb, “Bar Talmai”, or “the son of Talmai”, or “Ptolomy”: a name once common to the kings of Egypt: so Talmai, king of Geshur, is by the Septuagint, in 2Sa 3:3 2Sa 13:37 called Tholmi, and in 1Ch 3:2 Tholmai: hence it appears, that Bartholomew is no other than Bartholmi, or the son of Tholmi. We read of one R. Jonathan, בן אבטולמו, “ben Abtolemus”, in the Talmud⁵⁹⁷, whether the same name with this, may be considered.

Thomas, and Matthew the publican:

by the other evangelists Matthew is mentioned first; but he being the writer of this Gospel, puts Thomas first, which is an instance of his modesty; and also calls himself the “publican”, which the other do not: this he mentions, to magnify the grace of God in his vocation. The Jews⁵⁹⁸ speak of

מתאי, “Matthai”, or “Matthew”, as a disciple of Jesus. Thomas was sometimes called Didymus; the one was his Hebrew, the other his Greek name, and both signify a “twin”, as it is very likely he was: mention is made of R. Thoma, or Thomas bar Papias, in a Jewish writer⁵⁹⁹. Next follow,

James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus:

the former of these is so called, to distinguish him from James, the son of Zebedee. This is the James, who was the brother of our Lord, Ga 1:19 and is called “James the less”, Mark 15:40. Alphaeus his father, is the same with Cleopas, Luke 24:18 or Cleophas, Joh 19:25. The Hebrew name, הלפי, which often occurs among the Jews⁶⁰⁰, may be pronounced either Chlophi, or Alphi, or with the Greek termination Cleopas, or Alphaeus. The latter of this pair of apostles is the same person with Jude, the

writer of the epistle, which bears that name, and was the brother of James, with whom he is coupled: he was called Lebbaeus, either from the town of Lebba, a sea coast town of Galilee, as Dr. Lightfoot thinks; or from the Hebrew word לב, “my heart”, as others, either for his prudence, or through the affections of his parents to him; as the Latins call one they love, “meum corculum”, “my little heart”; or from aybl, “a lion”, that being the motto of the tribe of Judah. His surname Thaddaeus, is thought by some to be a deflexion of Jude; or Judas, and as coming from the same root, hdy, which signifies “to praise”, or “give thanks”; or from the Syriac word, dt, “a breast”, and may be so called for the same reason as he was Lebbaeus. Frequent mention is made of this name, aydt, “Thaddai”, or “Thaddaeus”, among the Talmudic⁶⁰¹ doctors. The Jews themselves speak⁶⁰² of one hdwt, “Thodah”, as a disciple of Jesus, by whom no doubt they mean this same disciple. Eusebius⁶⁰³ mentions one Thaddaeus, as one of the seventy disciples, who was sent to Agbarus, king of Edessa, who was healed and converted by him. This Agbarus is reported to have wrote a letter to Jesus Christ, desiring him to come and cure him of his disease; to which Christ is said to return an answer, promising to send one of his disciples, who should do it; and that accordingly, after Christ’s death, Thomas sent this Thaddaeus to him.

Matthew 10:4**Ver. 4. Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot,**

This is the last couple, for they are all mentioned by pairs, because they were sent forth “by two and two”, as the Evangelist Mark says, Mark 6:7. The former of these is called Simon the Canaanite, to distinguish him from Simon Peter, before mentioned; not that he was a Canaanite, that is, an inhabitant of the land of Canaan, a man of Canaan, as a certain woman is called a woman of Canaan, Mt 15:22 for all the disciples of Christ were Jews; though in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel he is called שמונ הכנני “Simeon the Canaanite”, or of Canaan, as if he belonged to that country; nor is he so called from Cana of Galilee, as Jerorm and others have thought; but he was one of the קנאים “Kanaim”, or “Zealots”; and therefore Luke styles him, “Simon called Zelotes”, Luke 6:15, Acts 1.13. The Kanaites, or Zelotes, were a set of men, who, in imitation of Phinehas, who slew

596 Massechet Sopherim, c. 21. sect. 7. Bereshit Rabba, sect. 71. fol. 63. 4.

597 T. Bab. Nidda, fol. 19. 1.

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

599 Juchasin, fol. 105. 2.

600 Echa Rabbati, fol. 58. 4. Midrash Kohelet, fol. 60. 4. Juchasin, fol. 92. 1.

601 T. Hieros. Celaim, fol. 27. 2. Sabbat, fol. 6. 1.

Erubim, fol. 23. 3. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 123. 1. & Erubim, fol. 71. 2. Juchasin, fol. 81. 1. & 105. 2. & 108. 1.

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

603 Eccl. Hist. l. 1. c. 12, 13.

Zimri and Cozbi in the very act of uncleanness, when they found any persons in the act of adultery, idolatry, blasphemy, or theft, would immediately kill them without any more ado: this they did, from a pretended zeal for the honour and glory of God: nor were they accountable to any court of judicature for it; yea, such an action was highly applauded, as a very laudable one ⁶⁰⁴: under this specious name of Zealots, innumerable murders, and most horrible wickedness were committed, both before, and during the siege of Jerusalem, as Josephus ⁶⁰⁵ relates. Now Simon was one of this sect before his conversion, and still retained the name afterwards. Judas, the last of the twelve, is called Iscariot; concerning which name, the notation of it, and the reason of his being so called, many are the conjectures of learned men: some think that he belonged to the tribe of Issachar, and that he is called from thence, איש יששכר “a man of Issachar”, as a certain man is, in Jud 10:1 others, that he takes his name from the place he belonged to, and that he was called איש קריית, “a man of Kerioth”. A place of this name is mentioned, Jos 15:25 and some manuscripts and copies in some places read Judas apo Καρυωτου, of “Caryot”. Caryota is said ⁶⁰⁶ to be a plain of the city of Jericho, about eighteen miles from Jerusalem, which abounded in palm trees, called קוריית, “Caryotae”, of which mention is made in the ⁶⁰⁷ Talmud, and other writers ⁶⁰⁸. Others think he is so called, from the Syriac word, כריוטא, “secariota”, which signifies a “purse”, or bag, because he carried the bag. Some copies read it, skariwtev, “scariotes”: others are of opinion, that he is so called, from the manner of death he died, which was strangling: for אכרא, “ascara”, a word often used in the ⁶⁰⁹ Talmudic writings, signifies “strangling”; and is accounted by the Jews the hardest of deaths, and an evil one; and which seems to bid fair for the true reason of his name: however, it is mentioned here, as elsewhere, to distinguish him from Jude, or Judas, the true and faithful apostle of Christ; for this was he,

who also betrayed him;

604 Misn. Sanhedrim, c. 9. sect. 6. & Bartenora, in ib. T. Avoda Zara, fol. 36. 2. Maimon. Issure Bia, c. 12. sect. 4, 5, 6. 14. & Sanhedrim, c. 18. sect. 6. & Obede Cochabim, c. 2. sect. 9. Philo de Monarchia, l. 1. p. 818.

605 De Bello Jud. l. 5. c. 1, 2. & 6. 1. Vid. Abot R. Nathan, c. 6. fol. 3. 2.

606 Vid. Wolfi Heb. Bibl. p. 410.

607 T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 50. 2. & Avoda Zara, fol. 14. 2.

608 Plin. Nat. Hist. l. 13. c. 4.

609 T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 8. 1. & Sabbath, fol. 33. 1. Sota, fol. 35. 1. Pesachim, fol. 105. 1. Taanith, fol. 19. 2. & 27. 2. Yebamot, fol. 62. 2.

that is, Christ, as the Persic version reads it; and which is mentioned, not only for further distinction's sake, but to his great reproach. We learn from hence, that in the purest society on earth there has been an impure person; nor can it therefore be expected it should be otherwise in the best of churches, in the present state of imperfection; yea, that a man may have the highest gifts and attainments, as Judas had, ministerial gifts, and power of performing miracles, and yet be a vile person.

Matthew 10:5

Ver. 5. **These twelve Jesus sent forth,**

And no other but them, under the character of apostles. These had been with him a considerable time, to whom he had been gradually communicating spiritual knowledge; and by the benefit of private conference with him, and the observation they had made upon his doctrine and conduct, were greatly qualified for public usefulness: wherefore he gives them a commission, furnishes them with power and authority; and sends them forth from him by pairs, that they might be assisting to one another, and bear a joint testimony to the Gospel they preached; but before he sent them forth from his presence, he gave them some directions where they should go, and to whom they should minister, and where not:

and he commanded them,

as their Lord and Master; he gave them strict orders, which he expected them to comply with, and closely enjoined them, as they must answer it to him again,

saying, go not into the way of the Gentiles;

meaning, not the customs' and manners of the Heathens, they were to avoid; but that they were not to steer their course, or take their journey towards them: they were not, as yet, to go among them, and preach the Gospel to them; the calling of the Gentiles was not a matter, as yet, so clearly revealed and known, nor was the time of their calling come: besides it was the will of God, that the Gospel should be first preached to the Jews, to take off all excuse from them, and that their obstinacy and perverseness in rejecting Jesus as the Messiah, might manifestly appear; and since Christ himself was the minister of the circumcision, he would have his apostles, for the present, whilst he was on earth, act agreeably to the character he bore, that there might be an entire harmony in their conduct.

And into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not:

the word “any” is supplied, and that very rightly; for, not the city of Samaria, the metropolis of that country,

as the Arabic version reads it, is only meant, but any, and every city of the Samaritans: not that it was strictly unlawful and criminal to go thither; for he himself went into one of their cities, and so did his apostles, Joh 4:4 Luke 9:52 and after his death preached the Gospel there; but he judged it not proper and expedient at this time, and as yet, to do it; that is, not before their preaching it to the Jews; for there was a very great hatred subsisting between the Jews, and the Samaritans, insomuch that they had no conversation with each other in things civil or religious. The Samaritans, though they boasted of their descent from Jacob, were a mongrel sort of people, partly Jews, and partly Gentiles, a mixture of both; and therefore are distinguished from both and though they had, and held the law, and five books of Moses, yet corrupted them in many places, to serve their purpose, and countenance their religion, particularly their worshipping at Mount Gerizim; on which account they were looked upon by the Jews as apostates, idolaters, and even as Heathens⁶¹⁰, and are therefore here joined with them; and to shun giving offence to the Jews, seems to be the reason of this prohibition; see Gill “Joh 4:20”.

Matthew 10:6

Ver. 6. **But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.**

To whom he himself was sent, Mt 15:24. By “the house of Israel” is meant the whole Jewish nation; for though this phrase, when distinguished from the house of Judah, designs only the ten tribes; yet here it intends all the Jews, then living in the land of Judea, among whom there were some of all the tribes: and by “the lost sheep” of this house, are meant either all the people of the Jews in general, who were wandering, and were lost in error and sin, and to whom the external ministry of the Gospel came; or rather the elect of God among them, for whose sake particularly the apostles were sent unto them. These are called “sheep”, because they were chosen of God, and given to Christ to be redeemed, looked up, sought out, and saved by him; and “lost” ones, not only because lost in Adam, and by their own transgressions, so that neither they themselves, nor any mere creature, could save them from eternal ruin and destruction; but also, because they were made to go astray, and were lost through the negligence and errors of their pastors, the Scribes and Pharisees: and this character is the rather given of them, partly to reflect upon the characters of the shepherds of

⁶¹⁰ T. Hieros. Shekelim, fol. 46. 2. Bartenora in Misn. Taharot, c. 5. sect. 8.

Israel: and partly to magnify the grace of God, in having regard to such ruined and miserable creatures; and also to excite the compassion and diligence of the apostles, to preach the Gospel to them: respect seems to be had to Jer 1:16.

Matthew 10:7

Ver. 7. **And as ye go,**

Through the cities of Judea, and the streets thereof, from one city to another, from place to place; for these were itinerant preachers, who were not to abide long in any place, but to move about, that the Gospel might be spread all over the land, and the lost sheep in every corner be sought out and found.

Preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

This was to be the subject matter of their ministry, which they were to proclaim aloud in every place; and which is expressed in the same words with which John the Baptist, and Christ himself, began their ministry, Mt 3:2 which shows the entire harmony, and strict agreement, there were between them: for the meaning of the phrase; see Gill “Mt 3:2”. The Cambridge copy reads, “repent, for the kingdom”, &c.

Matthew 10:8

Ver. 8. **Heal the sick,**

For so he had given them power to do, and this both for the confirmation of their doctrine, and the recommendation of them to men; for nothing could more evidently prove their mission to be divine, and their doctrine from heaven, or be more acceptable to men, than to “heal” their “sick” friends and relations, who were given up by physicians, and incurable by the art of man; and to do this without the use of medicines, either by a word speaking, or by laying on of their hands, or by anointing with oil, joined with prayer; and particularly to

cleans the lepers,

of which there were many in Israel, who otherwise could not get rid of that disorder, and by the law were deprived of many privileges, and advantages, which others enjoyed: and especially to

raise the dead,

which had never been done before the times of Christ, since the days of Elijah and Elisha; and which must be allowed by all men to be more than human, and to require the arm of almighty power: and lastly, to

cast out devils,

the sworn enemies of mankind, and who had taken possession of the bodies, as well as souls of multitudes

in the Jewish nation; all which they are ordered to do, without taking any thing of the people, for so doing:

freely ye have received, freely give;

which refers both to the working of miracles, and preaching of the Gospel. As they had these miraculous gifts freely imparted to them by Christ, they had them not of themselves, nor did they procure them at any charge, or expense of their's, or purchase them with their money, as Simon Magus impiously proposed to the apostles; so they were freely to make use of these wonderful powers, they were possessed of, for the relief of the distressed, without insisting upon, or receiving any thing for the same; a practice which was formerly disapproved and condemned in Gehazi, the servant of Elisha: and with respect to the Gospel, as the knowledge of it was freely communicated to them by Christ, and gifts qualifying them for the preaching of it, were of his mere grace and goodness bestowed upon them, so they were to dispense it without making a gain of godliness, or discovering in the least an avaricious disposition. Our Lord seems to have respect to a rule frequently inculcated by the Jews concerning teaching their oral law⁶¹¹; which is this;

“in the place where they teach the written law for a reward, it is lawful to teach it for a reward; but it is forbidden to teach the oral law for a reward, as it is said, “behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me”, &c. De 4:5. As I have בְּחִנְיָ “freely” learned, and ye have also מְנִיבָה, “freely” learnt of me; so when ye learn posterity, כְּמוֹ שֶׁלִּמְדֵתֶם מִמֶּנִּי, “teach them freely, as ye have learnt of me”.”

Now what the Jews say of their traditions, Christ applies to the Gospel: in dispensing of which he would not have his disciples come behind them; but as they had freely received the Gospel from his lips; so they would as freely, as well as faithfully, make it known to others; and which no ways contradicts the maintenance of the Gospel ministers by the people; only forbids amassing wealth and riches by it, or preaching for sordid gain, or filthy lucre's sake: for otherwise it is Christ's own ordinance, that the preachers of the Gospel should live by it; and which is confirmed in the following verses.

Matthew 10:9

611 Maimon. Talmud Tora, c. 1. sect. 7. T. Bab. Nedarim, fol. 36. 2. & 37. 1. & Becorat, fol. 29. 1. Maimon. & Bartenora in Misn. Nedarim, c. 4. sect. 3. & in Pirke Abot. c. 4. sect. 5.

Ver. 9. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass,

That is, not any sort of “money”, as both Mark and Luke express it: for money was then coined, as now, of these three sorts of metals, and which include all kind of money; so that they were not to provide, get, prepare, or take along with them for their journey, as not gold, nor silver, or any parcel of this sort of money, which might be of considerable importance, and lasting consequence to them; so neither brass money, as, halfpence, and farthings, the least, and most inconsiderable: they were forbidden to carry any of either sort

in your purses:

or, as it may be rendered, “in”, or “within your girdles”; in which travellers, among the Jews, used to carry their money; and who, in their travelling dress, might not go into the temple, and are thus described⁶¹²;

”a man may not go into the mountain of the house with his staff, or with his shoes on, nor בְּפוֹנְדָחוֹ, “with his girdle”.

”The פּוֹנְדָא “phunda”, Maimonides says⁶¹³, is an inner garment, wore to keep off sweat from other garments, to which were sewed hollow things like purses, in which a man put what he pleased; though other⁶¹⁴ interpreters say it is חֶלְוֵי שְׁנוּתֵינִי בּוֹ מוֹחַ, “a hollow girdle, in which they put their money”: and so the Romans⁶¹⁵ had used to do; and so do the Turks {m} to this day; to which practice the allusion is here.

Matthew 10:10

Ver. 10. Nor scrip for your journey,

This the Jews call תְּרֵמִיל “tarmil”: and which their commentators⁶¹⁶ say, is a large leathern bag, in which shepherds and travellers put their food, and other things, and carried with them, hanging it about their necks; so that the disciples were neither to carry money with them, nor any provisions for their journey:

neither two coats;

one to travel in, and another to put on, when they came to their quarters: they were not allowed change of raiment; either because superfluous, or too magnificent

612 Misn. Beracot, c. 9. sect. 5.

613 In ib. & Celim. c. 29. 1. & Sabbat, c. 10. 3.

614 Bartenora & Yom Tob in ib. Gloss in T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 62. 2. & in Sabbat. fol. 92. 1. & 113. 1. & 120. 1. & Nedarim, fol. 55. 2.

615 Gracchus apud A. Gell. Noct. Attic. 1. 15. c. 12. Sueton. in Vita Vitellii, c. 16. {m} Bobovius de Peregr. Meccan. p. 14.

616 Maimon. & Bartenora in Misn. Sheviith, c. 2. sect. 8. & in Celim. c. 16. 4. & 24. 11. & Negaim. c. 11. sect. 11.

to appear in, or too troublesome to carry:

nor shoes,

only sandals, as Mark says; for there was a difference between shoes and sandals, as appears from the case of the plucking off the shoe, when a man refused his brother's wife ⁶¹⁷: if the "shoe" was plucked off it was regarded; but if the "sandal", it was not minded: this was the old tradition, though custom went against it. Sandals were made of harder leather than shoes ⁶¹⁸, and sometimes of wood covered with leather, and stuck with nails, to make them more durable ⁶¹⁹; though sometimes of bulrushes, and bark of palm trees, and of cork ⁶²⁰, which were light to walk with.

"Says R. Bar bar Chanah ⁶²¹, I saw R. Eleazar of Nineveh go out on a fast day of the congregation, בנדרל שן, "with a sandal of cork".

Of what sort these were, the disciples were allowed to travel with, is not certain:

nor yet with staves:

that is, with more than one staff, which was sufficient to assist them, and lean upon in journeying: for, according to Mark, one was allowed; as though they might take a travelling staff, yet not staves for defence, or to fight with; see Mt 26:55. Now these several things were forbidden them, partly because they would be burdensome to them in travelling; and partly because they were not to be out any long time, but were quickly to return again; and chiefly to teach them to live and depend upon divine providence. Now, since they were to take neither money, nor provisions with them, and were also to preach the Gospel freely, they might reasonably ask how they should be provided for, and supported: when our Lord suggests, that they should not be anxiously concerned about that, he would take care that they had a suitable supply; and would so influence and dispose the minds of such, to whom they should minister, as that they should have all necessary provisions made for them, without any care or expense of their's:

for the workman is worthy of his meat;

⁶¹⁷ T. Hieros. Yebamot, fol. 12. 3. T. Bab. Yebamot, fol. 102. 1. & Menachot, fol. 32. 1.

⁶¹⁸ Gloss. in T. Bab. Yebamot, fol. 101. 1. & Bartenora in Misn. Yebamot, c. 12. sect. 1.

⁶¹⁹ Misn. Yebamot, c. 12. sect. 2. Maimon. Bartenora in Sabbat, c. 6. sect. 2. & Edayot, c. 2. sect. 8.

⁶²⁰ T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 78. 2. Gloss. in ib. Maimon. Hilch. Shebitat. Ashur, c. 3. sect. 7.

⁶²¹ T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 78. 2. Juchasin, fol. 81. 1.

which seems to be a proverbial expression, and by which Christ intimates, that they were workmen, or labourers in his vineyard, and they, discharging their duty aright, were entitled to food and raiment, and all the necessaries of life: this to have, was their due; and it was but a piece of justice to give it to them, and on which they might depend. So that this whole context is so far from militating against a minister's maintenance by the people, that it most strongly establishes it; for if the apostles were not to take any money or provisions with them, to support themselves with, it clearly follows, that it was the will of Christ, that they should live by the Gospel, upon those to whom they preached, as the following words show: and though they were not to make gain of the Gospel, or preach it for filthy lucre's sake; yet they might expect a comfortable subsistence, at the charge of the people, to whom they ministered, and which was their duty to provide for them.

Matthew 10:11

Ver. 11. **And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter,**

As Christ had instructed them in what manner they were to travel, so he directs them where to go, and who to ask for, and take up their abode with, in the several towns and villages to which they should come; that as soon as they had entered any town or village, they should, in the first place,

inquire, who in it is worthy;

not of them, as the Arabic version reads, nor of the Gospel they preached, or of the grace of God, of which no man is worthy: and besides, who could answer to such a question when asked? Who in any town, or city, could tell who in it were worthy of Christ, of his Gospel, and ministers, to which they were all equally strangers before they came among them? Nor does it mean a man famous for piety and religion, or one that feared God, and was a worshipper of him, but an hospitable man; one that was very liberal; who was willing and ready to entertain strangers; for such a man they would want, having neither money nor food: and so the same word, in the Hebrew language, signifies "to be worthy", and "to give alms", because an eleemosynary man, or a man given to alms, was reckoned by the Jews a very worthy man: they thought giving of alms to be a matter of merit. Christ here speaks in the language of the masters of Israel; take an instance or two:

"saith R. Jona, blessed is the man that giveth to the poor; it is not written so, but "blessed is he

that considereth the poor”: he looks upon him, how he may לזכות מו, “give alms to him”.

And a little after,

”God hath set one against the other”, that when evil comes to thy friend, thou mayest see how wb לזכות, “to do thine alms to him”, and nourish him, so that thou mayest receive the gift of its reward.”

Again, so a man says to his neighbour, זכי בי, “give alms unto me”: and afterwards, in the same place, it is said, attya בהדיא זכי, “give alms unto that woman”⁶²². Now, it was such a worthy generous man, that was beneficent to the poor, and kind to strangers, that the apostles were to inquire out, wherever they came; and having found such a person, they were to continue with him:

and there abide till ye go out;

of that city or town, to another city or town: for to be often changing houses would bring upon them an ill character, as if they were difficult to be pleased, not content with the provision made for them; and would look as if they sought to serve their own bellies, and gratify their appetites, more than to do good to the souls of men; and besides, moving from the house of a bountiful man, might bring some reproach upon his character, as if he had not used them well, and therefore left him. In short, Christ’s meaning is, that he would not have his disciples be difficult, and dainty, or fickle, and inconstant, but be content with such things they should have provided for them; and not seek for other, and better quarters, nor fear being troublesome where they were.

Matthew 10:12

Ver. 12. **And when ye come into an house,**

Or the “house”; that is, the house of an hospitable man, when, upon inquiry, found out:

salute it;

meaning the inhabitants of it; or, as the Persic version reads, those of the household, especially the master of the family. Some copies add, saying, peace be to this house, as in Luke 10:5 and so read the Vulgate Latin, and Munster’s Hebrew Gospel; and is a very just, and proper explanation of saluting: for the usual form of salutation among the Jews was in such words; of which See Gill on “Mt 5:47” by which is meant all kind of happiness, and prosperity, temporal, spiritual, and eternal.

Matthew 10:13

⁶²² Vajikra Rabba, sect. 34. fol. 173. 3, 4. & 174. 4. Midrash Kohelet c. 11. 1. fol. 82. 2.

Ver. 13. **And if the house be worthy,**

If the family, and particularly the master of it, appeared to be civil, courteous, friendly, and hospitable, upon such a salutation, and ready to receive and embrace them, and provide for them,

let your peace come upon it, or it shall come upon it;

the imperative for the future, which is not unusual; and so read the Syriac and Vulgate Latin. The sense is, the peace the apostles wished for, in their form of salutation, should come, and abide on the family; for not the Gospel of peace, and the preaching of it, are here meant, but the salutation itself, or the things desired in it, which should be granted, and the house be blessed for their sake, and as a reward of their generosity, and hospitality:

but if it be not worthy:

does not prove to be what it was said to be, and they expected; namely, to be generous, liberal, and beneficent; but, on the contrary, uncivil and churlish, should neglect their salutation, discover an unwillingness to receive them, and turn their backs upon them: **let your peace return to you**, or “it shall return to you”; the happiness wished for shall not come upon them, and the prayers and good wishes of the apostles shall be void, and of none effect, with respect to that family, but should be made good to themselves; and they should be directed to another house, where they should find persons more generous and free to entertain them.

Matthew 10:14

Ver. 14. **And whosoever shall not receive you,**

Into their houses, and refuse to entertain them and provide for them in a friendly manner;

nor hear your words,

slight their salutations, make no account of, but despise their good wishes for their welfare; and also treat with contempt the doctrines of the Gospel preached by them; and either would not attend on their ministry, or if they did, give no credit to what they should say, but deride and reject them.

When ye depart out of that house, or city;

to another house, or to another city, being obliged to remove, through their contemptuous rejection of them:

shake off the dust of your feet.

So Paul and Barnabas did at Antioch in Pisidia, when the Jews contradicted and blasphemed the Gospel preached by them, raised a persecution against them, and expelled them out of their coasts, Ac 13:51 which ceremony was ordered by Christ to be observed even

to the cities of Judea, that should despise and reject the ministry of his apostles; and that either to show that they did not come to them with worldly views, with any design to amass riches and wealth to themselves, for they would not so much as carry away with them the dust on their feet, but it was purely with a view to their welfare, both spiritual and temporal; or to testify that they had been among them, and that that very dust they shook off their feet would rise up in judgment against them, and declare that the Gospel had been preached among them, and they had rejected it, which will be an aggravation of their condemnation; or rather to observe to them, that such was their wickedness, that even the dust of their country was infected thereby, and therefore they shook it off, as though it defiled them, as the dust of an Heathen country was thought by the Jews to do; so that by this action they signified that they would have nothing more to do with them, or say to them, and that they looked upon them as impure and unholy, as any Heathen city or country. There seems to be an allusion to some maxims and customs of the Jews, with respect to the dust of Heathen countries.”

On account of six doubts, they say ⁶²³, they burn the first offering, for a doubt of a field in which a grave might be, and for a doubt **Mymeh Uram abh rpe**, “of the dust which comes from the land of the Gentiles”, &c.”

On which Bartenora has this note;

”all dust which comes from the land of the Gentiles, is reckoned by us as the rottenness of a dead carcass; and of these two, “the land of the Gentiles”, and a field in which is a grave, it is decreed that they “defile” by touching, and by carrying.”

Again ⁶²⁴,

”the dust of a field in which is a grave, and the dust without the land (of Israel) which comes along with an herb, are unclean.” Upon which Maimonides makes this remark, “that the dust of a field that has a grave in it, and the dust which is without the land of Israel, defile by touching and carrying; or if, when it hangs at the end of an herb, when they root it out of the dust of such a field, it is unclean”.

Hence they would not suffer herbs to be brought out

⁶²³ Misn. Taharot, c. 4. sect. 5. Vid. c. 5. 1. & Maimon & Bartenora in ib.

⁶²⁴ Misn. Oholot. c. 17. sect. 5.

of an Heathen country into the land of Israel, lest dust should be brought along with them.”

A Misnic doctor teaches ⁶²⁵, that they do not bring herbs from without the land (of Israel into it), but our Rabbins permit it; what difference is there between them? Says R. Jeremiah, they take care of their dust; that is the difference between them.

”On that clause, “they take care of their dust”, the gloss is,

”lest there should be brought with it **בגוש ארץ הגוים**, “any of the dust of the land of the Gentiles”, which defiles in the tent, and pollutes the purity of the land of Israel.”

Matthew 10:15

Ver. 15. **Verily, I say unto you,**

This was not all the punishment that should be inflicted on such despisers of the Gospel of Christ, and the ministers of it; as not to enjoy that peace and prosperity wished for by the apostles, and to be declared to be on an equal foot with Heathen cities and countries: but they were to suffer everlasting punishment in the world to come; which is here asserted by Christ in the strongest manner, saying:

it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha, in the day of judgment, than for that city.

The inhabitants of the land of Sodom and Gomorrha are the rather mentioned, because, as they were very notorious and abominable sinners, so their temporal punishment was well known, exemplary and awful, though not that, but their future damnation is here regarded, of which the Jews made no doubt; for they say ⁶²⁶,

”the men of Sodom have no part in the world to come; as it is said, Ge 13:13 “the men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners, before the Lord exceedingly”: they were “wicked” in this world, and “sinners” in the world to come;”

meaning, that by this passage is designed their double punishment in this, and the other world. But though their punishment was very tremendous, and

⁶²⁵ T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 12. 1.

⁶²⁶ Misn. Sanhedrim, c. 11. sect. 3. Hieros. Sanhedrim, fol. 29. 3.

they will suffer also “the vengeance of eternal fire”, as Jude says; yet, their punishment will be milder, and more tolerable, than that of the inhabitants of such a city, that rejects the Gospel of the grace of God: as there are degrees in sinning, for all sins are not alike, as the Stoics say; so there will be degrees in suffering; the sins of those that are favoured with the Gospel, are greater than those who only have had the light of nature, and so their torments will be greater. The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrha, though they sinned against the light of nature, despised the advice and admonitions of Lot, and ill treated the angels, yet will be more mildly punished than the wicked Jews, who rejected Christ, and his Gospel, and despised his apostles, and ministers; because they sinned not against so much light, and such means of grace, and knowledge, as these did; see La 4:6 which is thus paraphrased by the Targumist, and may be aptly applied to the Jews in Christ’s time:

”the sin of the congregation of my people is greater than the sin of Sodom, which was overturned in a moment; and there dwelt no prophets in it to prophesy, and turn it to repentance.”

The time referred to, signified by “the day of judgment”, respects not the destruction of Jerusalem, which was a very severe judgment on that people, but the general judgment, at the end of the world, which is appointed and fixed by God, though unknown to angels and men. The phrase is Jewish, and often to be met with in their writings, who use it in the same sense; particularly in the book of Zohar ⁶²⁷, mention is made of יומא דדינא ש, “the day of judgment”, when there will be no pollution in the sanctuary.

Matthew 10:16

Ver. 16. **Behold, I send you forth, as sheep among wolves,**

This, and the following verses, chiefly respect the troubles, afflictions, persecutions, and sufferings which should befall the apostles after the death and resurrection of Christ; when their commission was enlarged, and they afresh sent out by Christ to preach his Gospel; of which he gives a faithful account before hand, that they might be prepared for them, and not be surprised when they came upon them. He compares them to “sheep”, because they were meek and humble in their spirits, harmless, and inoffensive, in their lives and conversations; were weak, and unable to protect themselves, and were sent out by

him unarmed and defenceless; and their oppressors and persecutors to “wolves”, because fierce and furious, voracious and ravenous, cruel and hurtful, as these creatures are, especially to sheep; wherefore Christ gives them this wholesome advice,

be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

Much such an expression as this God is represented as saying of Israel ⁶²⁸:

”Says R. Judah, in the name of R. Simon, the holy blessed God said, concerning Israel, with me they are חמימי כיונימ, “harmless as doves”; but among the nations of the world, they are כנחשימ רומימ, “subtle as serpents”.

”The serpent is a very sharp sighted, cunning creature, and uses various arts and stratagems for its own preservation, and especially of its head; and is so far to be imitated by the followers of Christ, as to make use of all proper methods to preserve themselves from the insults and rage of men, and not expose themselves to unnecessary dangers: and, as much as in them lies, they should be careful to give no just occasion of offence, or irritate, and provoke them to use them ill, and to avoid all snares and traps that are laid for them; and, at the same time, maintain the innocence and harmlessness of the dove, being free from all wicked cunning and craftiness, without rancour, malice, and wrath; not meditating and seeking revenge, but meek and humble in their deportment, leading inoffensive lives, and proceeding in the course of their calling, though liable to many insults, and much oppression.

Matthew 10:17

Ver. 17. **But beware of men,**

Of these men, comparable to wolves, before spoken of: the phrase is somewhat uncommon and emphatical, and designs not merely wicked men in common, the men of the world, and enemies of the Gospel; but chiefly such of them as were men of note and authority, ecclesiastical and civil governors of the people, the Scribes, Pharisees, elders, and chief priests, and other rulers; and the advice to the apostles is, to take care how they came into their company, and put themselves into their hands; who would seek all opportunities and occasions against them, and use their power and interest to do them hurt:

for they will deliver you up to the councils,
or sanhedrim, of which there were three sorts; the

⁶²⁷ In Gen. fol 13. 3. & 16. 1.

⁶²⁸ Shirhashirim Rabba, c. 2. 14. fol. 12. 1.

greater, which consisted of seventy one persons, and was only held in Jerusalem; the lesser one, which was made up of twenty three members, and was kept in every place where there were an hundred and twenty Israelites; and the third, where there was not that number, and was a triumvirate, or a bench of three judges only ⁶²⁹.

And they will scourge you in their synagogues;

where the triumvirate, or bench of three Judges kept their court; under whose cognizance were pecuniary judgments, and such as related to thefts, damages, restitutions, ravishing, and enticing of virgins, and defamation; also to plucking off of the shoe, and refusing a brother's wife, to the plant of the fourth year, second tithes whose price is unknown, holy things, and the estimations of goods; to these belonged also laying on of hands, the beheading of the heifer, and, among the rest, מכות בשלשה, "scourging was by the bench of three" ⁶³⁰. The manner of performing it was this ⁶³¹:

"they bind both his hands to a pillar, here and there; and the minister of the synagogue takes hold of his clothes, and if they are rent, they are rent; and if they are ripped in the seam, they are ripped till his breast is uncovered; for he is not to beat him on his clothes, as it is said, "he shall beat him", but not his clothes: and a stone is placed behind him, on which the minister that scourges stands, and a white leather whip in his hand, doubled two and two with four, and two lashes of an ass's hide, going up and down: the breadth of the whip was an hand's breadth, and the length of it, so as to reach to the navel, and the handle of the whip, by which he took hold, was the length of an hand; and he lifts up the whip with both his hands, and strikes with one hand, with all his might; and gives him the third part of his stripes before, upon his breast, between his paps, and two thirds behind him; one third upon this shoulder, and the other upon the other shoulder. He that scourges neither stands, nor sits, but bows; as it is said, "the judge shall cause him to lie down, and to be beaten before his face"; for the eyes of the judge shall be upon him, that he do not look upon anything else, and smite him from thence; for no two strokes are as one; the greatest of the judges reads all the time he is scourging,

629 Maimon. Hilch. Sanhedrim, c. 1. sect. 3, 4.

630 Misn. Sanhedrim, c. 1. sect. 1, 2, 3.

631 Maimon. Hilch. Sanhedrim, c. 16. sect. 8, 9, 10, 11. Misn. Maccot, c. 3. sect. 12, 13, 14.

viz. these passages; "if thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law", &c. and "the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful", &c. and he intends to finish the verses with the stripes; but if he does not finish, he returns to the beginning of the Scripture, and reads, and returns, and reads until the whole scourging is over: and the second of the judges numbers the stripes; and the third says to the minister strike: every time he strikes, it is at his orders he strikes.

"Now, as this punishment was inflicted by the chazan, or minister of the synagogue, who was a sort of sexton, so it was done in the synagogue itself: and according to our Lord's predictions here, and in Mt 23:34 as the former of these, delivering up to councils, had its accomplishment in part, in the apostles, Ac 4:1 so the latter, scourging in their synagogues, was fulfilled both by Paul, Ac 22:19 and upon him, 2Co 11:24. Epiphanius tells ⁶³² us of one Joseph, a Jew, who was caught by the Jews reading the Gospels in his own house; upon which they dragged him away, and had him to the synagogue, and there "scourged" him. Now as these things did not befall the apostles till after the death of Christ, it is clear that the context refers not to their first, but to an after mission.

Matthew 10:18

Ver. 18. **And ye shall be brought before governors,**

Meaning Roman governors; so Paul was had before Gallio, Felix, and Festas; for judgments relating to life and death were to be taken away, and were taken away from the Jewish sanhedrim; and as they themselves say ⁶³³, forty years before the destruction of the second temple, which was much about the time of Christ's death: so that what power they had, was only with regard to lesser matters, and to inflict lesser punishments, as beating and scourging: if they sought to take away life, they were obliged to bring the cause before the governors of the Roman provinces, who are here intended:

and kings for my sake;

as Herod, Agrippa, Nero, Domitian, and others, before whom one or other of the apostles were brought; not as thieves, or murderers, or traitors, and seditious persons, or for having done any wrong or injury to any man's person or property; but purely for the sake of Christ, for the profession of their faith in him, and for

632 Contra Haeres. 1. 1. Haeres. 30.

633 Hieros. Sanhedrim, fol. 18. 1. & 24. 2. Juchasin, fol. 26. 2. & 51. 1. Maimon. Hilch. Sanhedrim. c. 14. sect. 13.

preaching his Gospel; of all which they had no reason to be ashamed, nor were they:

for a testimony against,
or “to”

them, and the Gentiles;

that is, that thereby they might have an opportunity of bearing a testimony to the truths of the Gospel, which would be either to the conviction and conversion of many Gentiles, as well as Jews; or would be a testimony which would stand against them another day, both against the Jews, who charged, and accused them, and brought them before the Heathen kings and governors, to punish them with death; and against those Gentile magistrates, and others, who should join with them in rejecting the Gospel, and putting them to death for preaching it: so that they should have no pretext or excuse; since the Gospel had been faithfully and clearly preached to them, and they had despised it, and evil treated the ministers of it. This confirms what is before observed, that this passage refers to an after mission.

Matthew 10:19

Ver. 19. **But when they deliver you up,**

The apostles hearing that they should be delivered up to councils, and brought before governors and kings, might be under some concern how they should behave, and what they should be able to say in vindication of themselves and truth, before such great persons; they not being used to converse with men in such high stations: they were illiterate men, and of no elocution; men of mean birth, low life, most of them poor fishermen; and might fear, on these accounts, that the Gospel would suffer for want of able persons to defend it before the great ones of the earth. Now, in order to remove these their fears and objections, and to strengthen and comfort their minds, our Lord bids them, when this would be their ease, that the Jews would deliver them to the Roman magistrates, to

take no thought how, or what ye shall speak;

not to be anxiously concerned, neither as to the matter, or manner of what they should say in their defence: they should have no occasion, as orators do, to take pains, and rack their thoughts, to prepare a studied, elaborate oration, dressed with all the flowers of rhetoric, filled with the most moving and powerful arguments, and clothed with diction of the strictest propriety and elegance; for they should want neither words, nor things; they should have arguments put into their mouths, and helped to proper language to express them in:

for it shall be given you in the same hour, what ye shall speak;

immediate assistance should be afforded them either by his father, or himself; or rather, the blessed Spirit, who would suggest unto them, at once, things, the most proper to be said, and help them to deliver them in the most proper manner: and these are the most convincing arguments, and that the best elocution, which the Spirit of God helps men to; these vastly exceed all the art of men, and strength of nature. This was greatly verified in Peter and John, two poor fishermen, when before the council, and in Stephen the protomartyr.

Matthew 10:20

Ver. 20. **For it is not ye that speak,**

Not but that they were to speak the words, and did; but then both the things they spoke, and the very words in which they spoke them, were not of themselves, but were suggested and dictated by the Spirit of God; for as “the preparation of the heart” in them, so “the answer of the tongue” by them, were both “from the Lord”: the Spirit, he was the efficient cause, they were only instruments; for not they of themselves spoke; or not so much they,

but the Spirit of your father, which speaketh in you,

or “by you”: what they should say was not to be dictated by their own spirit or natural understanding, nor by an angel, but by the Spirit of God; called the “Spirit of” their “father”, because he proceeds from him, is of the same nature with him, and is the reason of his being given to them: and this character of him might serve to strengthen their faith in the expectation of him, and in the assistance promised, and to be had by him; since he was the spirit of him, who stood in the relation of a father to them, and bore a paternal affection for them.

Matthew 10:21

Ver. 21. **And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death,**

Christ having fortified the minds of his disciples by the foregoing promises of divine influence and assistance, proceeds to open more largely and particularly the sorrows, troubles, and afflictions they must expect would attend the faithful ministration of his Gospel; as, that the true followers of Christ should not only be persecuted and betrayed, and delivered up into the hands of the civil magistrate, by persons that were strangers to them; but even by their nearest relations, brethren, whom the nearness of blood, should oblige to the tenderest regards to each other, to the securing of property and preserving of life: these should deliver up those that were so nearly

related to them in the bonds of consanguinity, into the hands persecuting men in power, in order to be put to death; than which scarce anything can be more barbarous and unnatural, though the next instances exceed it:

and the father the child, and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death.

The father laying aside his natural affection for his child, whom he has begotten, and brought up, and has took so much care of, and delight in, and perhaps his only one, his son and heir; and yet, professing a faith different from his, such is his blind zeal and bigotry, that, breaking through all the ties of parental relation and affection, he delivers him up into the hands of wicked magistrates, to put him to death: and, on the other hand, children, forgetting the bonds they are in, and the obligations they lie under to their aged parents, rise up against them, and either with their own hands murder them, or appear as witnesses against them, and give their hearty consent to the taking away of their lives; even of them who have been the means and instruments of bringing them into the world, and of bringing them up in it. This shows the sad corruption of human nature, its enmity to the Gospel of Christ, and the inveterate malice and hatred of Satan against Christ, and his interest. Something like this is said by the Jews themselves, as what shall be in the times of the Messiah; for a little before his coming, or in the age in which the son of David comes, they say,

”the son shall deal basely by his father, the daughter shall rise up against her mother--a man’s enemies shall be of his own household; the face of that generation shall be as the face of a dog; and the son shall not reverence his father ⁶³⁴”

Matthew 10:22

Ver. 22. **And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake,**

This is more particularly directed to the apostles themselves, as what is said before regards the followers of Christ in general; for this was to be the lot of the apostles, that they should not only be ill treated in common with others, by their near friends and relations, whose love would be turned into hatred to them, but should be the butt and mark of the malice and wrath of all men; that is, of most men, or of the far greater part of the Jews, even of all wicked men who disbelieved and rejected the Messiah: for that the words are not to be understood in the utmost latitude, without any restriction, is certain; since there

would be some who would be converted; and believe in Christ through their ministry, and consequently would love, esteem, and honour them as their spiritual fathers and guides, and as the disciples and apostles of Christ. This hatred they should be exposed to, would not be on account of any ill will to their persons; or because of any evil or immorality committed by them; but purely, and alone, for the name of Christ, in whom they believed, by which they were called, of which they made a profession, and zealously preached: which consideration, as it must needs secure peace and tranquillity in their breasts; so for their further encouragement, it is added,

but he that endureth to the end, shall be saved:

which words suggest, that the tribulations and persecutions of the disciples of Christ, through the hatred of wicked men against them, shall not last always; there will be an end to them; respecting either the end of time and life, or the destruction of Jerusalem, when these their enemies would be cut off, or removed, and be capable of giving them no further trouble; and that such persons are happy, who patiently endure the hatred of men, and all manner of persecution, for Christ’s sake; who are not moved by the afflictions they suffer, but stand fast in the faith, hold fast the profession of it, go on in their Christian course, and hold out to the end; for such shall be saved, not only with a temporal salvation, as the Christians were at the destruction of Jerusalem, but with an eternal one.

Matthew 10:23

Ver. 23. **But when they persecute you in this city,**

Or any city into which they went, and preached the Gospel; and would not suffer them to go on in their work, they were not to desist, but to go elsewhere, where they might hope for a better reception, and a longer continuance, and so of doing more good:

flee ye into another;

not so much for their own safety, though this, according to the circumstances of things, is lawful, but for the further spreading of the Gospel. The exhortation is not to take methods to avoid persecution, or to make an escape from it, but to perseverance under it: the sense is, they were not to be discouraged, and to leave off, because of persecution in one place, but to persist in the ministration of the Gospel, by carrying it to other cities; and it seems to be a spur to them to make haste, and fulfil their office of preaching the Gospel, in the land of Judea: nor need they fear going on too fast, lest they should have no places to preach in;

634 Misn. Sota, c. 9. sect. 15.

for verily I say unto you,

this is a certain and indisputable truth not to be called in question, being strongly affirmed by truth itself, **ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel,**

or “finished” them; that is, their tour through them, and their ministry, or the preaching of the Gospel in them,

till the son of man be come;

which is not to be understood of his second coming to judgment, but either of his resurrection from the dead, when he was declared to be the Son of God, and when his glorification began; or of the pouring forth of the Spirit at the day of Pentecost, when his kingdom began more visibly to take place, and he was made, or manifested to be the Lord and Christ; **or of his coming to take vengeance on his enemies, that would not have him to rule over them, and the persecutors of his ministers, at the destruction of Jerusalem.**

Matthew 10:24

Ver. 24. **The disciple is not above his master,**.... So far from it, that he is inferior to him; as in knowledge, so in reputation and character; and cannot expect the same honour to be given him, and the same respect shown to him, as to his master; and therefore if his master is not used with that decency, and in that becoming manner he ought to be, he must not think it any hardship if he is treated in the same way. Our Lord hereby intends to fortify the minds of his disciples against all the reproach and persecution they were to meet with from the world, by observing to them the treatment he himself met with; wherefore, if he who was their master, a teacher that came from God, and taught as never man did, and was worthy of the utmost deference that could be paid, was maligned and evilly treated by men, it became them who were his disciples, to look for, and patiently bear such indignities; since they could expect no better usage than he himself had: the same doctrine is suggested in the next clause, **nor the**

servant above his Lord;

and both seem to be proverbial expressions. The Jews have a saying⁶³⁵ much like unto them, **אינו הבד זכה מרבו**, “no servant is worthier than his master”; and Christ might make use of such common, well known expressions, that he might be the more easily understood, and in the most familiar manner convey what he intended, into the minds of his disciples; as, that since he was their Lord, and they were his servants, if his superior character and dignity

did not secure him from the obloquy and insults of men, it could not be thought by them, who were inferior to him, that they should escape them.

Matthew 10:25

Ver. 25. **It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master,**

A disciple should think himself very well off, be entirely satisfied, yea, abundantly thankful, if he meets with no worse treatment than his master; if he has the same honour done him his master has, this is more than could be expected by him; and if he has the same ill usage with his master, he need not wonder at it, but should solace himself with this consideration, that it is no other, nor worse than his master had before him: and the same is equally true in the other case,

and the servant as his Lord:

these expressions, as before, were proverbs, or common sayings among the Jews, which our Lord chose to make use of, and adapt to his present purpose; **כרבו להייה**, “*vel*” **לבוך שיהא**”⁶³⁶, “it is enough for the servant, that he be as his master”, is a saying often to be met with in their writings⁶³⁶; which our Lord applies, and reasons upon, in the following manner :

if they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of the household?

By “the master of the household”; he means himself, who is master of the family both in heaven and in earth; who is son over his own house, the high priest over the house of God, the lord and governor of all the household of faith; who takes care of, provides for, and protects all that are of God’s household: and yet, though in such an high office, and of such great usefulness, he did not escape the severest lashes of the tongues of the wicked Jews; who called him by the most opprobrious names they could think of, and among the rest Beelzebub; see Mt 12:24. This was the god of the Ekronites, 2Ki 1:2. The word signifies “a masterfly” or the “lord of a fly”: and so the Septuagint there call him baal muian, “Baal the fly”; the god of the Ekronites. And this idol was so called, either because it was in the form of a fly: or else from the abundance of flies about it, by reason of the sacrifices, which it was not able to drive away; and therefore the Jews contemptuously gave it this name. They observe⁶³⁷, that in the temple, notwithstanding the

⁶³⁵ T. Hieros. Maaser Sheni, fol. 55. 1.

⁶³⁶ T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 58. 2. Bereshit Rabba, fol. 43. 3. Juchasin, fol. 93. 1. Tzeror Hammor, fol. 64. 2. Aben Ezra in Hos. i. 2.

⁶³⁷ Pirke Abot, c. 5. sect. 5.

multitude of sacrifices offered up there, there never was seen a fly in the slaughter house: or else this deity was so called from its being invoked to drive away flies, and the same with Myiodes, the god of flies, mentioned by Pliny ⁶³⁸, or Myagros, which the same author ⁶³⁹ speaks of; so Jupiter was called apomuiov, a driver away of flies; as was also Hercules ⁶⁴⁰; and were worshipped by some nations on this account. In most copies, and so in the Arabic version, it is read Beelzebul; that is, as it is commonly rendered, the “lord of dung”, or a dunghill god; and it is generally thought the Jews called the god of the Ekronites so, by way of contempt; as it was usual with them to call an idol’s temple זבול, “zebul”, “dung”, and worshipping of idols מזובל, “dunging” ⁶⁴¹: but I must own, that I should rather think, that as Beelsamin, the god of the Phoenicians, is the same with Beelzebul, the god of the Ekronites, so it signifies the same thing: now גל שמיני “Beelsamin”, is “the lord of the heavens”, and so is Beelzebul; for זבול, “Zebul”, signifies “heaven”; so the word is used in Hab 3:11 “the sun and the moon stood still”, זבלה, “in their habitation”; by which, as a Jewish ⁶⁴² writer observes, הרון בו השמיני, “is meant the heavens”; for they are the habitation of the sun and moon: see also Isa 63:15 and so among the seven names of the heavens, reckoned up by them, this is accounted one ⁶⁴³. Now as the Jews looked upon all the deities of the Gentiles as demons, or devils; and since Beelzebub was the chief of them, they thought they could not fix upon a more reproachful name, to give to Christ, than this: and our Lord suggests, that since the great master of the family was called in such an abusive manner, it should be no cause of stumbling and offence, if those of a lower class in the family should be so stigmatized; if Christians are called by ever such hard names, even devils, they should not be disturbed at it; since their lord and master was called the prince of them.

Matthew 10:26

Ver. 26. **Fear them not, therefore,**

That is, be not afraid of men, and of their reproaches and revilings; which our Lord intimates would do them no more hurt, than they did him, and which in a little while would be all wiped away: time would bring all

⁶³⁸ Nat. Hist. 1. 29. sect. 6.

⁶³⁹ lb. 1. 10. c. 28.

⁶⁴⁰ Pausanias, 1. 5. p. 313. & 1. 8. p. 497. Clement. Alex. ad Gentes, p. 24.

⁶⁴¹ T. Hieros. Beracot, fol. 13. 2.

⁶⁴² R. Sol. Urbinas in Ohel Moed, fol. 100. 1.

⁶⁴³ T. Bab. Chagiga, fol. 12. 2.

things to light, when the wickedness of these men would be discovered, their evil designs seen through; which were now covered with the specious pretences of sanctity, and zeal for religion, and the glory of God; and the innocence and integrity of him and his disciples would be made manifest. There is no need to refer this to the great day of account, when every secret thing shall be brought to light; but it chiefly regards the times when the Gospel should be more publicly known, and embraced, and should prevail against all the opposition made unto it; and then all these reproachful names and characters would be seen plainly to arise from spite and malice: to which may be applied those proverbial sayings in common use,

for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed, and hid, that shall not be known.

Men may cover their malice and wickedness, for a while, under the best of names, but ere long it will all be revealed to their great shame and reproach: the innocence of the followers of Christ may, for some time, lie out of sight, and they may be traduced as the worst of men; but in process of time things take another turn, and their characters appear in quite another light: and so it is with the Gospel preached and professed by them, which, though sometimes it is little known, lies hid, and is covered with disgrace; yet in the Lord’s own time its light breaks forth, power attends it, and it is made manifest to the consciences of men.

Matthew 10:27

Ver. 27. **What I tell you in darkness,**

Hence Christ proceeds to encourage his disciples to an open, plain, and faithful ministration of the Gospel, not fearing the faces and frowns of men. For with respect to the Gospel, his meaning is, that what was hid and covered should not remain so, but should be revealed, and made known, and they were the persons who were to do it; and it was with that view that he had communicated it to them: and whereas he had told them it “in darkness”; not in a dark and obscure manner; for though he spoke in parables to others, yet to them he made known the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven: and if at any time he delivered parables, or dark sayings, to them, he would afterwards, or when alone, explain them to them; but his meaning chiefly is, that what he communicated to them in private houses, when they were by themselves, and no one saw, or heard them, and so were in darkness with respect to others,

that speak ye in light;

openly and publicly in the synagogues and temple, in the high places of the city, streets, or fields, wherever there is a concourse of people; hide and conceal nothing, but speak out all clearly, distinctly, fully, without the least reserve, or throwing any obscurity on it, which may cover the true sense of it from the view of the people.

And what ye hear in the ear,

or is whispered to you by me, as your master. Christ alludes to the custom of the Jewish doctors, who had each an interpreter, into whose ear he used to whisper his doctrine, and then the interpreter delivered it to the people: so it is said ⁶⁴⁴,

”Rab came to the place of R. Shilla, and he had no speaker to stand by him; wherefore Rab stood by him, and explained.

The gloss upon it is,

”an interpreter stands before a doctor whilst he is preaching, and the doctor לִיחֹשׁ לוֹ, “whispers to him” in the Hebrew tongue, and he interprets it to the multitude in a tongue they understand.

Again ⁶⁴⁵,

”they said to Judah bar Nachmani, the interpreter of Resh Lekish, stand for a speaker for him.”

The gloss upon it is,

”to cause his exposition to be heard by the congregation, שִׁלְחֹשׁ לְכַ, “which he shall whisper to thee”.

”Now it was absolutely requisite, that the speaker, or interpreter, should faithfully relate what the doctor said; sometimes, it seems, he did not: it is said ⁶⁴⁶ in commendation of the meekness of R. Aba,

”that he delivered one sense, and his speaker said another, and he was not angry.”

The gloss says,

”his speaker was, he that interpreted to the multitude what he לִיחֹשׁ לוֹ “whispered to him” in the time of preaching.”

Sometimes one doctor is said to whisper in the ear of another, when he instructed him, or informed him of anything. R. Jochanan ⁶⁴⁷ whispered R. Joshua באוּרְיָה, “in his ear”. The Jews have a notion that the law was given

this way; so they interpret “the eloquent orator” in Isa 3:3 ⁶⁴⁸ this is he to whom it is fit to deliver the words of the law, שְׁנִיתָה בְּלֶחֶשׁ, “which was given by whispering”: and so, it seems, the Gospel was in like manner delivered by Christ to his disciples. It was reckoned a very great honour, and a token of magisterial dignity, to have one to whisper in the ear to, and speak for them. So to one that related his dream, that he saw an ass standing at his pillow, and braying, answer is made, thou shalt be a king, that is, the head of a school; and “a speaker” or “an interpreter shall stand by thee” ⁶⁴⁹. Our Lord very justly takes upon him the character of a doctor, master, and dictator, and solemnly charges his disciples, clearly, loudly, and faithfully to declare what he suggested to them.

That preach ye,

says he,

upon the housetops;

for the roofs of their houses were not ridged, but plain, and flat, upon which they could stand or walk; and battlements were made about them to prevent their falling off, according to the law in De 22:8. Here many religious actions were performed: here Peter went up to pray, Ac 10:9 and here persons sometimes sat and read: hence that passage in the Misna ⁶⁵⁰ if any one בְּרֹאשׁ הַגֶּגֶז הָיָה קוֹרֵא, “was reading on the top of a roof”, and the book is rolled out of his hand, &c. and sometimes they made their proclamations from hence of their festivals and solemn days, and particularly of their sabbath; which was done by the sound of a trumpet, that the people might cease from work in the fields, and shut up their shops in the city, and light up their lamps. This proclamation, by the sound of a trumpet, was made six times by the chazan, or minister of the congregation, from an housetop; and, it is said, that there was, גַּג מְיֻחָד בְּגוֹבַהּ הָיָה, “a peculiar roof in the highest part of the city”, and from the middle of it he blew the trumpet ⁶⁵¹. In allusion to this, our Lord orders his disciples to blow the trumpet of the everlasting Gospel; and loudly proclaim to all the truths and mysteries of grace, which he had made known to them.

Matthew 10:28

Ver. 28. **And fear not them which kill the body,**

This is a “periphrasis” of bloody persecutors, who, not content to revile, scourge, and imprison, put the

644 T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 20. 2.

645 T. Bab. Sanhed. fol. 7. 2.

646 T. Bab. Sota, fol. 40. 1.

647 T. Hieros Kiddushin, fol. 65. 4.

648 T. Bab. Chagiga, fol. 14. 1.

649 T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 56. 1.

650 Erubin, c. 10. sect. 3.

651 T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 35. 2. & Gloss. in ib.

faithful ministers of Christ to death, in the most cruel and torturing manner; and yet are not so to be feared and dreaded by them, as to discourage and divert them from the performance of their important work and office; for, as Luke says, Luke 12:4 “after” that they “have no more than they can do”. This is all they are capable of doing, even by divine permission, when they are suffered to run the greatest lengths in violence against the saints; this is the utmost of their efforts, which Satan, and their own wicked hearts, can put them upon, or is in the power of their hands to perform: and the taking away of the lives of good men is of no disadvantage to them; but sends them the sooner out of this troublesome world to their father’s house, to partake of those joys that will never end; so that they have nothing to fear from their most implacable enemies; but should boldly and bravely go on in their master’s service, openly, freely, faithfully, and fully discharging the work they were called unto: for, the loss of a corporal life is no loss to them, their souls live after death, in eternal happiness; and in a little time God will raise up their bodies, and reunite them to their souls, and be for ever happy together. A noble argument this, which our Lord makes use of, to engage his disciples to a public and diligent ministration of the Gospel, in spite of all opposers; who, when they have vented all their malice, can only take away a poor, frail, mortal life; and which, if they did not, in a little time would cease in course:

but are not able to kill the soul;

which is immortal, and cannot be touched by the sword, by fire and faggot, or any instruments of violence: it is immortal, it survives the body, and lives in a separate state, enjoying happiness and bliss, whilst the body is in a state of death:

but rather fear him, which is able to destroy both body and soul in hell.

This is a description of God, and of his power, who is able to do that which men are not: all that they can do, by divine permission, is to kill the body; but he is able to “destroy”, that is, to torment and punish both body and soul “in hell”, in everlasting burnings; for neither soul nor body will be annihilated; though this he is able to do. As the former clause expresses the immortality of the soul, this supposes the resurrection of the body; for how otherwise should it be destroyed, or punished with the soul in hell? Now this awful being which is able to hurl, and will hurl all wicked and slothful, unfaithful and unprofitable, cowardly and temporising servants and ministers, soul and body, into the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, is to be feared and dreaded;

yea, indeed, he only is to be feared, and to be obeyed: cruel and persecuting men are not to be feared at all; God alone should be our fear and dread; though the argument seems to be formed from the lesser to the greater; yet this, is the sense of the word “rather”, that God is to be feared, not chiefly and principally only, but solely; and in some versions that word is left out, as in the Arabic, and Ethiopic, and in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel.

Matthew 10:29

Ver. 29. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?

A farthing, with the Jews, was a very small coin; according to them it contained four grains of silver⁶⁵²; was the ninety sixth part of a “sela”, or shilling⁶⁵³; and sometimes they make it to be of the same value with an Italian farthing: for they say⁶⁵⁴, it is of the value of eight “prutahs”: and a “prutah” is the eighth part of an Italian farthing: it is used proverbially to signify a very little thing in the Misna⁶⁵⁵;

“if of a command, which is light כִּאִיר “as a farthing”, which Bartenora explains a “very little thing”, the law says, “that it may be well with thee”, much more of the weighty commands in the law.”

Hence, in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel, it is rendered by טַבַּ. קְטוֹנִי, “a little piece of money”; and this was the common price of two sparrows. Our Lord appeals to his disciples, for the truth of it, as a thing well known: according to the question in Luke, five sparrows were sold for two farthings, which makes them somewhat cheaper still. This shows they were of little account.

And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father:

some copies add, “which is in heaven”; meaning, that one of them should not be shot, or be killed, without the knowledge, will, and pleasure of God. The design of Christ is to assert the doctrine of providence, as reaching to all creatures and things, even the most minute and worthless: he instances not in men, nor in the beasts of the field, but in the fowls of the air, and in those of the inferior sort, and more useless, in sparrows, yea in little sparrows; as the word may be rendered; whose price was so low, that two are obliged to be

652 Maimon. in Misn. Peah, c. 8. sect. 1.

653 Maimon. & Bartenora in Misn. Maaser Sheni, c. 4. sect. 3.

654 Ib. in Misn. Eracin, c. 8. sect. 1.

655 Cholin, c. 12. sect. 5.

put together to fetch the least sum of money current: and yet the providence of God is concerned with each of these; so that not one of them is taken in a snare, or killed with a stone, or shot flying, or sitting, but by the will of God: from whence it may be strongly concluded, that nothing comes by chance; that there is no such thing as contingency with respect to God, though there is to men, with respect to second causes; that all things are firmly ordained by the purpose of God, and are wisely ordered by his providence: and our Lord's further view is, from this consideration, to animate his disciples to a free, open, and constant preaching of his Gospel, not regarding their lives for his sake; for since their heavenly Father, in his providence, takes care of the meanest, even of the most irrational creatures, so that the life of one of them is not taken away without his will, much more will he take care of them; nor could their valuable lives be lost without his will and pleasure. Much such a way of arguing is used by the Jews, who ⁶⁵⁶ say, *יבדא כל שכן בר נשא*, "a bird without God does not perish, much less a man"; or, as it is elsewhere ⁶⁵⁷ expressed,

"a bird "without God" is not hunted, or taken, how much less does the soul of a man go out of him?"

And again ⁶⁵⁸,

"a bird "without God" does not fly away, much less the soul of a man."

Two birds, or sparrows, as the word may be rendered, in Le 14:4 were used in cleansing the leper; one was killed, and the other let loose into the open field: and though it might be a contingent thing with men which was killed, and which preserved, yet not with God; and some think the allusion is here to that case.

Matthew 10:30

Ver. 30. **But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.**

A proverbial expression, showing the perfect knowledge God has, and the exquisite care he takes, in providence, of all his creatures, particularly men, and especially his dear children and faithful ministers; as not a sparrow, so not a single hair of a man's head falls to the ground without the knowledge, and will of God: a way

⁶⁵⁶ T. Hieros. Sheviith, fol. 38. 4. {g} Bereshit Rabba, fol. 69. 3.

⁶⁵⁷ Bereshit Rabba, fol. 69. 3.

⁶⁵⁸ Midrash Kohelet, fol. 81. 2. & Midrash Esther, fol. 89. 3.

of speaking sometimes used to signify, that not the least hurt or damage should befall a person; see 1Sa 14:45 and the phraseology of the text was in use, and very well known by the Jews; for so they represent God speaking ⁶⁵⁹;

"do not I number all the hairs of every creature?"

As our Lord applies this particularly to his disciples, his sense is, that they had no reason to be afraid of men, or fear anything that should befall them, for their bearing a faithful testimony to him; for, their valuable lives were under the special and peculiar care of divine providence; not only the days, months, and years of their lives were with God, and put down in his book of purposes and decrees, which could neither be shortened nor lengthened; and not only the more principal, and even all the members of their bodies were written in his book of providence, and a singular care taken of them; but even their very excrescences, the more minute parts, and which were of no great account with them, the "hairs" of their head, even "all" of them, were not only known, but numbered, taken account of; yea, the thing was done already, it was not to be done; a very strong way of setting forth the doctrine of divine providence: a doctrine which the Jews were not unacquainted with, who say ⁶⁶⁰;

"that the events of man, and accidents which come upon him, *הכל בידי שמיא* "are all by", or "in the hands of God"

and ⁶⁶¹ that

"nothing is by chance, but all things are *בכונה* "with design"

or, as they elsewhere say ⁶⁶²,

"a man does not hurt his finger below, but they proclaim concerning it above;

"that is, as the gloss explains it, *גורו לוי*, "it is decreed" concerning it: which comes very near to the phrase here used.

Matthew 10:31

Ver. 31. **Fear ye not therefore,**

Neither be afraid of men, nor distrust the providence of God; for if that reaches to the meanest of creatures, sparrows, and to that which is of the least account with men, the single hair of a man's head; much more must it

⁶⁵⁹ Pesikta, fol. 18. 4. apud Drusium in loc.

⁶⁶⁰ Piske Tosaphot ad Cetubot, art. 119.

⁶⁶¹ Kimchi in Ps. civ. 4.

⁶⁶² T. Bab. Cholin, fol. 7. 2.

regard the lives of men, and still more such useful lives as those of the disciples were, who were called to, and employed in preaching the everlasting Gospel; a work which so much concerned the glory of God, the interest of Christ, and the good of immortal souls:

ye are of more value than many sparrows.

Two of them were worth no more than a farthing; there must be a great multitude of them to be mentioned with any man: and indeed there is no comparison between the whole species of them and the life of a single man, and much less between them and the apostles of the Lamb. Any man is more valuable, as a man, than many sparrows, and much more a Christian man, and still more an apostle: the argument then is, that if God takes care of sparrows and is concerned for their lives, much more will he take care of his faithful ministers, and not suffer their lives to be taken away, till they have done the will and work of their Lord.

Matthew 10:32

Ver. 32. **Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men,**

The confession of Christ here, more especially designed, does not so much intend, though it may include, that which is less public, and is necessary to be made by every believer in Christ: for it is not enough to believe in him, with the heart, but confession of him must also be made with the mouth; and which lies in ascribing their whole salvation to him, giving him the glory of it; declaring their faith in him to others, and what he has done for their souls; and subjecting themselves to his ordinances, and joining in fellowship with his church and people: which confession, as it ought to be both by words and deeds, and to be hearty and sincere, so likewise visible, open, and before men. This, I say, may be included in the sense of these words; but what they chiefly relate to, is a confession of Christ by his ministers, in the public preaching of the Gospel; who ought openly, and boldly, to acknowledge, and declare, that Christ is truly and properly God, the eternal Son of God, the only mediator between God and men, the Saviour and Redeemer of lost sinners; through whose blood alone is the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of grace; by whose righteousness only men can be justified before God; and by whose sacrifice and satisfaction sin is only expiated; that he died for, and in the room and stead of his people, rose again for their justification, ascended to heaven in their name, is set down at the right hand of God, and ever lives to make intercession for them, and

will come again, and judge both quick and dead: such a free and open confession of Christ ought to be made by all his ministers before men, and in spite of all the rage and opposition of earth and hell; and such shall not fail of being taken notice of, and requited by Christ; for he himself says,

him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven:

as he has a perfect knowledge of them, and bears an affectionate love to them; so he will openly own, and acknowledge them as his ministers, and speak in the praise and commendation of their works and labours; though they have been performed through the gifts, grace, and strength, which he has communicated to them: he will introduce them into his Father's presence, and recommend them to him, to be honoured, blessed, and glorified by him.

Matthew 10:33

Ver. 33. **But whosoever shall deny me before men,**

Deny that he is a disciple of Christ, and that Christ is his Lord and master, act contrary to him, deliver things repugnant to his mind and will; which for a disciple to do to his master was a very heinous crime with the Jews:

"if (say they ⁶⁶³ Rabbi Jochanan, יִכְפֹּר "deny"
Rabbi Eleazar, his disciple, he will not "deny"
Rabbi Jannai, his "master".

Some regard may be had here to Peter's after denial of Christ; and this proviso be supposed, "except he repent", as he did. Moreover, to deny Christ, is to drop, or oppose any of those truths which regard his person, office, and grace; or to hide and conceal them from men, through fear, shame, or cowardice of mind: and even not to confess him, through fear of men, is interpreted, by Christ, a denial of him; and such who deny him in any form and shape, either by words or deeds,

him,

says he,

will I also deny before my Father which is heaven; he will deny them to be disciples, or that they belong to him; he will deny that he ever knew them, loved or approved of them; he will declare in the presence of his Father, his disapprobation of them, his indignation against them, that they are workers of iniquity; yea, he will do more, he will banish them from his presence, and send them into everlasting burnings.

Matthew 10:34

Ver. 34. **Think not ye that I am come to send peace on earth,**

The Jews had a notion of great outward peace and prosperity in the days of the Messiah; which was grounded on several prophecies of the Old Testament, not rightly understood by them; and the disciples of Christ had imbibed the same notion: wherefore our Lord thought fit to let them know the contrary; and that they must not expect outward ease and quiet, and worldly tranquillity would attend their ministry; for though he came to be a peace maker between God and sinners, by the blood of his cross; and was both the author and donor of spiritual peace to his people; and the Gospel he brought with him, and sent them to preach, was the Gospel of peace; which, accompanied with his power, would produce peace in the consciences of men, and be the means of cultivating and maintaining peace among the saints; yet “peace on earth” in a temporal sense, whether in the world in general, or in Judea in particular, must not be expected as the consequence of his coming; so far from it, that he subjoins,

I came, not to send peace, but a sword.

By the “sword” may be meant the Gospel, which is the means of dividing and separating the people of Christ from the men of the world, and from their principles and practices, and one relation from another; as also of divisions, discords, and persecutions arising from it: not that it was the intention and design of Christ, in coming into the world, to foment and encourage such things; but this, through the malice and wickedness of men, was eventually the effect and consequence of his coming; see Luke 12:51 where, instead of a “sword”, it is “division”; because the sword divides asunder, as does the sword of the Spirit, the word of God.

Matthew 10:35

Ver. 35. **For I am come to set a man at variance against,**

Or “to divide a man from his father”. Here our Lord opens and explains what he means by the sword, intestine divisions, domestic broils, family differences, as well as such as appear in towns, cities, and kingdoms, which are exemplified by other instances following;

and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law:

the case is this, a father believing in Christ, embracing his Gospel, and submitting to his institutions, is contradicted, opposed, and persecuted by his own son, and a mother by her own daughter; in both which

relations, natural affection knit them together; and the mother-in-law by her daughter-in-law, who before lived together in the most peaceable, kind, and tender manner: which must be imputed, not to Christ, and the doctrines of Christ, and the natural tendency of them, embraced by the father, the mother, and mother-in-law; but to the natural enmity of the son, the daughter, and the daughter-in-law, to everything divine, spiritual, and evangelical, or “vice versa”.

Matthew 10:36

Ver. 36. **And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.**

His children, and his servants, such that he has either begotten and brought up, or are daily fed at his table, and maintained by him. This, with the former instances, are borrowed from Mic 7:6 and the times of the Gospel are set forth in the same dismal and black characters, as those in which the prophet lived; and much such a description do the Jews themselves give, of the times of their expected Messiah; which agreeing in words, as well as things, I cannot forbear transcribing.

”The government shall be turned to heresy (Sadducism), and there will be no reproof; the synagogue shall become a brothel house, Galilee shall be destroyed, and Gablan shall be laid waste, and the men of the border shall wander from city to city, and shall obtain no mercy; the wisdom of the Scribes shall stink, and they that fear to sin shall be despised, and truth shall fail; young men shall turn pale, or put to shame, the faces of old men, and old men shall stand before young men; the “son” shall deal basely “with his father, the daughter shall rise up against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and the enemies of a man shall be they of his own house”: the face of that generation shall be as the face of a dog, and the son shall not reverence his father⁶⁶⁴.

”All which characters, how exactly they agree with the generation in which Christ lived, is easy to observe.

Matthew 10:37

Ver. 37. **He that loveth father or mother more than me,**

The design of these words, is not at all to lessen the

664 Misn. Sota, c. 9. sect. 15. T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 97. 1. Zohar in Num. fol. 102. 3. & Raya Mehimna in ib. in Lev. fol. 28. 2. Shirhashirim Rabba, fol. 11. 4. Derech Eretz Zuta, fol. 19. 4.

due affection of children to their parents; or to detract from the respect and esteem, in which they ought to be had by them: it is the duty of children, to love, honour, and, obey them; who have been the means of bringing them into the world, and of bringing them up in it; nor do any of the doctrines of Christ break in upon the ties and obligations of nature, or in the least set aside any of the duties of natural religion: but the intent of this passage is, to show, that as Christ is infinitely above all creatures, he is to be loved above the nearest and dearest relations and friends; being God over all blessed for ever, and also the Saviour and Redeemer; which itself, makes him more amiable and lovely than a common parent. That man therefore, that prefers father and mother to Christ, and their instructions, and orders, to the truths and ordinances of Christ: who, to please them, breaks the commands of Christ, rejects his Gospel, and either denies him, or does not confess him, our Lord says,

is not worthy of me;

or, as in Munster's Hebrew Gospel, he is not לֵאמֹרֵי רָאוּי, "fit for me": it is not fit and proper, that such a person should name the name of Christ, or be called by his name, and should be reckoned one of his disciples; he is not fit to be a member of the church of Christ on earth, nor for the kingdom of heaven, but deserves to be rejected by him, and everlastingly banished his presence: for otherwise no man, let him behave ever so well, is worthy of relation to Christ, and interest in him; or of his grace, righteousness, presence, kingdom and glory. The same is the sense of the following clause,

and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me:

whoever, to gratify a child, drops the profession of Christ, renounces his Gospel, and neglects his commands, it is not proper and convenient that he should bear the name of Christ, be accounted one of his, or be treated as such, but all the reverse.

Matthew 10:38

Ver. 38. **And he that taketh not his cross,**

By the "cross", which was a Roman punishment, whereby malefactors were put to death, are meant all sorts of afflictions, reproaches, persecutions, and death itself; and particularly the ill will, hatred, and persecution, of near relations and friends, which must be expected by such, who bear a faithful testimony for Christ. Every minister of Christ, or professor of his name, has "his" own cross, his own particular afflictions, appointed by God, and laid on him by Christ, and which he should

cheerfully take up, and patiently bear, for his sake. The allusion is to the custom of persons sentenced to be crucified, to carry their own cross, as Christ did his, and Simon the Cyrenian for him; and which our Lord here may have a respect unto, as well knowing what death he was to die, and that some of his disciples also would die the same death: wherefore Christ says,

and followeth after me;

led on by his example, to preach or profess the Gospel, submit to the ordinances of it, and cheerfully suffer for the sake of it, when called to it. If a man, who would be thought to be a disciple of Christ, is not willing to do all this, but, in order to avoid it, complies with his friends, conforms to the world, and turns his back on Christ; of such an one he may well say,

he is not worthy of me;

it is not convenient that he should stand among his disciples and followers.

Matthew 10:39

Ver. 39. **He that findeth his life shall lose it,**

That man that seeks to preserve his life, and the temporal enjoyments of it, by a sinful compliance with his friends and the world, and by a denial of Christ, or non-confession of him; if he is not, by the providence of God, deprived of the good things of life, and dies a shameful death, both which are sometimes the case of such persons; yet he is sure to lose the happy and eternal life of his soul and body, in the world to come: so that the present finding of life, or the possession of it, on such sinful terms, will in the issue prove an infinite and irreparable loss unto him. On the other hand, Christ observes,

he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it.

That man that is willing to forego the present advantages of life, to suffer reproach and persecution, and lay down his life cheerfully for the sake of Christ and his Gospel, for the profession of his name, rather than drop, deny, conceal, or neglect any truth and ordinance of his, shall find his soul possessed of eternal life, as soon as separated from his body; and shall find his corporal life again, in the resurrection morn, to great advantage; and shall live with Christ in soul and body, in the utmost happiness, to all eternity.

Matthew 10:40

Ver. 40. **He that receiveth you, receiveth me,**

This is said to comfort the disciples, lest they should conclude from this account of the sorrows, afflictions, and persecutions they were to meet with, that there

would be none that would receive them and their message; Christ therefore suggests, that there would be some that would embrace the Gospel preached by them, and receive them kindly into their houses, and entertain them in a very hospitable manner: and, for the encouragement of such persons, who would risk their own goods and lives by so doing, he lets them know, that receiving of his disciples, was interpreted by him, a receiving of himself; and what they did to them, would be taken as kindly, as if done to him personally; and, in like manner, would it be understood and accepted by his Father:

and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me.

To which agrees, what the Jews say ⁶⁶⁵ of the angel, in Ex 23:22 “If thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I shall speak”: who observe, that it is not written, “that he shall speak”, but “that I shall speak”; intimating, that אממקבליני אתמו הימונו כאלו לי אתמו מקבליני, “if ye receive him, it is all one as if you received me”: and the whole of this accords with a common saying among ⁶⁶⁶ them, ששלוחו של אדמוכמוחו, “that a man’s messenger is as himself”. The Jew ⁶⁶⁷, therefore, has no reason to reproach Christ and his followers as he does, as if it was the sense of these words of Christ, and which the Christians give of them, that Christ and his twelve apostles were but one person.

Matthew 10:41

Ver. 41. **He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet,**

By “a prophet” is meant, not one that foretells things to come, but a preacher of the Gospel; for as prophesying sometimes signifies preaching, so a prophet designs a minister of the word: and to “receive” him, is not only to embrace his doctrine, but to entertain him in a kind, and generous manner; and he that does this, “in the name of a prophet”, not as coming in the name of another prophet, but upon this account, and for this consideration, because he himself is a prophet; so the phrase, לְשֵׁם “in the name”, or on the account of anything, is often used in the Misnic writings ⁶⁶⁸: he that regards such a person, and shows him respect, by an hospitable entertainment of him; not because he may be related to him after the flesh; or because he may be a man of good behaviour,

⁶⁶⁵ Shemot Rabba Parash. 32. fol. 135. 3.

⁶⁶⁶ T. Bab. Baracot, fol. 34. 2. Kiddushin, fol. 41. 2. 42. 1. & 43. 1. Bava Metzia, fol. 96. 1.

⁶⁶⁷ R. Isaac Chizzuk Emuna, par 2. sect. 14. p. 404.

⁶⁶⁸ Misn. Zebachim, c. 1. sect. 1. 2, 3, 4. & 4. 6. & 6. 7. & 7. 1, 2, 3, 4.

of a singular disposition and temper, of much learning and eloquence, of great natural parts and abilities; but because he is a faithful minister of the Gospel; he

shall receive a prophet’s reward:

either a reward from the prophet himself, who shall interpret the Scriptures to him, preach the Gospel to him, lead him more fully into the truths of it, and guide him to the true, and more clear and distinct sense of the sacred writings; which is an ample reward for his kind entertainment of him: or else, that reward which God has appointed, prepared, and promised, to them who receive his prophets; and which indeed is no other, than what the prophets themselves shall receive, even the reward of the inheritance, the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world, a reward of grace, and not of debt; since both, in their way, serve the Lord Christ.

And he that receiveth a righteous man, in the name of a righteous man.

He that is kind and liberal to any good man, whether he is a minister of the Gospel or not, who appears to have the work of grace upon his soul, and is justified by the righteousness of Christ, and expects eternal life on that account; if he shows respect to him, purely because he has the image of Christ stamped on him, and the righteousness of Christ imputed to him, and not on any natural, worldly, or civil accounts, he shall receive a righteous man’s reward; either from the good man himself, who will not fail to pray for his benefactor, to wish him well, and give him all the assistance he can in his Christian course; to exhort, comfort, instruct him as much, and as far as his Christian experience will furnish him with; or else the same reward of grace the righteous man himself shall have, namely, eternal life, as God’s gift, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Matthew 10:42

Ver. 42. **And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones,**

Our Lord gradually descends from prophets to righteous men, and from righteous men, to those of the lowest form and class among them; who have the least measure of grace, and share of spiritual light, and knowledge; who are outwardly the poorest, meanest, and most contemptible in the eyes of the world; and are little, even the least of saints, in their own esteem and account: whosoever takes notice but of “one” of these, receives him into his house, and gives him

a cup of cold water only,

is regarded, a phrase used to express the least favour,

or benefit whatever.

”So says ⁶⁶⁹ Maimonides, one that calls to his friend to dine with him, and he refuses, and swears, or vows, that he shall not enter into his house, nor will he give him to drink, *אין טיפה מים* “a drop of cold water”, &c.

”Moreover, this is said to prevent any objection, on account of the mean and low condition persons may be in, to their relieving necessitous objects; for everyone is capable of doing this, and if they can do no more, it is accepted. Now whosoever takes notice of, and shows favour to the meanest of Christ’s people, though it be but bestowing so small a benefit as a cup of cold water; yet, if it is done **in the name of a disciple** or because that poor person is a disciple of Christ, **verily**, says Christ,

I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward:

it will be observed another day by Christ, who takes what is done to the least of his brethren, as done to himself. The Jews say many things in praise of hospitality, to *תלמיד חכם*, “a disciple of a wise man”; and observe ⁶⁷⁰, that he that hospitably entertains such an one in his house, and causes him to eat and drink, and partake of the goods of his house, there is reason to believe, he shall be much more blessed than the house of Obed Edom was for the ark’s sake, which neither ate nor drank with him; and which may be compared with this passage.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW CHAPTER XI

2 John sendeth his disciples to Christ. 7 Chris’s testimony concerning John. 18 The opinion of the people, both concerning John and Christ. 20 Christ upbraideth the unthankfulness and unrepentance of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. 25 and praising his Father’s wisdom in revealing the gospel to the simple, 28 he calleth to him all such as feel the burdens of their sins.

Matthew 11

- [1] And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities.
- [2] Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples,
- [3] And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?
- [4] Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see:
- [5] The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the

lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

- [6] And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.
- [7] And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?
- [8] But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings’ houses.
- [9] But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.
- [10] For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.
- [11] Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.
- [12] And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.
- [13] For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.
- [14] And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.
- [15] He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.
- [16] But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows,
- [17] And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.
- [18] For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil.
- [19] 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.
- [20] Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:
- [21] Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.
- [22] But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for

⁶⁶⁹ Hilchot Nedarim, c. 8. sect. 10.

⁶⁷⁰ T. Bab, Beracot, fol. 63. 2. & 64. 1.

you.

- [23] And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.
- [24] But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.
- [25] At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.
- [26] Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.
- [27] All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.
- [28] Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
- [29] 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.
- [30] For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

JOHN GILL'S COMMENTARY ON MATTHEW CHAPTER XI

Matthew 11:1

Ver. 1. **And it came to pass,**

In the course of things, and as before determined and resolved on, that

when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples;

when he had given them a commission to preach the Gospel, had finished all his instructions he thought fit to give them, and orders he enjoined them, relating to that work; as where they should go, what they should say, how they should behave, and what treatment they should meet with; and had given them all proper advice and encouragement,

he departed thence,

from the place where he then was: he did not desist either from the ministry of the word, or from working of miracles, but went out into other parts of the country,

to teach and to preach in their cities:

meaning either in the cities of the Jews, or in the cities of his disciples; and these, either the cities they belonged to, from whence they came, namely, the cities of Galilee;

for the disciples were Galilaeans, and in which parts Christ now was; or else the cities where he sent them to preach first, and then came himself, and confirmed their doctrine by his own ministry and miracles.

Matthew 11:2

Ver. 2. **Now when John had heard in the prison,**

The person here spoken of is John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, who was now in the prison of Machaerus; being put there by Herod, for his reproving him for taking Herodias, his brother Philip's wife; and whilst he was there, an account was brought him by his own disciples, see Luke 7:18 of

the works of Christ,

the miracles he wrought; as the healing of the centurion's servant, the raising from the dead the widow's son of Nain, and the like; upon hearing of which,

he sent two of his disciples,

who might be the most prejudiced against Christ, because of the increase of his followers, and the decrease of their master's; and because he did not live such an austere life as John did; and who, notwithstanding all that they had heard, and their master had told them of Jesus, were not easily persuaded that he was the true Messiah. Moreover, two of them were sent, both because it was more honourable to Christ, and that they might be proper witnesses of what they saw and heard; and since it was not so much for himself, as for the sake of his disciples, that these messengers were sent.

Matthew 11:3

Ver. 3. **And said unto him,**

By the disciples he sent; this was the message they came with, and this the question they were to ask, and did,

art thou he that should come?

A "periphrasis" of the Messiah, well known to the Jews; for he had been spoken of frequently in the prophecies of the Old Testament, as the Shiloh, the Redeemer, the Prophet, and King that should come; particularly, by this circumlocution, reference seems to be had to Hab 2:3. "It shall surely come"; **כִּי בֹא יְיָ** which may be rendered, "for he that cometh", or "is to come, shall come". So that the question in plain terms is, whether he was the Messiah? John could not be ignorant of this, who had seen the Spirit of God descending on him at his baptism, heard a voice from heaven, declaring him the Son of God; and had so often pointed him out to others, and had borne frequent testimonies that he was the Lamb of God, and bridegroom of his church: wherefore this question was

put, not upon his own account, but his disciples, that they might have from the mouth of Christ a full and satisfactory answer, which would remove all their doubts and scruples, and attach them to Christ, now he was about to die, and leave them, than which nothing was more desirable to him. Though some have thought, that John's faith was somewhat slackened; and through his long imprisonment, he began to doubt whether he was the Messiah or not: and others have been of opinion, as particularly Dr. Lightfoot, that the reason of this message was, neither the ignorance and unbelief of John, or his disciples; but that John, with the rest of the Jews, having a notion of a temporal kingdom, and hearing of the mighty works of Christ, wonders that he himself was not delivered out of prison by him, grows impatient upon it, and asks, if he was the Messiah? And if he was, why did he suffer his forerunner and chief minister to lie in prison?

or do we look for another,

to release me, and set up this kingdom?

Matthew 11:4

Ver. 4. **Jesus answered and said unto them,**

Not by an express declaration, that he was the Messiah that was to come, and they were not to look for any other; but he bids them

go, and show John again, those things which ye do hear and see.

Christ would have them go back to John in prison, and relate to him the doctrines which they had heard preached by him to the poor; and the miracles which they had seen with their own eyes, then wrought by him; as well as many others, which were attested to them by credible witnesses; for there were at that time about Christ, that had infirmities, plagues, and evil spirits, and that were blind, and he instantly cured them in their presence; see Luke 7:21.

Matthew 11:5

Ver. 5. **The blind receive their sight,**

Our Lord here, has reference to several prophecies concerning the Messiah, in Isa 35:6 and which having their accomplishment in him, John and his disciples might easily and strongly conclude, that he was he that was to come, and that they should not look for another. The several things here mentioned, were not all done at this time, but were what these disciples had sufficient and authentic evidence of; sight was restored to the blind before them then; and no doubt they were informed of the two blind men, that had their eyes opened, Mt 9:30

and the lame walk;

as did the man sick of the palsy, who was brought to him on a bed, carried by four men, but went away himself, with his bed upon his shoulders, Mt 9:2

the lepers are cleansed:

as the poor man was, that was full of leprosy, and who was cured by Christ, by touching him, Mt 8:3

and the deaf hear;

as did the man, into whose ears Christ put his fingers and said, Ephphatha, be opened, Mark 7:33 **and the dead are raised:** as were Jairus's daughter, Mt 9:18 and the widow's son of Nain, Luke 7:15

and the poor have the Gospel preached them;

by "the poor" are meant, either the preachers of the Gospel; for so the words may be rendered, "the poor preach the Gospel": and such were the apostles of Christ; they were poor with respect to the things of this world; they were chiefly fishermen; and, with respect to human literature, they were unlearned men, had no stock or furniture of acquired learning, and were mean, abject, and contemptible, in the sight and opinion of men; and yet Christ called, qualified, and sent them forth to preach the Gospel. Or else, the hearers of it are designed; who were also the poor of this world, made a very low figure in life, and had but a small share of knowledge and understanding, and so were despised, and reckoned as cursed by the Scribes and Pharisees: or they were such, who were poor in spirit, or spiritually poor; who saw their spiritual poverty, bewailed and acknowledged it, and sought after the true riches of grace, and glory in Christ. Now these, as they had the Gospel preached to them more fully and clearly, with more power and authority, and so as it never was before or since, so they "received" it, as Tremellius from the Syriac reads the text, readily and willingly, joyfully and gladly, with faith and love; and were, as it may be also rendered, "evangelized" by it, or thrown into a gospel mould and frame: which may be said to be done, when a man has a spirit of liberty, in opposition to a spirit of bondage; when he lives by faith on Christ alone; when his comforts do not spring from his works, but from Christ; when the love and grace of God influence his repentance and obedience; when a man has a spirit of meekness and of love to the saints, is of a forbearing and forgiving spirit: when he is desirous of performing all duties both to God and man, and yet depends upon none of them, but upon Christ alone, for salvation.

Matthew 11:6

Ver. 6. **And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.**

The Jews were offended at Christ's parentage and birth, at the poverty of his parents, and at the manner of his birth, by a virgin; and at the place of his birth, which they thought to be Galilee; at his education, because he had not learnt letters, and was brought up to a mechanical employment; at his mean appearance in his public ministry, in his own person, and in his attendants: his company and audience being the poorer sort, the more ignorant, and who had been loose and scandalous persons, publicans and sinners; at the doctrines he preached, particularly, which respected his own deity and eternity, the distinguished grace of God, and living by faith upon his flesh and blood. The disciples of John also were offended in him, because he and his disciples did not fast, and lead such an austere life as they and their master did; because of the meanness and obscurity of Christ's kingdom; the imprisonment of John, and the many reproaches, afflictions, and persecutions, which did, and were likely to attend a profession of Christ: this our Lord knew, and had a peculiar respect to them in these words; but happy are those persons, who, notwithstanding all these difficulties and discouragements, are so far from stumbling at Christ, and falling from him, that they heartily receive him and believe in him, make a profession of him, and hold it fast; greatly love, highly value, and esteem him, and are willing to part with all, and bear all for his sake: these are blessed, notwithstanding all their sufferings for him even now; they have spiritual peace, joy, and comfort in their souls, and shall be happy in the full enjoyment of him to all eternity.

Matthew 11:7

Ver. 7. **And as they departed,**

That is, the messengers of John, Luke 7:24 when they returned to their master, to give an account to him of what they had heard and seen,

Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John;

he took this opportunity before the whole company, who had heard what passed in conversation between him and the disciples of John, to say some things concerning his character and ministry: and which he did, partly to rectify and remove any wrong opinion they might have conceived of him, from this message of his, as if he had retracted his former sentiments concerning Christ, at least was wavering and doubtful about him; and partly, to put them in mind of their former zeal and attachment

to John's ministry, when they went out in large bodies to attend upon it; and to revive a good opinion of him; and signifies, that they would do well to ask themselves, what views they had in attending on him, and how they came to grow indifferent to so great a man: and Christ, by giving an account of his character and office, confirms his own Messiahship; and this commendation of John, he chose to enter into, after the departure of his messengers, lest what he said of him should be interpreted as mere flattery:

what went ye out in the wilderness to see?

This refers to Mt 3:5 where we read, that great numbers from Jerusalem, Judea, and the country round about Jordan, went out into the wilderness of Judea, where John came preaching, to hear him, and be baptized by him; and our Lord asks, what was it that led such multitudes of them into the wilderness? What did they expect to see there?

A reed shaken with the wind?

This may either refer to John's gesture in preaching, who might wave to and fro as a reed does, when shaken by the wind; and Christ's question is, did ye go out only to see and observe the preacher's gesture, to see him move his body to and fro? Was it not to hear his doctrine, and receive benefit for your souls? And did you not? Wherefore, you ought still to retain a valuable respect for him. Or this may regard their opinion of him; and the sense of the interrogation is, when you first went out to him, did you take him to be an unstable, inconstant man? Like a reed shaken with every wind! If you did, you were mistaken; he was firm and stable in his sentiments and ministry, his preaching was not yea and nay, his doctrine was all of a piece; he stood to it, that he was not the Messiah, but his forerunner; the testimony he bore was always alike, consistent with himself, and he is the same man now he ever was. The Jews use this comparison of a man to a reed, in a sense just the reverse, and make it to signify constancy, and not inconstancy, as well as tenderness, in opposition to roughness, severity, and stubbornness.

“Let a man (say they ⁶⁷¹) be always רך בקנה “tender as a reed”, and let him not be hard and stubborn as a cedar: when the four winds of the world go out, the reed goes and comes with them; and when the winds are still, the reed stands in its place.”

671 Derech Eretz, fol. 18. 1.

So they observe ⁶⁷², that it is said, that “the Lord shall smite Israel, as a reed shaken in the water”, 1Ki 14:15 which they interpret by way of blessing.

“As a reed (say they) stands in a place of water, its body waves about, and its roots are many; and though all the winds in the world come and blow upon it, they cannot move it out of its place, but it goes and comes with them; and when the winds are still, the reed stands in its place.”

Matthew 11:8

Ver. 8. But what went ye out for to see?

Since it cannot be thought it was to see the reeds in the wilderness blow to and fro by the wind, or a man like one of them, either in gesture or doctrine; was it to see

a man clothed in soft raiment?

In raiment made of soft materials, as fine wool, cotton, silk, &c. such as Mecaenos wore, and who was therefore called Malacinus ⁶⁷³: one finely dressed, and richly apparelled, draws the eyes of persons to him; but such an one is not to be expected in a wilderness: and if the Jews went to see such a person, they were greatly disappointed; for John’s raiment was of camel’s hair, undressed, and he had a leathern girdle about his loins; and as for his diet, it was locusts and wild honey: no,

behold they that wear soft clothing,

or, as Luke says, are “gorgeously apparelled”; to which he adds,

and live delicately, are in kings’ houses,

or “courts”; not in a desert, where John came preaching, nor in a prison, where he now was: he was no light, inconstant, flattering person, as generally courtiers are; had he, he would not have been in a prison; it was for his uprightness and faithfulness, in reproving Herod the king, that he was in such a place and condition. Thus from his very garb and diet, his character is vindicated from the charge of levity and change.

Matthew 11:9

Ver. 9. **But what went ye out for to see?**

Since it was not any thing so mean as a shaking reed, or so grand as a man in gay clothing, pray what was it you went out to see?

A prophet?

This was the truth of the matter, they expected to see a prophet, and they believed he was one; this was the common voice of the people; all held John to be a prophet. This made Herod afraid to put him to death,

⁶⁷² T. Bab. Taanith, fol. 20. 1.

⁶⁷³ Alex. ab Alex. Genial Dier. 1. 5. c. 18.

and the Pharisees to speak against his baptism: now, though this was giving him a great character, to believe and own him to be a prophet, yet it did not come up to his full character.

Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet;

when they saw him, they saw not only a prophet, but one that was greater, and more excellent than any of the prophets that went before him: they prophesied of the Messiah at a distance, and in words not so clear, and easy to be understood; they spoke of him as to come, but he pointed him out with his finger, and declared that he was come; he saw him himself, and showed him to others; he saw the Spirit of God descending on him, and he himself baptized him; his office, as the harbinger of Christ, and the administrator of the ordinance of baptism to him, gave him a preference to all the prophets; and was such an one, as never any man was vested with but himself.

Matthew 11:10

Ver. 10. **For this is he of whom it is written, Mal 3:1**

Behold I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

That these words belong לַיְהוָה הַבֵּא, to the world to come, or the times of the Messiah, that is, the Gospel dispensation, the Jews ⁶⁷⁴ themselves own; but as to the particular person meant by the “messenger”, or “angel”, because they are not willing to acknowledge the right person, are at the utmost loss. Jarchi makes him to be the angel of death, who is to destroy the wicked; Aben Ezra conjectures it may be Messiah the son of Joseph, who they fancy will come before Messiah the son of David. Kimchi thinks an angel from heaven is designed; and Abarbinel Malachi himself: but the more ancient sense of the synagogue was, that the same person is meant, as in Mark 9:5 under the name of Elijah the prophet; and some have thought, that Elijah the Tishbite himself, is intended; though others think, that some great prophet of equal degree with him, and who is called by his name, is what the prophecy has regard unto {a}; which last is the true sense of the passage: nor should it be once called in question, when our Lord himself has applied it to John the Baptist; to whom the things said in it perfectly agree. He was an “angel”, not by nature, but by office; a “messenger” sent by God, “before the face” of the Messiah; six months before him: such a space of time he was born before him; and such a space

⁶⁷⁴ Bemidbar Rabba, sect. 15. fol. 219. 4. {a} Vid. Pocock in Mal. iii. 1.

of time he entered on his public ministry before him; and “prepared” his “way before” him, by preaching the doctrine of repentance, administering the ordinance of baptism, pointing at the Messiah, and exhorting persons to believe on him. All which proves him to be, what Christ says he was, “more than a prophet”.

Matthew 11:11

Ver. 11. **Verily I say unto you,**

What Christ had before said, he proved from a testimony of Scripture; what he was about to say depending on his word, he asseverates in the most solemn manner:

among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.

The phrase, “them that are born of women”, is a “periphrasis”, of men born into the world by ordinary generation; see Job 14:1 and the sense is, that of all the prophets that have been in the world, since the beginning of it, Moses himself not excepted, there has not been raised up by God a greater prophet than John, the first administrator of baptism; were but considered, the uncommonness of his birth, his being filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother’s womb, his exemplary life, the excellency of his doctrine; and especially, his work and office, as the harbinger of Christ, and the preparer of his ways.

Notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than he;

which is to be understood, not of Christ, who was younger in age, and a junior preacher, and less in the esteem of the Pharisees, being greater than he, in nature and office, nor of the saints in heaven, where he that was least, the meanest, and most abject, when on earth, is more happy than John, who was then in prison; nor of all the believers under the Gospel dispensation; but of the apostles of Christ, and the least among them, who were then the kingdom of heaven, or the visible Gospel church state. These had a better opportunity of conversing with Christ, and of seeing and hearing the things they did, than John had; they had the power of performing miracles, which John had not; were immediately sent forth by Christ, to preach the Gospel, and had a clearer insight into the truths of it, than John; especially, after the Holy Ghost was in such an extraordinary manner poured forth upon them, on the day of Pentecost; particularly after the death and resurrection of Christ, they were able to preach him, not only as come in the flesh, but as having suffered and died, and obtained eternal redemption: they

could speak of his blood being shed, of his righteousness being wrought out, and of his sacrifice and satisfaction as made, which John could not; and besides, were more successful in the conversion of sinners, both Jews and Gentiles, than ever he was. The comparison does not lie so much between their persons, as their several different degrees of light and doctrine.

Matthew 11:12

Ver. 12. **And from the days of John the Baptist until now,**

From the time that he began to preach, to the then present time,

the kingdom of heaven,

the Gospel, and the ministry of it, first by John, then by Christ and his apostles,

suffereth violence;

or “comes with force”, and power upon the souls of men: it was attended with the demonstration of the Spirit, and of power; as appeared by its being the means of quickening persons that were dead in trespasses and sins; enlightening the blind; causing the deaf to hear; melting and softening hearts of stone; making, of enemies, friends to God and Christ; turning men from the power of Satan unto God; setting at liberty such as were slaves and vassals to their own corruptions; and, in a word, in being the power of God unto salvation, to many souls: and which was further seen, in the manner it did all this; suddenly, secretly, powerfully, and effectually, and yet not against the wills of men; and by such instruments as the apostles were, poor, sinful, mortal men; despised by the world, and attended with opposition and persecution: or “suffers violence”; which may be understood, either of the vast numbers, that pressed and crowded to hear the Gospel preached: great numbers followed John, when he first began to preach, and baptize: still a greater number followed Christ, some to hear his doctrine, others to see his miracles, others to behold his person, others out of selfish ends; and some behaved rudely and indecently: or of the ardour and fervency of spirit, which appeared in some, to the ministry of John and Christ, and in their desires and expectations of the kingdom of the Messiah: or of the Gospel’s suffering violence by the persecutions of its enemies opposing and contradicting it, reproaching it, intimidating the professors of it, and seeking to take away the life of Christ, the great subject of it:

and the violent take it by force;

meaning either publicans, and harlots, and Gentile sinners; who might be thought to be a sort of intruders:

or rather the same persons, as being powerfully wrought upon under the ministry of the Gospel; who were under violent apprehensions of wrath and vengeance, of their lost and undone state and condition by nature; were violently in love with Christ, and eagerly desirous of salvation by him, and communion with him; and had their affections set upon the things of another world: these having the Gospel preached to them, which is a declaration of God's love to sinners, a proclamation of peace and pardon, and a publication of righteousness and life by Christ, they greedily caught at it, and embraced it.

Matthew 11:13

Ver. 13. **For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.**

These words are to be considered in connection with Mt 11:11 and are a further proof of John's being greater than any of the prophets; because all the inspired writers and prophets, who were before him, prophesied of the Messiah as to come; and either spoke of him in obscure terms, or represented him under dark shadows and figures: whereas John spake of him as already come, and in plain terms, and directed to his very person; and since his time, there have been no prophecies concerning the Messiah and his kingdom; vision and prophecy are now sealed up; all which are acknowledged by the Jews themselves, who ⁶⁷⁵ say, כולו לא נתנבאו אלא לימות המשיח, "all the prophets did not prophesy but to, or of the days of the Messiah". This was the subject, and these the limits of their prophecies; for they own ⁶⁷⁶, that

"from the day that the temple was destroyed, בטילה נבואה מן הנביאי, "prophecy was taken away from the prophets"."

Since that time, they confess they have had no prophets⁶⁷⁷ and that they are not able to observe their signs.

Matthew 11:14

Ver. 14. **And if ye will receive it,**

The words carry in them some suspicion of unbelief and hardness of heart, as though they would not receive it: however, whether they would or not, it was a certain truth, that

this
same person, "John the Baptist",

⁶⁷⁵ T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 34. 2. Sabbat, fol. 63. 1. Sanhedrim, fol. 99. 1.

⁶⁷⁶ T. Bava Bathra, fol. 12. 1.

⁶⁷⁷ Abarbinel in Dan. fol. 63. 4.

is Elias, which was for to come;

who was appointed by God to come, and was prophesied of Mal 4:5 that he should come; and even according to the doctrine of the Scribes and Rabbins, he was expected to come before the Messiah; only they in general thought that Elijah the Tishbite, in person, was meant; though some, as before observed ⁶⁷⁸, were of opinion, that some great prophet equal to Elijah, and endued with the same spirit, is intended; and which is true of John the Baptist, who came "in the Spirit" and "power" of Elias, Luke 1:17. And, as it was usual with the Jews ⁶⁷⁹, to call Phinehas by the name of Elias, and Elias Phinehas, because of his zeal for the Lord of hosts; for the same reason may John be called by the same name, there being a great resemblance between Elias and him; in their temper and disposition; in their manner of clothing, and austere way of living; in their very great piety and holiness; in their courage and integrity, in reproving vice; and in their zeal and usefulness in the cause of God, and true religion: in respect to which, Christ must be here understood, when he affirms John to be Elias; not Elias in person, but he that was intended by Elias, that was said should come: hence here is no contradiction to the words of the Baptist, in Joh 1:21 when he says, that he was not Elias; for the Jews, who put the question to him, whether he was Elias, or not? meant whether he was Elias in person, Elias the Tishbite, or not; and so John understood them, and very honestly and sincerely replies, he was not: but he does not deny that he was intended by this Elias, that was prophesied should come; yea, he says such things as might induce them to believe he was that person; hence, Christ, and he, say nothing contrary to, and irreconcilable, as the Jew ⁶⁸⁰ suggests, with each other.

Matthew 11:15

Ver. 15. **He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.**

A way of speaking used by Christ, when anything serious, and of great importance, was delivered; and which required attention, and was not easily understood: and such were the several things he had mentioned in this context; as that John was more than a prophet, more excellent than all the prophets; that the law and prophets were now at an end, and that John was Elias; which things, if rightly understood, would serve

⁶⁷⁸ Vid. Pocock. not. in porta Mosis, p. 219.

⁶⁷⁹ Baal Hatturim in Num. xxv. 12. Kimchi in 1 Chron. ix. 20. Targum Jon. in Exod. vi. 18.

⁶⁸⁰ R. Isaac Chizzuk Emuna, par. 1. c. 39. & par. 2. c. 15.

greatly to settle their judgment, with respect to himself as the Messiah: but his words imply, that everyone had not spiritual ears and understandings, to hear and take in things of such an high nature, and excellent use; none but those to whom they were given; and such ought to attend to them, and, seriously weigh and consider the importance of them. The phrase is to be met with in Jewish writings, where it is thus expressed ⁶⁸¹;

“He that hears let him hear, and he that understandeth let him understand”. See Mt 13:43.

Matthew 11:16

Ver. 16. **But whereunto shall I liken this generation?**

The men of that age, the stubborn and perverse Jews; who were pleased with nothing, with no man’s ministry, neither with John’s, nor with Christ’s, but found fault with whatever they heard, or saw done:

it is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling to their fellows:

that is, the case of such persons may be fitly represented by children in a public market, calling to their companions, to pipe or mourn with them, and who are so morose and sullen as to do neither: for the men of that generation, are not the good natured children, that called to their fellows, and were willing to join in innocent diversions and exercises; but rather John the Baptist, Christ and his disciples, who may be compared to “children”, for their harmlessness and simplicity; and are represented as “sitting in markets”, places of concourse, where much people met together; which may intend the synagogues and temple, and other public places, which they made use of to publish their doctrines in, to preach to, and exhort the people; and as “calling to their fellows”, to their contemporaries, to those of their own nation, by the external ministry of the word.

Matthew 11:17

Ver. 17. **And saying, we have piped unto you, and ye have not danced,**

The allusion is to Jewish children, who having seen their parents and friends at their festivals and weddings, some play upon the pipe, and others dance to them, mimicked the same in their diversions; and also having observed, at funerals, the mourning women, making their doleful ditties, and others answering to them, acted the part of these persons, expecting their fellows would make their responses, but did not: hence the complaint,

we have mourned unto you, and ye have not

lamented.

The different characters of John and Christ, are here set forth, by “piping” and “mourning”. The character and ministry of Christ and his disciples, by “piping”; by which is meant, the clear, comfortable, and joyful ministry of the Gospel; which is delightful music to a sensible sinner; and may be compared to it, for distinction of sounds, harmony, and agreement, being charming and delightful; its notes are all grace, mercy, love, liberty, peace, pardon, righteousness, and free salvation; and it is very powerful and engaging, it quickens and animates, attracts, allures and charms. The character and ministry of John, is signified by “mourning”: his life was a very austere one; he and his disciples fasted oft; he appeared in a very coarse habit; his speech was rough, his voice thundering: his doctrine was the doctrine of repentance, and he used very severe threatenings, in case of impenitence: on the other hand, by the “fellows” to whom they piped, or ministered, in their different ministrations, are meant, the Scribes and Pharisees; who were neither affected to, nor with, either of them: as for John, he was too austere for them; they did not like his garb, nor his diet; nor did his doctrine, or baptism please them; nor were they wrought upon, or brought to repentance by his ministry; they did not lament, weep, or shed one tear, but sat unmoved, like stocks and stones, under those awful striking discourses, on mournful subjects, delivered by him: nor were they pleased with the free conduct, and pleasant conversation of Christ; nor did they dance, or rejoice, at the good news and glad tidings of grace, and salvation, which were brought by him: of such froward, peevish spirits they were, that neither John, nor Christ, could please them: they were a true picture and emblem of many persons, who like neither law nor Gospel, but are morose, sullen, and quarrelsome, let them hear what they will; as Solomon says,

“If a wise man contendeth with a foolish man, whether he rage or laugh, there is no rest”, Pr 29:9. Upon which the Talmudists ⁶⁸² comment, and illustrate it in this manner, and produce a proverbial saying, much like this in the text.

“Says God, I was angry with Ahaz, and I delivered him into the hands of the kings of Damascus; he sacrificed and burnt incense to their gods, 2Ch 28:22. I played with Amaziah, and I gave the king of Edom into his hands; he brought their gods and worshipped them, 2Ch 25:14. Says R. Papa,

⁶⁸¹ Zohar in Num. fol. 60. 3.

⁶⁸² T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 103. 1.

this is what men say, or it is a common proverb, יד בכיי ליה למר דלא יד חייכי ליה למר דלא, “they weep to a man who takes no notice of it, they laugh to a man who does not observe it”; woe to that man, who knows not the difference between good and evil.”

Matthew 11:18

Ver. 18. **For John came neither eating nor drinking,**

This and the following verse are an explanation of the foregoing “parable”; and this shows, that John and his disciples are the persons that mourned, of which his austere life was a proof: for when he “came”, being sent of God, and appeared as a public preacher, he was “neither eating nor drinking”; not that he did not eat or drink at all, otherwise he could not have lived, and discharged his office: but he ate sparingly, very little; and what he did eat and drink, was not the common food and drink of men; he neither ate bread nor drank wine, but lived upon locusts and wild honey; he excused all invitations to people’s houses, and shunned all feasts and entertainments; he abstained from all free and sociable conversation with men, in eating and drinking: and though the Scribes and Pharisees pretended to much abstinence and frequent fastings, yet they did not care to follow his very severe way of living, and lament, in answer to his mournful ditty; but in a calumniating way, **they say he hath a devil;**

is a demoniac, a madman, one that is unsociable and melancholy; under a delusion of Satan, and influenced by him to abstain from proper food and company of men, under a pretence of religion.

Matthew 11:19

Ver. 19. **The son of man came eating and drinking,**

Meaning himself, who ate and drank as men usually do, lived in the common way of life, was free and sociable, went to feasts, entertainments, and weddings, when he was invited; and was affable, courteous, and friendly in his deportment, to all men;

and they say, behold a man gluttonous,

a voracious man, an epicurean, one that indulges his appetite to a very great degree, and in a scandalous manner;

a winebibber,

a common tippler, one that drinks to excess; whom the Rabbins call ⁶⁸³ גרגרני, who is one, they say, that drinks up his cup at one draught; one that is given to wine, and

is greedy of it:

a friend of publicans and sinners;

such as are openly and notoriously wicked; and loves their company, for the sake of tippling with them; and encourages them in their revelling and drunkenness; a very black charge this!

But wisdom is justified of her children;

either the wisdom of God, in making use of ministers of a different disposition and deportment, whereby some are gained, and others left inexcusable: or the Gospel, in which there is such a display of divine wisdom, which is vindicated from the charge of licentiousness, by the agreeable lives and conversations of the children of God: or rather Christ himself, who is the wisdom of God; and in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; who, however he may be traduced by ignorant and malicious men, yet will be acquitted from all such charges, as here insinuated, by all the true sons of wisdom; or by such, who are made wise unto salvation. We may learn from hence, that no sort of preachers and preaching will please some men; that the best of Gospel ministers may be reproached as libertines, or madmen; and that they will be sooner, or later, justified and cleared from all such aspersions.

Matthew 11:20

Ver. 20. **Then began he to upbraid the cities,**

When he had sent forth his disciples to preach, and had been in these several cities hereafter mentioned himself, and had taught and preached in them, and confirmed his doctrine by many wonderful works; when he had observed how ill they had used both John and himself, representing the one as having a devil, and the other as a licentious person; when they could not be pleased with the ministry of the one, nor of the other, he very seasonably and righteously began to reproach them with their ungenerous treatment of him, their ingratitude to him, their unbelief in him, the hardness and impenitence of their hearts; which could not be moved to repent of their evil ways, and believe in him, and acknowledge him as the Messiah, by all the instructions he gave them, and miracles he wrought among them: for the cities he has a view to, were such,

wherein most of his mighty works were done;

the most for number, and the greatest in their kind; as particularly at Capernaum; where he cured the centurion’s servant, recovered Peter’s wife’s mother from a fever, healed the man sick of a palsy, raised Jairus’s daughter from the dead, made whole the woman that

⁶⁸³ T. Bab. Pesachim, fol. 86. 2. Betza, fol. 25. 2.

had a bloody issue, opened the eyes of two blind men, and cast out a devil from a dumb man, possessed with one: all these, and more, he did in this one city, and therefore he might justly upbraid them,

because they repented not:

not because they did not commend him, and speak well of his works, for he sought not his own glory, but their good: all he did was, in order to bring men to repentance of their sins, and faith in himself, that they might be saved.

Matthew 11:21

Ver. 21. **Woe unto thee, Chorazin!**

Though many of Christ's mighty works were done in this place, yet mention is made of it no where else, but here; whether it was a single city, or a country, is not easy to determine: the word חֹרָזִין "Chorazin", signifying "woody places", Dr. Lightfoot⁶⁸⁴ conjectures it might include Cana, in which Christ wrought his first miracle, and a small adjacent country, situated in a wood, and be so called from thence; and Origen⁶⁸⁵ reads it, χορα ζιν, "the region of Zin":

woe unto thee, Bethsaida!

This was the city of Andrew and Peter, see Gill "Joh 1:44"; so that as bad as it was, some persons were called out of it by the grace of God, and to the high office of apostleship; and which makes that grace in such the more distinguishing:

for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

These words are to be understood in a popular sense, as Grotius observes, and express what was probable, according to an human judgment of things; and the meaning is, that if the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon had had the advantages of Christ's ministry, and of seeing his miracles, as the inhabitants of Chorazin and Bethsaida had, it looks very likely, or one would be ready to conclude, especially from many coming out of these parts, to attend on Christ's ministry, Mark 3:8 and from the conversion of some of them in after times, Ac 21:3 they would have repented of their sins; at least, in an external way, signified by sackcloth and ashes, which were outward signs of repentance; see Isa 58:5. And which, if it had been only performed in such a manner by the inhabitants of Chorazin and Bethsaida, would have saved them from temporal judgments, which

their sins now called for. The words are an hyperbolical exaggeration of the wickedness of those cities, like to Eze 3:5 showing, that they were worse than the Tyrians and Sidonians; an Heathenish and idolatrous people, who lived very profligate and dissolute lives, in all intemperance, luxury, and impiety; and therefore would be punished in a severer way: neither this passage, nor what follows, can be any proof of God's giving sufficient grace to all men alike, which in some is effectual to conversion, and in others not, but of the contrary; since the men of Tyre and Sidon had not the same means, or the same grace, as the inhabitants of the other cities, if the mighty works done among them are to be called so; or that man has a power to repent of himself, in a spiritual and evangelical way; or that outward means, as doctrines and miracles, are sufficient to produce such a repentance, without efficacious and unfrustrable grace; since only an outward repentance is here supposed, such as that of Ahab, and of the Ninevites.

Matthew 11:22

Ver. 22. **But I say unto you,**

What may be depended upon as true, and which shall certainly come to pass, however the inhabitants of these cities might flatter themselves; or in whatsoever light they might look upon their neighbours, the Tyrians and Sidonians; and fancy themselves to be the favourites of heaven, and these as the most execrable of creatures;

it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day off judgment, than for you.

Their punishment in another world will be more mild and moderate; they will not have such severe stings of conscience, nor have reason to make such bitter reflections on themselves, as those will who have had the advantages of a Gospel revelation: all sins are not alike, nor will the punishment of them be the same; there will be degrees of torments in hell, and which the justice of God requires. These words suppose, that the men of Tyre and Sidon will be punished for their many abominable sins, committed against the law and light of nature; but that the inhabitants of Chorazin and Bethsaida, having rejected the Messiah, and the doctrines of the Gospel, against all the evidence of miracles, and convictions of their own minds, and probably sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost; as their sins are aggravated, their condemnation will be the greater, and their punishment the more intolerable.

Matthew 11:23

Ver. 23. **And thou Capernaum,**

684 Chorogr. Cent. in Matth. p. 84. Vol. 2.

685 Philocalia, p. 109.

This city is singled out from all the rest, and spoken to particularly, because of its peculiar advantages:

which art exalted unto heaven;

which has respect to the very great privileges this place enjoyed, it being the city where Christ chose to dwell, and for a time fixed his abode in; where he first began to preach, and where such a train of miracles were done; a particular enumeration, of which has been before given: as also it may refer to the situation of the place, which was very high and lofty, so that it seemed to reach unto heaven; for the account that R. Benjamin Tudelensis⁶⁸⁶ gives of it is, that

”Capernaum, which is, by interpretation, “the village of comfort”, at first sight looks to be כרמלי במקומו ל, “a place higher than Mount Carmel”

And Nonnus on Joh 6:59 calls it, βαψυκρηπιδι χαφαρναουσι which the interpreter renders, the land of “Capernaum founded on high”. But notwithstanding all this,

shalt be brought down to hell;

meaning, it should be attended with very humbling providences, be reduced to a very low condition, see Isa 14:15 be destroyed and laid waste, as a city, as it was in the times of Vespasian; and the inhabitants of it not only punished with temporal, but everlasting destruction;

for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

The sense of these words is the same with that of Mt 11:22 only this may be observed, that whereas Capernaum was superior in privileges and advantages than the other cities, and yet acted the vile and ungrateful part it did; so that its impenitence and unbelief were the more aggravated; hence a still viler set of men are pitched upon, even the men of Sodom, to make the comparison of them with: for as wicked as the men of that place were, who were so infamous for their unnatural lusts; yet if they had enjoyed such a ministry as Christ’s, and had had such miracles wrought among them, for the attestation of the doctrines taught them, in all human probability they would have repented of their flagitious crimes; at least in an external way, in such a manner as to have escaped that dreadful judgment, which laid their city, and several adjacent ones, in ashes; and so would have continued a city until this day. The phrase remained is Jewish, and is used of Sodom by the Rabbins, who say⁶⁸⁷, that

”Abraham was “ninety nine” years of age when he was circumcised, and then was the overthrow of Sodom; which was “fifty one” years, after the generation of the division (of the people and languages), and near “fifty two” years; but “Zoar remained” one year, אחר־שוב דומו, “after Sodom remained”

According to the Jews, it stood but fifty two years at most⁶⁸⁸: and they have a notion, that Sodom and Gomorrha will be built again in the future state⁶⁸⁹, or world to come, the times of the Messiah.

Matthew 11:24

Ver. 24. **But I say unto you,**

Capernaum, and the inhabitants thereof, as before, to Chorazin and Bethsaida.

It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment, than for thee:

though the punishment of the men of Sodom will be very great, their iniquities being horribly dreadful and enormous, yet more easy to be borne than the vengeance, which, in the last and general judgment, will fall upon such, who have had the means of grace, and have despised them; especially such as had the personal presence, ministry, and miracles of Christ among them, as the Capernautes had. Such a way of expressing and setting forth the severer punishment of others, by that of Sodom, is not unusual in the Old Testament; see La 4:6 nor in Jewish writers, who say⁶⁹⁰, that

”the Israelites were fit for, or deserved, Mwdo vnwem לוֹגֵשׁ יוֹתֵר חֲמוּר, “a far more heavy punishment than the punishment of Sodom”: because they abounded with prophets, rising early, and sending them, but they did not hearken; whereas Sodom had no hands stayed on her, or prophets to warn them.”

Matthew 11:25

Ver. 25. **At that time Jesus answered, and said,**

The time referred to is, when the disciples returned to him, and gave him an account of the success of their ministry, Luke 10:17 who say nothing of the conversion of sinners, but of the spirits being subject to them; and may also refer to the several things spoken of in the context: it was at that time when Christ spoke to the multitude about John, and the excellency of his ministry,

⁶⁸⁸ T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 11. 2. & Gloss. in ib. Jarchi in Gen. xix. 20.

⁶⁸⁹ Shemot Rabba, sect. 15. fol. 101. 3.

⁶⁹⁰ Tzeror Hammor, fol. 82. 1

⁶⁸⁶ Itinerarium, p. 37.

⁶⁸⁷ Juchasin, fol. 8. 1.

which yet was ineffectual to great numbers, who for a while attended on it; and when he took notice to the people, how he himself, as well as John, was rejected and vilified by the Pharisees, and received by publicans and sinners; and when he upbraided Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, for their impenitence and unbelief: taking occasion from hence, he “answered and said”; an Hebrew way of speaking, used when nothing goes before, to which what is said can be an answer; see Job 3:2.

I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth.

This is an address to God, by way of thanksgiving; glorifying and praising him, confessing and acknowledging his wisdom, power, grace, and goodness, discovered in the things he after mentions: so far was he from being discouraged and dejected at the poor success of the Seventy: at his ill treatment by the Pharisees; and at the general impenitence and unbelief of the cities, where he preached and wrought his miracles; that he is abundantly thankful, and admires the distinguishing grace of God in the calling of a few in those places. This address is made to God as a “Father”, as his Father, his own Father; for he was the only begotten of him, and dearly beloved by him: this epithet he makes use of, to show the near relation he stood in to him, and the freedom he could use with him: he also addresses him as “the Lord of heaven and earth”; he being the maker, upholder, and governor of both, and which he fills with his presence; the one is his throne, and the other is his footstool. This he mentions to show the sovereignty of his Father, in the conversion of men; and that it was not for want of power in him, that there were no more wrought upon under the ministry of John, himself, and his disciples. The things he expresses his thankfulness for, follow;

because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent.

The “things” he means are the doctrines of the Gospel; such as respect himself, his person, as God, and the Son of God; his office, as Messiah, Redeemer, and Saviour; and the blessings of grace, righteousness, and salvation by him. The persons from whom these things were hid, are “the wise and prudent”; in things worldly, natural, and civil; men of great parts and learning, of a large compass of knowledge, having a considerable share of sagacity, penetration, and wisdom; or, at least, who were wise and prudent in their own conceits, as were the Scribes and Pharisees, and the schools of Hillel and Shammai, the two famous doctors of that day: and indeed the people of the Jews in common were so; who thus applaud themselves at the eating of the passover every year, and say, את התורה אנו

כלנו חכמים כלנו נבונים כלנו יודים, “we are all wise, we are all prudent, we all understand the law”⁶⁹¹; the same is elsewhere⁶⁹² said of all Israel; in their opinion they were so, yet the things of the Gospel are hidden from them. God may be said to “hide” these things, when either he does not afford the outward revelation of the Gospel; or, if he does, it is given forth in parables, or he does not give along with it the light of his Spirit and grace, but leaves men to their own darkness and blindness; so that they cannot see, perceive, and understand the beauty, glory, excellency, and suitableness of the doctrines of it. Now, when Christ confesses this, or gives thanks to God for it, it is a declaration that God has done so, and denotes his acquiescence in it; and is not properly a thanksgiving for that; but rather, that for as much as he has thought fit, in his infinite wisdom, to take such a method, he has been pleased to make a revelation of these things to others;

and hast revealed them unto babes;

foolish ones, comparatively speaking, who have not those natural parts, learning, and knowledge others have, that wisdom and prudence in worldly and civil things; and are so in their own account, and in the esteem of the world; and who are as babes, helpless, defenceless, and impotent of themselves, to do or say anything that is spiritually good, and are sensible of the same: now to such souls God reveals the covenant of his grace, Christ, and all the blessings of grace in him, the mysteries of the Gospel, and the unseen glories of another world. The veil of darkness and ignorance is removed from them; spiritual sight is given them; these things are set before them; they see a glory and suitableness in them; their desires are raised after them; their affections are set on them; their hearts are impressed with them; and they are helped to view their interest in them. The Jews themselves have a notion, that in the days of the Messiah, children and babes shall have knowledge of divine things.

”Says Simeon ben Jochai⁶⁹³, it is not the pleasure of God that wisdom should be so revealed to the world; but when it is near the days of the Messiah, even amled רבוי “little children”, or the “babes that are in the world”, shall find out the hidden things of wisdom, and know thereby the ends, and the computations of times; and at that time it shall be revealed to all:”

and there is more truth in what they own else-

691 Haggada Shel Pesach, p. 5. Ed. Ritangel.

692 Tzeror Hammor, fol. 135. 1.

693 Zohar in Gen. fol. 74. 1.

where ⁶⁹⁴, than they themselves are aware of, when they say, that

”from the day that the temple was destroyed, prophecy has been taken away from the prophets, and given לשוטימולתינוקות, “to fools and babes.”

Matthew 11:26

Ver. 26. **Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.** Or, “so is the good will”, or “pleasure before thee”: thus, יהירג מלפניך “let it be the good will before thee”, or “in thy sight, O Lord”, is a phrase often to be met with in the Jews’ forms of prayer ⁶⁹⁵. Here the word designs the sovereign counsel and purpose of God, to which, and to which only, our Lord refers the different dispensations of God towards the sons of men: this is a reason which ought to satisfy everyone, and is better than ten thousand others that can be thought of, or devised by men. This difference among men, with respect to the Gospel revelation, cannot be owing to natural sagacity, prudence, and penetration; for these things are with those from whom it is hid; nor to any worthiness in those to whom it is revealed; for they are the poor, the base, the foolish things of this world, and even things that are not; nor to any foresight of their making a better use and improvement of such a revelation, but to the good will and pleasure of God only.

Matthew 11:27

Ver. 27. **All things are delivered unto me of my Father,**

This is to be understood of Christ, as mediator; for, as God, nothing was delivered to him; he had all things, all perfections, power, and glory his Father has; and is to be considered in the utmost extent: all persons are delivered to him, angels and men; good angels are delivered to him, to be confirmed in him, as their head, and to be made use of by him; spirits, evil spirits, which were subject to his disciples, are under him, and at his command and disposal; and their subjection to his disciples is owing to his power over them, which he communicated to them; all the elect of God are delivered to him, to be kept and saved by him; all the babes and little ones, to whom it was the Father’s will to reveal the mysteries of grace, were his care and charge; all power in heaven, and in earth, are given unto him; and all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid with him, which are distributed to

any of the sons of men; all the blessings of grace, and the promises of the everlasting covenant, and all the glory and happiness of his people, are put into his hands:

and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father;

the transcendent glories and perfections of his nature, as the Son of God; nor the whole of his work and office, as mediator: or all that is committed to his charge, as such: all that he was to do, and suffer, for his people; all that he had done for them, and should communicate to, and bestow upon them.

Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son;

his essence and glory, his mind and will, his purposes and decrees, his counsels and covenant; the grace and love of his heart to his chosen people; what he has prepared and laid up for them, and will make them partakers of to all eternity;

and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him;

both himself, and his Father, and the grace and glory of each, which he does by his Spirit; who is a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; and which entirely depends on his own sovereign will and pleasure.

Matthew 11:28

Ver. 28. **Come unto me,**

Christ having signified, that the knowledge of God, and the mysteries of grace, are only to be come at through him; and that he has all things relating to the peace, comfort, happiness, and salvation of men in his hands, kindly invites and encourages souls to come unto him for the same: by which is meant, not a local coming, or a coming to hear him preach; for so his hearers, to whom he more immediately directed his speech, were come already; and many of them did, as multitudes may, and do, in this sense, come to Christ, who never knew him, nor receive any spiritual benefit by him: nor is it a bare coming under the ordinances of Christ, submission to baptism, or an attendance at the Lord’s supper, the latter of which was not yet instituted; and both may be performed by men, who are not yet come to Christ: but it is to be understood of believing in Christ, the going of the soul to him, in the exercise of grace on him, of desire after him, love to him, faith and hope in him: believing in Christ, and coming to him, are terms synonymous, Joh 6:35. Those who come to Christ aright, come as sinners, to a full, suitable, able, and willing Saviour; venture their souls upon him, and trust in him for righteousness, life, and salvation, which

⁶⁹⁴ T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 12. 2.

⁶⁹⁵ Seder Tephillot, fol. 4. 2. & 5. 1. & passim. Ed. Amsterdam.

they are encouraged to do, by this kind invitation; which shows his willingness to save, and his readiness to give relief to distressed minds. The persons invited, are not “all” the individuals of mankind, but with a restriction,

all ye that labour, and are heavy laden;

meaning, not these who are labouring in the service of sin and Satan, are laden with iniquity, and insensible of it: these are not weary of sin, nor burdened with it; not do they want or desire any rest for their souls; but such who groan, being burdened with the guilt of sin upon their consciences, and are pressed down with the unsupportable yoke of the law, and the load of human traditions; and have been labouring till they are weary, in order to obtain peace of conscience, and rest for their souls, by the observance of these things, but in vain. These are encouraged to come to him, lay down their burdens at his feet, look to, and lay hold by faith on his person, blood, righteousness, and sacrifice; when they should enjoy that true spiritual consolation, which could never be attained to by the works of the law. **And I will give you rest;** spiritual rest here, peace of conscience, ease of mind, tranquillity of soul, through an application of pardoning grace, a view of free justification by the righteousness of Christ, and full atonement of sin by his sacrifice; and eternal rest hereafter, in Abraham’s bosom, in the arms of Jesus, in perfect and uninterrupted communion with Father, Son, and Spirit. The Jews say⁶⁹⁶, that מנוחה תורה, “the law is rest”; and so explain Ge 49:15 of it: but a truly sensible sinner enjoys no rest, but in Christ; it is like Noah’s dove, which could find no rest for the soles of its feet, until it returned to the ark; and they themselves expect perfect rest in the days of the Messiah, and call his world מנוחה, rest⁶⁹⁷.

Matthew 11:29

Ver. 29. **Take my yoke upon you,**

The phrase is Rabbinical. The Jewish doctors often speak⁶⁹⁸ of מלכות שמיים, “the yoke of the kingdom of heaven”, and of persons taking it upon them; and which they exhort to, and express in much such language as here⁶⁹⁹; קבילו לייכו גל מלכותא קדישא, “take upon you the yoke of the holy kingdom”, every day. They distinguish this from the yoke of the law, and say⁷⁰⁰

696 Tzeror Hammor, fol. 39. 3.

697 Tzeror Hammor, fol. 150. 2.

698 T. Hieros. Beracot, fol. 4. 1. Bab. Beracot, fol. 61. 2. Zohar in Lev. fol. 46. 4. Caphtor, fol. 44. 2. Tzeror Hammor, fol. 2. 2.

699 Zohar in Num. fol. 51. 2. Caphtor, fol. 48. 2.

700 Misn. Beracot, c. 2. sect. 2. T. Hieros. Beracot, fol. 4.

”a man must first take upon him the yoke of the kingdom of heaven, and after that take upon him the “yoke” of the commandment.”

Their sense I take to be this, that a man must first make a profession of his faith in the God of Israel, and then live conformably to his law: agreeably to this, Christ exhorts such persons who come to him for rest and happiness, to profess their faith in him, to embrace the doctrines of the Gospel, to submit to his ordinances, and to walk according to those laws, commands, and orders, which he, as king of saints, has made, and requires obedience to: so those who come to him for life, and believe in him, as the Saviour of their souls, though they are not to trust in, and depend upon any duties performed by them; yet they are not to sit still, or lay aside the performance of good works, or live a licentious course of life, but are always to be doing the will and work of their Lord. And this he calls “his yoke”, in distinction from the yoke of the law of Moses, and of the traditions of the elders.

And learn of me, for I am meek, and lowly in heart:

respect seems to be had to Zec 9:9 where such characters as these are given of the Messiah. The meekness, humility, and lowliness of Christ appear in his assumption of human nature; in his subjection to his Father; in the whole of his deportment and conversation among men; in his submission to the ordinance of baptism; in the whole course of his obedience to God, and in his sufferings and death: and he is to be imitated herein, by all his followers, who may learn many excellent things from his example, as well as from his doctrine; and particularly, that whereas, though he was so great a person, yet condescended to perform every duty with readiness and cheerfulness, his disciples should not think it below them to conform to every ordinance of his, to every branch of his will; for he has set them an example, that they should tread in his steps, and walk even as he has walked. There never was such an instance of humility, and lowliness of mind, as Christ; nor is there any example so worthy of our imitation as his. The Jews have a saying {d},

”for ever let a man נווהו כהילל, “be meek as Hillell”, and let him not be wrathful as “Shammai”:

which two men were presidents of their universities about the times of Christ. But our Lord says, “learn of me”, not of “Hillell”, or any of your doctors,

and ye shall find rest unto your souls;

referring to Jer 6:16 and which shows the rest he

2. {d} T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 30. 2.

speaks of in the preceding verse, to be not a corporal, but a spiritual one; and which is to be enjoyed “in”, though not “for” the observance of Christ’s commands; whose “ways are ways of pleasantness, and all” whose “paths are peace”.

Matthew 11:30

Ver. 30. **For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.**

Christ calls a profession of faith in him, and subjection to his ordinances, a yoke, in allusion to the law of Moses, and in distinction from it; and a “burden”, with respect to the very heavy ones the Scribes and Pharisees laid upon the shoulders of the people, obliging them to a strict observance of them; though of a different nature from either of them; “for his commandments are not grievous”, hard and heavy to be borne, as their’s were, but “easy and light”: not that they are so to unregenerate men, or are easily performed by the strength of nature, and power of men’s free will: but they are good and amiable, and lovely in their own nature, and are cheerfully complied with, and abundance of spiritual pleasure and delight is enjoyed in them by believers, when they have the presence of God, the assistance of his Spirit, and the discoveries of his love. Moreover, the commands of Christ, and the ordinances of the Gospel, are so in comparison of the law of Moses; which required perfect obedience, but gave no strength to perform, and threatened with condemnation and death, in case of the least failure; and of the numerous, and some very severe rites and usages of the ceremonial law; and of the bulky and heavy traditions of the elders, and ordinances of men.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW CHAPTER XII

1 Christ reproveth the blindness of the Pharisees concerning the breach of the sabbath. 3 by scriptures, 9 by reason. 13 and by a miracle. 22 He healeth the man possessed that was blind and dumb. 31 Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall never be forgiven. 38 account shall be made of idle words. 38 He rebuketh the unfaithful, who seek after a sign. 49 and sheweth who is his brother, sister and mother.

Matthew 12

- [1] At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat.
- [2] But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day.
- [3] But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David

did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him;

- [4] How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?
- [5] Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?
- [6] But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple.
- [7] But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.
- [8] For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.
- [9] And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue:
- [10] And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him.
- [11] And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?
- [12] How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days.
- [13] Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other.
- [14] Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him.
- [15] But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all;
- [16] And charged them that they should not make him known:
- [17] That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,
- [18] Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles.
- [19] He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.
- [20] A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.
- [21] And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.

- [22] Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.
- [23] And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?
- [24] But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.
- [25] And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand:
- [26] And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?
- [27] And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges.
- [28] But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.
- [29] Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.
- [30] He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.
- [31] Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.
- [32] And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.
- [33] Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit.
- [34] O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.
- [35] A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.
- [36] But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.
- [37] For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.
- [38] Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.
- [39] But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:
- [40] For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.
- [41] The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.
- [42] The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.
- [43] When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.
- [44] Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished.
- [45] Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.
- [46] While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him.
- [47] Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee.
- [48] But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?
- [49] And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!
- [50] For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

JOHN GILL'S COMMENTARY ON MATTHEW CHAPTER XII

Matthew 12:1

Ver. 1. **At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn,**

That is, the corn fields, as the other evangelists express it. It being on a sabbath day, it is very probable,

that Christ and his disciples were going to some public place of worship, the way to which lay through some fields of corn, which were now ripe: for Luke says, it was on the “second sabbath after the first”, or rather “the first sabbath after the second”; that is, the first sabbath after the second day of the passover, when the sheaf of the first fruit was offered, and harvest was begun.

And his disciples were an hungered;

it being in the morning before they had broke their fast; and this circumstance is mentioned to show the reason of the following action, and to excuse it: at which the Pharisees were so much offended, and of which they accused them, as having done what was very criminal:

and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat;

Luke adds, “rubbing them in their hands”; and so here in the Syriac, Arabic, and Persic versions, it is rendered, “they began to rub”: as they passed along, they plucked off the ears of corn, either barley or wheat, and rubbed them in their hands, to get the grain clear of the husk, or beard, and eat them; contenting themselves with such mean and unprepared food, when the Jews on that day fed on the best of dainties ⁷⁰¹.

Matthew 12:2

Ver. 2. **But when the Pharisees saw it,**

Who went along with him, or followed him, being employed to make observation on his words and actions,

they said unto him; Luke says, “unto them”, the disciples: it seems, they took notice of this action both to Christ and his disciples, and first spoke of it to the one, and then to the other, or to both together:

behold thy disciples do that which it is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day!

they mention it with astonishment, and indignation. What they refer to, is not their walking on the sabbath day: this they might do, according to their canons, provided they did not exceed two thousand cubits, which were a sabbath day’s journey ⁷⁰² nor was it their passing through the corn fields; though, according to them ⁷⁰³,

“it was not lawful for a man to visit his gardens, ושדותיו, “or his fields”, on the sabbath day, to see what they want, or how the fruits grow; for such walking is to do his own pleasure.”

But this they knew was not the case of Christ, and his disciples, who were not proprietors of these fields: nor was it merely their plucking the ears of corn, and

rubbing and eating them, which were not their own, but another man’s; for this, according to the law, in

De 23:25 was lawful to be done: but what offended the Pharisees was, that it was done on a sabbath day, it being, as they interpret it, a servile work, and all one as reaping; though, in the law just mentioned, it is manifestly distinguished from it. Their rule is ⁷⁰⁴

“he that reaps (on the sabbath day) ever so little, is guilty (of stoning), ותולש חולדה קור הוא and “plucking of ears of corn is a derivative of reaping”;

and is all one as its primitive, and punishable with the same kind of death, if done presumptuously: so Philo the Jew observes ⁷⁰⁵, that the rest of the sabbath not only reached to men, bond and free, and to beasts, but even to trees, and plants; and that ου ερυσω ου κλαδον, αλλ ουδε πεταλον εφειται τεμειν, “it was not lawful to cut a plant, or branch, or so much as a leaf”, on a sabbath day: and it may be what might make this offence of the disciples the more heinous was, that they plucked these ears, and ate them, and so broke their fast before morning prayer; for a man might not eat any thing on a sabbath day until morning prayers were ended in the synagogue, nor indeed on any other day; for they used not to eat bread till after they had offered the daily sacrifice, which was about the third hour of the day, or nine o’clock in the morning; nor did they eat till the fourth hour, or ten o’clock ⁷⁰⁶.

Matthew 12:3

Ver. 3. **But he said unto them, have ye not read,**

If they had not read the Scriptures, they were very unfit persons either to be teachers, or censurers of others, and must have been very slothful and negligent; and if they had, they could not but have observed the case of David, which Christ produces in vindication of his disciples:

what David did when he was an hungered;

which was the case of the disciples, and is therefore mentioned; it being also the circumstance which could, and did excuse what was done by David and his men: and the Jews themselves own, that in case of hunger the showbread might be eaten, by those that were not priests; not only that which was removed from the table, but that which was upon it; yea, even when there

⁷⁰⁴ Maimon. Hilch. Sabbat, c. 8. sect. 3. & 7. 1.

⁷⁰⁵ De Vita Mosis, 1. 2. p. 657.

⁷⁰⁶ Vid. Targum in Eccl. x. 17. Maimon. Hilch. Tephilla, c. 6. sect. 4.

⁷⁰¹ Vid. Maimon. Hilch. Sabbat, c. 30. sect. 7, 8, 9, 10.

⁷⁰² Ib. c. 27. sect. 1.

⁷⁰³ R. Moses Kotzensis Mitzvot Tora prec. neg. 65.

was none to put in its room ⁷⁰⁷; and that David was in the utmost distress, and therefore desired it, and it was granted him on that account. They represent him as thus saying to the priest {m},

“when he found there was none but showbread, give it me, that we may not die with hunger; שבת נפשות דוחה, שפק נפשות דוחה, “for danger of life drives away the sabbath”;

which perfectly agrees with our Lord’s argument, and justifies the apostles conduct: and this was not a single fact of David’s, but of others also;

and they that were with him;

for though in 1Sa 21:1 he is said to be “alone, and no man with him”; yet this must be understood either comparatively, having but very few with him, and which were as none, considering his dignity; or thus, though none came with him to Ahimelech, pretending to the priest he had a secret affair of the king’s to transact; and therefore had left his servants in a certain place, and desires bread for himself and them; concerning whom the priest and he discourses, as may be seen in the place referred to: so that though no man was with him at the priest’s house, yet there were some with him, and who partook with him in eating of the showbread.

Matthew 12:4

Ver. 4. **How he entered into the house of God,**

Not the temple, which was not then built; but the tabernacle, which was then at Nob, the city of the priests, and which probably adjoined to Abimelech’s house:

and did eat the shewbread;

for that this is meant by the hallowed bread, in 1Sa 21:6 is certain; though R. Joseph Kimchi ⁷⁰⁸ thinks it was the bread of the thank offering; to which R. Levi ben Getsom ⁷⁰⁹ seems to incline: but the general sense of the Jewish doctors ⁷¹⁰ is, that it was the showbread; and which is very clear from that text, and is rightly affirmed by Christ;

which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests:

see Le 24:5 and so the Jews say that this bread לזרים אור, “is forbidden to strangers” ⁷¹¹; that is, to any but the

⁷⁰⁷ R. David Kimchi in 1 Sam. xxi. 5. {m} Laniado Cli Jaker, fol. 227. 2.

⁷⁰⁸ Apud R. David Kimchi in 1 Sam. xxi. 6.

⁷⁰⁹ In ib.

⁷¹⁰ T. Bab. Menachot, fol. 95. 2. R. David Kimchi, Abarbinel & Laniado in 1 Sam. xxi. 6.

⁷¹¹ Laniado & Abarbinel in ib.

priests, which, after the burning of the frankincense, was divided equally among them: that course of priests that came into the service had six cakes, and that which went out six; though the high priest had a right to half himself, but he did not use to take it, it being judged not to his honour to do so ⁷¹². No hint is here given, nor in the history, in 1Sa 21:1 that it was on the sabbath day that David came to Ahimelech, and ate the showbread; but this is observed, and disputed, by the Jewish writers. Some indeed are in a doubt about it; but others ⁷¹³ readily give into it, that it was on the sabbath day, which he chose to flee in, for the greater safety and preservation of his life: and indeed it seems reasonable it should be on that day; since on that day only the showbread was removed from the table, and other loaves put in the room. One of their writers ⁷¹⁴ says,

“that showbread was not to be eaten, but on the day, and night of the sabbath day; and on the going out of the sabbath day; and on the going out of the sabbath David came there.”

Now our Lord’s argument stands thus, that if David, a holy, good man, and, the men that were with him, who were men of religion and conscience, when in great distress, through hunger, ate of the showbread, which was unlawful for any to eat of but priests, the high priest himself assenting to it; then it could not be criminal in his disciples, when an hungred, to pluck, rub, and eat a few ears of corn, which were lawful for any man to eat, even though it was on the sabbath day: and for the further vindication of them, he adds,

Matthew 12:5

Ver. 5. **Or have ye not read in the law,....** Nu 28:9 by which law the priests were obliged, every sabbath day, to offer up two lambs for a burnt offering; to which were annexed many servile works, as killing the sacrifice, flaying it, cutting it in pieces, and laying it on the altar, cutting of wood, and putting that in order, and kindling the fire: from all which, it might be observed,

how that on the sabbath days, the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless. There were many things, which, according to the Jewish canons, the priests might do on the sabbath day; particularly they might slay the sacrifice: it was a rule with them,

⁷¹² Maimon. Hilch. Tamidin, c. 4. sect. 12. 14.

⁷¹³ Bemidbar Rabba Parash. 23. fol. 231. 9. Laniado Cli Jaker, fol. 226. 4. & 227. 2, 3, 4. & Jellammedenu in ib.

⁷¹⁴ R. Isaiah in 1 Sam. xxi. 5.

“that slaying drives away the sabbath”⁷¹⁵. They might also knead, make, and bake the showbread on the sabbath day: their general rule was, as R. Akiba says, that what was possible to be done on the evening of the sabbath, did not drive away the sabbath; but what was not possible to be done on the sabbath eve, did drive away the sabbath⁷¹⁶: so they might kill the passover, sprinkle its blood, wipe its inwards, and burn the fat on the sabbath day⁷¹⁷, with many other things. What exculpated these men was, that what they did was done in the temple, and for the service of it, upon which an emphasis is put; and agrees with their canons, which say, that there is no prohibition in the sanctuary; החר הוא “that which is forbidden to be done on the sabbath, is lawful to be done in the sanctuary”⁷¹⁸: and whereas, it might be objected to the disciples of Christ, that they were not priests; and what they did was not in the temple, but in the fields; to this it is replied, in the following words:

Matthew 12:6

Ver. 6. **But I say unto you,**

Who Christ knew would be ready to object, as above, and therefore prevents them, by saying,

that in this place is one greater than the temple;

meaning himself, who was the Lord and Proprietor of the temple, and in his human nature the antitype of it; see Joh 2:19 and was infinitely more sacred than that. Some copies read נִימָ, “something greater”; referring either to the human nature of Christ, in which the Godhead dwells bodily, and so infinitely greater than the temple; or to the health of his disciples, which was in danger, through hunger: or to the ministry of the apostles, which, by satisfying nature, they were more capable of performing; either of which was of more moment than the sacrifices and service of the temple. Christ’s argument is, that if the temple, and the service of it, excused the priests from blame, in doing things in it on the sabbath day, which otherwise might not be done; then much more might his presence, who was greater than the temple, excuse his disciples from blame in this action of rubbing and eating the ears of corn; which was done to satisfy hunger, and to render them the more capable of performing their ministerial function; and which was of more importance than the service of the priests.

⁷¹⁵ T. Bab. Menachot, fol. 72. 2.

⁷¹⁶ Misn. Menachot, c. 11. sect. 3.

⁷¹⁷ Misn. Pesachim, c. 6. sect. 1. Maimon. Pesach. c. 1. sect. 18.

⁷¹⁸ lb. sect. 16. & Hilchot Sabbat, c. 21. sect. 27.

Matthew 12:7

Ver. 7. **But if ye had known what this meaneth,**

The passage of Scripture in Hos 6:6

I will have mercy, and not sacrifice;

of the sense of which, see Gill “Mt 9:13”

ye would not have condemned the guiltless.

Our Lord taxes the Pharisees both with ignorance of the Scriptures, in which they pretended to be very knowing, and took upon them to be the interpreters of; and with inhumanity, for condemning innocent persons, the apostles, for rubbing a few ears of corn, for the refreshment of nature; which they would never have done, had they understood the word, and will of God; who prefers acts of humanity, compassion, and mercy, to the observance of rites and ceremonies; or had they the common affections of human nature, and those bowels of compassion which one man ought to show to another.

Matthew 12:8

Ver. 8. **For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.**

By “the Son of man” is meant, not any man, as some have thought; for no mere man is lord of any law, moral or ritual, natural or positive; or has a power of disposing of it, and dispensing with it at pleasure; but Christ himself; which is the constant sense of this phrase in the New Testament, and is a character of the Messiah in the old, Da 7:13 who, as he was the institutor of the sabbath among the Jews, that being a ritual, and of mere positive institution, could dispense with it, and even abrogate it at his pleasure. The Jews so far agree to this, that he that commanded the law of the sabbath, could dispense with it; they say⁷¹⁹, that

“the day on which Jericho was taken was the sabbath day; and that though they slew and burnt on the sabbath day, מִי שֶׁהָיָה לְהַשְׁבֵּת נָה לְחַלֵּל שַׁבָּת, “he that commanded the observation of the sabbath, commanded the profanation of it”.

And since Christ is greater than the temple, and has all the perfections of the divine nature in him, is equal to the Father in power and glory; and even as mediator, has all power in heaven and earth given him; so as he is Lord of all other things, he is of the sabbath, and has a power of dispensing with it, and even of abolishing it; see Col 2:16 and since the Lord of the sabbath had a power of dispensing with it, and made use of it in the cases of David and his men, and of the priests in the temple formerly; the Pharisees ought not to think it strange,

⁷¹⁹ R. David Kimchi in Josh. vi. 11.

that the Son of man, who is equally Lord of the sabbath, dispensed with it in his disciples now.

Matthew 12:9

Ver. 9. **And when he was departed thence,**

From the corn fields, where the disciples had plucked the ears of corn, and this conversation passed between Christ and the Pharisees about the violation of the sabbath, he went into their synagogue; not on the same sabbath day, as one might be led to conclude from the account of this evangelist, but on another sabbath, as Luke expresses it, Luke 6:6. He might indeed directly go into one of their synagogues the same day, where he and his disciples seem to have been going, and stay in the city the week following; and then, as it is said in Mark 3:1 he entered again into the synagogue; not being afraid of the Pharisees, who sought an advantage against him; nor deterred by them from doing good to men; and willing to take another opportunity of exposing their ignorance and malice.

Matthew 12:10

Ver. 10. **And behold, there was a man which had his hand withered,**

Or dry; the juices were dried up, the nerves and sinews contracted, so that it was of no manner of use to him: Luke says, it was his right hand, which was so much the worse; and means not only his hand, but the whole arm. Such a case is mentioned in the Talmud ⁷²⁰, "it happened to one, שיבשה זרונה", that his arm was dry, or withered. Jerom says ⁷²¹, in the Gospel which the Nazarenes and Hebionites used, this man is said to be a plasterer, and so might possibly come by his misfortune through his business; and being a man that got his bread by his hand labour, the case was the more affecting. This account is introduced with a "behold!" it being remarkable that such a case should offer so opportunely, of showing his divine power in healing such a disorder; and of his authority, as the Son of man, over the sabbath; and of putting to silence his enemies, the Pharisees: and who, upon seeing such an object, put the following question to him;

and they asked him, saying, is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?

and which was put, not for information sake, as willing to be instructed in this point; for their determinations were, that healing was not lawful on such a day; nor were any means to be made use of for that purpose: if a

man received a cure accidentally, it was very well; but no methods were to be taken with intention: as for instance ⁷²²,

"if a man had an ailment in his throat, he might not gargle it with oil, but he might swallow a large quantity of oil, ואמ' נהרפא נהרפא "and "if he was healed, he was healed" (i.e. it was very well, it was no breach of the sabbath); they may not chew mastic, nor rub the teeth with spice, on the sabbath day, hawprl Nywktmv Nmzb, "when it is intended "for healing"; but if it is intended for the savour of his mouth, it is free."

There are several things they allowed might be done on the sabbath; but then they did not reckon them to come under the notion of healing.

"Three ⁷²³ things R. Ishmael bar Jose said he had heard from R. Matthia ben Charash; they might let blood for the stranguary on the sabbath day; one that was bit by a mad dog, they might give him hog's liver to eat; and he that had an ailment in his mouth, they might put spice to it on the sabbath day: but the wise men say of these, that there is not in them hawpr Mwvm, anything of medicine."

Indeed, in case of extreme danger of life they did admit of the use of medicine, by the prescription of a physician ⁷²⁴.

"Danger of life drives away the sabbath; wherefore, if there is any danger in a sick person, it is lawful to kindle a fire for him, &c. and they may kill, and bake, and boil: and though there may be no apparent danger, only a doubt of danger; as when one physician says there is a necessity, and another physician says there is none, they may profane the sabbath for him."

Hence it is very clear with what view the Pharisees asked Christ this question; and that it was, as the evangelist says, that they might accuse him: either of cruelty and weakness, should he answer in the negative, that either he was not able to heal the poor man before him, or wanted compassion; or should he answer in the affirmative, as they expected, and act upon it, then

⁷²² Maimon. Hilchot Sabbat, c. 21. sect. 24.

⁷²³ T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 84. 1. Vid. Misn. Yoma, e. 8. sect. 7.

⁷²⁴ Kotsensis Mitzvot Tora pr. neg. 65. Maimon. in Misn. Sabbat, c. 18. sect. 3

⁷²⁰ T. Hieros. Yoma, fol. 40. 1.

⁷²¹ In loc.

they might have wherewith to charge him before the sanhedrim as a violator of the sabbath, and of their canons concerning it.

Matthew 12:11

Ver. 11. **And he said unto them,**

Well knowing their intentions, and also their usages and customs, which he was able to produce and object to them; in which, through covetousness, they showed more regard to their beasts, than they did humanity to their fellow creatures:

what man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?

Christ appeals to them in a case which was usually done among them, and which, without delay, no man would scruple to do; though their present rule of direction, in such a case, is this ⁷²⁵:

“if a beast fall into a ditch, or a pool of water, if food can be given it, where it is, they feed it till the going out of the sabbath; but if not, bolsters and pillows may be brought, and put under it, and if it can come out: it may come out:”

and which is elsewhere ⁷²⁶ a little differently expressed;

“if a beast fall into a ditch, or pool of water, it is forbidden a man to bring it out with his hand; but if he can give it food where it is, it may be fed till the going out of the sabbath:”

which seems to have been made since the times of Christ, and in opposition to this observation of his.

Matthew 12:12

Ver. 12. **How much then is a man better than a sheep?**

As a rational creature must be better, and more excellent, than an irrational one, more care is to be taken of, and more mercy shown unto, the one, than the other: even the health of a man is preferable to the life of a beast; and if it is lawful to give food to a beast, and make use of means for its relief, and for the lifting it up out of a ditch, when fallen into it on the sabbath day, “wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days”, to men; to do acts of beneficence and humanity to them, among which must be reckoned healing of diseases and infirmities: and particularly, if it is lawful to take a sheep out of a ditch on the sabbath day, it must be right to restore to a man the use of his hand on such a day; and especially to one

that gets his bread by his hand labour, as it is very likely this man did. This was such a strong way of arguing, that the Jews could not well object to it; and it appears, that they were confounded and put to silence; for, as Mark observes, “they held their peace”: and indeed they allow of everything to be done where life is in danger, though not otherwise: they say ⁷²⁷,

“they may take care of the preservation of life on the sabbath; and if he is prepared for it, lo! this is praiseworthy, and there is no need to take a licence from the sanhedrim: as when a man sees a child fallen into the sea, he may spread a net, and bring him out; and if he is prepared for it, lo! this is praiseworthy, and there is no need to take a licence from the sanhedrim, though he was fishing: if he sees a child fallen into a ditch, he may rake into the mud and bring him out; and if he is prepared for it, lo! this is praiseworthy, and there is no need to take a licence from the sanhedrim, though he had set a ladder ready.”

It is said of Hillel ⁷²⁸, that

“he sat by a window to hear the words of the living God, from the mouth of Shemaia and Abtalion; and they say that that day was the evening of the sabbath, and the winter solstice, and the snow descended from heaven; and when the pillar of the morning ascended, (when it was daylight,) Shemaia said to Abtalion, brother Abtalion, all other days the house is light, but today it is dark, perhaps it is a cloudy day: they lift up their eyes, and saw the form of a man at the window; they went up, and found upon him snow the height of three cubits; they broke through and delivered him; and they washed him, and anointed him, and set him over against his dwelling, and said, very worthy is this man *להלל לוי את שבת*, “to profane the sabbath for him”.

And if it was lawful to dig a man out of the snow, and do these several things for him on the sabbath day, why not cure a man of a withered hand, and especially when done by a word speaking, and without any labour?

Matthew 12:13

Ver. 13. **Then saith he to the man,**

That is, after he had looked round about upon them, to observe their countenances; and what answer they

⁷²⁵ Maimon. Hilchot Sabbat, c. 25. sect. 26.

⁷²⁶ Kotsensis Mitzvot Tora pr. neg. 65.

⁷²⁷ T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 84. 2..

⁷²⁸ T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 35. 2

would make to his arguments; and with anger for their inhumanity and cruelty; being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, i.e. their unmercifulness to their fellow creatures, and the stupidity and blindness of their minds, being ignorant of the Scriptures, and of the sabbath, the nature, use, and Lord of it; which things are observed by the Evangelist Mark; then, in a commanding authoritative way, almighty power going along with his word, he says to the man who stood forth before him, and the Pharisees,

stretch forth thine hand,

which was before contracted and shrivelled up;

and he stretched it forth

with all the ease imaginable, and was, not only able to do this, but to make use of it any way;

for it was restored whole like as the other;

his left hand, which had never been damaged. This was an instance of Christ's power; a proof of the lawfulness of healing on the sabbath day; and a rebuke to the Pharisees for their cruelty and uncharitableness. This man was an emblem of the inability of men to do anything that is spiritually good, and of the power and efficacy of divine grace to enable persons to stretch out their hands, and do things which they of themselves are not equal to.

Matthew 12:14

Ver. 14. **Then the Pharisees went out,**

Of the synagogue, being, as Luke says, filled with madness, at the unanswerableness of his arguments; and because of the violation of the sabbath, as they thought; and most of all, because of the miracle wrought by him; and which was so glaringly a proof of his being Lord of the sabbath, and could not fail of creating him esteem among the people: and held a council against him, how they might destroy him. Mark says, the council was held by them with the Herodians; of whom, See Gill on "Mt 22:16" who, though they differed from them both in religion and politics, yet might be thought very proper persons to advise with about this matter; and especially, as they might have a greater interest at court, than they had. Nor did they scruple to enter into such a consultation, though on the sabbath day, and about the taking away of the life of an innocent person; which shows what scared consciences, and hard hearts they had, and how full of hypocrisy they were.

Matthew 12:15

Ver. 15. **But when Jesus knew it,**

Their consultation against him, as he did, not by any

discovery made to him by men, but as the omniscient God; he withdrew himself from thence; from the synagogue and city, where he was, to the sea of Galilee, and his disciples with him, as Mark observes; not through fear, but because his time was not yet come, that he must suffer and die for his people; he had some other work to do first, and therefore rightly and wisely provides for his safety. And great multitudes followed him; from Galilee, Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and from beyond Jordan; and were joined by another multitude of people, who came from about Tyre and Sidon, as Mark relates: so that his departure was not so very private; nor was he forsaken by the common people, though the Pharisees were so offended with him. And he healed them all; that stood in need of healing, as many as had plagues and unclean spirits; practising agreeably to his doctrine, that it was lawful to do good on the sabbath day, and to heal the bodies as well as the souls of men.

Matthew 12:16

Ver. 16. **And charged them that they should not make him known.**

This charge was given, either to the multitude that followed him, and were healed by him, that when they returned to the respective places from whence they came, they would not make it known to his enemies where he was, and what he had done to them; being neither desirous of popular applause and glory, nor willing to provoke them more, nor to fall into their hands as yet; or else, as Mark seems to intimate, to the unclean spirits, that they would not declare who he was, the Son of God, they confessed him to be: and very likely it was given to both, and that they should neither tell where he was, nor who he was; and this charge was a very severe one; for the word signifies a charge with threatenings, should they not observe his orders.

Matthew 12:17

Ver. 17. **That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying.** Isa 42:1

not that Christ gave the above charge with this view, that this passage in Isaiah might have its accomplishment: but this is an observation of the evangelist, that what was now done by Christ, by his private departure from the Pharisees, being unwilling to irritate them more; by his preaching to the Idumeans, Tyrians, and Sidonians; by healing their diseases, and shunning all ostentation and popular applause; and prohibiting to tell who and where he was, was a fulfilling of this prophecy; in which the Holy Spirit foreknowing the disposition and actions of

Christ, predicted them: which, when considered, must be looked upon as a very large proof of the truth of his being the Messiah. For that this prophecy belongs to the Messiah, is owned by the Jews themselves ⁷²⁹.

Matthew 12:18

Ver. 18. **Behold, my servant whom I have chosen,**

These are the words of God the Father, speaking to the church, concerning Christ, as mediator; who, as such, is God's servant, employed by him, and obedient to him, in the work of man's salvation; and is a righteous, faithful, prudent, and diligent one; whom he, from all eternity, had chosen to this service, and in the fulness of time sent him to do it, and supported and upheld him in it; for it is whom I uphold, in the Hebrew text. My beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased; who always was the object of his love, not only as his own and only begotten Son, but as in his office capacity, as mediator; in regard to which he was his elect, as it is in Isaiah; and, as such, he was always delighted in his person, well pleased with his office, and the discharge of it, and which he declared more than once by a voice from heaven, as at his baptism, and at his transfiguration on the mount: I will put my Spirit upon him; as he did without measure, whereby he was abundantly qualified for his whole work, and particularly for preaching the Gospel, being richly anointed with gifts and graces, above his fellows; of which the descent of the Holy Spirit upon him, as a dove at his baptism, which immediately preceded his public ministry, was a symbol. And he shall show judgment unto the Gentiles; meaning, not the general judgment, at the last day, which is committed to him; nor the laws of Justice and equity; but the Gospel, which is the produce of the God of judgment; best informs the judgment of men about the business of salvation; gives an account of the righteous procedure of God in justifying sinners, by the righteousness of his Son; and teaches men to live soberly, righteously, and godly: this Christ brought forth, and showed, at this time, to the Heathens, the Idumeans, Tyrians, and Sidonians; who flocked unto him; whereby this part of the prophecy had its fulfilment: in the Hebrew it is, "he shall bring forth"; that is, out of his heart and mouth, and is the same as "show" here.

Matthew 12:19

Ver. 19. **He shall not strive,**

Or contend in a wrangling way, as the disputers of

this world do about words to no profit, and for the sake of victory only, and popular applause, but shall choose rather to withdraw, than to carry on a controversy to a great length, to little purpose; or, as men litigate a point in a court of judicature, where one is plaintiff, and the other defendant. In the Hebrew text it is, "he shall not cry"; he shall not act the part of a plaintiff; he shall not complain, or bring in any charge, or accusation against any, but choose rather to suffer wrong, than to contend: thus *hqu* signifies such a cry, as is a complaint of injustice, Isa 5:7 and *qewu* a plaintiff, one that brings an action against another ⁷³⁰: but Christ did not so, he would not accuse to the Father, nor complain against his most implacable enemies, but left that to Moses, in whom they trusted; "nor cry", or, as in the Hebrew text, lift up; that is, his voice, in a clamorous way, using reviling and opprobrious language, or menaces and threatenings; but, on the contrary, he silently put up all abuses, and patiently bore every affront, and behaved peaceably, quietly, committing himself and cause to a righteous God.

Neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets;

or, as in the Hebrew text, "nor cause his voice to be heard in the street": the sense is the same, and the meaning is, that he sought not worldly honour, popular applause, and to be seen of men; he did nothing in an ostentatious way, said nothing in his own commendation, was never heard to praise himself, and chose that others should be silent concerning him: for this does not so much regard the lowness of his voice, as if that was not so sonorous as to be heard without doors, when he preached within, as his modest mein and suitable deportment; nor the places where he usually ministered, which was sometimes in the street, as well as in an house, or on a mountain, or by the sea side, or in the temple, and the synagogues. The Ethiopic version here is very wrong, "no man shall hear his voice in the synagogues"; for his voice was often heard there.

Matthew 12:20

Ver. 20. **A bruised reed shall he not break,**

Various are the thoughts of interpreters, about what is meant by this, and by

the smoking flax shall he not quench.

Some think the Scribes and Pharisees are designed, whose power Christ could easily crush, and their wrath and fury restrain, but would not, till the time of his vengeance was come. Others that the publicans and

⁷²⁹ Targum & Kimchi in loc. Abarbinel Mashmia Jeshua, fol. 9. 1, 2. & 10. 1, 2. & 21. 2. & in Is. fol 64. 3, 4. R. Isaac Chizzuk Emuna, p. 299.

⁷³⁰ Vid. Cocc. Heb. Lex. in rad. *qewu*.

sinner are intended, of whose conversion and salvation there were more hope than of the Scribes and Pharisees; and which Christ greatly sought after, and therefore cherished and encouraged them in his ministry and conversation. Some are of opinion, that such who have fallen into sin, and are under great decays of grace, are meant, whom Christ has compassion on, succours, and restores: but rather young converts, such as are under first awakenings, are here pointed at; who, like to a “bruised reed”, or “broken” one, one that is in some measure broke, near being broken to pieces, are wounded in their spirits, have their hearts broken and contrite, under a sense of their sinfulness, vileness, weakness, and unworthiness; whom Christ is so far from breaking and destroying, that he binds up their broken hearts, heals their wounds, and restores comforts to them: and who are like to “smoking flax”, or, as the Syriac reads it, *שְׂרָנָא דְמַטְפָּט* “a smoking lamp”; to which the Arabic and Persic versions agree; meaning the wick of the lamp, which being just lighted, seems ready to go out, having scarce any light, only a little fire in it, which makes it smoke: so these have but little light of knowledge, faith, and comfort, and a great deal of darkness and infirmity; only there is some warmth in their affections, which go upwards “like pillars of smoke, perfumed with frankincense”; and such Christ is so far from neglecting, and putting out, that he blows up the sparks of grace into a flame, and never utterly leaves the work,

till he sends forth judgment into victory;

that is, till he sends forth the Gospel into their hearts, accompanied with his mighty power, in the light and comfort of it; which informs their judgments, enlightens their understandings, bows their wills, raises their affections, sanctifies their souls, works effectually in them, under the influence of his Spirit and grace, to the carrying on of the work of grace in them to the end; and making them victorious over all their enemies, and more than conquerors, through him that has loved them. The Targum of Jonathan paraphrases the words thus;

”the meek, who are as a bruised reed, he will not break; and the poor, who are as an obscure lamp, he will not quench.”

Matthew 12:21

Ver. 21. **And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.**

The former part of the text is omitted, “he shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth”; but is inserted in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel; and which some understand of the bruised reed, and

smoking flax, and others of Christ; the latter sense is to be preferred. The passage, here cited, is somewhat different in Isaiah: for there it is, “and the isles shall wait for his law”; but the difference, at least, in sense, is not so great as it may appear at first sight: for, *אִיִּים*, as Grotius observes, does not always signify “islands”, but nations, and countries, that are upon the continent, Ge 10:5 and so might be rightly rendered here, the Gentiles, or “nations”; and by “the name” of Christ is meant his Gospel: see Ac 9:15 which Isaiah calls his “law”: that is, his doctrine, the doctrine of righteousness, life, and salvation by him, which is the ground and foundation of hope, and trust in him; and they that wait for it, may be truly said to hope, or trust in it. This began to have its accomplishment in the Idumeans, Tyrians, and Sidonians, now attending on the ministry of Christ; and has had a greater accomplishment since: the Gospel having been preached in the Gentile world, both upon the main land, and in the isles afar off; whereby multitudes have been brought to hope, and believe in Christ, as their Saviour and Redeemer.

Matthew 12:22

Ver. 22. **Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil,**

About this time, or some little time after, when he was returned from the sea of Galilee, and was come into a certain house; see Mark 3:19 some persons brought him a demoniac, in compassion to the possessed man, and being persuaded of the power of Christ to heal him by the late cures he had performed. A like instance we have in Mt 9:32, which had a like effect upon the people, and cavilled at by the Pharisees in much the same way; and which cavils were answered in much the same words; and yet the case is not the same; for that man was only dumb, but this both

blind and dumb;

not by birth, or through the defect of nature, or by any natural distemper that had attended him, but through the malice of Satan, by divine permission; his blindness, and dumbness, were the effects of his being possessed with a devil, who had deprived him of his sight, and speech. The word rendered “dumb”, signifies both deaf and dumb, and answers to the Hebrew word *קָרָא* which sometimes⁷³¹ is used of a deaf man only, who can speak, but not hear; and often of one that can neither speak, nor hear; which is the case of such as are born deaf: it seems as if this man could hear, though he could not speak;

731 Maimon. & Bartenora in Misn. Trumot, c. 1. sect. 2.

since no mention is made of his want of hearing, or of Christ's restoring it to him; for it follows,

and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb, both spake and saw.

This he did, not by making use of medicines, but by a word speaking, dispossessing Satan; so that the cause of blindness and dumbness being removed, the effects ceased, and the man was restored to his sight, and speech, as before. He had his sight to behold his Saviour, and a tongue to praise his name: so when men are turned from Satan unto God, and are delivered from his thralldom and bondage, they are brought into marvellous light, and put into a capacity of showing forth the praises of God.

Matthew 12:23

Ver. 23. **And all the people were amazed,**

At the cure; it was such an instance of divine power, and so glaring a proof, that the person who wrought it was more than a man, and must be the Messiah. This is to be understood of the greater part of the people, not of every individual, and of the common people only; for it had a different effect upon the Pharisees, as hereafter appears; but in these it not only produced admiration, but conviction, faith, and confession:

and said, is not this the son of David?

or the Messiah; for בן דוד, "the son of David", is a character of the Messiah, well known among the Jews; See Gill "Mt 1:1" because he was promised to David, was to be raised up of his seed, and to spring from his loins. This question they put, not as doubting of it, but as inclining, at least, to believe it, if not as expressing their certainty of it: and is, as if they had said, who can this person be but the true Messiah, that has wrought such a miracle as this? for from his miracles they rightly concluded who he was; though the Jews since, in order to deprive Jesus of this true characteristic of the Messiah, deny that miracles are to be performed by him ⁷³².

Matthew 12:24

Ver. 24. **But when the Pharisees heard it,**

Very probably not the same that went out, and held a council against Christ to destroy him, Mt 12:14 but others that were come from Judea and Jerusalem, and were with him in the house, and saw the miracle: these, when they heard what the people said, and how ready they were to believe, and own Jesus to be the Messiah, in order to prevent it, being filled with envy and malice,

they said, this fellow doth not cast out devils but by

Beelzebub, the prince of devils.

They could not deny the miracle, or that it was one; but to deprive him of the glory of it, and even reproach him for it, and to bring him into contempt with the people, they not only speak of him in a scornful manner, שׂה, "this" sorry man, "this" vile fellow; but ascribe the miracle he wrought to familiarity with the devil, to diabolical influence and skill in magic art: they pretended he was in confederacy with Satan, and was carrying on his interest: and therefore, that he might gain credit and reputation, the prince of devils suffered the inferior ones to remove at his word: and of these their ancestors, the Jews have learnt to fix this vile imputation, and blasphemous piece of slander upon Christ; who, they say ⁷³³, brought enchantments, or witchcrafts, out of Egypt, in the cuttings of his flesh, whereby he performed the things he did. Concerning Beelzebub, See Gill "Mt 10:25" here called "the prince of devils"; it being a prevailing notion among the Jews, that there is one devil who is the head of all the rest, and who is by them sometimes called Asmodeus: they say ⁷³⁴, when Solomon sinned against the Lord, he sent to him אשמודאימלכא דשדרי, "Asmodeus the king of the devils", and drove him from his throne, and so elsewhere ⁷³⁵: and sometimes Samael, who is styled ⁷³⁶ Samael the prince, מלכא דשדרי, "the king of devils"; and the angel Samael, the wicked, ראש כל השטנים, "the head of all the Satans", or devils ⁷³⁷: and we often read ⁷³⁸ of שר הגיהנום "the prince of hell"; by whom the same is meant, as here, by Beelzebub; for if anyone devil is more wicked, odious, and execrable than the rest, the chief of them may be thought to be so; for which reason he is here mentioned.

Matthew 12:25

Ver. 25. **And Jesus knew their thoughts,....** He not only heard their blasphemous words, but was privy to their secret thoughts; he knew their vile malicious intentions and designs, with what view they expressed themselves in this manner, on purpose to reproach him, and set the people against him, contrary to the inward

⁷³³ T. Hieros. Sabbat, fol. 13. 4. T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 104.

2.

⁷³⁴ Targum in Eccl. i. 12.

⁷³⁵ T. Bab. Pesach, fol. 110. 1. Gittin, fol. 68. 1. & Raziël, fol. 41. 2.

⁷³⁶ Zohar in Deut. fol. 120. 3.

⁷³⁷ Debarim Rabba, fol. 245. 3.

⁷³⁸ T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 52. 1. Imre Binah in Zohar in Gen. fol. 22. 3.

⁷³² Maimon. Hilch. Melacim, c. 11. sect. 3.

light of their minds, and dictates of their consciences; who must, and did know the contrary of what they said: and regarding the inward frame of their minds, as well as their words, and which is a proof of his omniscience, and so of his deity, and consequently of his Messiahship, **said unto them** the following parables, as Mark calls them, Mark 3:23 or proverbial expressions: **every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation**; a government, in which there is a disagreement between the chiefs of it, and the body of the people, or where one part is opposed to the other, or in which a civil and intestine war is begun and prosecuted, cannot continue in any comfortable situation, and flourishing state, but must come to nothing: this is a maxim that has been so often fatally verified, that no one will doubt the truth of it; and the same holds true of lesser communities, of cities, and families: and every city, or house, divided against itself, shall not stand. If citizens fall out with their magistrates, or one with another, and turn out, and disfranchise each other; and if the heads of families, and the respective branches thereof, quarrel with, and divide from one another, a dissolution of the whole must ensue; and the same may be said of the kingdom and government of Satan. These, it is very likely, were common sayings among the Jews, and they might be very easily understood by them; and are very appropriately produced by Christ to illustrate the present case, and confute the vile and blasphemous suggestions of the Pharisees: a proverbial expression, much like to these, is to be read in the writings of the Jews, *בו מחלוקת ופּו ליחרב כל בית שיש* "every house, in which there is a division, at the end shall come to desolation"⁷³⁹

Matthew 12:26

Ver. 26. **And if Satan cast out Satan,**

That is, if Satan, the same with Beelzebub, casts out the rest of the Satans, or other devils, of which he is the prince and head,

he is divided against himself;

he acts contrary to his own interest, which is to keep possession of the bodies and souls of men; and consequently it must, in course, be subversive of his power and dominion:

how shall then his kingdom stand?

he will never be able to maintain his authority, and keep up the show of a government, as he does: for these words suggest, that there is a form of government among

the devils, who are united in one body, under one head; and whose unity and concord are their greatest strength, as in all other governments. Our Lord's argument, and which is his first, for others follow, is, that since Satan, who is so cunning and crafty, can never be thought to act such an opposite part to himself, subversive of his kingdom and government; and which would give so much credit to Christ, and serve so much to strengthen his interest, as to assist him in the casting out of devils; the weakness, and maliciousness of such a suggestion, must be clear and evident to all.

Matthew 12:27

Ver. 27. **And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils,**

As the Pharisees asserted, and would have the people believe; for this is not allowed, only for argument sake supposed:

by whom do your children cast them out?

meaning not the apostles and disciples of Christ, the children of the Jews, to whom Christ gave power of casting out devils, and who had exercised it in his name; and therefore argues, if they in his name cast out devils, why could he not do it himself, without the help of Satan? wherefore these would be judges against them: but, no doubt, the Pharisees had no better opinion of the disciples, and of their ejection of devils, than of Christ; wherefore, it is not likely, that our Lord should argue with them from hence: but rather, he means, some among themselves, who pretended to have a power of exorcising and ejecting of devils, either in the name of Jesus, as some of them did, Mark 9:38 or in the name of their kings, righteous men, prophets and patriarchs, as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ⁷⁴⁰; and which practice, perhaps, they took up and made pretensions to, in imitation of Christ and his apostles; so as Christ healed men possessed of devils, they also affected to do the same. A story is reported ⁷⁴¹

"concerning Ben Talmion, that a miracle was wrought by R. Eleazar bar Jose, who healed a king's daughter at Rome, in whose body the devil entered, whose name was Ben Talmion; and they brought him (the Jew) to the king's treasury, to take what he would, but he would take nothing from thence, but letters, in which were written the decrees they had decreed against Israel; and when he found them, he tore them to pieces, and

⁷⁴⁰ Justin Martyr, adv. Tryphon. p. 311.

⁷⁴¹ In Gloss. in T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 57. 1. Meilah, fol. 17. 2.

⁷³⁹ Derech Eretz, c. 5.

there he saw the vessels of the house of the sanctuary, in the treasury.”

Now since the Jews pretended to do these things, Christ asks them, by whom they cast out devils? Whether by the Spirit of God, or by Beelzebub? They would doubtless say by the former, and not the latter, which would show their great partiality; for admitting that the like actions were done by them, as by him, why not by the same power? Why should their ejection of devils be ascribed to God, and his to Beelzebub?

Therefore they shall be your judges;

who will rise up against you, and condemn you one day, for this unequal judgment you now pass; and which was just the reverse of the true state of the case: for he cast out devils by the Spirit of God, which they imputed to the assistance of Beelzebub; their children cast out devils, or pretended to do so, and it was by the help of Satan; and yet they ascribed it to a divine power, even though they made use of the name of Satan, under that of Beelzebub, or Asmodeus, their exorcising, of which take the following form ⁷⁴². “By the authority of the glorious and fearful name, I adjure thee Asmodeus, “king of the devils”, and all thy company, &c. that ye hurt not, nor put in fear, nor trouble such an one, the son of such an one, but that ye help him, and sustain him (or deliver him) out of every distress and anguish, and from every evil thing, and from all diseases, that enter into the two hundred and forty eight members, &c.”

Matthew 12:28

Ver. 28. **But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God,**

As it was certain he did, from the nature, use, and design of such miracles; and it could not be reasonably thought, that Satan would assist in what was so very opposite to his kingdom and interest, and was so serviceable to the cause and glory of Christ. All the three persons had an hand in the miracles of the Messiah; they were done by Christ, in his Father’s name, and by the power of the Spirit of God; from which the following inference may be justly deduced,

then the kingdom of God is come unto you:

meaning, either the Messiah himself; or rather, his kingdom, the Gospel dispensation, which both Christ and John had declared to be at hand; of which the performing of miracles, particularly the casting out of devils, whereby the kingdom of Satan was so much weakened, was a clear proof.

Matthew 12:29

742 Raziell, fol. 41. 2.

Ver. 29. **Or else, how can anyone enter into a strong man’s house,**

This is another argument of Christ’s proving that his casting out of devils could not be by Satan, but by the Spirit of God; for if he did not act by any superior power to Satan’s, and such by which he was able to master, overcome, and bind him, he could never

spoil his goods,

as he did; or dispossess devils out of the bodies or souls of men: just as if a man should enter into another man’s house, who is strong and robust, with a design to spoil his goods, who would never make use of the man himself to do it, and can never be thought to effect it, unless he has a power superior to his, and uses it;

except he first bind the strong man, and then he will spoil his house:

by the “strong man”, is meant the devil, see Isa 49:24 who is powerful and mighty, as appears from his nature, being an angel, though a fallen one, excelling in strength human creatures; from his names, such as the roaring lion, the great red dragon, leviathan, &c. from the extent of his dominion, here called “his house”; which reaches to the whole posse of devils, and world of men; whence he is called the prince of the power of the air, and the prince of this world, and the god of it; and from his works and actions, in and over the bodies and estates of men, by divine permission; which might be exemplified in the case of Job, and the demoniacs in the time of Christ; and in and over the souls of men, not only over wicked men, but men under a show of religion, as antichrist and his followers; yea, saints themselves, and even over Adam in a state of innocence; but Christ is stronger than he, and attacked him, and dispossessed him of the bodies of men; and restraining him from doing them any hurt, enters into the souls of men, dethrone him, and leads him captive, who led others; and keeps him from doing them any damage; as he will in the latter day “bind” him and shut him up in prison a thousand years; and also “spoils his goods”; or “vessels”, and “his house”; the palace of Satan, by taking bodies and souls out of his possession; by awakening the conscience, enlightening the mind, working upon the affections, subduing the will, and implanting principles of grace and holiness in the heart; and so making it a fit habitation for God, which spoils it for the devil: in all which, Satan can never be thought to have any hand; and therefore the suggestion that Christ casts out devils by his assistance, even out of the bodies of men, has no show of reason in it.

Matthew 12:30

Ver. 30. **He that is not with me, is against me,**

These words chiefly refer to Satan, and are a further proof, that Christ did not cast out devils by him; since they two are as much opposites, as can possibly be; Satan is not on the side of Christ, but an adversary to him; there is an original, and implacable enmity, between the serpent and the seed of the woman; there is an open war between them, and therefore one cannot be thought to lend assistance to the other. They were concerned in different things, had different views and interests, and so took different methods;

and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth:

Christ is the good shepherd, that gathers his sheep to himself, and into his fold, by the external ministry of the word, and internal efficacy of his grace; Satan is the wolf, that catches and scatters the sheep, and seeks to kill and destroy them: and since there is such an open war proclaimed and carried on between Christ and the devil, none ought to be neutral; whoever is not on the side of Christ, is reckoned as an enemy; and whoever is not concerned by prayer or preaching, or other means to gather souls to his word and ordinances, and to his church, and to himself, is deemed by him a scatterer of them.

Matthew 12:31

Ver. 31. **Wherefore I say unto you,**

This shows, that what follows is occasioned by what the Pharisees had said, concerning the miracles of Christ; imputing them to diabolical influence and assistance, when they were done by the Spirit of God, of which they themselves were conscious;

all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven

unto men: not unto all men, for there are some, who, as they are never truly convinced of sin, and brought to repentance for it, so they never have the remission of it; but to such to whom God of his free grace has promised, and for whom he has provided this blessing, in the covenant of his grace; for whom the blood of Christ was shed, for the remission of their sins; and who, by the Spirit of God, are made sensible of them, and have repentance unto life given them, and faith in Christ, by which they receive the forgiveness of them: the sense is, that all kind of sin, whether committed more immediately against God, or man, the first or second table of the law, or against any of the divine precepts; be they sins small or great, secret or open, sins of heart, lip, or life, or attended with whatsoever aggravating circumstances; and all kind

of blasphemy, or evil speaking of men, or of angels, or of the name of God, but what is hereafter excepted, there is forgiveness of in the grace of God, through the blood of Christ, even for all sorts of men and sinners whatever. The Jews have a saying ⁷⁴³, that God pardons all sins

“*קִין מִן הַזִּמְהָה*” “except lasciviousness”.

But this is not excepted by Christ, only what follows, **but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, shall not be forgiven unto men:**

by which is meant, not every ignorant denial of, and opposition to his deity and personality; nor all resistance of him in the external ministry of the word; nor every sin that is knowingly and wilfully committed; but it is a despiteful usage of the Spirit of grace, an opposing, contradicting, and denying the operations wrought, or doctrines revealed by him, against a man's own light and conscience, out of wilful and obstinate malice, on purpose to lessen the glory of God, and gratify his own lusts: such was the sin of the Scribes and Pharisees; who, though they knew the miracles of Christ were wrought by the Spirit of God, yet maliciously and obstinately imputed them to the devil, with a view to obscure the glory of Christ, and indulge their own wicked passions and resentments against him; which sin was unpardonable at that present time, as well as under that dispensation then to come, when the Spirit of God was poured down in a more plenteous manner.

Matthew 12:32

Ver. 32. **And whosoever speaketh a word against the son of man,**

By whom is meant, not any man, as Grotius thought, but the Lord Jesus Christ, so often called “the son of man”, on account of his human nature, in which he appeared in great meanness and obscurity. Now many might, through ignorance of him, thinking him to be a mere man, and taking up with common fame, speak evil of him, deny him to be the Messiah, reproach him for the meanness of his parentage and education, and for the freedom of his conversation with publicans and sinners; and do many things contrary to his name, as Saul, whilst a Pharisee did, and thought he ought to do; and yet be afterwards convinced of their mistakes, and be brought to a sense and acknowledgment of them, and obtain pardoning grace and mercy, as Saul did, though a blasphemer; and who is an instance of what is here promised,

it shall be forgiven him

through the grace of God, the blood and mediation

⁷⁴³ Tanchuma apud Buxtorf. Heb. Florileg. p. 126.

of Christ, under the application of the blessed Spirit.

But whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost,
in the sense before declared,
it shall not be forgiven him:

not because the Holy Ghost is greater than Christ; or for want of efficacy in the blood of Christ; or because God cannot pardon it; but because such persons wilfully, maliciously, and obstinately oppose the Spirit of God, without whom there can be no application of pardon made; and remain in hardness of heart, are given up to a reprobate mind, and die in impenitence and unbelief, and so there is no forgiveness for them, neither in this world, nor in the world to come; that is; they shall never be forgiven, see Mark 3:29. The distinction here used, does not refer to a common one among the Jews, of the Jewish state and the times of the Messiah; but to the present state of life, and that which will be after, or upon death: and it does not suppose there may be forgiveness of other sins, though not of this, in the other world; but strikes at a notion the Jews had, that there are some sins, which repentance and the day of atonement expiate in this life; but there are others, which repentance and the day of atonement do not expiate; and these a man's death expiates, or makes atonement for ⁷⁴⁴. The form of confession used by sick persons is the following ⁷⁴⁵;

"I confess before thee, O Lord our God, and the God of our fathers, that my cure is in thy hands, and my death is in thy hands; if it be thy good pleasure, heal me with a perfect healing; but if I die, תהא מיתתי ליהא, "let my death be for the pardon", forgiveness, and atonement of all the sins, iniquities, and transgressions, which I have sinned, acted perversely in, and transgressed before thee; and give me my portion in paradise, and justify me "in the world to come", which is hidden for the righteous."

But the sin against the Holy Ghost is such, as is not forgiven, neither before, nor at, nor after death, nor by it: all sins that are forgiven, are forgiven in this world, and that perfectly and at once; and all that are forgiven in this world, there will be a manifestation and declaration of the pardon of them in another; but such sins as are not forgiven here, there will be no declaration of the pardon of them hereafter. In short, the sense is, that the sin against the Holy Ghost never has forgiveness; it is

not pardoned now, and consequently there will be no declaration of the pardon of it hereafter. The Jews use the phrase in the same sense ⁷⁴⁶; a certain sick man said to his son,

"give me water, and such certain food; but if not, I will not "forgive thee, neither in this world, nor in the world to come".

"That is, I will never forgive thee.

Matthew 12:33

Ver. 33. **Either make the tree good, and his fruit good,**

That is, either assert them both good, or

else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt:

say they are both evil, for the contrary cannot be affirmed with any consistency and propriety: the matter is easy to be determined, **for the tree is known by his fruit;** fruit will discover what a tree is, and accordingly judgment may be made. No man will say a tree is good, and its fruit corrupt; or say, that a tree is corrupt, and its fruit good: these are glaring contradictions, and can never be reconciled. The case Christ here puts, is a very easy and familiar one, and is obvious to common sense: the application of it may be made, either to the foregoing instance of Christ's casting out devils, which the Jews ascribed to the help of Satan; and then the sense is, either say I am a good man, and do good works, or that I am an evil man, and do evil works: to say that I do good works, as the casting out of devils must be allowed to be, and yet am an evil man, and do this under satanical influence, is as great an inconsistency, as to say that a corrupt tree brings forth good fruit; either therefore condemn these miracles as evil actions, done by confederacy with Satan; or if you will allow them to be good ones, as you do, ascribe them to the Spirit of God; for these things may as easily be determined, as the cause by its effect, or as a tree is known by its fruit: or else this may be applied unto the Pharisees, who, though wicked men, pretended to do good works; and though they set up for men of religion and holiness, yet did evil things, as their words and actions testified; particularly the blasphemy just now uttered by them, charging the miracles of Christ as done by the assistance of the devil, which discovered the malignity and rottenness of their hearts: and the meaning of Christ is, that they would either both say, and do, that which is right and good; or relinquish their pretensions to the character of good and religious men: nothing can be concluded from

⁷⁴⁴ T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 86. 1.

⁷⁴⁵ Seder Tephillot, fol. 333. 2. Ed. Basil. Vid. T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 60. 1.

⁷⁴⁶ Sepher Chasidim: num. 234.

hence in favour of free will, or a power in the creature to make himself good; for the word “make”, here signifies to “say, affirm, assert”, and the like; see Joh 5:18. Though it may be fairly inferred from hence, that a man must first be a good man, ever he can perform good works, truly and properly so called; and that these are fruits and evidences of the inward real goodness of a man; which must be understood not of a few single actions, but of the common, constant series and course of life.

Matthew 12:34

Ver. 34. **O generation of vipers,**

Though they boasted of their being the seed of Abraham, yet their immediate ancestors were no other than vipers, deceitful, hurtful, poisonous creatures; and they were exactly like them: for though they made a fair show in the flesh, and outwardly appeared righteous, yet were inwardly full of the poison of wickedness, envy and malice; and which their pestilential breath, their blasphemy against the Spirit, fully discovered; and gave just cause and reason for so severe a reproof, and such resentment, as here made by Christ.

How can ye, being evil, speak good things?

This is not to be expected, nor is it commonly and constantly done; an evil man may sometimes speak good things, or which seem to be so; but these are not his common talk; as he is, so, for the most part, is his language; his speech betrays him: and since these men were by nature evil, were destitute of the Spirit and grace of God, had no good thing in them, how should any good thing come out of them? And since they were so full of wickedness, spite and malice, it is no wonder that they belched out such blasphemous expressions concerning the miracles of Christ;

for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh:

a phrase much like this is used by the Septuagint, in Ec 2:15. “I spoke abundance”, or “much in my heart”; *διοστο ο αφρων εκ περισευματαπωλαλει*, “for the fool out of his abundance speaketh”: as there is abundance of folly in him, there is much delivered out by him; and where there is abundance of wickedness in the heart, if the grace of God is wanting to restrain it, much of it will come out by the lips; as is a man’s heart, ordinarily is his language.

Matthew 12:35

Ver. 35. **A good man, out of the good treasure of the heart,**

“A good man”, is a regenerated man, one that is

renewed by the Spirit of God, a believer in Christ, a sincere lover of him, and one that follows him, wheresoever he goes, and who has the grace of God implanted in him: for “the good treasure the heart”, is not what he is naturally possessed of, but what is put into him: and is no other than the superabundant grace of God, or that grace for grace, which he has received out of Christ’s fulness, and the rich experience of it he is blessed with: and may well be called a “treasure”; for as a treasure is a collection of riches, so this consists of various graces, each of which is more precious than gold, silver, and precious stones; a “good” one, both from the quality and quantity of it; and “of the heart”, though this is left out in many copies, from the seat and subject of it; and out of this the gracious man **bringeth forth good things**; tells his experience, speaks of what God has done for his soul; says many things to the glory of the grace of God; of the person, offices, blood, righteousness, and fulness of Christ; and of the operations and influences of the blessed Spirit; and which are pleasant, profitable, useful, and edifying to the saints:

and an evil man, out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.

The “evil man”, is a man as he was born; who is wholly flesh, carnal, and in a state of nature; destitute of the Spirit, and having no principle of grace in him: “the evil treasure”, is the corruption of his nature, the desperate wickedness of his heart; and those swarms of lusts, and all manner of sin that dwell there; from whence are continually proceeding evil and corrupt communications, which not only defile himself, but others; and among the rest, not only vain words and unprofitable talk, but blasphemies against God, Christ, and the blessed Spirit; all which men will be accountable for another day.

Matthew 12:36

Ver. 36. **But I say unto you,**

This form of speaking is used, the more strongly to asseverate the truth of what is after said; and the rather, because men are apt to indulge a liberty with their tongues; fancying no great crime is committed, when only words are spoken, and no facts done;

that every idle word that a man shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

By an “idle word” is meant, what the Jews call, *קלה* “light conversation”, and *רבב בטל*, “vain discourse”, as the Hebrew Gospel of Munster reads it here; frothy language, unprofitable talk, which, though it does not

directly hurt God or man, yet is of no use to speaker or hearer; and yet even this, in the last general and awful judgment, if not forgiven, and repented of, must be accounted for; and much more such horrid blasphemies the Pharisees had vented against Christ, and the Spirit of Christ. The Jews ⁷⁴⁷ have a saying pretty much like this,

“That even לְ שִׁיחָה קְלָה, “for any light conversation”, which passes between a man and his wife, he shall “be brought to judgment””

Matthew 12:37

Ver. 37. **For by thy words thou shalt be justified,**

Theophylact seems to take these words to be a passage of Scripture cited by Christ, in proof of what he had said, but does not point to any; nor is any such Scripture to be found. They are rather proverbial expressions, in common use among the Jews; or refer to the usual methods of proceeding in courts of judicature, upon the acknowledgments and confessions of persons.

”Says Resh Lakish ⁷⁴⁸, such an one and such an one, they justify; and such an one and such an one, they condemn. R. Eliezer replies, נִזְדַּכְּהוּ פְּלוּנֵי, “by their words such an one and such an one are justified”.

”The gloss upon it is,

”upon hearing the difference there is between them, and between their words, they are justified.”

Our Lord’s meaning is, that not only works and actions, but words of all sorts, will come into account in the day of judgment, and will be evidences for, or against a man, to acquit or condemn him: **and by thy words thou shalt be condemned:** according to these, the sentence of justification, or of condemnation, will be pronounced; as these will appear to be evidences for, or against a man’s being in a state of grace and righteousness: thus for instance, a man that has spoken for Christ, and has freely confessed that all his hope of justification before God, and acceptance with him, is solely upon the account of the righteousness of Christ imputed; such a man will be declared a justified man according to the tenor of his own words: on the other hand, a man that has spoken hard speeches against Christ, and his righteousness; declaring he has no dependence on it, expects no justification by it; he will be convinced of these ungodly sayings, and out of his own mouth will be condemned. Some have

⁷⁴⁷ R. Jonah apud L. Capell. in loc.

⁷⁴⁸ T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 30. 1.

thought, that Christ here strikes at a notion which obtained among the Jews, that little or no account would be taken of a man’s words in the day of judgment; provided his life and actions were good, and regular; but whatever were the sentiments of the Pharisees, or of any of Christ’s present hearers, it is certain, that it is the opinion of Jewish writers, that words, as well as actions, will be accounted for hereafter: they say ⁷⁴⁹,

”When a man dies, he lifts up his eyes and sees two come to him, and write before him all that he has done in this world, וְכָל מַה דִּאֲפִיק מִן פּוּמִיָּה, “and all that has proceeded out of his mouth”, “and he gives an account for all”; וְיִהְיֶה דִּינָא לְ כָּלֵא, “and he gives an account for all”; and a little after, כָּל אִינוּן מוֹלִין, “all the words” of a man in this world, are prepared before him, and not one of them lost; and in the hour he goes to his grave, they are all set before him.”

Matthew 12:38

Ver. 38. **Then certain of the Scribes and Pharisees answered,**

Not the same that charged him with casting out devils, by the prince of devils; but others, that were present, as appears from Luke 11:16 and who do not take upon them to make a proper reply to what he had said, or return an answer to that, but address him on another account; being willing to divert the discourse, and try what they could do with him in another, and more gentle and crafty way; saying, master, not fellow, magician, Samaritan, thou that hast a devil, and casts out devils by Beelzebub, and art a devil, and Beelzebub himself; but doctor, teacher, allowing him, at least, in a flattering way, that he was an instructor of mankind, though they would not own him to be a prophet, unless he would give such signs, as would make it appear he was one; hence they say,

we would see a sign from thee:

that is, a sign from heaven, as they desired at another time, Mt 16:1 and, as Luke says, they did now, Luke 11:16 they had seen a sign from him on earth, in the cure of the man that had a withered hand; and another, in dispossessing the devil out of the man, that was blind and dumb; but these they looked upon rather as signs from hell, and done by confederacy with the devil; and therefore desire, or rather, in an imperious way, demand one from heaven, where they thought Satan had not such power, as on earth; and where there could not be such collusion and deception, as they wickedly

⁷⁴⁹ Zohar in Num. fol. 53. 2.

imagined were in this last action: they seem to require some such things to be done, as were on Mount Sinai, at the giving of the law, when there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud, and the voice of a trumpet, and some visible appearances of the divine majesty; and intimate, that if something of this kind was done, if there was any visible and miraculous appearance in the heavens, produced by him, they should believe him to be the prophet that was spoken of, and the true Messiah; but if not, should give no credit to him: however, this is to be learned from hence, that the Jews, in Christ's time, expected signs and wonders to be wrought by the Messiah, in proof of his being so, though now they reject them as needless ⁷⁵⁰.

Matthew 12:39

Ver. 39. **But he answered and said unto them,**

Not to the Pharisees, who were unworthy of an answer from him; having, in such an imperious manner, and with a sole view to tempt him, and after such miracles were wrought by him, required of him a sign from heaven; but to the multitude, the throng of people gathered thick together on this occasion, see Mt 12:45 he turns himself from the Scribes and Pharisees, to the common people, and says to them concerning the former, **an evil and adulterous generation;** not only in a spiritual sense, being degenerated from the faith, religion, and piety of their ancestors; but literally, which appeared not only in their polygamy, and frequent divorces on trivial occasions, but by criminal conversation with other women; see Joh 8:9 and this, with the Jews themselves, is a character of the generation in which the Messiah comes: for they say ⁷⁵¹,

”that just when the Messiah comes, or in the age the son of David comes, “impudence shall be increased”, corn and wine shall be dear, the government shall be heretics, בית וור יהיה לזנות, “and the synagogue shall become a brothel house”.

Their meaning is, that the chief magistrates should be Sadducees, and those that pretended to religion and holiness would be adulterers, which was now the case. Their writings ⁷⁵² frequently speak of the increase and abounding of adulteries, under the second temple, and about this time; which obliged Jochanan ben Zaccai and

the sanhedrim, to leave off the use of the bitter waters.

Seeketh after a sign;

this is perfectly Talmudic language, the language of the Jews ⁷⁵³.

”The disciples of R. Jose ben Kismai, asked him, when the Son of David came? He replied, I am afraid, lest תבקשו ממני אות, “ye should seek of me a sign”; they say unto him, we will not “seek of thee a sign”.

This the Jews sought of Christ, time after time; not content with one, sought another, though such wonderful ones were wrought, which most fully demonstrated him to be the Messiah; and therefore he would not indulge this temper in them; but declared, that

there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas.

Not that no miracles should afterwards be wrought amongst them; for, after this, many wondrous works were done by Christ; but no such signs should be given they desired, not one from heaven; but one particularly should be given them, out of the earth, and should be, not for their conviction, but condemnation; and would seem very much like that which was done to the prophet Jonas, or Jonah; for so is his name in the Hebrew language, the other being the Greek termination of it.

Matthew 12:40

Ver. 40. **For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly,**

Or “in the belly of a great fish”, as is said, Jon 1:17 for that it was a whale, is not there said, nor is it certain it was; nor from the smallness of its swallow, is it thought probable it should; nor does the word here used, necessarily imply one, but some large fish; nor are there whales in the Phoenician Sea: it might be a kind of a sea dog, called Carcharias, and sometimes Lamia, or Lamina, from its vast swallow; in which whole men; even in coats of mail, have been found. However, be it what it will, Jonas was three days and three nights in the belly of it; which agrees with the account in the above mentioned place, and is the sign Christ speaks of in the foregoing verse; and a very great sign and miracle it was, that being swallowed down by such a fish, he should remain in the belly of it three days and three nights, as one dead; for, without a miracle, he could not have lived an hour; and on the third day, as one raised from the dead, be cast out of it upon the dry land; which was a

⁷⁵⁰ Maimon. Hilch. Melachim. c. 11. sect. 3.

⁷⁵¹ Misn. Sota c. 9. sect. 15. T. Bab. Sanhed. fol. 97. 1.

⁷⁵² Misn. Sota, c. 9. sect. 9. & Maimon. Hilch. Sota, c. 3. sect. 19.

⁷⁵³ T. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 98. 1. so Nmyo vqbm, “seeketh a sign”, Shemot Rabba, Parash. 9. fol. 97. 2.

very eminent type of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, as appears by what follows. The Jews reckon up several wonders or miracles in this case of Jonah's; as that a fish was prepared to swallow him up, and he not drowned in the sea; and that this was prepared for him from the creation of the world; that he should be three days and three nights in the fish's belly, and be alive; and that he should retain his senses and his understanding, so as to be able to pray: they represent him also as if he was in the state of the dead ⁷⁵⁴, and that the fish itself was dead, and was quickened again. According to Josephus, after he had been carried 250 miles in the Hellespont of the Euxine Sea, he was cast ashore ⁷⁵⁵.

So shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

That Christ means himself by the "son of man", there is no reason to doubt; and his being laid in a tomb, dug out of a rock, is sufficient to answer this phrase, "the heart of the earth", in distinction from the surface of it; but some difficulty arises about the time of his continuing there, and the prediction here made agreeable to the type: for it was on the sixth day of the week, we commonly call "Friday", towards the close, on the day of the preparation for the sabbath, and when the sabbath drew on, that the body of Christ was laid in the sepulchre; where it lay all the next day, which was the sabbath of the Jews, and what we commonly call "Saturday"; and early on the first of the week, usually called "Sunday", or the Lord's day, he rose from the dead; so that he was but one whole day, and part of two, in the grave. To solve this difficulty, and set the matter in a clear light, let it be observed, that the three days and three nights, mean three natural days, consisting of day and night, or twenty four hours, and are what the Greeks call *ἀρμυραῖαι*, "night days"; but the Jews have no other way of expressing them, but as here; and with them it is a well known rule, and used on all occasions, as in the computation of their feasts and times of mourning, in the observance of the passover, circumcision, and divers purifications, that *היומן ככולו*, "a part of a day is as the whole" ⁷⁵⁶: and so, whatever was done before sun setting, or after, if but an hour, or ever so small a time, before or after it, it was reckoned

as the whole preceding, or following day; and whether this was in the night part, or day part of the night day, or natural day, it mattered not, it was accounted as the whole night day: by this rule, the case here is easily adjusted; Christ was laid in the grave towards the close of the sixth day, a little before sun setting, and this being a part of the night day preceding, is reckoned as the whole; he continued there the whole night day following, being the seventh day; and rose again early on the first day, which being after sun setting, though it might be even before sun rising, yet being a part of the night day following, is to be esteemed as the whole; and thus the son of man was to be, and was three days and three nights in the grave; and which was very easy to be understood by the Jews; and it is a question whether Jonas was longer in the belly of the fish.

Matthew 12:41

Ver. 41. **The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment,**

Alluding either to the custom and practice of witnesses, who rise up from their seats, and stand, when they give in their testimonies in a court of judicature; or else, referring to the time of the general resurrection from the dead, at the last day, when these men shall rise from the dead, and stand in judgment

with this generation;

shall rise when they do, and stand before the judgment seat together, and be against them,

and shall condemn them;

not as judges of them, but by their example and practices, which will be brought above board, and observed as an aggravation of the guilt and condemnation of the Jews: so the lives and conversations of the saints condemn the wicked now, and will do hereafter: in this sense the word is used in the Talmud ⁷⁵⁷; where having related how Hillell, though a poor man, and R. Eleazar, though a rich man, studied in the law, and Joseph, though youthful, gay, and beautiful, withstood the importunities of his mistress, it is observed, that Hillell *מזדיין*, "condemned" the poor; and R. Eleazar ben Harsum condemned the rich; and Joseph condemned the wicked: in like manner, the Ninevites will condemn the Jews,

because they repented at the preaching of Jonas;

a mere man, a single prophet, a stranger to these men, who only preached, and wrought no miracle among them, and his stay with them was very short; whereas the men of this generation had the Son of God

⁷⁵⁴ R. David Kimchi & Jarchi, in Jonah i. 17. & ii. 1. Zohar in Exod. fol. 20. 3. & 78. 3.

⁷⁵⁵ Antiq. 1. 9. c. 18.

⁷⁵⁶ T. Hieros. Pesach. fol. 31. 2. T. Bab. Moed. Katon, fol. 16. 2. 17. 2. 19. 2. & 20. 2. Bechorot, fol. 20. 2. & 21. 1, Nidda, fol. 33. 1. Maimon. Hilch. Ebel, c. 7. sect. 1, 2, 3. Aben Ezra in Lev. xii. 3.

⁷⁵⁷ T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 35. 2.

“sent” to them, had the ministry of his apostles, and of John the Baptist, and a variety of miracles wrought among them; and all this for a series and course of years, and yet remained impenitent: the chief aggravation of their impenitence, and what made it the more astonishing was, that so great a person was in the midst of them;

and behold, a greater than Jonas is here;

meaning himself, who was greater in person, office, doctrine, miracles, life, obedience, sufferings, death, and resurrection from the dead. The Ninevites, though a Heathenish people, having but forty days allowed them to repent in, upon Jonas’s preaching, repented immediately; whereas the Jews, though God’s: professing people, and having forty years, from Christ’s resurrection, allowed them to repent in, yet did not at all; and though the repentance of the Ninevites was but an external one, in dust and ashes, yet it was what secured them from temporal ruin; as the Jews would have been saved from the destruction that came upon their temple, city, and nation, had they repented but as they did.

Matthew 12:42

Ver. 42. The queen of the south,

Called the queen of Sheba, 1Ki 10:1. Sheba was one of the sons of Joktan, a grandchild of Arphaxad, who settled in the southern parts of Arabia: hence this queen is called the queen of the south. Sheba is by the Targumist⁷⁵⁸ called Zemargad: and this queen the queen of Zemargad: she goes by different names. According to some, her name was Maqueda⁷⁵⁹, and, as others say, Balkis⁷⁶⁰: a Jewish chronologer⁷⁶¹ tells us, that the queen of Sheba, who is called Nicolaa, of the kingdom of Jaman, or the south, came to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, and gave him much riches: and Josephus⁷⁶² calls her Nicaulis, queen of Egypt and Ethiopia; of whom it is here said, that she

shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it:

the meaning is, as before; that she shall rise from the dead, and stand as a witness against that generation at the day of judgment, and, by her example and practices, which will then be produced, condemn them, or aggravate their condemnation:

for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth;

⁷⁵⁸ In 1 Chron. i. 9. & 2 Chron. ix. 1.

⁷⁵⁹ Ludolph. Hist. Aethioph. 1. 2. c. 3. & not. in Claud.

Confess. sect. 1.

⁷⁶⁰ Pocock. Specimen Hist. Arab. p. 59.

⁷⁶¹ Juchasin, fol. 136. 1.

⁷⁶² Antiqu. 1. 8. c. 2.

an hyperbolic expression, meaning a great way off from a far country, a very distant part of the world from Jerusalem, לשמוֹר חכמת שלמה, “to hear the wisdom of Solomon”; the very phrase used by the above Jewish⁷⁶³ writer.

And behold, a greater than Solomon is here;

one that was infinitely greater than Solomon was, in everything; so particularly in that, in which he excelled others, and on the account of which the queen of the south came unto him, namely, wisdom: for he is the wisdom of God, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. The Jews themselves⁷⁶⁴ own, that the king, meaning the Messiah, that shall be raised up of the seed of David, בְּלִ חכמה יהיה יתר מִשְׁלמה, “shall be a greater master of wisdom”, or “wiser than Solomon”. Now what an aggravation of the condemnation of the Jews will this be another day, that a Gentile woman, living in a foreign and distant land, should, upon the fame of the wisdom of Solomon, leave her own kingdom and country, and come to Jerusalem, to hear his wise discourses about things natural, civil, and moral; and yet the Jews, who had a greater than Solomon in the midst of them, and had no need to take much pains to come to the sight and hearing of him, yet rejected him as the Messiah, blasphemed his miracles, and despised his ministry; though it was concerned about things of a spiritual and evangelic nature, and the eternal welfare of immortal souls.

Matthew 12:43

Ver. 43. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man,

By “the unclean” spirit, is meant Satan, the old serpent, the devil; who by the Jews, is wont to be called as here, רֵיחַ מְאֵבָה “the unclean spirit”⁷⁶⁵; and that, because he is by sin become so, though he was not so originally; is the cause of uncleanness in men, and delights in unclean persons, places, and things: his “going out of a man”, is not to be understood of his being dispossessed of the bodies of men; nor of the ejection of him, and his going by force, through the power of divine grace, out of the souls of men; but either of his leaving the Jews for a while, in some sort, whilst Christ and the Gospel continued among them; and of his going out of the Scribes and Pharisees; not really, but putting on another form, appearing as an angel of light, and under the guise

⁷⁶³ Juchasin, fol. 136. 1.

⁷⁶⁴ Maimon. Hilchot. Teshuba, c. 9. sect. 2.

⁷⁶⁵ Zohar in Gen. fol. 77. 2.

of holiness and righteousness: and so he may be said to go out of men, when any outward reformation is made in them; and they take up a profession of religion, though destitute of the grace of God:

he walketh through dry places;

referring to a prevailing notion, that unclean spirits walk in, and haunt, desert and desolate places; and may have regard to the Gentiles, among whom Satan might go, seeking rest and satisfaction among them, in their idolatries and other wickedness, till he was there also disturbed by the Gospel sent among them: or by these “dry places” may be meant the saints, whom he takes his walks among, in order, by tempting, to distress them, being secure of pharisaical persons: and these may be so called, not for what they are in themselves; not because the sun of righteousness shines upon them: or because thirsty and desirous of divine and spiritual things; much less as if they had no moisture, since they have a well of living water in them, and are watered by the Lord; or were unfruitful, as dry places usually are; but for what they were to the unclean spirit, there being nothing in their grace, and the exercise of it, and in their spiritual performances, grateful to him; nothing to quench his thirst, and satisfy his sinful appetite; nor were there in them the mire and dirt of iniquity to roll in, as in unregenerate persons: wherefore he is represented as

seeking rest, and findeth none:

his view in walking in these places, or among such persons, is rest; not the rest of the saints, he seeks their disturbance, but his own rest; which is to do all the mischief he can, by stirring up corruption, tempting to sin, and discouraging the exercise of grace; but is not able to do so much mischief as he would, and so cannot find the rest he seeks for, nor satisfy his envious, spiteful, and malicious temper: and this being the case, it follows,

Matthew 12:44

Ver. 44. **Then he said, I will return into my house,**

Into the land of Judea, particularly into the Scribes and Pharisees, outward professors of religion; who, notwithstanding their outward reformation, and great pretensions to holiness, are Satan’s house still: he has a property in them, a claim upon them; and though he says,

from whence I came out,

yet he never really and properly quitted it, only seemingly, and in appearance; and therefore his returning is only throwing off the guise, and reassuming his former character, as a vicious and unclean spirit.

And when he is come, he findeth it empty:

not empty of sin: this puts me in mind of a passage in the Misna ⁷⁶⁶, where it is said, that on a fast day,

”when they stand in prayer, they cause to descend, or go before the ark, an old man, who is used (to prayer,) whose children, וביהו ריקם, “and his house, are empty”, so that his heart is perfect in prayer,”

or entirely at leisure for it. The commentators ⁷⁶⁷ on that phrase, “his house is empty”, note, that he was empty of sin, and free from it, and one concerning whom an evil report had not gone forth from his youth: but such was not this house; it was empty of God, of the true knowledge of him, of the fear of him, and love to him; of Christ, of faith in him, affection for him, and hope on him; of the Spirit of God, and of his graces, and of spiritual, internal religion, and powerful godliness.

Swept;

not with the Spirit of grace convincing of sin, righteousness, and judgment; but with the besom of an outward reformation:

and garnished;

not with internal grace, which makes saints all glorious within; but with secret lusts and corruptions, which rendered it an agreeable habitation for this unclean spirit; and at most, with some show of morality, a little negative holiness, or abstinence from outward acts of sin, an observance of some external rites and ceremonies, and a few hypocritical performances of fasting and prayer; which Satan can very well bear with, so long as the heart is empty of spiritual grace, and till an opportunity offers of throwing off all appearance of good.

Matthew 12:45

Ver. 45. **Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits,**

This is said in allusion to, and in imitation of the seven spirits before the throne; or may denote a large number of devils, seven being a number of perfection; or else the various corruptions of a man’s heart, the swarms of internal lusts which are there stirred up by Satan;

more wicked than himself,

as these are more pernicious to man, than the devil himself:

and they enter in and dwell there;

⁷⁶⁶ Taanith, c. 2. sect. 2.

⁷⁶⁷ Maimon. & Bartenora in ib.

that is, though they were there before, now they exert and show themselves, and such men appear to be under the power and government of them; when leaving their seeming religion and holiness, they return like the dog to the vomit, and the swine to the wallowing in the mire.

And the last state of that man is worse than the first:

he becomes more wicked than ever he was, before he made pretensions to religion; as such apostates generally are more extravagant in sinning, and are seldom or ever recovered by repentance, and their last end is eternal damnation; see 2Pe 2:20

even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.

This parable fitly suited them, the Scribes and Pharisees, and the men of that generation, from whom in some measure the unclean spirit might be said to depart through the doctrine, and miracles of Christ, to go into the Gentile world; but being followed there with the preaching of the Gospel by the apostles, returns to the Jews, and fills them with more malice, blasphemy, and blindness, than ever, which issued in their utter ruin and destruction; of which this parable may be justly thought to be prophetic.

Matthew 12:46

Ver. 46. **While he yet talked to the people,**

Upon these subjects, which so nearly concerned the Scribes and Pharisees, and which could not fail of drawing upon him their resentment and ill will.

Behold his mother and his brethren:

by "his mother" is meant Mary; but who are "his brethren", is not so easy to say: some are of opinion, that Joseph had children by Mary, who are here meant; but it is more generally believed, that these were either the sons of Joseph by a former wife, whose name is said to be Escha; or rather, Mary's sister's sons, the wife of Cleophas, the cousin-germans of Christ, it being usual with the Jews to call such kindred brethren; and so they might be James, Joses, Simon, and Judas: these

stood without:

for Christ was within doors, not in a synagogue, as Piscator thought, but in an house; see Mt 13:1 and his mother and brethren stood without doors, either because they could not get in for the throng of the people; or because they would not, it not being proper to make all within acquainted with what they had to say to him:

desiring to speak with him;

not with a pure view to interrupt him in his work, or to divert him from it, lest he should overspend himself;

nor from a principle of ambition and vain glory, to show that they were related to him, and that he was at their beck and command; but rather, to observe unto him the danger he exposed himself to, by the freedom he took with the Pharisees in his discourses, and probably to acquaint him with some conspiracies formed against him.

Matthew 12:47

Ver. 47. **Then one said unto him,**

Either one of his auditors, or, as the Ethiopic version has it, one "of his disciples": the other evangelists intimate, that more than one acquainted him with it; which is easily reconciled: for, upon his mother and brethren calling to him, as Mark says they did; first one and then another, and more, might apprise him of it, and especially as he did not immediately go out unto them.

Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee:

whether this message was carried at the request of the mother and brethren of Christ, and delivered in a simple manner, and with an honest intention; or whether it was officiously done, and with a design to interrupt him, and to try him, whether he would prefer his natural relations, and their society and conversation, to the spiritual work in which he was engaged, in doing good to the souls of men, is not certain; the latter seems probable, from the following words, and conduct of Christ. Some copies read, "desiring to see thee".

Matthew 12:48

Ver. 48. **But he answered and said unto him that told him,**

Of his mother and brethren being without doors, desiring, and waiting to speak to him,

Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?

These questions are put, not as if he himself was ignorant who were his mother or his brethren; or as suggesting as if he had none; or as denying that these were in such a relation to him; or as casting any slight upon them; or as intending to teach men disrespect to parents and kindred, according to the flesh; but as displeased with the man, or men, for interrupting him in his work; and to let them know, that the business of his heavenly Father was preferred by him to any his natural relations could have with him; and that he might have an opportunity of pointing out who were his relations in a spiritual sense.

Matthew 12:49

Ver. 49. **And he stretched forth his hand towards**

his disciples,

By whom are meant, not only the twelve, but all others present, who truly believed in him, both men and women; and who might sit near him and together, and whom, by this motion of his hand, he pointed out as his spiritual relations, to the multitude that sat round him:

and said, behold my mother, and my brethren;

in whose hearts he was formed, and who were the children of God by adopting grace, and so his brethren; and were as dear to him as his mother and brethren. It is reasonable to suppose, that when he said, "behold my mother", and, as in the following verse, "sister"; he might stretch forth his hand particularly, toward the pious and religious women that believed in him, and ministered to him of their substance, who might be now present; such as Mary Magdalene, Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and others; since these are mentioned by Luke in the same chapter in which this passage stands in his Gospel; and when he said "behold my brethren", he might point directly to the twelve, and the rest of the men that believed in him, and followed him.

Matthew 12:50

Ver. 50. **For whosoever shall do the will of my Father,**

This is not to be understood of a perfect obedience to the will of God, revealed in his righteous law; for since this cannot be performed by any mere man, no one could be in such a spiritual relation to Christ: but of the obedience of faith to the will of God, revealed in the Gospel; which is to believe in Christ, and have everlasting life; see Joh 6:40. This is the will of Christ's Father,

which is in heaven,

and which is good news from heaven, to sinners on earth; and which Christ came down from heaven to do, and to declare to the children of men: such as "hear the word of God and do it", as Luke says, Luke 8:21 that is, hear the Gospel, understand and believe it, and become obedient to the faith of it; these are in this near manner related to Christ, evidentially and openly, as well as those who were now present:

the same is my brother, and sister, and mother;

as dear to me, as such are to those, to whom they stood thus related in the flesh: and these natural relations serve to convey some ideas of that relation, union, nearness, and communion, there are between Christ and his people; all these relative characters may be observed in the book of Solomon's Song, to which our Lord may

be reasonably thought to have respect; see (Song of Solomon 3:11) (Song of Solomon 4:9 Song of Solomon 4:10 Song of Solomon 4:12) (Song of Solomon 5:1 Song of Solomon 5:2) (8:1) ..

**THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW
CHAPTER XIII**

3 The parable of the sower and the seed : 18 the exposition of it. 24 the parable of the tares. 31 of the mustard seed. 33 of the leaven. 44 of the hidden treasure. 45 of the pearl. 47 of the dragnet cast into the sea : 53 and how Christ is contemned of his own countrymen.

Matthew 13

- [1] The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side.
- [2] And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.
- [3] And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow;
- [4] And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:
- [5] Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth:
- [6] And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.
- [7] And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:
- [8] But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.
- [9] Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.
- [10] And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?
- [11] He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.
- [12] For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.
- [13] Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.
- [14] And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not

- perceive:
- [15] For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.
- [16] But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.
- [17] For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.
- [18] Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.
- [19] When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.
- [20] But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;
- [21] 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.
- [22] 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.
- [23] But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.
- [24] Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:
- [25] But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.
- [26] But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.
- [27] 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?
- [28] He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?
- [29] But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.
- [30] 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.
- [31] Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field:
- [32] Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.
- [33] Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.
- [34] All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them:
- [35] That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.
- [36] Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.
- [37] He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;
- [38] The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;
- [39] The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.
- [40] As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.
- [41] The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;
- [42] And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.
- [43] Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.
- [44] Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.
- [45] Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls:
- [46] Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.
- [47] Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that

was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind:

- [48] Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.
- [49] So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just,
- [50] And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.
- [51] Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord.
- [52] Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.
- [53] And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence.
- [54] And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?
- [55] Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?
- [56] And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?
- [57] And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.
- [58] And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

Matthew 13:1

Ver. 1. **The same day Jesus went out of the house,**

Where he had been preaching, and working miracles: where this house was, is not certain; it seems to have been in one of the cities of Galilee, probably Capernaum, since that was by the sea coast: the reason of his going out of the house was, either to converse with his mother and brethren, as they desired; or to withdraw himself from company, and take some refreshment by the sea side; or because it would not hold the people, and therefore he quitted it for a more convenient place. The time he went out of it, was the same day he had cast the devil out of the man blind and dumb, and had delivered himself so freely concerning the Scribes and Pharisees, who had blasphemously ascribed that miracle to the assistance of

Satan; and the same day his mother and brethren came to see him, and speak to him.

And sat by the sea side; either as weary, and for his refreshment, or in order to preach to the people; for, Mark says, "he began again to teach by the sea side", Mark 4:1. This was the sea of Galilee, sometimes called the sea of Tiberias.

Matthew 13:2

Ver. 2. **And great multitudes were gathered unto him,**

Some on one account, and some on another; some to see his person, others his miracles; some healing for their bodies, and others for their souls; some for the loaves, and others to hear him preach; and of these there were several sorts, as the following parable shows.

So that he went into a ship:

both for his own advantage, that he might not be crowded, and pressed by the people, and have more room, and a freer air to speak in, and for theirs, that they might both see and hear him better.

And sat, and the whole multitude stood on the shore;

as was the then custom of the Jewish doctors and hearers, the one to sit, and the other to stand. See Gill on "Mt 5:1". Christ sat upon the deck of the ship; or perhaps this ship was no other than an open boat, which was put to sea, some little distance from the shore; upon which the people stood in great numbers, with much convenience and attention.

Matthew 13:3

Ver. 3. **And he spake many things unto them in parables,**

For the parables of the sower, and the different sorts of ground the seed fell in, of the wheat and tares, of the grain of mustard seed, of the leaven in three measures of meal, of the treasure hid in a field, of the pearl of great price, of the net cast into the sea, and of the householder, were all delivered at this time. This way of speaking by parables was much in use among the eastern nations, and particularly the Jews. R. Meir was very famous among them for this way of teaching; they say ⁷⁶⁸,

"that when R. Meir died, בטלו מוֹשְׁלֵי מוֹשְׁלִים, "they that were skilled in, and used parables, ceased"

The commentators ⁷⁶⁹ on this passage say,

⁷⁶⁸ Misn. Sota, c. 9. sect. 15.

⁷⁶⁹ Jarchi & Bartenora in ib. e Talmud. Bab. Sanhedrim, fol. 38. 2.

“that he preached a third part tradition, and a third part mystical discourse, ותילתא מתלי, “and a third part parables”:

which method of discoursing was judged both pleasant and profitable, and what served to raise the attention of the hearer, and to fix what was delivered the more firmly in their minds: what was our Lord’s reason for using them, may be seen in Mt 13:13. He begins with the parable of the sower. The design of which is to set forth the nature of the word of God, the work and business of the ministers of it, the different success of the preaching of it, and the fruitfulness of it; and to show when it is truly received, and the various degrees of fruit it produces; that the efficacy of it depends on the grace of God, which makes the heart good, and fit to receive it; and how few they be which hear the word to any spiritual advantage and benefit; and how far persons may go in hearing, and yet fall short of the grace of God; and therefore no dependence is to be had on the external hearing of the word.

Behold, a sower went forth to sow;

Luke adds, “his seed”; as does also Munster’s Hebrew Gospel here; and Mark introduces the parable thus, “hearken, behold!” it being a matter of great importance and concern, which is expressed by this parable, it deserves the most diligent attention. By “the sower” is meant “the son of man”, as may be learnt from the explanation of another parable, Mt 13:37 which is Jesus Christ himself, who is often so called on account of his human nature; and may the rather be thought to be intended here, since the seed he sowed is called “his seed”; meaning the Gospel, of which he is the author, publisher, sum and substance; and since he is, by way of eminency, called נורפס, “the sower”; which must be understood of him as a prophet, or preacher of the word, who was eminently sent of God, and richly qualified for such an office, and was most diligent in it, and yet his success was but small. Indeed, every minister of the Gospel may be called a sower, who bears precious seed, sows spiritual things, and though in tears, he shall not return empty, but shall reap in joy, and bring his sheaves with him. This sower “went forth” from his own house to his field; which, as applied to Christ, may intend his incarnation, his coming into this world by the assumption of human nature, his appearance in the public ministry, in the land of Judea, and his going forth still in his ministers, and by his Spirit, in the preaching of the Gospel; and, as applied to the preachers of the word, may be explained of their

commission, of their being sent, and of their going forth into the field of the world, preaching the Gospel every where. The end of the sower’s going forth is to “sow his seed”: by “his seed” is meant the word, the word of God; see Mark 4:14 so called, because of the choiceness and excellency of it in itself, that grain which is reserved for seed being usually the best of the kind; and because of its smallness, it being mean and contemptible in the eyes of those, who know not the nature of it; and because of the generative virtue it has, though not without a divine influence. Nor does it bring forth fruit, unless it is sown in the heart, as seed in the earth; where its operation is secret, its growth and increase gradual, and its fruitfulness different. By “sowing”, is meant preaching; which, as sowing, requires knowledge and skill, and an open and liberal hand; keeping back nothing that is profitable, a declaring the same doctrine in one place as another; and designs a constant ministration of it, notwithstanding all discouragements, and a patient waiting for success.

Matthew 13:4

Ver. 4. **And when he sowed,**

Or, “as he sowed”, as the other evangelists; that is, “whilst he was sowing”,

some seeds fell;

either out of his hand, or out of the cart drawn by oxen; hence the ⁷⁷⁰ Talmudists distinguish between יד מפולה, “the falling of the hand”, or what falls out of the hand; and מְפֹלָה שׁוּרִיִּים “the falling of the oxen”, or what falls from them; where the gloss is,

“in some places they sow the grain with the hand; and in other places they put the seed on a cart full of holes, and oxen draw the cart on the ploughed land, and it falls upon it.”

By the wayside; by the common road, or private paths, which led through corn fields, in which Christ and his disciples walked, Mt 12:1 and which being beaten and trodden hard, the seed must lie open on it, and so be liable to be trampled upon by men, or devoured by the fowls of the air; and designs such hearers as are careless, negligent, and inattentive, who hear without understanding, judgment, and affection; see Mt 13:19

and the fowls came and devoured them;

the other evangelists say, “the fowls of the air”; and so the Vulgate Latin, and Munster’s Hebrew Gospel, and some copies; and mean the devils; so called, because their habitation is in the air; hence they are said to be “the power of the air”: and because of their ravenous and

770 T. Bab. Bava Metzia, fol. 105. 2.

devouring nature, their swiftness to do mischief, and their flocking in multitudes, where the word is preached, to hinder its usefulness, as fowls do, where seed is sowing. Satan, and his principalities, and powers, rove about in the air, come down on earth, and seek whom they may devour, and often mix themselves in religious assemblies, to do what mischief they can; see Job 1:6.

Matthew 13:5

Ver. 5. **Some fell upon stony places,**

Such a place as the Jews call חולית, a barren, stony place, a place from whence, they say, they take stones, and בית ל, and which אינו ראוי לזרייה, “is not fit for sowing”⁷⁷¹; and such were those places and spots of ground, that some of these seeds fell upon; and design such hearers, in whom the natural hardness of their hearts continues, and who remain unbroken by the word, and are without any true sense of sin, and repentance for it.

Where they had not much earth,

to cover them and take root in: this is expressive of such persons who have slight convictions of sin, and awakenings of the natural conscience; some little, light, and speculative notions of the word, in the understanding and judgment; some flashes of natural affection for it, and outward expressions of delight and pleasure in it; some show of grace, and a form of godliness, but no real heart work.

And forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth;

to strike their roots downwards: and through the reflection of the heat, upon the rocks and stones, they quickly broke through the thin surface of the earth over them, and appeared above ground before the usual time of the springing up of seed: which may not only denote the immediate reception of the word by these hearers, and their quick assent to it; but their sudden and hasty profession of it, without taking due time to consider the nature and importance thereof; and the seeming cheerfulness in which they did both receive and profess it; though it was only outward and hypocritical, and more on account of the manner of preaching it, than the word itself, and through a selfish principle in them; and did not arise from any real experience of the power of it on their souls, or true spiritual pleasure in it: nor could it be otherwise, since their stony hearts were not taken away, nor hearts of flesh given them; wherefore the word had no place in them, and made no real impression on them;

they remained dead in trespasses and sins; the word was not the savour of life unto life unto them, or the Spirit that giveth life; they did not become living and lively stones; they continued as insensible as ever of their state and condition by nature, of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, of the danger they were in, and of their need of Christ, and salvation by him; they were as hard, and obdurate, and as inflexible, as ever, without any real contrition for sin, or meltings of soul through the influence of the love and grace of God; and as backward as ever to submit to the righteousness of Christ, being stout hearted, and far from it; and being no more cordially willing to be subject to the sceptre of his kingdom, or to serve him in righteousness and holiness, than they ever were; for the word falling upon them, made no change in them; their hearts were as hard as ever, notwithstanding the seeming and hasty reception of it; though they did not refuse to hearken to the word externally, did not put away the shoulder, or stop their ears, yet their hearts were still like an adamant stone: nothing but the mighty power of God, and his efficacious grace, can break the rocky heart in pieces; or give an heart of flesh, a sensible, soft, and flexible one, with which a man truly repents of sin, believes in Christ, and becomes subject to him.

Matthew 13:6

Ver. 6. **And when the sun was up,**

Some time, and its heat was increasing, and it began to shine out hot, and beat with some vehemency and strength; which may denote some sore temptation, or severe affliction, or fiery trial of persecution and tribulation; see Mt 13:21 for this is not to be understood of the glorious light of the Gospel, which, though very comfortable and refreshing, as well as illuminating to good men, is very distressing and tormenting to carnal minds; they cannot bear its truths and doctrines; this is the fire which comes out of the mouth of God's faithful witnesses, and torments them that dwell on the earth, and devours their enemies, Re 11:5. And it, moreover, like the sun, has different effects on different objects; as the sun hardens clay, and melts wax, so the Gospel is to the hardening of some, and softening of others; to the one it is the savour of life unto life, and to the other the savour of death unto death; but this cannot be intended, because the word by these hearers is first received with joy. Nor is Christ the sun of righteousness meant, who arises with healing in his wings, and gives grace and glory to his people; but the sun of persecution and affliction, in which sense the metaphor is used, in So 1:6

⁷⁷¹ T. Bab. Erachin, fol. 32. 1. & Gloss. in ib. & Bava Bathra, fol. 156. 2. & Gloss. in ib.

the heat of which the church patiently bore, though she was made black with it: but these hearers think it strange that such a fiery trial should befall them; wherefore, as they take up their profession in haste, they as quickly drop it; see Re 7:16.

They were scorched, and because they had not root, they withered away:

they were offended with what they met with, for the sake of Christ, and the profession of his word; and therefore, not being rooted in him, nor in the love of God, nor having the root of the matter, true grace, in themselves, or, as Luke says, “lacked moisture”, of divine grace, of the dews and waterings of it, fell away finally and totally. This is no instance of the apostasy of real saints, or any proof of true believers falling away finally and totally; since these were not rooted, and grounded in the everlasting and unchangeable love of God, were not interested in it, or were partakers of the effects of it; had they been so, they could never have been separated from it; tribulation, distress, and persecution could never have done it; none of these would ever have moved them; had they had the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, they would have gloried in tribulation: nor were they united to Christ, rooted and built up in him; had they, they would have continued to have derived life and nourishment from him; in him the life of believers is hid, and because he lives they live also; as long as there is life in the root, the branches will not die; he is the root that bears the branches, the root of the righteous that yields fruit, and is never moved: nor had these the truth of grace, which is an incorruptible seed, a well of living water springing up to everlasting life; had they, they could never have withered away; to such God gives more grace, he himself is as the dew unto them, and he waters them every moment.

Matthew 13:7

Ver. 7. **And some fell among thorns,**

On a spot of ground which was full of the roots of thorns, and briars, which was not cleared of them as it should be. We often read ⁷⁷² שְׂדֵה שֶׁנִּתְקַוָּה שׁ, “a field cleared of thorns”; but such was not this piece of ground, it was overrun with them, not on the surface of the earth, but within it: for it follows,

and the thorns sprung up:

naturally, being neither sown nor planted; either before the seed, or, at least, as soon; and however grew

faster, and higher,

and **choked them;**

so that they came to nothing; hence the advice, “sow not among thorns”, Jer 4:3 and a lost kindness, or what is bestowed in vain, is expressed in this proverbial manner ⁷⁷³ שְׂקוּלָה שִׁבּוּחִיכ וּשְׂרִיא אַחֲזִירִי “thy beneficence is taken away, and cast among thorns”: these point out such hearers who seemed to be contrite, to have the low ground of their hearts broken up, their consciences tender, and to have a true sense of sin, as well as to be outwardly reformed; and yet inwardly were full of the thorns of sinful lusts, particularly of the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, the lusts of other things, and the pleasures of this life, which rendered the word useless and unfruitful; see Mt 13:22 all which are comparable to thorns; it is hardly possible to be in the midst of, and meddle with these, without being scratched by them; they pierce, afflict, and wound, even where they have not their greatest power and influence; and where they do prevail, and get the ascendant, as they are fruitless themselves, they make others so too; they choke the word, and make that, and all ordinances, and opportunities, useless, and unserviceable. Thorns are a part of the earth’s curse for the sin of man; and such persons in whom thorny cares and lusts prevail, as they are like unto the earth which beareth thorns, so, as that, they are rejected, and nigh to cursing, whose end is to be burned in everlasting flames of divine wrath and fury, Heb 6:8.

Matthew 13:8

Ver. 8. **But others fell into good ground,**

Not beaten and trodden by the feet of men, nor stony, nor thorny, but well broke up, manured, and tilled; which designs good, honest hearted hearers who become so by the Spirit and grace of God; who with a spiritual understanding, experience, savour, and relish, what they hear; see Mt 13:23

and brought forth fruit, some an hundred fold, some sixty fold, some thirty fold:

some seeds produced an hundred, others sixty, and others thirty. The first of these especially was a large increase, but what was sometimes had, and which Isaac received in Gerar, in the land of the Philistines, Ge 26:12 and is what Pliny says ⁷⁷⁴ of Byzacium, a country of the Lybiphoenicians, that it yielded an hundred fold to its husbandmen; and of such fruitfulness was the land of Israel, of which the Jewish doctors say some things

⁷⁷³ T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 63. 2. Bava Kama, fol. 83. 1.

Cetubot, fol. 53. 2. & Betza, fol. 29. 2.

⁷⁷⁴ Nat. Hist. 1. 5. c. 4.

⁷⁷² Misn. Sheviith, c. 4. sect. 2. T. Hieros. Sheviith, fol. 34. 3. & 35. 1. T. Bab. Bechorot, fol. 34. 2.

incredible: they tell us a story ⁷⁷⁵ of

“one that sowed a measure of vetches, or pease, וְשָׂה שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת אֵין, “and it produced three hundred measures”; they say unto him, the Lord hath begun to bless thee, &c.”

Here, in the parable, these various increases intend the different degrees of fruitfulness in gracious souls; for though the fruits of grace, in believers, are of the same quality, yet not of the same quantity. Some believers are grown to a greater maturity than others; some are but little children, some are young men, some are fathers.

Matthew 13:9

Ver. 9. **Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.**

Not externally only, but internally; he that has ears given him to hear, so as to understand, let him make use of them, and seriously consider of, and diligently attend to the use and importance of this parable. It is a way of speaking used by Christ, when anything of moment was delivered, and not so easy to be understood, on purpose to quicken the attention of his auditors, and stir up in them a desire of understanding what was said; which effect this had upon his disciples; see Mark 4:10.

Matthew 13:10

Ver. 10. **And the disciples came, and said unto him,**

Not the twelve only, but others that were about him, as Mark says, who also were his disciples, and believed in him: these, when he was alone, came nearer to him, who, whilst he was preaching to the people, were at some little distance from him, either in the ship, or on the shore, though within the hearing of him, and addressed him after this manner;

why speakest thou unto them in parables?

not that this way of speaking was new and surprising to them; but because it was not easily understood, especially not by the common people, without an explanation, which, as yet, Christ had not given: and indeed the parable was not understood by the disciples themselves; who put this question, not only for the sake of the multitude, but for their own also, hoping to be favoured with the meaning of it.

Matthew 13:11

Ver. 11. **He answered, and said unto them,**

Christ was always ready to give an answer to his inquiring disciples, concerning his ministry, and his conduct in it; which shows great respect to them, and condescension in him:

because it is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven:

by the “kingdom of heaven”, is meant the Gospel, which treats of the kingdom of heaven, and of things pertaining to it; of the saints’ meetness for it, which is the regenerating and sanctifying grace of the Spirit; and of their right to it, which lies in the justifying righteousness of Christ. The “mysteries” of it intend the sublime doctrines thereof; such as relate to the Trinity of persons in the Godhead, to the incarnation of Christ, and the union of the two natures, human and divine, in him, eternal predestination, redemption by Christ, satisfaction by his sacrifice, justification by his righteousness, and pardon through his blood, the resurrection from the dead, &c. things, though clearly revealed, yet may have difficulties attending them, and which are not very easily solved: now to know and understand the great truths of the Gospel, spiritually, savingly, and experimentally, is not from nature, or to be acquired by men’s industry, but is the gift of God’s grace, flowing from his sovereign will and pleasure; a favour which the disciples of Christ, as a chosen people, receive from the Lord, and which is denied others:

but to them it is not given;

to the wise and prudent, to the Scribes and Pharisees, to the multitude, to the bulk and generality of the people, to the rest that were blinded. Mark calls them “them that are without”; who are not in the number of God’s elect; nor within the covenant of grace, nor among the disciples of Christ; referring to a common way of speaking among the Jews, who used to call the Gentiles, all without their land, “they that are without”; and indeed all within themselves that despised the rules and judgment of the wise men ⁷⁷⁶: but Christ here calls the wise men themselves such. Now our Lord, who was privy to the secret and sovereign dispensation of God, who, of his own will and pleasure, had determined to give a spiritual and saving knowledge of divine things to some, and deny it to others, made this the rule of his conduct in his ministry; that is to say, he preached in parables to some without an explication, whilst he spoke plainly to others; and, if in parables, yet gave them an interpretation, and an understanding of them.

Matthew 13:12

Ver. 12. **For whosoever hath, to him shall be given,....** Whoever has the true grace of God implanted in him, has a saving knowledge of Christ, and a spiritual

⁷⁷⁵ T. Hieros. Peah, fol. 20. 2.

⁷⁷⁶ Vid. T. Bab. Megilla, fol. 24. 2. & Gloss. in ib.

acquaintance with the doctrines of the Gospel, shall have more grace given him; he shall grow in the knowledge of Christ, and the Spirit of truth shall lead him into all truth:

and he shall have more abundance: of grace, light, knowledge, and experience: all grace shall be made to abound towards him; he shall be filled with all the fulness of God, and shall arrive to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; and his light shall shine more and more unto the perfect day.

But whosoever hath not: the truth of grace, nor a spiritual knowledge of Christ, nor any experience of the doctrines of the Gospel,

from him shall be taken away, even that he hath, or “that which he seemed to have”, as Luke expresses it; for everything besides true grace is a mere show, and has no solidity in it; as natural parts, human learning, and a form of knowledge and of truth in the law, the national church state of the Jews, with all the outward privileges appertaining thereunto, all which may be here meant; and even speculative notions of the Gospel, the external gifts of the Spirit, the means of grace, the Gospel of the kingdom of God, and the ministry of it, which in process of time were wholly taken from these people.

Matthew 13:13

Ver. 13. **Therefore speak I to them in parables,**

Because it was the will and pleasure of his Father to give the knowledge of divine mysteries to some, and not to others; and because even the outward good things they had, being wrongly used or abused by them, would be taken away from them:

and because they seeing, see not:

they saw Christ with their bodily eyes, but not with an eye of faith; they saw the miracles he did, but did not discern, at least did not acknowledge the evidence of them, proving him to be the true Messiah.

And hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand:

they heard externally, but not internally; they heard the sound of Christ's voice, but did not understand his words, even when he spake in the plainest and most intelligible manner; nor were they concerned to know the meaning of them: wherefore he spoke to them in this abstruse and parabolical way, that they might be what they really were, seers and not seers, hearers and not hearers, at least not understanding ones; and that what he said might remain sealed and hidden to them, as the things contained in the sealed book were to the Jews of

old; the reason of which was, as a writer of their's ⁷⁷⁷ says, and which agrees with our Lord's reason and conduct here, *שהיו במשל ויהיה* “because they were in parable and riddle”.

Matthew 13:14

Ver. 14. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias,.... In Isa 6:9 which saith, which runs, or may be read thus,

by hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive.

The words are a prophecy concerning the people of the Jews, which began to be accomplished in the times of Isaiah; and were again fulfilled in the times of some after prophets; and had been in part fulfilled under the more plain and easy ministry of Christ; and was to have a further accomplishment under this parabolical way of preaching; as it also was to have, and had, a yet further completion under the ministry of the apostles; see Ac 28:26 and the judicial blindness here predicted was to go on among them, until the land of Judea was utterly destroyed by the Romans, and the cities and houses thereof left without any inhabitants; all which accordingly came to pass: for that this prophecy refers to the times of the Messiah, and to the people of the Jews, is clear from this one observation made by Christ himself, that Esaias foretold those things when he saw the glory of the Messiah, and spake of him, Joh 12:40 and because it was to have, and had, its accomplishment over and over again in that people, therefore the word *anaphroutai*, which may be rendered “is fulfilled again”, is made use of. The sense of the prophecy is, with respect to the times of the Messiah, that the Jews, whilst hearing the sermons preached by him, whether with, or without parables, should hear his voice, and the sound of it, but not understand his words internally, spiritually, and experimentally; and whilst they saw, with the eyes of their bodies, the miracles he wrought, they should see the facts done, which could not be denied and gainsayed by them, but should not take in the clear evidence, full proof, and certain demonstration given thereby, of his Messiahship. In the prophecy of Isaiah, the words run in the imperative, “hear ye, see ye”, &c. but are here rendered in the future, “shall hear, shall see”, &c. which rendering of the words is supported and established by the version of the Septuagint, by the Chaldee paraphrase, and by many Jewish commentators ⁷⁷⁸; who allow, that the

⁷⁷⁷ Abarbanel in Isa. 29. 11.

⁷⁷⁸ In R. David Kimchi in Isa. vi. 9.

words in Isaiah may be so understood, which is sufficient to vindicate the citation of them, by the evangelist, in this form of them.

Matthew 13:15

Ver. 15. **For this people's heart is waxed gross,**

Or fat, become stupid and sottish, and without understanding; and so incapable of taking in the true sense and meaning of what they saw with their eyes, and heard with their ears; for they had their outward senses of hearing and seeing, and yet their intellectual powers were stupefied.

And their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed;

which is expressive of the blindness and hardness, which were partly brought upon themselves by their own wilfulness and obstinacy, against such clear evidence as arose from the doctrine and miracles of Christ; and partly from the righteous judgment of God, giving them up, for their perverseness, to judicial blindness and obduracy; Joh 12:40 and are in the prophet ascribed to the ministry of the word; that being despised, was in righteous judgment, the savour of death unto death, unto them; and they under it, as clay, under the influence of the sun, grew harder and harder by it, stopping their ears, and shutting their eyes against it:

lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart:

which may be understood either of God's intention, and view, in giving them up to judicial blindness, and hardness of heart, under such miracles, and such a ministry, as a punishment for their wilful contempt of them; that so they might never have any true sight, hearing, and understanding of these things, and be turned from the evil of their ways, have repentance unto life, and remission of sins; which seems to be the sense of the other evangelists, Mark 4:12 or, as if these people purposely stupefied themselves, stopped their ears, and pulled away the shoulder, and wilfully shut their eyes; fearing they should receive some conviction, light, and knowledge,

and be converted

by the power and grace of God:

and I should heal them;

or, as in Mark, "and their sins should be forgiven them"; for healing of diseases, and forgiveness of sins, are, in Scripture language, one and the same thing; and this sense of the phrase here, is justified by the Chaldee

paraphrase, which renders it, Nwhl qbtvyw, "and they be forgiven", or "it be forgiven them", and by a Jewish commentator on the place; who interprets healing, of the healing of the soul, and adds והיא הליחה, "and this is pardon" ⁷⁷⁹.

Matthew 13:16

Ver. 16. But blessed are your eyes, for they see,.... Which is to be understood both of corporal and intellectual sight: it was their happiness to see Christ in the flesh, and converse with him in person, be eyewitnesses of his majesty, and see with their own eyes the miracles performed by him, the proofs and attestations of those doctrines they were to publish to all the world; and it was still their greater happiness, that they saw his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth: many saw him in the flesh, as they did, with their bodily eyes, but saw no beauty, nor comeliness in him, nothing amiable and desirable in him; but these saw his personal and transcendent glories, as the Son of God, his fulness as mediator, his suitableness as a Saviour and Redeemer, and all the characters of the Messiah in him; and so believed, and were sure that he was the Christ, the Son of the living God: they saw Christ, not in the promise, as Abraham, and other patriarchs did; nor through types and shadows, as the saints of the Old Testament did; to them it was given to know and understand the mysteries of grace, respecting the person, offices, obedience, sufferings, and death of Christ. And your ears, for they hear. This also must be understood of corporal and intellectual hearing, another branch of their present happiness. They heard the words of truth from the lips of that great prophet Moses said should rise up among them, like unto him, whom they should hear: they heard, with their own ears, a voice from heaven, declaring him to be the beloved Son of God, in whom he was well pleased. They heard the Gospel preached by him, not only so as to be affected with it, and give their assent to it, but also to understand it spiritually, and experimentally, and to bring forth the fruit of it; and so were that sort of hearers, signified by the good ground in the parable Christ had just delivered. The forms of speech, in which the happiness of the disciples is here expressed, seem to be in common use with the Jews, when they would extol the peculiar attainments of a man, especially in matters of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. Thus, it being told R. Jochanan ben

⁷⁷⁹ R. David Kimchi in loc.

he observes one hearing the word, especially that has not been used to attend, comes immediately, and, as he is hearing,

catcheth away that which is sown in his heart:

not the grace of God, which being once implanted in the heart, can never be taken away by Satan; but the word which was sown, not in his understanding, in a spiritual sense, nor even in his affections, so as to love it, delight, and take pleasure in it; much less in his heart, so as to become the engrafted word able to save, or so as to believe in it, and in Christ revealed by it; but in his memory, and that but very slightly neither; for the heart sometimes means the memory; see Luke 2:51. Besides, the word only fell “upon”, not “into” his heart, as into the good ground, as the metaphor in the parable shows; and it made no impression, nor was it inwardly received, but as soon as ever dropped, was “caught” away by the enemy; not by frightening him out of it, by persecution, as the stony ground hearer; nor by filling the mind with worldly cares, as the thorny ground hearer; but by various suggestions and temptations, darting in thoughts, presenting objects, and so diverted his mind from the word, and fixed his attention elsewhere; which is done at once, at an unawares, secretly, and without any notice of the person himself; so that the word is entirely lost to him, and he does not so much as remember the least thing he has been hearing:

this is he which receiveth the seed by the way side;

such an hearer is comparable to such ground, on whom the word has no more effect, than seed sown upon a common beaten path.

Matthew 13:20

Ver. 20. **But he that receiveth the seed into stony places,**

Such a hearer, who is like to the stony ground on which the seed fell, is one that is not an accidental hearer of the word, as the former, but a settled constant hearer of it; and not one that is careless and negligent, but diligent and attentive, and has some understanding of what he hears;

the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it:

he is one that not only constantly attends upon it, but he receives it; he gives an assent to it, he believes in it historically, makes a profession of his faith in it, and holds it for a while, being under some convictions of the truth of it: and having some speculative notions of it, and light in his understanding and judgment in it, he

has some flashes of natural affection for it, and delivers some outward expressions of pleasure and delight in it, like Herod, and the hearers of John the Baptist; but has no heart work, and so is like to the rock in stony ground; the natural hardness of his heart continues, it remains unbroken by the word, without any true sense of sin, and repentance for it, and destitute of spiritual life, and of true faith, love, and joy: hence, as his profession is taken up in haste, immediately, upon a flash of affection, and a little head knowledge, it does not last long, nor prove honourable.

Matthew 13:21

Ver. 21. **Yet hath he not root in himself,**

Nor in Christ; the word is not rooted in him, nor has he the root of the matter, or the truth of grace in him:

but dureth for a while;

a hearer of the word, a professor of religion, showing some outward respect to the word, and to the preachers of it:

for when tribulation or persecution ariseth, because of the word;

which is often the case, and must be expected by those who embrace the Gospel, profess the name of Christ, and are willing to live godly in him. Tribulation may intend some lesser and lighter troubles for the sake of Christ, and his Gospel; such as the revilings and reproaches of men, loss of character, and trade, &c. and persecution may design something more public and vehement; such as confiscation of goods, imprisonment, and danger of life, the most exquisite tortures, and death in the most cruel form and shape; things very disagreeable to flesh and blood, and which cannot be endured, and submitted to, by persons without a principle of grace, by one that has no root in himself. Luke calls this a time “of temptation”, or trial, as it is either way, both by private troubles, and more public persecutions: these try men’s principles and professions, and whether the truth of grace is in them or not; and where it is not in any person,

by and by he is offended;

at the cross; he shrinks back from it, does not care to take it up, and follow Christ; but drops his religion, and the profession of it; apostatises, falls away, and comes to nothing.

Matthew 13:22

Ver. 22. **He also that receiveth seed among the thorns,**

The hearer that is like to the thorny ground, on which the seed fell,

is he that heareth the word;

not a profane sinner, nor a reviler of religion, or a persecutor of the saints; but one that not only shows a love to the word, but who seems to have his heart broken under it, and by it, his conscience tender, and his life outwardly reformed; one, who besides his being a settled, diligent, understanding, and affectionate hearer of the word, and a believing receiver and professor of it, seems to have a thorough work of grace upon him, to have the fallow ground of his heart ploughed up, and to be truly contrite; the thorns being under ground, and not yet to be seen, but afterwards appear:

and the care of this world;

not the care of another world, nor a care about spiritual things in this world, nor even a proper, laudable care of the things of this present life, but an anxious and immoderate care of them; which, as thorns, is very perplexing and distressing to the persons themselves, and is what is vain and fruitless.

And the deceitfulness of riches:

in opposition to some riches, the riches of grace and glory, which have no deceit in them; and not riches themselves, bare worldly riches but the deceitfulness of them, is here taken notice of; for riches often delude, and lead persons out of the right way, out of God's way; cause them to err from the faith; they do not give the satisfaction they promise, and often do not continue, as is expected: and are as thorns, pungent to the owners of them, who pierce themselves through with many sorrows in acquiring and keeping them; and are frequently injurious to others, their fellow creatures; and in the issue are useless and unprofitable, especially with respect to the concerns of another world. Mark adds, "and the lusts of other things"; besides riches; and Luke adds, and "pleasures of this life"; meaning divers other worldly lusts and pleasures, such as the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life: which also, like thorns, are distracting and afflicting, sooner or later; are vain, and unprofitable, and lead to destruction: and these are called "the pleasures of this life", in opposition to, and distinction from the pleasures of that which is to come, which are real and lasting: the phrase is Jewish ⁷⁸⁴;

"says R. Judah, the prince, whoever takes upon him, תַּגְנִי הַלְמָהוּזָה, "the pleasures of this world",

⁷⁸⁴ Abot R. Nathan, c. 28. Vid. Kimchi & Ben Melech in Psal. xvi 5. & Eben Ezra in Psal. xix. 10.

to him are denied the pleasures of the world to come: and whoever does not take upon him "the pleasures of this world", to him are given the pleasures of the world to come."

Now these, all, and each of them,

choke the word:

by overspreading all the powers and faculties of the soul, as thorns do a field; by over topping the seed of the word, and by hiding it from the influences of the sun of righteousness, and rain of grace; and by attracting everything in the heart to themselves; and by bearing and pressing down all thought, concern, and care for the use, fruitfulness, and increase of the word.

And he becometh unfruitful:

as in such circumstances he must needs be; or if there be any show of fruit in outward respect to the word, in an historical faith of it, in an external profession, and outward reformation, "yet brings not fruit to perfection", as Luke says; these in process of time shrivel up, wither away, and come to nothing.

Matthew 13:23

Ver. 23. **But he that received seed into the good ground,**

The hearer compared to good ground into which the seed fell, is he that heareth the word and understandeth it; has a new and spiritual understanding given him, feels the power of it on his heart, enlightening and quickening him; has an application of it made to him by the Spirit of God, and can discern the worth and excellency of it, and distinguish it from all others; and, as Mark says, "receives it"; as the word of God in faith, and with the love of it, and with all readiness and meekness; and, as Luke observes, "keeps it"; holds it fast against all opposition with great struggling; will not part with it at any rate, nor depart from it in the least, nor entertain any doubt about it; but abides by it, stands fast in it, and is valiant for it: and this he does in and with "an honest and good heart"; which no man naturally has; nor can any man make his heart so: this is the work of God, and is owing to his efficacious grace. This is an heart of flesh, a new and right heart, and spirit; an heart to fear God, to love him, and to trust in him; in which Christ dwells by faith; in which the Spirit of God has his temple; and in which every grace is implanted: and such an one, as he hears with a strict, and an honest intention, and in the exercise of grace; so he holds fast the word he hears, understands and receives, with all faithfulness and honesty:

which also beareth fruit and bringeth forth, some

an hundred fold, some sixty, and some thirty:

the fruit bore, and brought forth by such an hearer, is the true fruit of grace and righteousness, and is all from Christ, under the influences of the Spirit, through the word and ordinances, as means, and issues in the glory of God; and though not brought forth in the same quantity in all, yet is of the same quality; and is brought forth, as Luke says, “with patience”: constantly, and continually, in all seasons, in old age, and even unto death; and is at last brought “to perfection”, holds, and remains unto the end.

Matthew 13:24

Ver. 24. **Another parable put he forth unto them, saying,**

Somewhat like the former, but with a different view: for whereas the design of the former was to show the different sorts of hearers that attend upon the ministry of the word, three parts in four being bad; this is to show the difference of members in churches, some being comparable to good seed, and others to tares.

The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:

by “the kingdom of heaven”, is not meant the ultimate glory of the saints in heaven, or the state of happiness in the other world; for there will be no tares there; nor the Gospel, and the ministration of it, but the Gospel dispensation, and times, and kingdom of the Messiah; or rather the Gospel visible church state, on earth, called a “kingdom”, of which Christ is king, and in which the saints are subject to him; where proper laws are made for the orderly government of it, and proper officers appointed to explain, and put those laws in execution; and which consists of various persons, united under one head, and independent of any other government: and it is styled the kingdom of heaven, in distinction from the kingdoms of this world; the subjects of it are, or should be, heaven born souls; the word, laws, and ordinances of it are from heaven; and there is some resemblance between a Gospel church state and heaven, and it is very near unto it, and is even the suburbs of it: or else the king Messiah himself is intended, who is compared to a man, a sower; and so it is explained, Mt 13:37 “he that soweth the good seed is the son of man”: which is a name and title of the Messiah, by which he is called both in the Old and New Testament; who, though the seed of the woman, yet was the son of man, as of Abraham, and David; and which denotes the truth, and yet the infirmity of his human nature: he is the sower that went about preaching the Gospel of the

kingdom, in the Jewish world, or throughout Judea and Galilee, in his own person: and who also, by the ministry of his apostles, sowed the seed of the word in the several parts of the world, which was made effectual for the beginning of a good work of grace on the souls of many; for by “his field” is meant “the world”, as appears from Mt 13:38 and means either the whole world, in which both good and bad men live and dwell; and is the field Christ is the proprietor of, both by creation, as God, and by gift, as mediator: or the church, the visible Gospel church state throughout the world; which is as a field well tilled and manured; and is Christ’s by gift, purchase, and grace: and by the good seed sown in it, are meant “the children of the kingdom”; as is said, Mt 13:38 such as have a good work begun in them, and bring forth good fruit in their lives and conversations.

Matthew 13:25

Ver. 25. **But while men slept,**

Good men, ministers, and churches; whose case this sometimes is to be asleep in a spiritual sense: and which sleepiness lies in a non-exercise of grace; in a sluggishness to and in duty; in a contentment in external exercises of religion; in lukewarmness about the cause of Christ; in an unconcernedness about sins of omission and commission; and in a willingness to continue in such a state; and which arises from a body of sin and death; from worldly cares; weariness in spiritual duties; a cessation from spiritual exercises; an absencing from spiritual company; oftentimes from outward ease, peace, and plenty, sometimes from a long expectation of the bridegroom’s coming, and the delay of it; and from its being a night season, a time of darkness and security: such a case with the church, and good men, is very dangerous, as it exposes to every sin and snare; renders them liable to lose the presence of Christ, their liveliness and comfort; and tends to poverty and leanness of soul: such are in danger of being surprised with the midnight cry; and the churches are likely to be filled with hypocrites and heretics:

his enemy came;

by whom is meant the devil, Mt 13:39 who is an enemy to Christ personally, and showed himself to be so in his infancy, by stirring up Herod to seek his life: and, when grown up, by instigating the Jews to contrive his death; which they attempted by various methods, and which, at last, he compassed by Judas, and the Scribes and Pharisees; and also to Christ mystical, to the church, and all true believers; whose adversary he is, going about,

like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour: the same came into the field, the world, and church in it;

and sowed tares among the wheat;

by “the wheat”, is meant the same with the “good seed”, the children of God, true believers in Christ; who are comparable to wheat, for the choiceness of it, that being the choicest grain, so they are the chosen of God, and precious, and the excellent in the earth: and because it dies before it rises and springs up; so the saints do, and will do, both in a spiritual and corporal sense; and because of the purity and whiteness of it, so they are pure and white, being sanctioned by the Spirit, washed in the blood of Christ, and justified by his righteousness; and because of its substance, fulness, weight, and permanence, so they are filled from Christ’s fulness, and with the fulness of God, and fruits of righteousness, and remain, and cannot be driven as the chaff is, but continue to live, because Christ their head lives; and because of its gradual increase, so they increase in spiritual light, grace, and experience; and because of the chaff that adheres to it, so sin and corruption cleave to the saints in this life; and lastly, because it needs both the flail and the fan, so believers need chastisements, afflictions, and corrections: by “the tares” sown among them, are meant “the children of the wicked one”; Satan, the enemy and adversary, as in Mt 13:38 who are to be understood, not of profane sinners; though these are the children of the devil; but of professors of religion, men either of bad principles, or of bad lives and conversations; whom Satan, by some means or another, gets into churches, and they become members thereof: at first they look like wheat, like true believers, have a show of religion, a form of godliness, an appearance of grace, but are destitute of it; and prove tares, unfruitful, unprofitable, and of no account, yea hurtful, and whose end is to be burned. **And went his way;** somewhere else, to do more mischief; and having done all he could at present here, undiscovered, not taken notice of by ministers and churches; they being all asleep, and having lost, in a great measure, the spirit of discerning. The word תַּאֲבִיבִים we render “tares”, and the Ethiopic version “thistles”, probably means the same the Jewish doctors call תַּאֲבִיבִי נֶגֶן ⁷⁸⁵; and which, they say, is a sort of wheat, and not of a different kind from it; that when it is sown it looks like wheat, and is sown for it, but is changed in the earth, both as to its nature and form, and brings forth this kind. In the generation in which

⁷⁸⁵ Misn. Kilaim, c. 1. sect. 1. & Trumot, c. 2. sect. 6. & Maimon. in ib. T. Hieros. Kilaim, fol. 26. 4. Maimon. Hilch. Kilaim, c. 3. sect. 3.

the flood was, they say ⁷⁸⁶, they sowed wheat, and the earth brought forth תַּאֲבִיבִיבִים, what we render “tares”, and bids fair to be what is here meant; and fitly expresses false professors, nominal Christians, men of degenerate principles and practices: for not what we call tares, or vetches, can be meant, which may be removed from the wheat without danger, but rather this degenerate wheat; or that wheat which is blasted, and which may be observed sometimes to grow upon the same root, and therefore cannot be taken away, without rooting up the wheat also.

Matthew 13:26

Ver. 26. **But when the blade was sprung up,**

That is, the blade of the wheat; which designs the taking up, a profession of religion on principles of grace, called a profession of faith; and when right, it springs up from, and proceeds upon a work begun in the heart: and such a profession ought to be made by all that are partakers of the grace of God; and ought to be made both verbally, by a confession of the mouth, and a declaration of the work of God upon the heart, and by deeds, by submitting to the ordinances of the Gospel; and should be sincere, and from the heart, and be visible to men, and be held fast unto the end without wavering.

And brought forth fruit;

which intends not the conversion of sinners, nor the performance of duties, nor the perfection of grace, but the first appearances of grace under a profession, such as sorrow for sin, after a godly sort, fear and reverence of God, great humility, much self-denial, ardent love to Christ, pantings and breathings after him, and communion with him, strong affection for the people of God, some exercise of faith on Christ, zeal for his cause and interest, and a concern to honour and glorify God.

Then appeared the tares also.

They were not discernible for some time when they were first sown; they looked like good seed when they first appeared among the people of God; they seemed to have the truth of grace, as others had; their blade of profession, when it sprung up, looked like that of true wheat; but were now discernible both by their unfruitfulness in their lives and conversations, and by their bad principles, which they now endeavoured to spread, to the hurt of the churches where they were: they always appeared to be what they were to God the searcher of hearts; but now, through the zeal of true converts, to which these opposed themselves, and the fruitfulness of

⁷⁸⁶ Bereshit Rabba, sect. 28. fol. 23. 4.

their lives, from which they were so very different, they became manifest to ministers and churches.

Matthew 13:27

Ver. 27. **So the servants of the householder came,**

Christ is the “householder”; the house of which he is master is the church, called the household of God, the household of faith, the family in heaven, and in earth; in which house he bears and sustains many relations, as those of a son, a priest, a master, or governor. By “the servants” that came to him, are meant, not civil magistrates, who have nothing to do in the affairs of churches; nor the angels, though these are ministering servants to Christ, and will be employed by him, in the close of time, to gather up the tares, bind them in bundles, and cast them into the fire; but the ministers of the Gospel, the servants of Christ, and of the most high God, who are made use of in planting, and sowing, and weeding his field, the church: these observing the tares, and fearing the danger the wheat was in by them, as well as troubled and surprised at the appearance and growth of them, came to him, and spread the case before him in prayer; **and said unto him,**

Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?

Their manner of address, calling him Sir, or Lord, is expressive of their reverence of him, and obedience to him; and which is said, not in word only, but in the sincerity of their hearts, and under the influence of the Spirit of God. They ascribe the field, the church, the good seed, converts that sprung up in it, and the sowing, or making of them such, all to Christ, and not any of this kind, or any part of it to themselves; though they were employed by him in tilling this field, in sowing spiritual things to the saints, and were useful to them in their profession of religion. Moreover, they intimate, that nothing but good could come from Christ; no bad seed, no tares could be of his sowing: and declare their ignorance of the rise of them; which ignorance was owing to their being asleep, when the enemy sowed them.

Matthew 13:28

Ver. 28. **He said unto them, an enemy has done this,**

This is the answer of the householder to the question of his servants. In the Greek text it is, “an enemy man”; and is so rendered in the several versions; meaning, not that the enemy was a man; for he was the devil, as in Mt 13:39 but it is an Hebraism; such as in Es 7:6, אִישׁ רָ וְאִיבֵי “the man adversary and enemy” is this wicked Haman; and signifies a certain enemy, and one indeed that is an

implacable enemy to man.

The servants said unto him, wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?

which words express the concern of the ministers of Christ for the true members of the church, comparable to wheat, lest they should receive any damage by the ill examples, and pernicious principles of evil men among them; also their detestation and abhorrence of men of wicked lives and erroneous principles; they cannot bear them which are evil; likewise, they show great regard to the glory of God, and interest of religion, and their readiness to execute any orders Christ should give them; but not willing to proceed of themselves, ask counsel and advice of him.

Matthew 13:29

Ver. 29. **But he said, nay,**

The answer is in the negative; and which, if spoken to angels, is to be understood, that they should not inflict punishments, or pour out, their vials, as yet, on formal professors, lest the righteous should share in them; and if to magistrates, the sense of it is, that they should not persecute with the sword, or put men to death for heretical opinions; but if to ministers of the word, which sense I choose, the meaning is, that not everyone suspected to be a tare, or a nominal professor, is to be removed from the communion of the church, because there is often danger in so doing:

lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them:

not that men of openly scandalous lives are to be tolerated in churches; they are to be withdrawn from, and put away; nor men of known, avowed, heretical principles; such, after the first and second admonition, are to be rejected: yet there may be such in churches, not altogether agreeable in principle and practice, whose character and situation may be such, that there is no removing them without offending some truly gracious, useful persons, in whose affections they stand, who may be tempted, by such a step, to leave their communion; and so cannot be done without a considerable prejudice to the church. The scope of the parable, and the design of our Lord in it, are chiefly to be attended to; which are to show, that a pure and perfect church cannot be expected in the present state of things; and that saints should not be immoderately uneasy, but patiently bear such exercises, until Christ’s time is come to relieve them, when the tares and chaff shall be separated from the wheat; when sinners shall not stand in the congregation

of the righteous, and there shall be no more a pricking briar, nor a grieving thorn in the house of Israel.

Matthew 13:30

Ver. 30. **Let both grow together until the harvest,**

By “the harvest”, is meant “the end of the world”, Mt 13:39 either of the Jewish world, the dissolution of their church and state, which was near; or of a man’s life, which is the end of the world to him; or rather of this present world, the system of the universe, of the material world, as to its present form and use, and of the inhabitants of it, and of time in it. Now the end of the world is compared to harvest, because the time of it is fixed and settled; though it is not known when it will be, yet it is as certain as the time of harvest; and because as that is in the summer season, in hot weather, so this will be a time of wrath, when the day of the Lord will burn like an oven; and as the harvest time is a time of hurry and labour, so will it be in the end of the world, especially with the angels, who will be gathering the elect from the four winds, and all men, to appear before the judgment seat of Christ; and as at harvest the corn is cut down, the fields cleared, and all brought home, so it will be at the end of the world; the sickle will be thrust in, and the earth reaped, the tares bound in bundles, and cast into the fire, and the wheat gathered into the garner; and as the harvest, as it falls out to be good or bad, is matter of joy or sorrow, so will the end of the world be joy to saints, who will then enter into the joy of their Lord, and be for ever with him, and sorrow to the wicked, who will then go into everlasting punishment. Until this time, wheat and tares are to “grow” together. The “wheat”, or true believers, “grow” in the exercise of grace, as of faith, hope, love, humility, &c. and in spiritual knowledge of the will of God, of the doctrines of grace, and of Christ; which growth is owing to the dews of divine grace, to the sun of righteousness shining upon them, to the gracious influences of the blessed Spirit, and to the word and ordinances as means. The “tares”, or nominal professors, may “grow” in riches, in credit, and reputation among men, and in speculative knowledge; and oftentimes so it is, that they grow worse and worse, both in doctrinal and practical wickedness: when they are ordered to “grow together”, the meaning is, not that their growth is equal, or of the same kind, nor in the same way, nor in the same things; but this only notes the time and duration of their growth: nor is this suffered and permitted, because of any love God has unto them, or any delight in, or approbation of them; but either because they are not fully ripe for ruin; or for the

exercise of the saints, and for their temporal and spiritual good; for it is entirely a tender regard to the wheat, and not to the tares, that they are ordered to grow together.

And in the time of harvest, I will say to the reapers, the angels, Mt 13:39

gather ye together first the tares;

that is, formal professors, hypocrites, and heretics; whom he will have removed out of his kingdom, his church, his field, in the world: and this order shows, that the angels will have a perfect and exact knowledge of these persons; and that their work will be to separate them from the righteous; when the churches will be pure, and without spot, or wrinkle: and this will be done first; that is, these wicked men will be first removed out of the church, before their more severe punishment takes place:

and bind them in bundles to burn them:

which denotes the power of angels over these persons, the certainty and inevitableness of their ruin, their association together, and their destruction in company with one another; which will be an aggravation of their misery, which is expressed by “burning” with fire; not material, but metaphorical; the wrath of God, which will be a consuming fire, and be everlasting and unquenchable.

But gather the wheat into my barn;

meaning the kingdom of heaven, which is as a garner or repository, in which none but wheat is put, and where it is safe, and lies together: so none but righteous, pure, and undefiled persons, are admitted into heaven; and being there, they are safe, and out of the reach of all enemies; and what adds to their happiness is, that they are together, enjoying all satiety and fulness; and are in Christ’s barn, or garner, which he has made, and prepared for their reception. The gathering of them into it designs the introduction of the saints into heaven by angels, as their souls at death, and both souls and bodies, at the last day, when their happiness will be perfect and complete.

Matthew 13:31

Ver. 31. **Another parable put he forth unto them, saying,**

As the former parable sets forth the condition of the Gospel church state until the end of the world; this expresses the small beginnings of it, and the large increase and growth of it, and its great usefulness to the saints. The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field: by “the kingdom of heaven” is meant, as before, the Gospel dispensation,

or the Gospel church state, and the ministry of the word, and the administration of ordinances in it: by the grain of mustard seed, either the Gospel, or the people of God, or the grace of God in them; and by the man that took and sowed it, the Lord Jesus Christ; and by his field, in which he sowed it, the world, or his church throughout the world.

Matthew 13:32

Ver. 32. **Which indeed is the least of all seeds,**

So mustard with the Jews ⁷⁸⁷, is called *מיני זרניב*, “a kind of seeds”; and being very small, hence *ldrxk*, “as a grain of mustard”, is often used, proverbially ⁷⁸⁸, for the least thing, as it is by Christ, Mt 17:20. Not but there are seeds lesser than this; but the meaning is, that this is one of the least of all seeds; or was the least of seeds, which were commonly known in Judea; or the very least which grew to the size this sometimes did, and as here related. Now this is designed to express the small beginnings of the Gospel dispensation, of the ministry of the word, of the grace of God in the hearts of his people, and of the small number of them at first. The Gospel, and the ministry of it were like a grain of mustard seed, little, mean, and contemptible; the author of it, Christ, was so to the Jews, in his birth, parentage, education, and outward appearance; the subject of it a crucified Christ, and salvation by him; and the doctrines out of the reach, and contrary to carnal reason; the preachers of it, were persons of very mean and low life, few in number, weak, illiterate, and despicable, and the whole world against them; the circumstances which attended the Gospel were very discouraging; it was charged with novelty, represented as contrary to common sense, and the reason of mankind, and as opening a door to licentiousness; and was followed with violent opposition and persecution, wherever it went. The grace of God, which under the ministry of the word is implanted in the hearts of the Lord’s people, is at first very small, like a grain of mustard seed; it is a day of small things; faith in Christ is very weak and low, spiritual strength small, comfort little, experience of the love of God not large, light and knowledge in the doctrines of grace but very obscure and glimmering; the church of God, which sprung up under the ministry of the word, and through the work of grace, upon the hearts of particular persons, was like the small grain of mustard seed; the persons of which it consisted were but few in number in Christ’s time, and

⁷⁸⁷ Misn. Kilaim, c. 3. sect. 2.

⁷⁸⁸ T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 31. 1. Megilla, fol. 23. 2. Nidda, fol. 66. 1.

at his ascension into heaven, and when the Gospel was first preached among the Gentiles; and those persons which laid the foundation, and were at the beginning of the Gospel church state, made a very contemptible figure, by reason of their outward poverty, and mean circumstances in the world; and on account of the severe persecutions which every where attended them; and also through the errors and heresies introduced by evil men, that crept in among them.

But when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree.

Luke says, “a great tree”, Luke 13:19 for to such a size did the mustard tree grow in the land of Judea, of which take the following instances ⁷⁸⁹.

”At Shichin there was a mustard stalk, which had three branches, and one of them was cut down, and they covered a potter’s booth with it; and found in it *של קביני של הרדל*, “three kabs of mustard seed” (elsewhere ⁷⁹⁰ it is said, nine kabs). Says R. Simeon ben Chelphetha, I have one stalk of mustard seed in my field, and I go up to it, *כְּלוֹהֲבֵרֵאשׁ הַחֲאֵנָה* “as one goes up to the top of a fig tree.”

And though the mustard tree grew to this height and size, it was reckoned among herbs, as here by Christ; for they say ⁷⁹¹,

”they do not put mustard in a field of fruits, but in a field of herbs.”

All which serve to illustrate and confirm the account here given by Christ, and alluded to; and which expresses the very large growth and increase of the Gospel, and the ministry of it; of the grace of God in the heart, and of the church of Christ, and his interest in the world: of the Gospel, and the ministry of it, as to its large spread in the world; which at first was confined to the Jews, but was afterwards published to the Gentiles, and carried through the whole world; and, in ages since, has made a considerable progress, particularly at the Reformation; and will make a much greater one, towards the end of time: and of the grace of God in the heart, which gradually increases to a full assurance of understanding of hope, and of faith, and to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: and of the church of Christ, and his interest in the world; both as to the large numbers it did consist of

⁷⁸⁹ T. Hieros. Peah, fol. 20. 2.

⁷⁹⁰ T. Bab. Cetubot, fol. 111. 2.

⁷⁹¹ Misn. Kilaim, c. 2. sect. 8.

in the times of the apostles, and since, and will more especially hereafter; for the church will fill the earth, and the kingdoms of the world will become the church, and all nations of the earth will flock unto it; the people of the Jews in general will be converted, and the fulness of the Gentiles will be brought in: as also with respect to the figure it will make through the great personages, the kings and princes of the earth, that will be in it; the great power and authority the saints will then have; the peace and prosperity that will be enjoyed by them; the spirituality, holiness, righteousness, love, and unity, there will be among them; as also the presence of God and of the Lamb, they will be favoured with; all which glory and happiness will be brought about by a plentiful effusion of the Spirit, and by the glorious appearance of Christ.

So that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof:

by “the birds of the air”, some think angels are meant, compared to “birds” for their harmlessness and innocence; for their readiness and swiftness to do the will of God; and for their warbling notes and tuneful songs of praise; and who may be called birds “of the air”, or heaven, because of their habitation: now these delight to be in the church, to be under the shadow of the Gospel ministry, and to look into the mysteries of it. Though rather, the saints and people of God are intended, who, in Scripture, are sometimes compared to particular birds; as to the eagle, the dove, and sparrow; and to birds in general, because timorous, weak, and defenceless, are exposed to danger, and wonderfully delivered, and are very subject to wander and go astray; and because of their chirpings, and singing songs of praise to their God and Redeemer; and to birds of the air or heaven, because they are heaven born souls, are partakers of the heavenly calling, and are pressing for, and soaring aloft towards the high calling of God in Christ: now the Gospel ministry, and the Gospel church state, are very useful to these; they “come” thereunto willingly, and cheerfully, deliberately, and with dependence on the grace and strength of Christ; humbly, under a sense of their own unworthiness, and yet with joy and thankfulness; heartily, and with their faces thitherwards, and they also “lodge” therein. This is what they desire, and their hearts are set upon; here they determine to be, and it is their happiness to be here; the shadow of Gospel ordinances is very delightful, very refreshing, and very fruitful to them, and under which saints dwell with great safety; and what a coming of these birds will there be hither, and a tabernacling of them herein, at the latter day! which are greatly designed in

this part of the parable.

Matthew 13:33

Ver. 33. **Another parable spake he unto them,**

To the disciples and the multitude, and which was of the same kind, to the same purpose, and relating to the same subject as the former; the spread of the Gospel, and the increase of it in the world.

The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven.

The word “leaven” is every where else used in a bad sense; and either designs immorality, as malice and wickedness, or false doctrine, such as that of the Pharisees and Sadducees: but here it seems to be taken in a good sense, and the Gospel to be compared unto it; nor for its disagreeable qualities, but on account of its small quantity; it is a little leaven that leavens the whole lump, and may express, as the grain of mustard seed does, the small beginnings of the Gospel, and its meanness in the eyes of men; and on account of its piercing, penetrating, and spreading nature: so the Gospel reaches the conscience, pierces the heart, enlightens the understanding, informs the judgment, raises and sets the affections on right objects, subdues the will, and brings down all towering thoughts, to the obedience of Christ, in particular persons; and has penetrated and made its way, under divine influence, through towns, cities, kingdoms, and nations: also on account of its heating, swelling, and assimilating nature; so the Gospel, where it takes place, warms the affections, causes the heart to burn within, inspires with zeal for God, and Christ, and the Gospel; it swells and fills churches with such as shall be saved, and assimilates the several persons it operates in, makes them like one another, one bread, one body, having like precious faith, knowledge, and experience, though in a different degree.

Which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal.

By the “three measures of meal”, are meant the elect of God; who, because of their nature and quality, are compared to meal, or fine flour; and that because of that of which it is made, wheat, to a corn of which Christ is compared, Joh 12:24 and by whose grace the saints are what they are, justified, regenerated, and sanctified; and on account of the manner it becomes so, as by grinding the wheat, sifting it when ground, and separating it from the bran; all which may express the first convictions in the conscience of awakened sinners, the grace of God in conversion, and the separation of them from the rest of the world, in the effectual calling; as also by

reason of its choiceness, purity, and goodness, the saints being chosen of God and precious, and being pure and spotless, through the grace and righteousness of Christ, and being highly valued, and had in great esteem by him; and because of their quantity, are compared to three measures of meal. The measure here designed, is the Hebrew seah, which held a gallon and an half, and three of these made an ephah; and which is often rendered by the ⁷⁹² Targumists, תלת אַיִן “three seahs”; or “measures”, the very phrase here used; and the reason why three are particularly mentioned is, because such a quantity used to be fermented and kneaded by women at one time; see Ge 18:6 and for the further illustration of this, take the following passage out of the Talmud ⁷⁹³.

”The wise men say, that three women may be employed in one lump of dough; one may knead it, another may make it into loaves, and another may bake it--and it is a tradition, בהיטני שלשת קבין, “that in wheat they use three kabs”, or “measures”, and in barley four “kabs”.

These measures, as here used parabolically, may design the small number of God’s elect; and, as some have thought, may have respect to the three then known parts of the world, where they were, or should be: by the woman that took and hid the leaven in these measures, is meant, either the church, sometimes compared to a woman in Scripture, Re 12:1 or the ministers of the Gospel, wisdom’s maidens; or rather, Jesus Christ, the wisdom of God; see Pr 9:1 and the reason why a woman is mentioned is, because it was, with the Jews, the work of women to ferment the flour, knead the dough, and make the bread: and this action of taking and covering the leaven in the meal, may denote the power of Christ, in opening the heart, and putting in the Gospel, which unless he takes in hand, and uses, is ineffectual; as also the passiveness of men, under the first workings of the Spirit of Christ upon their souls, by the Gospel; and likewise, the secret and invisible power of divine grace, operating by the ministry of the word, upon the heart.

Until the whole was leavened:

to be “leavened” by the Gospel, is to be evangelized by it, to be brought into the life and liberty of it, to a Gospel way of living by faith on Christ; to derive all peace, joy, and comfort from him, and not from any works of righteousness; and to have a man’s obedience

influenced by the love of God, so as to do it cheerfully, and without dependence on it. Now the Gospel, where it has entrance and takes place, powerfully and effectually, continues to operate more or less, as the leaven in the meal, until the whole man, soul and body, all the faculties of the soul, and members of the body, are influenced by it; and will continue with power and efficacy in the world, and church, until all the elect of God are wrought upon by it, and are brought in. There is a late ingenious interpretation ⁷⁹⁴ of this parable, which, since the word “leaven” is elsewhere always used in a bad sense, deserves consideration; according to which, this parable expresses not the spread of truth, but of error; by “the woman” is thought to be meant, the Apocalyptic woman, the woman spoken of in the Revelations, the whore of Rome, the mother of harlots; and the “leaven” which she took, the leaven of false doctrine and discipline; by her “hiding” it, the private, secret, artful methods, false doctrines, and bad discipline were introduced, and the gradual progress thereof; and by the “three measures of meal”, the bishops and doctors of the church, among whom this leaven was spread, and who were fermented with it; particularly those three bishops of Rome at first, Sosymus, John the faster, and Boniface the third; which by degrees spread itself, until the whole Christian world was affected with it; and for a long time lay hid and undiscovered, till the Lord raised up Wyclif, John Huss, Jerom of Prague, Luther, and other reformers. The reader may choose which interpretation he likes best.

Matthew 13:34

Ver. 34. **All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude,**

In the hearing of his disciples, whilst in the ship, the multitude being on the shore,

in parables;

in the four foregoing ones;

and without a parable spake he not unto them:

not that he never had preached but in a parabolical way unto them, or that he never did afterwards use any other way of speaking; for it is certain, that both before and after, he delivered himself plainly, and without figures: but the meaning is, that in that sermon, and at that time, he thought fit to make use of no other method, as appears from the many other parables he afterwards delivered; and though he explained the

⁷⁹² Targum Onketos & Jarchi, in Exod. xvi. 36. & Targum Jon. in Ruth ii. 17.

⁷⁹³ T. Hieros. Pesachim, fol. 30. 2.

⁷⁹⁴ Vid. Teelman. Specimen Explic. Parabolarum, p. 64, 65, 66, 67, 68.

meaning of some of them to his disciples, at their request, yet he dismissed the multitude without any explication of them.

Matthew 13:35

Ver. 35. **That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet,**

Not Isaiah, as some copies in the times of Jerom read, but Asaph, who is called Asaph the seer, 2Ch 29:30 which is all one as a prophet; vision is one sort of prophecy⁷⁹⁵; and there was such a thing as prophesying with harps, psalteries and cymbals, as well as in other ways, and with which Asaph and his sons are said to prophesy, 1Ch 25:1 so that he is very rightly called a prophet by the evangelist, who is cited, as

saying, Ps 78:2

I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world:

which Psalm, though a history of the dealings of God with the people of Israel, and of the many deliverances wrought for them, yet as the⁷⁹⁶ Jewish writers observe, contain many things in it, expressed in a parabolical and enigmatical way; such as God's furnishing a table in the wilderness, kindling a fire against Jacob, opening the doors of heaven, giving the corn of heaven, and angels' food, and delivering his strength into captivity; and besides, the very historical facts recorded of the people of Israel, were types of things future under the Gospel dispensation: now as Asaph, by divine inspiration, delivered these parables and dark sayings, so Christ expressed the Gospel, and the mysteries of it, in a parabolical way, which were hid in God, and under the shadows of the law; and so were kept secret from the beginning of the world, and from the multitude, though now made known to the apostles, and by them to others, according to the will of God.

Matthew 13:36

Ver. 36. **Then Jesus sent the multitude away,**

That his disciples might have the opportunity of conversing with him alone, about the sense of the parables he had delivered; and that he might instruct them by some others hereafter mentioned.

And went into the house:

left the ship in which he had been preaching to the multitude, came on shore, and returned to the house he

came out of, Mt 13:1

and his disciples came to him;

and being alone, make an humble request to him,

saying, declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field:

by which they mean, not a rehearsal of it, but an explication of the sense and meaning of it: they ask nothing about the parables of the mustard seed and leaven, either because they better understood them; or because there were some things very remarkable and striking in this, which made them very desirous to be particularly informed of the several parts of it, and their meaning.

Matthew 13:37

Ver. 37. **He answered and said unto them,**

Being very ready to answer their request, and willing to communicate spiritual knowledge to them; thereby showing great condescension, and humility in himself, and great affection to them:

he that soweth the good seed, is the son of man;

he that is signified by the man that sowed good seed in his field, is "the son of man"; by whom he means himself, the seed of the woman; and the son of David; who being anointed with the Holy Ghost without measure, went about Judea and Galilee, preaching the everlasting Gospel, to the conversion of sinners, thereby making them good seed; though this may be understood of him, as including his apostles and ministers, whom he makes use of as instruments for the good of souls, by preaching the Gospel.

Matthew 13:38

Ver. 38. **The field is the world,**

That which is represented by "the field", in which the good seed is sown, is not only the land of Judea, where Christ preached in person, but the whole world, into which the apostles were afterwards sent; or the church of Christ, in the several parts of the world:

the good seed are the children of the kingdom:

they which are designed by the good seed, are such, for whom the kingdom of heaven is prepared, to whom it is bequeathed, and who are appointed to it; who are possessed of the kingdom of grace here, and are heirs of the kingdom of glory; and have both a meetness for it, and a right unto it, being the children of God by adoption, and that appearing by regeneration:

but the tares are the children of the wicked one:

the persons intended by "the tares", are such professors of religion, as both by their principles and practices,

⁷⁹⁵ R. David Kimchi, Shorash. rad. hzx.

⁷⁹⁶ Aben Ezra & Kirachi in loc.

manifestly show that they are of their father the devil; they resemble and imitate him, and do his works; and plainly declare, that they were never born of God, and are in no better state, though under a profession, than openly profane and immoral persons; and are more hurtful and scandalous to the interest of Christ, than such are.

Matthew 13:39

Ver. 39. **The enemy that sowed them is the devil,**

He that is designed by the enemy, who sowed the tares in the field among the wheat, is no other than the devil; the enemy of Christ, of mankind in general, of God's elect in particular, and the accuser of the brethren; and his getting of hypocrites and heretics into churches, is no small proof of his implacable enmity to Christ and his interest; and shows what an adversary he is to the peace, comfort, and fruitfulness of the churches of Christ.

The harvest is the end of the world;

that which is meant by "the harvest", until which time wheat and tares, good and bad men, under a profession of religion, are to be together, is "the end of the world"; meaning either the day of wrath and vengeance upon the Jewish nation; when those that truly believed in Christ were separated from the rest, and that hypocritical generation of men were utterly destroyed; or else the day of judgment, the great and last day, when the heavens and the earth, and all that is therein, shall be burnt up; when the righteous will enter into life, and the wicked go into everlasting punishment:

and the reapers are the angels;

the persons signified by "the reapers", who shall put in the sickle, cut down the tares, bind them in bundles, and cast them into the fire, and who shall gather the wheat into the barn; that is, who shall be the executors of God's wrath, upon wicked professors of religion, and who shall be the means of introducing the saints into the heavenly kingdom, are "the angels"; the holy and elect angels, who are the ministers of Christ, and ministering servants to them, who are the heirs of salvation; and are opposite to all secret and open enemies of Christ and his people; and will be employed in the end of time, against the wicked, and for the righteous.

Matthew 13:40

Ver. 40. **As therefore the tares are gathered,**

As it is represented in the parable, that in the time of harvest, the tares shall be gathered out from the wheat first; and being bound in bundles, shall be

burnt in the fire,

prepared for that purpose,

so shall it be in the end of this world;

hypocritical and heretical men, and all formal professors, shall be gathered out from among the saints, and the several churches, among whom they have been; and shall be together cast into everlasting burnings, prepared for the devil and his angels, whose children they are.

Matthew 13:41

Ver. 41. **The Son of man shall send forth his angels,**

Meaning himself, whose ministers the angels are; who wait upon him, and are at his beck and command; even the thousand thousands that minister unto him; these will be sent forth by his orders, into the several parts of the world, where he has any churches, or an interest;

and they shall gather out of his kingdom:

the Gospel church, over which Christ is king, where he rules and governs in the hearts of his people; and who are cheerfully and willingly obedient to his laws, under the influence of his Spirit and grace: but all who are in the visible Gospel church state, are not such; some are wicked and rebellious, and though they are suffered to continue, yet not always; for if not removed by censures and excommunications, they will be at last by angels; who will separate them from the saints:

even all things that offend;

who are scandals to Christ, his church, and Gospel, by their wicked principles, or infamous practices; and who give offence, not only to God, and his righteous law, but lay stumbling blocks in the way of the children of God, and are the authors of divisions and offences among them:

and them that do iniquity;

that do nothing else but iniquity; and who, though they profess to be religious persons, are secretly, or openly, workers of iniquity; and are even doing iniquity, in and whilst they are professing religion.

Matthew 13:42

Ver. 42. **And shall cast them into a furnace of fire,**

Not a material, but a metaphorical one; denoting the wrath of God, which shall fall upon wicked men, and abide upon them to all eternity: which is sometimes called hell fire, sometimes a lake which burns with fire and brimstone; and here a furnace of fire, expressing the vehemency and intensesness of divine wrath, which will be intolerable; in allusion either to Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace, or as some think, to the custom of

burning persons alive in some countries; or rather, to the burning of chaff and stubble, and the stalks of any unprofitable things that grew in the field ⁷⁹⁷, for the heating of furnaces, and is the very language of the Jews, who used to compare hell to a furnace; so Ge 15:17 is paraphrased by them ⁷⁹⁸.

”And behold the sun set, and there was darkness; and lo! Abraham saw until the seats were set, and the thrones cast down; and lo! “hell”, which is prepared for the wicked in the world to come, כַּתּוּרָא “as a furnace”, which sparks and flames of fire surrounded; רְבִנּוּה “in the midst of which”, the wicked fell, because they rebelled against the law, in their lifetime.”

Which is expressed in much the same language, and conveys the same ideas as here; and no wonder is it that it follows,

there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth;

declaring the remorse of conscience, the tortures of mind, the sense of inexpressible pain, and punishment, the wicked shall feel; also their furious rage and black despair.

Matthew 13:43

Ver. 43. **Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun,**

The time referred to is, when the tares shall be separated from the wheat: when they that offend and do iniquity, shall be gathered out of Christ’s kingdom; when the wicked shall be cast into hell: then the “righteous”, not who are so merely in their own apprehensions, and in the judgment of others; nor by their obedience, legal or evangelical; but who are made so, by the righteousness of Christ imputed to them: these, though they have been in this world loaded with reproaches, and attended with many afflictions and persecutions; and have been despised for their poverty and meanness, and want of outward glory, honour, riches, and prosperity; shall now “shine forth” in the robe of Christ’s righteousness, in perfect holiness of nature, in all felicity and prosperity of soul; and in the shining dazzling robes of glory, incorruption, and immortality, on their bodies; even

as the sun,

having no spot in them, or upon them, and without any clouds of darkness: they will be as Christ himself, the sun of righteousness, with whom, and in whose glory

⁷⁹⁷ Misn. Sabbath. c. 3. sect. 1. & Maimon, & Bartenora in ib.

⁷⁹⁸ Hieros. Targum in Gen. xv. 17.

they shall appear, both in soul and body,

in the kingdom of their father; meaning either the same with the kingdom of Christ, the Father’s and his, being one and the same; or as distinct from Christ’s, see Mt 13:41 the church, and the government of it in this world, in all ages of time, and especially in the latter day, and during the thousand years, Christ and his saints shall reign together, may be peculiarly called the kingdom of Christ; when it will be delivered to the Father, and God shall be all in all: so that the ultimate glory may, though not to the exclusion of the Son, be styled the kingdom of the Father; of God, who is the Father of Christ and of his people; and which is observed, to assure the saints of their interest in it, right unto it, and certain enjoyment of it. Some copies read, “the kingdom of heaven”. Much the same images, here made use of, to set forth the glory of the saints, both in soul and body, in the world to come, are expressed by the Jews.

”The faces of the “righteous”, they say, ⁷⁹⁹ in time to come, shall be hmxl twmwd, “like to the sun”, and moon, to the stars and planets, and lightnings, and lilies, and to the lamp of the sanctuary.”

And elsewhere ⁸⁰⁰ they observe, that

”God in time to come, will beautify the body of “the righteous”, as the beauty of the first man, when he entered into paradise, according to Isa 58:11 and that the soul, whilst in its dignity, shall be sustained with the superior light, and be clothed with it; and when it shall enter into the body hereafter, it shall enter with that light; and then shall the body shine, כְּזוֹהַר הַרְקִי, “as the brightness of the firmament”: as is said in Da 12:3.

And a little after ⁸⁰¹ it is said, that when

”the soul goes out, the body is left, which shall be there built again, כְּנֹהַר דְּשִׁמְשָׁא, “as the light of the sun”, and as the brightness of the firmament.

Who hath ears to hear, let him hear;

and seriously consider of the several things said in this parable, concerning the wheat and tares, the righteous and the wicked, as being matters of the greatest moment and importance.

Matthew 13:44

⁷⁹⁹ Vajikra Rabba, fol. 170. 1. Siphre apud. Ceseph. Misna in Maimon. Hilch. Teshuba, c. 9.

⁸⁰⁰ Midrash haunealam apud Zohar in Gen. fol. 69. 1.

⁸⁰¹ lb. fol. 70. 1. Vid. Midrash Tillim. in Psal. xi. apud Galatin. de Arcan. Cathol. ver. 1. 12. c. 6. p. 712.

Ver. 44. **Again the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure,**

By which is meant, not eternal life, the incorruptible inheritance, riches of glory, treasure in heaven; nor Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and all the riches of grace and glory; but the Gospel, which is a treasure consisting of rich truths, comparable to gold, silver, and precious stones; of the most valuable blessings, and of exceeding great, and precious promises; and reveals the riches of God, of Christ, and of the other world; and is a treasure unsearchable, solid, satisfying, and lasting: this is said to be

hid in a field.

The Gospel was in some measure hid, under the former dispensation, from the Old Testament saints; and for a long time was hid from the Gentile world; and is entirely hid from them that are lost, who are blinded by the god of this world; and even from the elect of God themselves, before conversion: this is sometimes said to be hid in God, in his thoughts, counsels, and purposes, and in the covenant of his grace; and sometimes in Christ; who is the storehouse of truth, as well as of grace; and may be thought to be hid under the Mosaic economy, in the types and shadows of the ceremonial law: but here "the field" means the Scriptures, in which the Gospel lies hid; and therefore these are to be searched into for it, as men seek and search for silver and hid treasures, by digging into mines, and in the bowels of the earth:

the which when a man hath found;

either with or without the use of means, purposely attended to, in order to find it; such as reading, hearing, prayer, and meditation: for sometimes the Gospel, and the spiritual saving knowledge of it, are found, and attained to, by persons accidentally, with respect to themselves, though providentially, with respect to God; when they had no desire after it, or searched for it, and thought nothing about it; though by others it is come at, in a diligent use of the above means:

he hideth;

which is to be understood not in an ill sense, as the man hid his talent in a napkin, and in the earth; but in a good sense, and designs his care of it; his laying it up in his heart, that he might not lose it, and that it might not be taken away from him: and

for joy thereof;

for the Gospel, when rightly understood, brings good tidings of great joy, to sensible sinners;

goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth the

field:

which is not to be interpreted literally and properly; though a man that knows the worth and value of the Bible, rather than be without one, would part with all his worldly substance for one; but figuratively, and denotes the willingness of such souls, who are led into the glory, fulness, and excellency of the word of God, the scriptures of truth, and of the immense treasure of the Gospel therein, to part with all that has been, or is dear unto them; with their sins, and self-righteousness; with their good names and characters; their worldly substance, and life itself, for the sake of the Gospel, and their profession of it: and may also design the use of all means, to gain a larger degree of light and knowledge in the Gospel. It seems by this parable, according to the Jewish laws, that not the finder of a treasure in a field, but the owner of the field, had the propriety in it; when it should seem rather, that it ought to be divided. Such that have ability and leisure, may consult a controversy in Philostratus⁸⁰², between two persons, the buyer and seller of a field; in which, after the purchase, a treasure was found, when the seller claimed it as his; urging, that had he known of it, he would never have sold him the field: the buyer, on the other hand, insisted on its being his property; alleging that all was his which was contained in the land bought by him.

Matthew 13:45

Ver. 45 & 46. **Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man,**

This parable may be understood of Christ's seeking, finding, and purchasing his elect: for, certain it is, that he has sought after them; which implies, that they were lost and going astray; expresses his great love to them, value for them, and desire after them; in doing which, he took much pains, and used much diligence: and certain it also is, that he finds them in redemption, and in effectual calling; and that they are to him a pearl of great price; as very precious to God, so highly esteemed of by Christ, as his portion, his inheritance, and his jewels. He has also parted with all he had for the sake of these persons; he became poor, emptied himself of everything, even gave himself a ransom for them, and so made a purchase of them, with the price of his own blood: though to this sense it may be objected, that it does not seem so agreeable, that Christ should be compared to a merchant man, which better suits with those that deal with him, than as he is concerned with them; nor does he seek after any other than his elect:

⁸⁰² De Vita Apollonii, lib. 2. c. 15

whereas this merchant man is said to be

seeking goodly pearls;

any pearls that were so: nor is Christ's finding his elect a chance business; nor have they any intrinsic excellency in them, to denominate them pearls, but by his grace. The more common interpretation of it is, that it designs a sensible sinner, seeking after the true way of salvation, and finding Christ, and parting with all for him: such a man is a spiritual merchant, who trades in foreign parts, and in things of worth and value; and such an one seeks after a variety of things, which at first sight seem "goodly", in order to obtain salvation by; as civility, morality, a legal righteousness, fasting, watchings, prayer, a profession of religion, and a submission to external ordinances; but at length finds Christ,

the pearl of great price:

who is of an unspeakable brightness and glory, of intrinsic worth and value; who is enriching to those that possess him, and precious to them that believe; and of such a price, that no valuable consideration can be given for him: wherefore such a soul is willing to part with all for him; with sinful self, and righteous self; and with the honours, riches, and profits of this world; and buy him, his grace and righteousness, without money, and without price. Though I rather think, that in connection and agreement with the other parables, this is to be understood of such, who are seeking after knowledge in every branch of it, natural, moral, and spiritual; and so may be compared to a "merchant man, seeking goodly pearls"; and who find the Gospel, and prefer it to everything else.

Who when he had found one pearl of great price: for such who seek after wisdom and knowledge in the use of proper means, are like merchant men, that trade abroad, and for things of value; and these, under divine direction, find in the Scriptures, and through the ministry of the word, and by prayer and study, the truth.

**THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW
CHAPTER XIV**

1 Herod's opinion of Christ. 3 Wherefore John Baptist was beheaded. 13 Jesus departeth into a desert place : 15 where he feedeth five thousands men with five loaves and two fishes : 22 he walketh on the sea to his disciples : 34 and landing at Gennesaret, healeth the sick by the touch of the hem of his garment.

Matthew 14

[1] At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus,

[2] And said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.

[3] For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife.

[4] For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her.

[5] And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet.

[6] But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod.

[7] Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask.

[8] And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger.

[9] And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her.

[10] And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison.

[11] And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother.

[12] And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus.

[13] When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities.

[14] And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.

[15] And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals.

[16] But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat.

[17] And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.

[18] He said, Bring them hither to me.

[19] And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.

[20] And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.

- [21] And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.
- [22] And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.
- [23] And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.
- [24] But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.
- [25] And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.
- [26] And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.
- [27] But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.
- [28] And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.
- [29] And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.
- [30] But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.
- [31] And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?
- [32] And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.
- [33] Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.
- [34] And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret.
- [35] And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased;
- [36] And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.

JOHN GILL'S COMMENTARY ON MATTHEW CHAPTER XIV

Matthew 14:1

Ver. 1. **At that time Herod the tetrarch,**

Not Herod the Great, in whose reign Christ was born, and who slew the infants of Bethlehem, but his son; this

was, as the Jewish chronologer ⁸⁰³ rightly observes,

“Herod Antipater, whom they call תִּיתְרָקִי “the tetrarch”; the son of Herod the First, and brother of Archelaus, and the third king of the family of Herod.”

And though he is here called a “tetrarch”, he is in Mark 6:14 called a king: the reason of his being styled a “tetrarch” was this; his father Herod divided his large kingdom into four parts, and bequeathed them to his sons, which was confirmed by the Roman senate: Archelaus reigned in Judea in his stead; upon whose decease, that part was put under the care of a Roman governor; who, when John the Baptist began to preach, was Pontius Pilate; this same Herod here spoken of, being “tetrarch” of Galilee, which was the part assigned him; and his brother Philip “tetrarch” of Ituraea, and of the region of Trachonitis; and Lysanias, “tetrarch” of Abilene, Luke 3:1 the word “tetrarch”: signifying one that has the “fourth” part of government: and in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel, he is called “one of the four princes”; and in the Arabic version, “a prince of the fourth part”; and in the Persic, a “governor of the fourth part of the kingdom”. The “time” referred to, was after the death of John the Baptist; and when Christ had been for a good while, and in many places, preaching and working miracles; the particular instant which respect is had unto, is the sending forth of the twelve disciples to preach and work miracles; and which might serve the more to spread the fame of Christ, and which reached the court of Herod; who, it is said here,

heard of the fame of Jesus:

what a wonderful preacher he was, and what mighty things were done by him.

Matthew 14:2

Ver. 2. **And said unto his servants,**

Those of his household, his courtiers, with whom he more familiarly conversed; to these he expressed his fears, that it might be true what was suggested by the people, and he was ready to believe it himself;

this is John the Baptist:

some copies add, “whom I have beheaded”, as in Mark 6:16 the guilt of which action rose in his mind, lay heavy on him, and filled him with horror and a thousand fears:

he is risen from the dead;

which if he was a Sadducee, as he is thought to be, by

⁸⁰³ David Ganz. Tzemach David, par. 1. fol. 25. 2. and so in Juchasin, fol. 142. 2.

comparing Mt 16:6 with Mark 8:15 was directly contrary to his former sentiments, and was extorted from him by his guilty conscience; who now fears, what before he did not believe; and what he fears, he affirms; concluding that John was raised from the dead, to give proof of his innocence, and to revenge his death on him:

and therefore mighty works do show themselves in him,

or “are wrought by him”; for though he wrought no miracles in his lifetime, yet, according to a vulgar notion, that after death men are endued with a greater power, Herod thought this to be the case; or that he was possessed of greater power, on purpose to punish him for the murder of him; and that these miracles which were wrought by him, were convincing proofs of the truth of his resurrection, and of what he was able to do to him, and what he might righteously expect from him.

Matthew 14:3

Ver. 3. **For Herod had laid hold on John,**

By his servants, whom he sent to apprehend him:

and bound him; laid him in chains, as if he was a malefactor;

and put him in prison, in the castle of Machaerus ⁸⁰⁴, **for Herodias’s sake;**

who was angry with him, had a bitter quarrel against him, and by whose instigation all this was done; who was **his brother Philip’s wife.**

This Herodias was the daughter of Aristobulus, son to Herod the Great ⁸⁰⁵, and brother to Philip, and to this Herod; so that she was niece to them both; and first married the one, and then the other, whilst the former was living. Philip and this Herod were both sons of Herod the Great, but not by the same woman; Philip was born of Cleopatra of Jerusalem, and Herod Antipas of Malthace, a Samaritan ⁸⁰⁶; so that Philip was his brother by his father’s side, but not by his mother’s; the Evangelist Mark adds, “for he had married her”: the case was this, Herod being sent for to Rome, called at his brother Philip’s by the way, where he fell into an amorous intrigue with his wife, and agreed, upon his return, to take her with him and marry her; as he accordingly did, and divorced his own wife, who was daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia Petraea; which occasioned a war between Herod and his wife’s father, in which the former was beaten ⁸⁰⁷,

804 Joseph. Antiqu. 1. 18. c. 7.

805 Ib. c. 6.

806 Joseph. Antiqu. 1. 18. c. 6. de Bello Jud. l. 1. c. 28. sect. 7.

807 Joseph. Antiqu. 1. 18. c. 6.

Matthew 14:4

Ver. 4. **For John said unto him,**

John having heard of this incestuous marriage, went to Herod, and reprov'd him to his face for it; and, as Luke says, “for all the evils he had done”, Luke 3:19 for he was a very wicked man, and guilty of many flagitious crimes: John, in so doing, showed his zeal for holiness, his hatred of sin, his courage and faithfulness in reprov'ing thus freely so great a man; and made it manifest, that he came in the spirit of Elijah: what he said to him was, **it is not lawful for thee to have her**, being forbidden, Le 18:16 for though by another law it was right to marry a brother’s wife, after his decease, when he left no issue, yet this was not the case here; Philip was now living, and, had he been dead, such a marriage would have been unlawful, because there was issue; she had a daughter, who afterwards is said to dance before Herod; and besides, he himself had another wife, whom he put away; so that his sin was a very aggravated and complicated one: lying with a brother’s wife, was one of those sins which, according to the Jewish ⁸⁰⁸ canons, deserved cutting off, or death by the hand of God. Josephus ⁸⁰⁹ gives another reason of the imprisonment and death of John, that Herod feared that the people of the Jews, through his means, would be moved to sedition, and revolt from his government; which might be what Herodias suggested to him, or what he gave out himself, to cover the true cause of his proceedings: but the true reason is, what is here given, and is to be confirmed by the testimony of Jewish writers. One of their chronologers ⁸¹⁰ delivers the account in these express words:

“Herod Antipater was a very wicked and pernicious man, many of the wise men of Israel he slew with the sword; and he took to wife, his brother Philip’s wife, whilst he was living; and because John the high priest (for so through mistake they call him) hz le wxykwh “reprov'd him for this”; (see Luke 3:19) he slew him with the sword, with many of the wise men of Israel.”

And, says their historian ⁸¹¹,

“also he, Herod, slew John, because he said unto him, it is forbidden thee to take the wife of Philip, and he slew him; this is that John that practised baptism.”

808 Misn. Ceritot, c. 1. sect. 1.

809 Antiqu. lss. 18. c. 6.

810 Ganz. Tzemach David, par. 1. fol. 25. 2.

811 Joseph. Gorionides, 1. 5. c. 45.

Matthew 14:5

Ver. 5. **And when he would have put him to death,**

As soon as he apprehended him, and put him into prison; being provoked by his reproving him, and being stirred up by Herodias, who was greatly incensed and enraged, and would have killed him herself, but could not, being hindered by Herod: who, though he had a good will and strong inclination to take away his life, yet what with fearing the terror of his own conscience, and the reverence and respect he had for John, as a good man; and especially for the reason here given, he did not do it, for

he feared the multitude:

not God, but the multitude; and these, not only the large number of people that attended on John's ministry, and were baptized by him, and became his disciples, but the generality of the people, the whole body of the Jewish nation. So God is pleased oftentimes to restrain the wickedness of princes, by the fear of their subjects:

because they counted him as a prophet;

a holy good man, and who was sent of God; they respected him as such, believing him to be a true and real prophet, and treated him with honour and reverence, suitable to his character; wherefore Herod was afraid, should he take away his life, that the people would mutiny, rise up against him, and revolt from him. In what esteem John was with the people of the Jews in general, may be learned from the character Josephus gives of him, as a good man; who stirred up the Jews to the practice of virtue, especially piety and justice; which made the common people fond of him and his doctrine; and who were of opinion, that the defeat of Herod's army, which followed the death of John, was a just judgment of God upon him for it⁸¹².

Matthew 14:6

Ver. 6. **But when Herod's birthday was kept,**

The birthdays of princes, both of their coming into the world, and accession to the throne of government, were kept by the Gentiles; as by the Egyptians, Ge 40:20 and by the⁸¹³ Persians, and Romans⁸¹⁴, and other nations, but not by the Jews; who reckon these among the feasts of idolaters.

“These (say they⁸¹⁵ are the feasts of idolaters; the “Calends”, and the “Saturnalia”, the time kept in

memory of subduing a kingdom (or when a king takes possession of it, the day of his accession), יוֹם גְּבוּיָא שֶׁל מַלְכִימָ “and the birthday of kings” (when they are made and crowned, the day of coronation), and the day of birth, and the day of death.”

And it is a question, whether this day, that was kept, was the day of Herod's natural birth, or of his civil government, being his accession, or coronation day: and it might also be a question, whether it was the then present Herod's birthday, or whether it was not his father Herod's, was it not that Mark says, Mark 6:21 it was his birthday; since it is the latter the poet⁸¹⁶ refers to, as kept by Jews, when he says, “At cum Herodis venere dies”; and the old Scholiast upon him observes, that

“Herod reigned over the Jews in Syria, in the times of Augustus; therefore the Herodians kept Herod's birthday, as also the sabbath, on which day they set up candles in the windows lighted, and encircled with violets.”

This they did, believing him to be the Messiah: and it is further to be observed, that the word here used, is said⁸¹⁷ to be proper to the dead, and not to the living; and that he that uses it of the living, speaks very inaccurately: but however, it was a festival, and a time of great mirth and jollity; and a proper opportunity offered to Herodias, to execute her malicious designs against John the Baptist; for at this time,

the daughter of Herodias danced before them:

in the original text it is, “in the midst”, in the middle of the hall; or in the midst of the company, the lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee, for whom Herod made a supper, Mark 6:21 and the Syriac renders it קִדְמָ מִיכָא “before the guests”. Music and dancing were usual at such entertainments, they were the common appendages of a feast⁸¹⁸: the daughter of Herodias, who danced before the company for their diversion, whether alone, or with others, was very probably Salome⁸¹⁹, whom she had by her former husband; and therefore is called, not the daughter of Herod, but of Herodias:

and pleased Herod;

and as Mark adds, “and them that sat with him”; so that the pleasure he had did not arise merely from the respect and honour shown to him and his birthday, by

812 Antiqu. 1. 18. c. 6.

813 Herodot. l. 1. c. 133. & 9. c. 109.

814 Plin. Ep. 1. 10. ep. 61.

815 Misn. Avoda Zara, c. 1. sect. 3.

816 Persius, Satyr. 5. prope finem.

817 Ammonius, peri omoiwn &c. in lit.

818 Alex. ab Alex. Genial. Dier. l. 2. c. 25.

819 Joseph. Antiqu. l. 18. c. 6.

her appearing with so much cheerfulness on this occasion before him; who had taken her father's wife from him, and defiled her mother; but from the airs, gestures, and motions of the lady in dancing; which were so extremely fine and regular, that she gave wonderful satisfaction and delight to Herod, and the whole company.

Matthew 14:7

Ver. 7. **Whereupon he promised with an oath,**

On account of her fine dancing, and being extremely pleased with it himself; and the more, that it gave such pleasure to the whole court: he first promised her,

to give her whatsoever she would ask;

and then repeating it, he confirmed it with an oath; adding, as Mark says, that he would give it her, even "to the half of his kingdom": a way of speaking used by princes, when they give full power to persons to ask what they will of them; and to express their great munificence and liberality; signifying, let it be ever so great, or cost what it will, though as much as half a kingdom comes to, it shall be granted; see Es 5:3. A very foolish promise, and a rash oath these, which were made upon such a consideration, as only a fine dance. If she, as Theophylact observes, had asked for his head, would he have given it her? And if he swore by his head, which was a common form of swearing with the Jews⁸²⁰, she very appropriately, though unjustly, as Dr. Lightfoot observes, answers to him; as you have sworn by your head, give me John Baptist's head.

Matthew 14:8

Ver. 8. **And she being before instructed of her mother,**

What request to make; for as Mark says, "she went forth" to her mother immediately, as soon as she had received the king's promise, and took advice of her, what she should ask; who bid her ask for the head of John the Baptist; and accordingly she went in, "straightway with haste unto the king", as the same evangelist observes, to take him at his word, and whilst he was in the mood; being urged and hastened on by her mother, who was eager to satisfy her revenge on John; and said,

give me here John Baptist's head in a charger:

she desires his head, and this to be brought to her in a large dish, that her mother might be sure of his death; and have an opportunity of insulting that mouth and tongue, that had spoke against her incestuous marriage: and she desires to have it given "here", in that very place, at that

very time, where, and while the company was together, who were witnesses of the king's promise and oath; and this she did, lest when the festival was over, and he was out of his cups, he should repent of his folly and rashness. The mother and daughter seem to be much alike, both for lasciviousness, revenge, and cruelty: and if what the historian says⁸²¹ be true, that this same person Salome, the daughter of Herodias, as she walked over a river which was frozen in the winter season, the ice broke, and she fell in, and the pieces of ice cut off her head; the "lex talionis", the law of retaliation, was righteously executed on her.

Matthew 14:9

Ver. 9. **And the king was sorry,**

As he might be upon many accounts; partly on account of John, whom, notwithstanding his freedom in reproving him, he had a respect; and partly on his own account, his conscience dictating to him that it was an evil action, and would leave a brand of perpetual infamy upon him; as also on account of the people, who were so much affected to John, lest they should make an insurrection, and rebel against him; and likewise, because it was reckoned an ill omen with the Romans, to take away life on that day they received their own; and therefore carefully abstained, on such days, from executions.

Nevertheless for his oath's sake;

that he might not be guilty of perjury, chose rather to commit murder; though it would have been no iniquity in him, to have acted contrary to such a rash promise, and wicked oath; which would have been better to have been broke, than kept;

and them which sat with him at meat;

lest he should be thought by them fickle and inconstant, and not a man of his word, and who had no regard to an oath: or it may be, they, either to curry favour with Herodias, or out of ill will they might bear to John; or in great respect to the damsel, who had so well pleased them with her dancing; instead of dissuading him from it, pressed him much to perform his promise: and therefore,

he commanded it to be given her;

in the form and manner she requested it. Some have thought, that the whole of this affair was a concerted scheme; and that Herod himself was in it, though he pretended to be sorry and uneasy, having fixed on this season as a convenient time for it; and chose to have it

⁸²⁰ Misn. Sanhedrim, c. 3. sect 2. T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 3. 1. Derech Eretz, c. 6. fol. 18. 2.

⁸²¹ Nicephorus, Hist. l. 1. c. 20.

done in this way, and in so public a manner, to lessen the odium of it; or otherwise, it is not easy to account for his extravagant promise, and his punctual performance of it.

Matthew 14:10

Ver. 10. **And he sent,.... “An executioner”**,

as in Mark 6:27 where the Latin word “speculator”; or as it is sometimes written “spiculator”, is used; and is the name of an officer concerned in executions, and particularly in beheading of persons; and so is used by Latin writers.

“In a civil war (says ⁸²² Seneca), a servant hid his master that was proscribed; and when he had fitted his rings for himself, and put on his clothes, he met “speculatoribus”, the “speculators”; he told them he desired nothing, but that they would perform their orders, and immediately stretched out his neck.”

And the same writer elsewhere ⁸²³ speaks of a soldier that was condemned by Piso, on suspicion of murdering his fellow soldier;

“Who was had without the camp, and as soon as he stretched out his neck, he, who was thought to be killed, suddenly appeared; upon which the centurion that had the management of the execution, ordered “speculatorem”, the “speculator”, to put up his sword, and returned the condemned person to Piso.”

The word is also used by the Jewish doctors, and in the same sense: take the following instance among many ⁸²⁴.

“R. Ishmael said to R. Simeon ben Gamaliel (when they were both apprehended, in order to be executed), brother, there was a man ready to receive his blow, and they entreated לאפקלטור, “the speculator”: one said, I am a priest, the son of an high priest, slay me first, that I may not see the death of my companion; and the other said to him, I am a prince, the son of a prince, slay me first, that I may not see the death of my companion: he replied unto them, cast lots; and they cast lots, and the lot fell on R. Simeon ben Gamaliel; immediately he took a sword, “and cut off his

head””

And as this word is often used by them ⁸²⁵ for an executioner, so פִּקְוֵלָא “specula” is often made mention of by them ⁸²⁶, as a sort of punishment by death: and such an officer was sent by Herod, to inflict this punishment upon John; who accordingly executed it, and beheaded John in the prison; that is, of Machoeras, where he lay, without giving him a hearing, or allowing him to speak for himself, or with his friends: and which was done in this private manner, partly for dispatch, and partly on account of the people; who it might have been feared, had the execution been public and known, would have rose and rescued him.

Matthew 14:11

Ver. 11 **And his head was brought in a charger,**

By the executioner that cut it off, to Herod, whilst he and his guests were at table; by which it should seem, that the prison was very near; and it is not improbable, that it was the castle of Macheerus that Herod made this entertainment in:

and given to the damsel;

the daughter of Herodias, who, by her mother’s instigation, had asked it, and who received it out of the hands of Herod himself; or however, it was delivered to her by his orders:

and she brought it to her mother;

who had put her upon it, than which, nothing could be a more agreeable dish to her; and who, as Jerome says ⁸²⁷, because she could not bear truth, that tongue which spoke truth; she plucked out, and pierced it through and through with a needle, as Fulvia did Cicero’s: but this triumph over the faithful reprover of her, and Herod’s vices, did not last long; for quickly after this, they were stripped of their honours and riches, and deprived of the kingdom, and banished to Lyons in France, where they died ⁸²⁸. A Jewish chronologer says ⁸²⁹, Herod was driven out of the land by Tiberius, and fled to Spain, and died there.

Matthew 14:12

Ver. 12. **And his disciples came,**

⁸²⁵ Vid Targum Jon. in Gen. xxxvii. 36. & xxxix. 1. & Targ. Sheni in Esth. v. 2. Jarchi in Exod. iv. 11. T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 108. 1. & Gloss. in ib.

⁸²⁶ Bereshit Rab. sect. 79. fol. 69. 3. Vajikra Rab. sect. 24. fol. 165. 2. & Bemidbar Rab. sect. 7. fol. 187. 4.

⁸²⁷ Adv. Ruffin. Tom. 2. fol. 82. K.

⁸²⁸ Joseph. Antiqu. l. 18. c. 8.

⁸²⁹ Ganz. Tzemach David, par. 1. fol. 25. 2.

⁸²² De beneficiis, l. 3. c. 25.

⁸²³ De ira, l. 1. c. 16. Vid. Julium Firmicum, l. 8. c. 26. & Florum, l. 4. c. 7. & Suetonium in vit. Caligul. c. 52. Octav. August. c. 74. & Claud. c. 35. Tertullian. de Corona, c. 1.

⁸²⁴ Abot R. Nathan, c. 38. fol. 9. 1.

To the prison where his body was left, and to which they had liberty of recourse before; see

Mt 11:2 and very probably, upon hearing what was done, might apply to Herod, as Joseph of Arimathea did to Pilate, for the body of Jesus; who might, as he did, give them leave to take it: and

took up the body and buried it.

Theophylact says, his body was buried in Baste Caesarea, and that his head was first repositied in Emesesa. This was the last office of love to their master, and was done in respect and gratitude to him, and to show that they still abode by his doctrine; and was what decency and the belief of the resurrection of the dead, as well as the will of God, require should be done:

and went and told Jesus;

that their master was dead, what kind of death he suffered, and by what means it was brought about; and how that they had interred him; and what Herod also had said of Jesus, that he was John risen from the dead. Their coming to Christ, and informing him of all this, show, that they were taught by their master to respect him as the Messiah, and believe in him, and adhere to him; and it is very likely that they continued with him.

Matthew 14:13

Ver. 13. **When Jesus heard of it,**

Of the death of John, and of the cruel usage he had met with; and particularly, that his fame had reached the court of Herod, and that he was talked of there, and said by Herod himself to be John the Baptist, that was risen from the dead;

he departed thence by ship, into a desert place apart;

to avoid Herod, though not through fear of death; but because his time was not yet come: which may teach us, that it is lawful to shun dangers, when there is an opportunity; which may be done, without betraying truth, or sacrificing a good conscience. The other evangelists, Mark and Luke, assign another reason of this departure of Christ's, that it was upon the return of his disciples to him from their embassy; when having given him an account of what they had done, and taught, he judged it proper they should retire, and get some refreshment and rest; and both may very well be thought to be the reasons of this recess. At the same time that John's disciples brought him the news of their master's death, Christ's disciples return to him, with the account of the success of their ministry; who might not only be weary, and want refreshment, but be discouraged in their minds,

at this instance of cruelty; wherefore Christ thought it necessary to retire, partly for his own safety, and partly for their ease; and that he might have an opportunity of fortifying their minds against all trials and persecutions they were to meet with: the place from whence he departed, was either Capernaum, his own country and city, or Nazareth, where we have lately heard of him; or some other place in Galilee, where he was, when John's disciples came to him: the place whither he went, was "a desert place"; and, as Luke says, "belonging to the city called Bethsaida", the city of Andrew and Peter, which lay on the other side of the sea of Galilee, or Tiberias; over which he went by ship, Joh 6:1.

And when the people had heard thereof;

of his departure, and whither he went,

they followed him on foot out of their cities;

such as Nazareth, Capernaum, Tiberias, and others; and passing the bridge at Jordan, as Dr. Lightfoot observes, they outwent the ship, and got thither before them, as Mark relates. This showed their great affection and zeal for Christ, and their diligence in attending on him.

Matthew 14:14

Ver. 14. **And Jesus went forth,**

Either from the mountain where he sat with his disciples, Joh 6:3 or out of the desert, where he had retired for secrecy; or out of the ship, which seems best, the company having got thither before his landing:

and saw a great multitude;

for, there were about five thousand men, beside women and children, Mt 14:21

and was moved with compassion toward them:

partly on account of their bodily infirmities, which were very many and great; and partly on account of the bad situation they were in, through want of spiritual pastors to feed them with the bread of life; for Mark gives this as the reason, moving his compassion, "because they were as sheep, not having a shepherd": all which shows the truth of Christ's human nature; proves him to be a merciful high priest, and one truly concerned for both the bodies and souls of men:

and he healed their sick;

which they brought along with them, and that without the use of any medicine, by a word speaking: so that as the former phrase gives proof of his humanity, this attests his divinity: but this was not all he did, he not only healed their bodies, but he taught them the doctrines of the Gospel; and spake to them concerning

the kingdom of God, for the good of their souls, as the other evangelists relate.

Matthew 14:15

Ver. 15. **And when it was evening,**

Mark says, "when the day was now far spent"; and Luke, "when the day began to wear away"; it was upon the decline of the day. The Jews, as Grotius rightly observes, had two evenings; the one began when the sun declined at noon, and the other at sun setting: now it was the former of these, and not the latter, that was now come; for after this, you read of another evening that was come, Mt 14:23 between which two evenings Christ made the multitude to sit down, and he fed them in a miraculous manner; and the disciples reason for the dismissal of the multitude, that might go into the neighbouring villages, and buy provisions, shows that it could not be the last, but the first of these evenings, that is here meant.

His disciples came to him;

the twelve, whom he had left in that part of the desert he retired to; or on the mount, where he had sat down with them for their rest and refreshment:

saying, this is a desert place;

where no food was to be had; where were no houses of entertainment:

and the time is now past;

not the time of the day, but of dining: the usual dinner time was past, which, with the Jews, was the fifth hour of the day, and answers to eleven o'clock with us, or at furthest six; which, with us, is twelve at noon; concerning which, the Jewish doctors thus dispute⁸³⁰.

"The first hour, is the time of eating for the Lydians, or Cannibals; the second for thieves, the third for heirs, the fourth for workmen, and the fifth for every man: but does not R. Papa say, that the fourth is the time of dining for every man? But if so, if the fourth is the time for every man, the fifth is for workmen, and the sixth for the disciples of the wise men."

Which is elsewhere⁸³¹ delivered with some little variation, thus;

"the first hour is the time of eating for Lydians; the second, for thieves; the third, for heirs; the fourth, for workmen; the fifth, for scholars; and the sixth, for every man: but does not R. Papa say, &c."

But supposing the usual time of dining to be, at the furthest, at the sixth hour, at twelve o'clock, this time must be elapsed, since the first evening was commenced; so that the reasoning of the disciples is very just,

send the multitude away.

Christ was preaching to them, the disciples move that he would break off his discourse, and dismiss them; in the synagogue the manner of dismissing the people was, by reading the

הפטרָה, or "dismission", which was some passage out of the prophetic writings.

That they may go into the villages and buy themselves victuals;

the little towns which lay nearest the desert, where they might be supplied with suitable provisions.

Matthew 14:16

Ver. 16. **But Jesus said unto them,**

the disciples,

they need not depart;

meaning so long as he was with them, who had power enough to provide a sufficient meal for them, as well as by a word speaking, to heal their diseases; however, to try their faith, and make way for the working of the following miracle, he says to them,

give ye them to eat;

such provisions as you have along with you.

Matthew 14:17

Ver. 17. **And they say unto him,**

In order to excuse themselves, and to show the impossibility of feeding such a large number of people;

we have here but five loaves; and these barley ones, coarse bread;

and two fishes;

small ones, which were dried and salted, and fit for present eating; which they either brought along with them for their own refreshment, or rather, were brought thither by a boy to sell, as is usual where a great concourse of people are got together: these words seem to be spoken by Andrew, Simon Peter's brother; who added, "but what are they among so many?" see Joh 6:8 not thinking of the power of Christ, who was able to multiply, and make this provision a sufficiency for the whole company.

Matthew 14:18

Ver. 18. **He said, bring them hither to me.**

The loaves and the fishes, signifying that they were sufficient; or that he would make them so: this he said, to try their faith in him, their obedience to him, and their liberality to others: and indeed, the best way to have an

830 T. Bab. Sabbat. fol. 11. 1.

831 T. Bab. Pesachim, fol. 12. 2.

increase of temporal supplies, is to bring what we have, and put it into Christ's hands; whereby not only good is done to others, but that with an overplus is returned to the giver.

Matthew 14:19

Ver. 19. **And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass,**

The other evangelists say, that he ordered the disciples to cause the people to sit down; both no doubt were done: the multitude were commanded to sit down by Christ, which, without his orders, they would never have done; and the disciples were enjoined to place them in form, by companies, in ranks, by hundreds and by fifties, that their number might be the better taken, and the food more orderly distributed by the apostles:

and took the five loaves and the two fishes:

into his hands, lifting them up, that they might be seen by the whole company; and they be fully convinced of the miracle going to be wrought by him:

and looking up to heaven;

to his Father in heaven, who is the Father of mercies; and from whom every mercy and blessing of life comes; and giving thanks to him for the same, as was usually done by him,

he blessed

the five loaves and the two fishes; and brake the loaves, and divided the fishes;

and gave the loaves,

and fishes also,

to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitude; who were the ministers and servants of Christ, employed by him in this manner, for the more orderly and quick dispatch of this business: and which was an emblem of their spiritual work and office: who received all their food from Christ, which they distributed to the churches, and fed them with.

Matthew 14:20

Ver. 20. **And they did all eat,**

Christ and his twelve disciples, and the five thousand men, with the women and children, of the five loaves and two fishes; everyone had their portion,

and were filled;

they were satisfied, they had a full meal, they had enough, and to spare; see 2Ch 31:10 which the Targumist paraphrases thus.

”And Azariah said unto him, who was appointed chief over the house of Zadok, and said, from the time that they began to separate the offering,

to bring it into the sanctuary of the Lord, ושבנו ונאכלנו “we have eat and are filled”, and have “left much”; for “the word of the Lord” hath blessed his people, and what is left, lo! it is this plenty of good.” The Jews used not to reckon it a meal, unless a man was filled, and account it an ill sign, if nothing was left: but here was fulness, and more left than was first had; which was gathered up, either for the use of the poor, or reserved for after service; teaching us liberality to the needy, and frugality, not to waste that which is left.

And they took up of the fragments that remained, twelve baskets full;

according to the number of the disciples, every man had his basket full. It may be inquired, where they could have so many baskets in the wilderness? It is not likely, that everyone of the apostles had a basket with him; it is indeed not improbable, but that they might be furnished with them from some in the company, who might bring provisions with them, either for their own use, or to sell; see Joh 6:9 but perhaps the reason why they were so easily supplied with such a number of baskets in a desert place, might be a custom which the Jews ⁸³² had of carrying baskets with hay and straw, in commemoration of what they did in Egypt; when they were obliged to carry bricks in baskets, and to go about and pick up straw in baskets to make bricks; hence the ⁸³³ Epigrammatist calls a “Jew”, “cistifer”, a “basket bearer”, or “carrier”; and Juvenal ⁸³⁴ laughs at these people, as if all their household goods lay in a basket, and a little hay, or straw: it is said of R. Siraeon, that when he went to the school, שקיל נא “he carried a basket” on his shoulders ⁸³⁵; the gloss suggests, it was to sit upon; but a basket is not very proper for a seat; very likely it was for the above reason: such a custom will account for it, how such a number of baskets could be come at in the wilderness.

Matthew 14:21

Ver. 21. **And they that had eaten were about five thousand men,**

The word “about”, is omitted in the Vulgate Latin, in Munster's Hebrew Gospel, and in the Syriac, Arabic, and Persic versions, which expressly say there were so many.

⁸³² Nicholas de Lyra, in Psal. lxxxi. 6.

⁸³³ Nubere: nupsisti Gellia Cistifero. Martial. Epigram. 1. 5. ep. 17.

⁸³⁴ Judaeis: quorum Cophinus foenumque supellex. Juvenal. Satyr. 3. cum dedit ille locum, Cophino, foenoque relicto. ib. Satyr. 6.

⁸³⁵ T. Bab. Nedarim, fol. 49. 2.

A large number indeed, to be fed with five loaves and two fishes!

besides women and children;

who were not taken into the account, though they all ate, and were filled, it not being usual with the Jews to number their women; and who might be near as large a number as the men: for generally there is a very great concourse of the female sex, and of children, where anything extraordinary, or out of the way, is to be seen or heard; and of this sort was a large number of Christ's audience, who only came out of curiosity, or for one sinister end or another.

Matthew 14:22

Ver. 22. **And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples,**

As soon as ever he had wrought the above miracle, and perceived that the people were so convinced by it, of his being the Messiah, that they were determined, whether he would or not, to set him up for a temporal king, to deliver them from the Roman yoke; which they doubted not he was able to do, who could feed so large a number, with such a small quantity of provision; see Joh 6:14 and knowing also, that his disciples had imbibed the same notion of a temporal kingdom, were very fond of it, and big with expectation thereof; and would have readily encouraged the populace, and joined with them in such an action: wherefore, in all haste, he hurried them away, obliged them to depart, lest any step should be taken, which might be of dangerous consequence to them, and the people: it looks as if the disciples were bent upon the same thing, and that it was with much difficulty and reluctance they were brought off of it. Christ was forced to use his power and authority; and order them directly

to get into a ship;

very likely, the same they came over in;

and to go before him unto the other side

of the lake of Tiberias or sea of Galilee, over against Bethsaida, to Capernaum, or the land of Gennesaret;

while he sent the multitudes away:

who would not so easily have been prevailed upon to have departed, if Christ had not first shipped off his disciples; for had he withdrawn himself, and left his disciples with them, they would have been in hopes of his return, and would have continued in a body with them, in expectation of it; and therefore, the better to disperse them, and prevent their designs, he sends away his disciples before him.

Matthew 14:23

Ver. 23. **And when he had sent the multitudes away,**

Had ordered them at least to go away; for, it seems, according to Joh 6:22 that they did not in general disperse: there was a large body of them that continued upon the spot all night, expecting his return; in which being disappointed, they took shipping, and came to Capernaum.

He went up into a mountain apart to pray;

perhaps the same he went up to before, and from whence he came down, Joh 6:3. This he chose as a proper place for prayer, where he could be retired, and alone, have his thoughts free, and, as man, pour out his soul to his Father, on his own account, and on the behalf of others; and particularly, he might be concerned about this notion of a temporal kingdom, that his disciples and others were so fond of; and pray that his disciples might be convinced of their mistake, and that the people might be hindered from prosecuting their designs. His going up into a mountain and praying there, were quite contrary to the canons of the Jews; which forbid praying in places ever so little raised.

"Let not a man stand (say they ⁸³⁶ במקום גבוה "in an high place", and pray, but in a low place and pray; as it is said, "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord", Ps 130:1. It is a tradition, that a man may not stand, neither upon a throne, nor upon a footstool, nor in any high place and pray, because there are no high places before God."

This rule is delivered by Maimonides ⁸³⁷, in this form:

"A man may not stand in a place that is three hands high, or more, and pray, neither upon a bed, nor upon a seat, nor upon a throne."

But Christ did not look upon himself obliged, by these traditions of the elders; but chose such places, whether high or low, which were most private and retired.

And when evening was come;

when it was now dark, Joh 6:17 when the second evening was come and ended; see Mt 14:15 and it was properly night,

he was there alone;

⁸³⁶ T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 10. 2. Piske Tosaph. in ib. art. 52, T. Hieros. Beracot, fol. 4. 4. Kotsensis Mitzvot Tora precept. Affirm. 19. Midrash Kohelet, fol. 70. 3.

⁸³⁷ Hilch. Tephillah. c. 5. sect. 7.

in the mountain, where he continued the greatest part of the night, even until the fourth watch.

Matthew 14:24

Ver. 24. **But the ship was now in the midst of the sea,**

That is, the ship in which the disciples were put into, to go on the other side, had by this time got into the midst of the sea: the Syriac and Persic versions say, it was "many furlongs from land"; and the Arabic expressly says, "about twenty five furlongs": which account seems to be taken from Joh 6:19 but this was not all, it was not only at such a distance from land, but was

tossed with waves:

up and down, and in danger of being overset, and the passengers lost:

for the wind was against them;

which beat the waves with such violence against them, that they were in the utmost danger of their lives, and not able to get forward; and what was worst of all, and most discouraging to the disciples, Christ was not with them. The ship in which the disciples were, was an emblem of the church of Christ, and of its state and condition in this world: this world is like a sea, for its largeness, and the abundance of nations and people in it, compared to many waters, Re 17:15 and for the tumultuousness of its inhabitants; the wicked being like a troubled sea, which cannot rest, continually casting up the mire and dirt of sin, to the dishonour of God, and the grief of his people; and for its fickleness and inconstancy, changes and war being continually in it: now the church of Christ is like a ship in this troublesome sea; where the true disciples and followers of Christ are selected together; and are preserved from the pollutions of the world, and from the danger to which the men of it are exposed, being in their sins, and liable to the wrath and curse of God, and eternal damnation; which, they that are in Christ, and members of his body, are secure from; the port or haven to which they are bound, is heaven and eternal happiness; their's and Christ's Father's house, where are many mansions provided for them; and where they long to be, and hope, and believe, ere long they shall arrive unto; and hope is as an anchor of their soul, sure and steadfast: but in the mean while, whilst they are sailing through the sea of this world, they are often, as the church of old, tossed with tempests, and not comforted, Isa 55:11 with the tempests of Satan's temptations, the storms of the world's persecutions, and with the winds of error and false doctrine; and then is it most uncomfortable to them,

when Christ is not with them, which was the case of the disciples here.

Matthew 14:25

Ver. 25. **And in the fourth watch of the night,**

This is said, according to the division of the night into four watches, by the Jews; who ⁸³⁸ say, that

"there are four watches in the night, and four watches in the day."

It is true indeed, that it is disputed among them, whether there were four watches, or only three in the night: some say there were four, others say there were but three ⁸³⁹; not but that these made a division of the night into four parts, the three first of which, they thought were properly the watches of the night, and the fourth was the morning. The first watch began at six o'clock in the evening, and lasted till nine; the second began at nine, and ended at twelve, which was midnight; the third began at twelve, and closed at three; the fourth began at three, and ended at six in the morning. But since some ⁸⁴⁰ Jewish writers are so positive for the division of the night into three watches only, and a watch is with them called ⁸⁴¹ the third part of the night; and it is dubious with some, whether the Jewish division is here referred to; and since it is so clear a point, that the Romans ⁸⁴² divided their night into four watches, and their writers speak not only of the first, second, and third watches, but also of the fourth watch ⁸⁴³; it is thought by some, that the evangelist speaks after the Roman manner: but however, certain it is, that within this period, probably at the beginning of it, after three o'clock in the morning, Christ came to his disciples, when they had been almost all the night at sea, tossed with waves, and in great danger.

Jesus went unto them;

from the mountain where he had been praying, the greatest part of the night, to the sea side, and so upon the waters to them; for it follows,

walking upon the sea;

as on dry land: though it was so stormy and boisterous, that the disciples, though in a ship, were in the utmost danger, yet he upon the waves, was in none at all; by which action he showed himself to be the Lord of the sea, and to be truly and properly God; whose character

⁸³⁸ T. Hieros. Beracot, fol. 2. 4. Echa Rabbati, fol. 54. 4.

⁸³⁹ T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 3. 1, 2.

⁸⁴⁰ Jaschi & Kimchi in Jud vii. 19. & in Psal. cxix. 147.

⁸⁴¹ Gloss. in T. Bab. Betacot, fol. 2. 1.

⁸⁴² Gloss. in T. Bab. Betacot, fol. 2. 1.

⁸⁴³ Liv. Hist. 1. 36, c. 24.

is, that he “treadeth upon the waves of the sea”, Job 9:8.

Matthew 14:26

Ver. 26. **And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea,**

It being now morning, and perhaps might have moon light; and besides, there is always more light upon the water than land; they were able to discern something like a man, walking upon the surface of the sea, but had not light enough to distinguish what, or who it was; and, moreover, had no thought of Christ, or expectation of seeing him; and the appearance of a man walking upon the waters being so unusual, and astonishing,

they were troubled, saying it is a spirit:

a nocturnal apparition, a demon in human form. The Jews, especially the sect of the Pharisees, had a notion, from whom the disciples might have their's, of spirits, apparitions, and demons, being to be seen in the night; hence that rule ⁸⁴⁴,

”it is forbidden a man to salute his friend in the night, for we are careful, lest שֶׁר הוּיָא, “it should be a demon”.

’They say a great many things of one לילית, “Lilith”, that has its name from לילה, “the night”, a she demon, that used to appear in the night, with an human face, and carry off young children, and kill them. Some such frightful notions had possessed the minds of the disciples:

and they cried out for fear,

as persons in the utmost consternation, in the greatest danger, and in want of help: the fear of spirits arises from the uncommonness of their appearance; from their superiority to men in power and strength; from the enmity there is between men and evil spirits; and from a general notion of their doing hurt and mischief: hence, demons are, by the Jews, called מְזִיקִין “hurtful”, or “hurting”, all their study being to do hurt to men; and the same word is here used in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel: add to all this, that the fear of the disciples might be increased, through a vulgar notion among seafaring men, that such sights are ominous, and portend evil to sailors; and they might the more easily be induced to give credit to this, and fear, since they were already in such imminent danger.

Matthew 14:27

Ver. 27. **But straightway Jesus spake unto them,**

Directly, the very moment, as soon as ever they cried out, and he perceived the consternation they were in, as

844 T. Bab. Megilla, fol. 3. 1. Sanhedrim, fol. 44. 1.

one truly affected towards them, and concerned for their welfare; he called out aloud unto them, not coming with any intention to fright them, but to save them;

saying, be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid:

take heart, be of good courage, do not be affrighted at my appearance, from whom you have nothing to fear; nor be afraid of the storm and tempest in which you are, I will deliver you; for it is I, your Master, Saviour, and Redeemer, and not any hurtful spirit; who am able to save you, and am come for that purpose. Christ may be sometimes near his people, and they not know him; as the Lord was in the place where Jacob was, and he knew it not, Ge 28:16 and as Christ was standing by Mary Magdalene at the sepulchre, and she took him to be the gardener: and for want of a distinct knowledge of Christ in his person, offices, and grace, persons have wrong apprehensions of him, and are filled with dread and fears, concluding they have no interest in him; that he is a Saviour, but not of them; that their sins are so many, and of such a die, and attended with such aggravating circumstances, that though he is able to save them, he never can be willing to receive such vile sinners as they are: but when Christ makes himself known unto them, as the able and willing Saviour, and their Saviour and Redeemer, then, instead of dreading him as a judge, their fears vanish, their faith increases, and they are ready to do anything he shall order them; as Peter says in the next verse, who was willing to come to Christ on the water, when he knew who he was, if he was but pleased to bid him come.

Matthew 14:28

Ver. 28. **And Peter answered him and said,**

Who knew his voice, and was ready to believe it might be Christ; and having more courage, and being more forward than the rest of the disciples, ventured to speak to him; saying,

Lord, if it be thou;

for he was not fully assured that it was he: he might consider that nocturnal apparitions are deceitful, and that Satan can transform himself into an angel of light, and could put on the appearance, and mimic the voice of Christ; wherefore, to try whether it was a spectre, or really Christ, he says,

bid me come unto thee on the water;

thereby expressing great love and affection to Christ, being willing to come to him, though through danger, through storms and tempests; and also his strong faith in him, supposing it to be he; who, he knew, was as able

to support his body on the water, as his own; and yet much modesty, submission, and dependence; not willing to take a step without his order.

Matthew 14:29

Ver. 29. **And he said, come,**

This he said, partly to assure them who he was; for had he denied him, he and the rest might have concluded, it was none of Jesus; and partly to commend his love, and confirm his faith, by giving a further instance of his power, in enabling him to walk upon the water, as he did:

and when Peter was come down out of the ship;

as he immediately did, having orders from Christ; and being by this second speech fully convinced it was he

he walked on the water;

a little way, being supported and enabled by the power of Christ; for this was an extraordinary and miraculous action: for if it was so in Christ, it was much more so in Peter: Christ walked upon the water by his own power, as God; Peter walked upon the water, being held up by the power of Christ. The Jews⁸⁴⁵ indeed, call swimming המימ פני השיטה ל פני "walking upon the face of the waters": hence we read of a swimmer's vessel, which is explained to be what men make to learn in it, how לשוטל פני המימ "to go or walk upon the face of the waters"⁸⁴⁶; but then this is not going upon them upright, but prone, or lying along upon the surface of the waters, which was not Peter's case; he did not, as at another time, cast himself into the sea, and swim to Christ; see Joh 21:7 but as soon as he came down from the ship, standing upright, he walked upon the waters,

to go to Jesus;

not merely for walking sake, but for the sake of Christ, he dearly loved; that he might be with him, and be still more confirmed of the truth of its being he, and not a spirit.

Matthew 14:30

Ver. 30. **But when he saw the wind boisterous,**

Or "strong", blowing hard against him, and raising up the waves, which beat with great violence upon him,

he was afraid;

though Christ was so nigh him, and he had had such an instance of his power in bearing him up, causing him to walk upon the waters thus far; which shows, that his faith was imperfect:

and beginning to sink;

through fear, and the violence of the wind and waves,

845 R. David Kimchi, Sepher Shorash. rad. hxv.

846 R. Sol. Urbin. Ohel moed, fol. 78. 1.

just ready to be immersed, and go down to the bottom of the sea,

he cried;

being in a great fright and much danger, and with great importunity and eagerness, saying,

Lord, save me:

I am just going, I shall certainly perish else; still having so much faith in Christ, that he was able to save him in the last extremity.

Matthew 14:31

Ver. 31. **And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand,**

The Syriac reads it וברשחה "and in that very moment"; for his case requires immediate assistance, and Christ readily gave it; he reached out his hand at once, being just by him,

and caught him;

as he was sinking to the bottom, and lifted him up, and set him on his feet upon the water, and enabled him to walk with him to the ship; but not without reproving him for the weakness of his faith,

and said unto him, O thou of little faith:

he does not say, O thou unbeliever! or, O thou who hast no faith! for some faith he had, though but small; of this phrase, See Gill "Mt 6:30".

Wherefore didst thou doubt?

waver, fluctuate, or wast divided between faith and fear. He was worthy of reproof, since he had had the order of Christ to come to him upon the water; and an experience of his power in supporting him thus far; and was now so near unto him, that he had no room to doubt, whether it was he or not, nor of his power to preserve him.

Matthew 14:32

Ver. 32. **And when they were come into the ship,** Christ and Peter. The Arabic and Persic versions, and Munster's Hebrew Gospel read, "when he ascended", or "was come into the ship"; but there is no doubt but Peter went with him into it, though the following effect is only to be ascribed to Christ's coming into the ship, and not to Peter's:

the wind ceased:

from blowing with that fury and violence it did before, and there was a perfect calm; which gave equal proof of the divine power of Christ, as his walking upon the sea: he walked upon the sea whilst the wind was blowing hard, and the waves were tumultuous; he comes into the ship, and all is calm; both winds and sea obey

him, who is Lord of both.

Matthew 14:33

Ver. 33. **Then they that were in the ship,**

Not only the rest of the disciples, who remained in it, whilst Peter came forth out of it, to walk upon the sea, to go to Christ: but the mariners also, the owners of the vessel, and their servants that managed it,

came and worshipped him:

not merely in a civil, but in a religious way; being convinced, by what they saw, that he must be truly and properly God, and worthy of adoration;

saying, of a truth, thou art the Son of God:

not by creation, as angels and men, nor by office, as magistrates, but by nature; being of the same essence, perfections, and power, with God, his Father: and which these actions of his now done, as well as many others, are full attestations of; as his walking upon the sea, causing Peter to do so too, saving him when sinking, and stilling the wind and waves upon his entrance into the vessel; all which being observed by the disciples and mariners, drew out this confession upon full conviction from them, that he was a divine person, and the proper object of worship.

Matthew 14:34

Ver. 34. **And when they were gone over,**

That is, “the sea”, as Munster’s Hebrew Gospel adds, the sea of Tiberias, or Galilee;

they came into the land of Gennesaret;

the same with Cinnereth, or Chinnereth, or Cinnerot, Nu 34:11 in all which places, the Chaldee paraphrase renders it by rownyg, “Ginusal”, the same word that is used in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel here: it was a country in Galilee, in the tribe of Naphtali ⁸⁴⁷, bordering upon a lake, called the lake of Gennesaret; taking its name from the country, or the country from the lake: it was exceeding fruitful, full of gardens and orchards; hence we often read in the Talmud ⁸⁴⁸, of פירות גנור, “the fruits of Genusar”, or Gennesaret, which are said to be exceeding sweet: and it is said to ⁸⁴⁹ be a country in the land of Israel, in which were many gardens; and by others ⁸⁵⁰, a place in the land of Galilee (as it was) whose fruits were large and good; and was, as Josephus says ⁸⁵¹, thirty furlongs long

⁸⁴⁷ Targum Jon. in Deut. xxxiii. 23

⁸⁴⁸ T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 44. 1. Erubim, fol. 30. 1. & Pesachim, fol. 8. 2. Vid. Jarchi in Isa. xxviii. 1. & Kimchi in Josh. xi. & in 1 Kings xv. 20.

⁸⁴⁹ Maimon. in Misn. Maaserot, c. 3. sect. 7.

⁸⁵⁰ Bartenora, in ib.

⁸⁵¹ De Bello Jud. 1. 3. c. 35.

and twenty broad. And thus the saints, after a long and troublesome passage over the sea of this world, arrive, at last, safe at their desired haven, and enter upon a most delightful country, a paradise, a garden of pleasure; where all delicious fruits and desirable things are enjoyed, even pleasures for evermore; where they shall be led to fountains of living waters, into fulness of joy; where all troubles will cease, and tears will be wiped away; and when they will have leisure and capacity to reflect upon all they have met with in their dangerous, and difficult voyage; and will admire the wonderful grace of God, which has been with them; and his divine power, which has appeared for them, and supported them, and brought them safe to eternal glory; and they ascribe greatness to Christ, as the Son of God, and for ever worship him as the eternal Jehovah, who has done such great things for them, as none but God can do.

Matthew 14:35

Ver. 35. **And when the men of the place had knowledge of him,**

Not merely by report, but by face, having seen, and heard him before; see Luke 5:1.

They sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased;

which not only expresses their faith in him, that he was able to heal all their sick and diseased, were they ever so many; but also their affectionate regard to their fellow creatures and countrymen; and their care and diligence in sending messengers about to their respective cities, towns, and villages, and which must be attended with expense: for they neither spared cost nor pains, to do good to their country; in all which, they set an example worthy of imitation.

Matthew 14:36

Ver. 36. **And besought him that they might touch the hem of his garment,**

As the woman with the bloody issue did; Mt 9:20. This they desired, partly to show the strength of their faith in him, that they doubted not of a cure, could they be admitted so near his person; and partly, to signify the sense of their unworthiness, to be in another way taken notice of by him, either by speaking to them, or putting his hands on them:

and as many as touched, were made perfectly whole.

Christ condescended to this their request, and perfectly cured all such of their diseases, of whatever kind they were, who, in the exercise of faith, touched the

hem of his garment, the fringe he wore, in compliance with the ceremonial law, Nu 15:38.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW CHAPTER XV

3 Christ reproveth the scribes and Pharisees for transgressing God's commandments through their own traditions : 11 teacheth how that which goeth into the mouth doth not defile a man. 21 He healeth the daughter of the woman of Canaan, 30 and other great multitudes : 32 and with seven loaves and a few little fishes feedeth four thousand men beside women and children.

Matthew 15

- [1] Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying,
- [2] Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.
- [3] But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?
- [4] For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.
- [5] But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me;
- [6] And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.
- [7] Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,
- [8] This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.
- [9] But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.
- [10] And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand:
- [11] Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.
- [12] Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?
- [13] But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.
- [14] Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into

the ditch.

- [15] Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable.
- [16] And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding?
- [17] Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught?
- [18] But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.
- [19] For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:
- [20] These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.
- [21] Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.
- [22] And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.
- [23] But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.
- [24] But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.
- [25] Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.
- [26] But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.
- [27] And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.
- [28] Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.
- [29] And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there.
- [30] And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them:
- [31] Insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel.
- [32] Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing

to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.

- [33] And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?
- [34] And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes.
- [35] And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.
- [36] And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.
- [37] And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full.
- [38] And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children.
- [39] And he sent away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala.

JOHN GILL'S COMMENTARY ON MATTHEW CHAPTER XV

Matthew 15:1

Ver. 1. **Then came to Jesus Scribes and Pharisees,**

After he had wrought so many miracles, particularly that of feeding five thousand men; besides women and children, with five loaves and two fishes: the fame of which had reached Jerusalem, and occasioned much talk there about him: the Scribes and Pharisees, who were his inveterate enemies, hearing thereof, came to him, where he was, in Galilee: to know the truth of these things, to converse with him, and to watch, and observe, what he said and did;

which were of Jerusalem, saying.

There were Scribes and Pharisees throughout the land, but those of Jerusalem were the chief; they were men of the greatest learning and abilities, and were more expert in their religion and customs: these were either sent by the sanhedrim at Jerusalem, or came of themselves; taking upon them a greater power, and authority of examining, correcting, directing, and advising.

Matthew 15:2

Ver. 2. **Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?.**

Having observed, for some little time, the conduct of Christ and his disciples, they thought proper to take no notice of him as yet, but of them; and of them, not as transgressing any command of God, but of men; not

being able to charge them with any breach of the law of God: and could they have done this with any show of truth, yet they might choose rather to accuse them of breaking the rules of the elders; by whom they mean, not the elders of the present sanhedrim, but Hillell and Shammai; the two heads of their famous schools, and other ancient doctors; from whom were delivered by one to another, certain rules and laws of their own devising, which had no foundation in the word of God; and of these the Scribes and Pharisees were more tenacious, than of the Scriptures; and indeed they preferred them before them: most extravagant are their praises and commendations of these unwritten traditions; thus they say⁸⁵²,

“Know then, that “the words of the Scribes” are more lovely than the words of the law: for, says R. Tarphon, if a man does not read, he only transgresses an affirmative; but if he transgresses the words of the school of Hillell, he is guilty of death, because he hath broke down a hedge, and a serpent shall bite him. It is a tradition of R. Ishmael, the words of the law have in them both prohibition and permission; some of them are light, and some heavy, but “the words of the Scribes” are all of them heavy--זקנימ--

המוריימ דברי, “weightier are the words of the elders,” than the words of the prophets.”

And elsewhere⁸⁵³, this advice is given;

“My son, attend to “the words of the Scribes,” more than to the words of the law; for in the words of the law, are affirmatives and negatives; but the words of the Scribes הובר ל דברי ופרימ כל, “everyone that transgresses the words of the Scribes,” is guilty of death.”

This is what they charge the disciples with here, and could they have had their wills, would have put them to death for it: the particular tradition, they accuse them with the breach of, follows,

for they wash not their hands when they eat bread;

common bread, an ordinary meal; for, for eating of holy things, more than bare washing was required, even an immersion of them in water; but the hands were to be washed before eating common food, whether they were known to be defiled or not: “bread” is particularly mentioned, as including all sorts of food, and as distinct from fruit; for, for eating of common fruit, there was no

⁸⁵² T. Hieros. Beracot, fol. 3. 2.

⁸⁵³ T. Bab. Erubim, fol. 21. 2. T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 4. 2.

need of washing of hands; he that washed his hands for eating fruit, was reckoned an ostentatious man ⁸⁵⁴, who were the first authors of this tradition, it is not certain; it is said ⁸⁵⁵, that

“Hillell and Shammai decreed לְ טַהֲרוֹת יְדֵימ “concerning the purification of the hands”; R. Jose ben R. Bon, in the name of R. Levi, says, so was the tradition before, but they forgot it; and these two stood up, and agreed with the minds of the former ones.”

“However, it is a certain point, that the washing of the hands, and the dipping of them, are Myrþwo yrbdm, “from the words of the Scribes” ⁸⁵⁶.”

The breach of this rule was reckoned equal to the most flagitious crimes {i}: R. Jose says,

“whoever eats bread without washing of hands, is as if he lay with a whore: and, says R. Eleazer, whoever despiseth washing of hands, shall be rooted out of the world.”

And elsewhere it is said by them ⁸⁵⁷, that

“he that blesseth (food) with defiled hands, is guilty of death.”

And again ⁸⁵⁸,

“whoever does not wash his hands as is fitting, although he is punished above, he shall be punished below.”

And to fright people into an observance of this tradition, they talk of Shibta, a sort of an evil spirit, that hurts such as eat without washing their hands: they say, he sits upon their hands, and upon their bread, and leaves something behind, which is very dangerous {m}; and it is recorded ⁸⁵⁹, to the praise of R. Akiba, that he chose rather to die, than to transgress this tradition; for being in prison, and in want of water, what little he had, he washed his hands with it, instead of drinking it. Eleazar ben Chanac was excommunicated for despising the tradition concerning washing of hands; and when he

⁸⁵⁴ Misn. Chagiga, c. 2. sect. 5, 6. Maimon. Praefat. ad Tract. Yadaim, & Hilch. Beracot, c. 6. sect. 3.

⁸⁵⁵ T. Hieros. Sabbat, fol. 3. 4. {h} Maimon Hilch. Mikvaot, c. 11. sect. 1.

⁸⁵⁶ T. Bab. Sota, fol. 4. 2.

⁸⁵⁷ Zohar in Deut. fol. 107. 3.

⁸⁵⁸ Gloss. in. T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 77. 2. Taanith, fol. 20. 2. & Cholin, fol. 107. 2.

⁸⁵⁹ T. B. Erubim, fol. 21. 2.

died, the sanhedrim sent and put a great stone upon his coffin, to show, that he that died in his excommunication, the sanhedrim stoned his coffin ⁸⁶⁰: but of this, See Gill “Mark 7:3”.

Matthew 15:3

Ver. 3. **But he answered and said unto them,....** Taking no notice of the tradition about eating bread without washing the hands, whether it was right or wrong; it being at most but an human tradition, of no moment and importance, whether it was broke or kept; he makes a very just recrimination, by putting another question to them,

why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?

suggesting, that, if his disciples were guilty, they were not so guilty as they themselves were; that his disciples, at most, were but guilty of the breach of an human precept, whereas they were guilty of the breach of a divine command; and that it was strange, that men who were so scrupulous of breaking, and bore so hard on such as did transgress the traditions of the elders, could allow themselves to transgress the commandments of God; yea, to do this by, and while they were observing their own traditions: and which observation carries a full acquittance of the disciples from blame; for, if by keeping the traditions of the elders, they broke the commands of God, it was a very good reason why they should not observe them.

Matthew 15:4

Ver. 4. **For God commanded, saying,....** That he might not be thought to suggest this without any foundation, he gives them an instance, wherein a command of God was transgressed, by the observance of their tradition: the command he refers to, stands in

Ex 20:12 and is this;

Honour thy father and mother. This was a plain command of God, written with his own hand, and delivered by Moses to them; it was of a moral nature, and of eternal obligation: and to be understood, not merely of that high esteem parents are to be had in by their children, and of the respectful language and gesture to be used towards them, and of the cheerful obedience to be yielded to them; but also of honouring them with their substance, feeding, clothing, and supplying them with the necessaries of life, when they stand in need thereof; which is but their reasonable service, for all the care, expense, and trouble they have been at, in bringing them

⁸⁶⁰ T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 19. 1.

up in the world: nor did the Jews deny this to be the duty of children to their parents, and own it to be the sense of the commandment: they say ⁸⁶¹, that this is the weightiest commandment among the weighty ones, even this, the honouring of father and mother; and ask,

“What is this honour? To which is replied, he must give him food, drink, and clothing; buckle his shoes, and lead him in, and bring him out.”

They indeed laid down this as a rule, and it seems a very equitable one ⁸⁶²; that,

“when a man’s father has any money, or substance, he must be supported out of that; but if he has none, he must support him out of his own.”

But then, as will be seen hereafter, they made void this command of God, and their own explications of it, by some other tradition. Moreover, Christ observes, that it is said, Ex 21:17

And he that curseth father or mother, let him die the death; temporal and eternal: and which is a positive command of God, made as a fence for the former; and is to be understood, not only of giving abusive language to parents, but of slighting, as the Hebrew word signifies, and neglecting them, taking no notice of them, when needy and in distress, to supply their wants. Now these commands of God, Christ shows the Jews transgressed by their tradition, as appears from the following verses.

Matthew 15:5

Ver. 5 & 6. **But ye say, whosoever shall say to his father or mother,....** That is, it was a tradition of their’s, that if a man should say to his father and mother, when poor and in distress, and made application to him for sustenance,

it is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, and honour not his father, or his mother, he shall be free:

or, as Mark expresses it, “it is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, he shall be free, and ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or mother”. For the understanding of this tradition, let it be observed, that the word “Corban” signifies a gift, or offering, which was devoted to sacred use; and was unalienable, and could not be converted to any other use; and that this word was used among the Jews, from hence, as the form of an oath, or vow; and therefore, when anyone said “Corban”, it was all one, as

if he swore by “Corban”; or as if he had said, let it be as “Corban”, as unalienable as “Corban”: by which oath, or vow, the use of that which was spoken of, whether it respected a man’s self, or others, was restrained and prohibited: the rule was ⁸⁶³ this *אור הוא אור* קרבנ כקרבנ, “if a man said Corban, it was as if he said as Corban, and it was forbidden”: and if he used the words “Conem”, “Conach”, and “Conas”, which they call ⁸⁶⁴ the surnames of Corban, and were no other than corruptions of it, it was all one as if he had said “Corban” itself. There are many instances of this kind of vows, and the form of them in their oral law ⁸⁶⁵, or book of traditions;

“If anyone should say, *קונמ שאני נהנה* “Conem (or “Corban”) whatsoever I might be profited by the” sons of Noah, it is free of an Israelite, and forbidden of a Gentile; if he should say, “whatsoever I might be profited” by the seed of Abraham, it is forbidden of an Israelite, and is free of a Gentile--if anyone should say, *מלרל הנהנ ינאב מנאק*, “Conem (or “Corban”) whatsoever I might be profited by the uncircumcised”, it is free of the uncircumcised of Israel, and forbidden of the circumcised of the Gentiles; if he says “Conem (or “Corban”) whatsoever I might be profited by the circumcised”, it is forbidden of the circumcised of Israel, and free of the circumcised, of the Gentiles.”

Again ⁸⁶⁶,

“if anyone says to his friend, *לכ קונמ שאני נהנה* לב, “Conem (or “Corban”) whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me”, &c.”

which is exactly the same form as here, unless it should be rather rendered, “whatsoever I might be profited by thee”: once more ⁸⁶⁷,

“if a married woman should say to her husband, *קבלאב אבאל תנהנ ינאב מנאק* “Conem (or Corban) whatsoever I might be profited by my father, or thy father, &c.””

Let these instances suffice: the plain and evident sense of the tradition before us, is this; that when, upon application being made to a man by his parents, for support and sustenance, he makes a vow in such form as this, “Corban, whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me”; that is, whatsoever profit or advantage

⁸⁶³ T. Hieros. Nedarim, fol. 37. 1. Misn. Nedarim, c. 1. sect. 4. Maimon. Hilch. Nedarim, c. 1. sect. 7.

⁸⁶⁴ Misn. Nedarim, c. 1. sect. 1, 2. Maimon. Hilch. Nedarim, c. 1. sect. 16.

⁸⁶⁵ Misn. Nedarim, c. 3. sect. 11.

⁸⁶⁶ lb. c. 8. sect. 7. Vid. c. 11. sect 3, 4.

⁸⁶⁷ lb. c. 11. sect. 11.

⁸⁶¹ T. Hieros. Kiddushin, fol. 61. 2.

⁸⁶² Piske Toseph. ad T. Bab. Kiddushin, art. 61.

thou mightest have, or expect to have from me, let it be as “Corban”, as a gift devoted to God, that can never be revoked and converted to another use; or, in other words, I vow and protest thou shalt never have any profit from me, not a penny, nor a pennyworth of mine. Now, when a man had made such an impious vow as this, according to this tradition, it was to stand firm and good, and he was not to honour his father or mother, or do anything for them, by way of relief: so that our Lord might justly observe upon it as he does;

thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect, by your tradition: for if such a vow was valid, and a man was obliged to abide by it, according to the tradition of the elders, and not honour his father and mother, as the law of God requires; it is a plain case, that the command of God was made void by this tradition: nay they expressly say ⁸⁶⁸ that hwum yrbd le twlx Myrden, “vows fall upon things of a (divine) commandment”, as well as upon things in a man’s power, and that he is bound by them; so that without sin he cannot do what the law commands; insomuch, that if a man vows a vow, and that it may be ratified, a command must be made void, his vow must stand, and the command be abrogated. So truly and justly does Christ charge them with making the command of God of none effect, by their tradition. It is indeed disputed by the doctors, and at last allowed, that such a vow might be dissolved by a wise man, for the honour of parents ⁸⁶⁹.

“R. Eliezer says, they open to a man, (i.e. the door of repentance, and dissolve his vow,) for the honour of his father and his mother, but the wise men forbid “it”. Says R. Tzadok, if they open to him for the honour of his father and mother, they will open to him for the honour of God, and if so, there will be no vows: however, the wise men agreed with R. Eliezer in the affair between a man and his parents, that they should open to him for the honour of them.”

And this could be done only by a wise man; and very probably this last decree was made on account of this just reproof of Christ’s, being ashamed any longer to countenance so vile a practice; and even, according to this determination, the vow stood firm till dissolved by of their doctors: so that notwithstanding, Christ’s argument is good, and the instance full to prove that for which he brought it: for the above reason it may be, it is,

that this tradition Christ refers to is not now extant; but that there was such an one in Christ’s time, is certain; he would never have asserted it else; and had it not been true, the Pharisees would have been able to have retired him, and forward enough to have done it: and that such vows were sometimes made, and which were not to be rescinded, is clear from the following fact {z}.

“It happened to one in Bethhoron, מורד הימנו הנאה, שזיהה ביו “whose father was excluded, by a vow, from receiving any profit from him”: and he married his son, and said to his friend, a court and a dinner are given to thee by gift; but they are not to be made use of by thee, but with this condition, that my father may come and eat with us at dinner;”

which was a device to have his father at dinner, and yet secure his vow. Upon the whole, the sense of this passage is, not that a man excused himself to his parents, according to this tradition, by saying, that his substance, either in whole, or in part, was “Corban”, or devoted to the service of God, and therefore they could expect no profit, or relief, from him; but that he vowed that what he had should be as “Corban”, and they should be never the better for it: so that a man so vowing might give nothing to the service of God, but keep his whole substance to himself; which he might make use of for his own benefit, and for the benefit of others, but not for his father and mother; who, after such a vow made, were to receive no benefit by it, unless rescinded by a wise man; and which seems to be an explanation of it, made after the times of Christ.

Matthew 15:6

See note on Mt 15:5

Matthew 15:7

Ver. 7. **Ye hypocrites,....** After our Lord had given so full a proof of their making void the commandments of God by their traditions, he might very justly, as he does, call them hypocrites; who pretended to so much religion and holiness, and yet scrupled not, upon occasion, to set aside a divine command; who affected so much sanctity, as to be displeased with the disciples, for not complying with an order of their elders, when they themselves made no account of a divine precept; and plainly showed they had more regard to men than God, and to the precepts of men, than to the commands of God, and to approve themselves to men more than to God; and that they sought the praise and applause of men, and not the

⁸⁶⁸ Maimon. Hilch. Nedarim, c. 3. sect. 1. 6, 7. 9.

⁸⁶⁹ Misn. Nedarim, c. 9. sect. 1. {z} lb. c. 5. sect. 6.

honour which comes from God; and that their religion lay in mere rituals and externals, and those of men's devising, and not in the spiritual worship and service of God. Nor can it be thought that Christ, in calling them hypocrites, bears too hard upon them; when one of their own doctors, who lived not very distant from this age, says ⁸⁷⁰ of the men of Jerusalem, that

“if the hypocrites of the world were divided into ten parts, nine of them would belong to Jerusalem, and one to the rest of the world.”

Well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, in Isa 29:13 which prophecy, though it was directed to, and suited with many in that generation in which the prophet lived, yet had a further view to the Jews in after times: their own writers ⁸⁷¹ acknowledge, that the whole prophecy is spoken of that nation; for by Ariel they understand the altar at Jerusalem, the city in which David dwelt,

Matthew 15:8

Ver. 8. **This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth,....** The preface to these words, or the form in which they are introduced by the prophet; “wherefore the Lord said”, is left out in this citation, being unnecessary here, though of the greatest importance there; partly to show, that what was about to be said, was not the prophet's own words, but the words of the Lord, of which the Jews in Christ's time made no doubt; and partly to give a reason why that judicial blindness, threatened in the context, should be inflicted on them, which is no part of Christ's design here; but which is only to show, that the description here given exactly agrees with them, and so proves, and confirms the character he gives of them as hypocrites. They approached the ordinances of God, and drew nigh to him, and attended him in outward worship; they prayed unto him publicly, and constantly, in the streets, in the synagogues, and temple, and with much seeming devotion and sanctity:

and honoureth me with their lips:

they owned him to be their creator and preserver; they made their boast of him, and of their knowledge of him, as the one only living, and true God, and as the God of Israel; they brought their sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, even the fruit of their lips, unto him, for their many peculiar mercies, privileges, and favours, as a nation, church, and people, and with much seeming sincerity and affection.

But their heart is far from me; they had no true

love to God, nor faith in him, nor fear of him; they were not at all concerned for his presence with them, or for communion with him, or for his honour and glory; their hearts were in the world, and after their covetousness; they made religion a tool to their secular purposes, supposing gain to be godliness; sought the applause of men, and contented themselves with bodily exercise; having no regard to internal religion, powerful godliness, or where their hearts were, so be it, their bodies were presented to God in public worship; and what they did it was to be seen and approved of men, not caring what the searcher of hearts knew concerning them, or what he required of them.

Matthew 15:9

Ver. 9. **But in vain do they worship me,**

In the Hebrew text it is, “their fear towards me”: which is rightly expressed here by “worship”; for the fear of God often intends the whole worship of God, both external and internal: here it only signifies external worship, which these men only attended to. They prayed in the synagogues, read, and, in their way, expounded the books of Moses, and the prophets, to the people, diligently observed the rituals of the ceremonial law, brought their offerings and sacrifices to the temple, and neglected nothing appertaining to the outward service of it; and yet it was all “in vain”, and to no purpose; since the heart was wanting, no grace there, they acted from wrong principles, and with wrong views; their worship was merely outward, formal, and customary; and besides, they added doctrines and traditions of their own inventing and devising. The phrase, “in vain”, is not in the text in Isaiah: some have thought that it was not originally in Matthew, but inserted by some other hand, to make the sense more complete. Grotius thinks there was a various reading, which is followed by the Septuagint, and the evangelist; and that instead of וְתַהֲוֶה “and is”, it was וְתַהֲוֶה the same with לַתַּהֲוֶה, “in vain”: but there is no need to suppose either of these: Christ, who made this citation, either added it himself for the clearer illustration of the passage, and as being entirely agreeable to the sense of it, and which it required, for the true understanding of it; or he might have in his view another passage of the same prophet, speaking of the same people, and upon the same subject, Isa 1:11 and from thence take the phrase, and, for explanation sake, join it to the passage here. It follows,

teaching for doctrines the commandments of men;

⁸⁷⁰ R. Nathan in Rabba, sect. 1.

⁸⁷¹ Abarbinel, Jarchi, Kimchi, & Aben Ezra.

that is, teaching the people to observe the traditions of the elders, the decrees and determinations of the doctors, as if they were doctrines delivered by God himself; or, instead of the doctrines contained in the Bible, which lay neglected by them, they obtruded on them the orders, and injunctions of men. In the text in Isaiah, are only these words, “taught by the precept of men”: and which relate to their fear and worship of God; and which is here interpreted of their teachers teaching them it, and that explained of the commandments of men; as if, instead of *hdmlm*, “taught”, it had been read, *Mydmlm*, “teaching”. The Jews have no reason to quarrel with this construction and sense, since their Targum paraphrases it thus; “and their fear before me is, *כתפקידת גברני מלפני*, according to the commandment of men that teach”: and a noted commentator ⁸⁷² of their’s has this remark on the text, “their fear towards me is” not with a perfect heart, but “by the commandment *Mtwa Mydmlmh Myvnah*, of the men that teach them”.

Matthew 15:10

Ver. 10. **And he called the multitude,**

Having silenced the Scribes and Pharisees, and judging it not worth his while to say any more to men so obstinate and perverse; who were not open to conviction, nor would attend to any argument or reason, though ever so clear and strong, against their darling notions; he leaves them, as both disliking them, and despairing of them, and calls to the common people; who, through their great veneration for these men, upon their coming withdrew, and stood at a distance; nor indeed would they admit them very near unto them, lest they should be polluted by them: Christ, I say, calls to these to come nearer to him, hoping better of them, and knowing that they were more tractable, and teachable; and that there were some among them, that were to be brought off of their former principles and prejudices, to embrace him, and the truths delivered by him:

and said unto them, hear and understand;

this he said, partly, by way of reflection upon the learned Scribes and Pharisees, who, with all their learning, could not hear him so as to understand him; and partly to excite the attention of the multitude to what he had to say; as also to show, that barely to hear with the outward hearing of the ear, will be of no service, unless what is heard is understood; and that the way to understand, is to hear.

Matthew 15:11

⁸⁷² R. Sol. Jarchi in Isa. xxix. 13.

Ver. 11. **Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth the man,**

No sorts of meats, or drinks, or whatever is proper food for men, or manner of eating and drinking them, when moderately used, defile a man, or render him loathsome and odious in the sight God. This is directly opposite to the notions of the Jews, who say ⁸⁷³, that

“forbidden meats are unclean themselves, *והנפש* *והגוף* “and defile both body and soul””

The first food of man was herbs; after the flood he had an allowance of the flesh of beasts, without distinction; under the Levitical dispensation, a difference of meats was enjoined to be observed; the laws respecting that distinction are now abolished, and not binding on us under the Gospel dispensation. Some scruples, about some of these things, did arise among the first Christians; but in process of time these difficulties were got over: nor is there any religion in abstinence from any sort of food; men, indeed, on a “physical” account, ought to be careful what they eat and drink, but not on a religious one; moderation in all ought to be used; and whatever is ate or drank, should be received with thankfulness, and done to the glory of God, and then no defilement can arise from hence:

but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.

It is sin, and that only, which takes its rise from the heart, lies in thought, and is either expressed by the mouth, or performed by some outward action, which defiles the man, and renders him loathsome, abominable, and odious in the sight of God. The heart is the source of all evil; the pollution of it is very early, and very general, reaching to all the powers and faculties of the soul; which shows the ignorance of some, and folly of others, that talk of, and trust to the goodness of their hearts; and also the necessity of new hearts and right spirits being formed and created; and that the sinful thoughts of the heart, and the lusts thereof, are defiling to men; and that they are sinful in God’s account, and abominable in his sight; that they are loathsome to sensible sinners, and are to be repented of, and forsaken by them; and need the pardoning grace of God or otherwise will be brought into judgment. Sinful words, which, through the abundance of wickedness in the heart, come out of the mouth, have the same influence and effect: words are of a defiling nature; with these men pollute both themselves and others: the tongue, though a little member, defiles

⁸⁷³ Tzeror Hammor, fol. 142. 1.

the whole body; and evil and corrupt communication proceeding out of the mouth, corrupts the best of manners, and renders men loathsome to God, and liable to his awful judgment. And this is the nature of all sinful actions; they are what God can take no pleasure in; they are disagreeable, to a sensible mind; they leave a stain, which can never be removed by any thing the creature can do; nothing short of the blood of Christ can cleanse from it; and inasmuch as they are frequently committed, there is need of continual application to it. These are now the things men should be concerned about, as of a defiling nature; and not about meats and drinks, and the manner of using them, whether with hands washed, or unwashed.

Matthew 15:12

Ver. 12. **Then came his disciples, and said unto him,**

That is, after he had dismissed the people, and was come into a private house; see Mark 7:17 his disciples came to him, being alone, full of concern, for what he had said to the Pharisees, and before all the people; and not so well understanding it themselves.

Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended after they heard this saying?,

that they set aside the commandments of God, by observing the traditions of the elders; or that they were hypocrites; and that the prophecy of Isaiah, which describes such persons, belonging to them; or that not what goes into, but what comes out of a man, defiles him: whichever it was they have respect unto, or it may be to the whole, they seem to wish Christ had not said it; because the Pharisees were, as they thought, grieved and troubled at it, as being contrary to true religion and piety; and lest they should be so stumbled, as no more to attend, and so all hopes of bringing them over to the faith of Christ be lost; and chiefly, because they perceived they were made exceeding angry, and were highly provoked; so that they might fear that both Christ, and they themselves, would feel the effects of their wrath and rage; and perhaps it was with some such view, that he would take some prudential step that he might not fall into their hands, that they acquaint him with it.

Matthew 15:13

Ver. 13. **But he answered, and said,**

As being unconcerned at their rage, and having nothing to fear from them; and being well satisfied, that what he had said was right, and would produce proper effects, he gave his disciples this for answer:

every plant which my heavenly Father hath not

planted, shall be rooted up;

which may be understood either of things, or of persons: it may have regard to doctrines and ordinances; and the meaning be, that whatever doctrine is not delivered by God, or whatever ordinance is not instituted by him; whatever is not of heaven, but of man, of man's devising, and of human imposition, as the traditions of the elders, must be opposed and rejected; and sooner or later will be utterly rooted up, and destroyed; as will all the false notions, corrupt worship, and errors, and heresies of men, in God's own time: or it may respect persons. There are some plants, which are planted by Christ's Father, which is in heaven; these are the elect of God, who are trees of righteousness; the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified. These are planted by the river of God's love, in the person of Christ, in the likeness of his death and resurrection; they are transplanted out of a state of nature, are ingrafted into Christ, have the graces of the Spirit implanted in their souls, and are themselves planted in the courts of the Lord, in a Gospel church state; and being watered with the dews of grace, appear to be choice plants, plants of renown, pleasant ones, very fruitful, and which shall never perish, or be rooted, and plucked up, but there are others, like these Pharisees, hypocrites, formal professors, and heretics, who pretend to much religion and holiness, make a show of the leaves of profession, but have not the fruit of grace; these get into churches, and are outwardly and ministerially planted there; but being never rooted in Christ, nor partake of his grace, in time they wither, and die away; or persecution arising because of the Word, or truth being dispensed in so clear and glaring a light, that they cannot bear it; they are offended with it, and so are detected, discovered, and rooted up and it is necessary that truth should be freely spoken, as it was here by Christ, that such plants might be rooted out; for these words are said by Christ in justification of his conduct. So the Jews speak of God, as a planter, and of rooting up what he does not like.

“The holy, blessed God (say they ⁸⁷⁴), “plants” trees in this world; if they prosper, it is well; if they do not prosper, Nwl rqa, “he roots them up”, and plants them even many times.”

And elsewhere it is said ⁸⁷⁵,

“let the master of the vineyard come, and consume its thorns: the gloss on it is, the holy, bless-

⁸⁷⁴ Zohar in Gen. fol. 105. 3.

⁸⁷⁵ T. Bab. Bava Metzia, fol. 83. 2.

ed God; for the vineyard of the Lord of hosts, is the house of Israel, and he will consume, and take away the thorns of the vineyard.”

Matthew 15:14

Ver. 14. **Let them alone,**

Have nothing to say, or do with them; do not mind their anger and resentment, their reproaches and reflections, nor trouble yourselves at the offence they have taken; if they will go, let them go; they are a worthless generation of men, who are not to be regarded, hearkened to, nor to be pleased; it matters not what they say of me, and of my doctrine:

they be blind leaders of the blind;

the people that hearken to them, and are followers of them, are “blind”, as to any true sense of themselves, their state, and condition by nature; as to any spiritual, saving knowledge of God; as to any acquaintance with the Messiah, and the method of salvation by him; as to the Spirit of God, and the work of grace, regeneration, and sanctification upon the soul; as to the Scriptures of truth, and doctrines of the Gospel; and the “leaders” of them were as “blind” as they: by whom are meant the Scribes and Pharisees, the learned doctors and rabbins of the Jewish nation; who thought themselves very wise and knowing, yet they were blind also; and none more than they. It was an old tradition ⁸⁷⁶ among the Jews,

“that there should be “blind teachers” at the time when God should have his tabernacle among them.”

This was predicted, in Isa 42:19 and all such leaders and teachers are blind, who, notwithstanding their natural abilities, and acquired parts, are in a state of unregeneracy; and have nothing more than what they have from nature, or have attained to at school; and as apparently all such are, who lead men from Christ, to mere morality, and to a dependence upon their own righteousness for justification, which was the darling principle of the blind leaders in the text.

And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch;

of ignorance and error, immorality and profaneness, distress, if not despair, temporal ruin and destruction; which was notoriously verified in the Jewish people, and their guides: and of eternal damnation, the lake which burns with fire and brimstone; what else can be expected?

Matthew 15:15

Ver. 15. **Then answered Peter,**

Mark says, “his disciples asked him concerning the parable”; which might be by the mouth of Peter; who, probably, being the eldest man, and very forward to speak, was generally their spokesman: and who, at this time, might be requested, by the rest, to ask the meaning of the parable, which had given offence to the Pharisees, and was not clearly understood by them; which he accordingly did:

and said unto him, declare unto us this parable;

that not what goes into the mouth, but what comes out of it, defiles the man; which, though expressed in very plain words, and easy to be understood, yet did not appear clear to their understandings; and seemed to be contrary, not only to the traditions of the elders, but to the laws of God, respecting the difference of clean and unclean meats; and therefore call it a “parable”, and desire an explanation of it.

Matthew 15:16

Ver. 16. **And Jesus said,....** As wondering at, and as being displeased with, and as reproving them for their dulness and ignorance:

are ye also yet without understanding?

you, my disciples, as well as the Scribes and Pharisees; you, who have been with me so long, who have heard so many discourses from me, who for so long a time have been instructed by me, both in private, and in public; and yet do not understand what is so plain and easy, that has nothing of difficulty in it, but what might easily be accounted for.

Matthew 15:17

Ver. 17. **Do not ye understand,**

You must understand, you cannot be so ignorant,

that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth, goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught?

that is, that whatsoever food a man takes in at his mouth, he swallows down, and it is received into his stomach; which, having performed its office, the grosser parts go down into the belly, and passing through the bowels, are evacuated into the vault, or privy, “purging all meats”, as Mark says; for that only receives the filth and excrementitious matter; so that what is left in the body is pure, wholesome, and nourishing: nor can any part of what goes into a man defile him, because it only enters into the body, and passes through it; and, as Mark says, “entereth not into the heart”, which is the seat of moral impurity; so that no moral pollution can be contracted

⁸⁷⁶ Midrash Tillim in Psal. cxlvi apud Grotium in loc.

by eating any sort of food, even though it should not be clean itself, nor be eaten with clean hands.

Matthew 15:18

Ver. 18. **But those things which proceed out of the mouth,**

Meaning not material things, as spittle, vomit, &c. but, as it follows, which come forth from the heart: are first conceived and formed there, and then come forth from thence, and are expressed by the mouth; as all idle words, foolish talking, filthy jesting, unsavoury communication, and every word that is rotten and corrupt, or which is done in the life and conversation; and they defile the man: the heart is the corrupt fountain from whence all moral defilement flows; and sinful words and actions are the impure streams, which spring from thence, and increase the moral pollution of human nature.

Matthew 15:19

Ver. 19. **For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts,**

Of God, of Christ, of the Spirit, of fellow creatures, and of all sorts of wickedness. The thoughts of sin are evil, are to be hated, forsaken, and for which men are accountable to God. All wicked imaginations, carnal reasonings, lustful desires, and malicious contrivances, are here included; which take their rise from, and are devised, and forged, in the corrupt heart of man.

Murders;

inveterate hatred of men's persons, malice prepense, schemes to take away life, all angry and wrathful words, and actual effusion of man's blood.

Adulteries;

uncleanness committed between married persons, both in thought, and deed:

fornications;

unlawful copulations of persons in a single state: thefts; taking away from others by force or fraud, what is their right and property: false witness: swearing falsely, or exhibiting a false testimony to the hurt of his neighbour, either his name, person, or estate:

blasphemies;

evil speakings of God or men. To which Mark adds "covetousness"; a greedy and insatiable desire after the things of the world, or the neighbour's goods: "wickedness"; doing hurt and mischief to fellow creatures: "deceit"; in words and actions, in trade and conversation: "lasciviousness"; all manner of uncleanness, and unnatural lusts: "an evil eye"; of envy and covetousness: the vitiosity, or corruption of nature, is, by the Jews ⁸⁷⁷,

called Nyeer, "the evil eye": "pride"; in heart and life, in dress and gesture; and "foolishness"; expressed in talk and conduct.

Matthew 15:20

Ver. 20. **These are the things which defile a man,**

These are filthy in themselves, and must pollute all in whom they are; they bring a defilement on the whole man, both body and soul, fasten guilt upon him, and expose him to everlasting punishment: but to eat with unwashed hands defileth not a man: should a man neglect to wash his hands before eating a common meal, this need give him no uneasiness; he contracts no filth to his soul hereby, nor any guilt to his conscience; nor does he break any law of God; nor is he liable to any penalty for such an omission. This is a trifling matter, and merits no regard; but the things before mentioned are in their nature evil: they are contrary to the law of God; they are abominable in his sight; they render men loathsome and odious to the divine being; and expose them to shame and ruin; and it is only the blood of Christ can cleanse them from the pollution and guilt of them, and secure them from that punishment they deserve.

Matthew 15:21

Ver. 21. **Then Jesus went thence,**

From the land of Gennesaret, after he had silenced the Pharisees, as to the charge brought by them against his disciples; and when he had reproved them for their hypocrisy and wickedness, in making void the commands of God by their traditions; and had explained some difficult and parabolical sayings he had made use of to his disciples, he then left that country, and departed very privately: either to shun the multitude, for the sake of retirement; or to avoid any snares the Scribes and Pharisees might be laying for him, who must be greatly galled with his free discourse, and strong arguments: and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon; two principal cities of Phoenicia: not that he went into these places themselves, but into some places that bordered upon them; for as he ordered his disciples not to go in the way of the Gentiles, so neither did he himself.

Matthew 15:22

Ver. 22. **And behold a woman of Canaan,**

That is, of Phoenicia, which was called Canaan; so Shaul, the son of a Canaanitish woman, is, by the Septuagint in Ex 6:15 called the son of a Phoenician; and the kings of Canaan are, by the same interpreters in

877 Tzeror Hammor, fol. 141. 3.

Jos 5:1 called kings of Phoenicia: hence this woman is by Mark said to be a Greek, that is, a Gentile, as the Jews used to call all of another nation, and a Syrophenician, being a native of Phoenicia, called Syrophenician; because it bordered upon Syria, and had been formerly a part of it, by conquest: so Cadmus, who is reported to have first brought letters from Phoenicia to Greece, is called ⁸⁷⁸ a Syrophenician merchant.

Came out of the same coasts;

being an inhabitant, it is very likely, either of Tyre or Sidon: this shows that Christ did not go into these places, but only to the borders of them, since she is said to come out of them to him; who, having heard of him, and the miraculous cures wrought by him, and being informed that he was near, at such a place, as the Persic version says, “suddenly came forth out of a corner”; and the Ethiopic reads it, “out of the mountains thereof”; and made to the house where he was privately retired, and would have hid himself, as Mark suggests,

and cried unto him;

with a loud voice, with much vehemency, being in great distress,

saying, have mercy on me;

meaning, by curing her daughter, with whose case she was so much affected, that she made it, as it were, her own:

O Lord, thou son of David.

The first of these characters expresses her faith in his power, dominion, and government, that all persons and things, and so all diseases were at his command, and control; and that being Lord of all, he could remove them at his pleasure: the other shows her knowledge and belief of him, as the Messiah, that being a name by which he was usually known by the Jews; See Gill “Mt 1:1” and which she, though a Gentile, might come at the knowledge of, either through being a proselyte to the Jewish religion, or through a general report which might reach, especially the neighbouring nations, that the Jews expected a wonderful deliverer to arise among them, under this character of the son of David; and from what she had heard of him, she concluded he must be the person.

My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil,

which had took possession of her, and most grievously afflicted her: and her request to him was, that he would cast him out of her: believing he had power so to do, without seeing or touching her, only by a word

878 {i} Lucian. Dialog. Deor. Coneil. sect. 2,

speaking: her faith was like that of the centurion’s.

Matthew 15:23

Ver. 23. **But he answered her not a word,**

Not that he did not hear her, or that he despised either her person or petition, or that he was not moved with it; but to continue her importunity, and try her faith, and make it manifest: for like reasons the Lord does not always, and immediately, answer the requests of his people. This giving her no answer, either that he would, or would not help her, carried in it a tacit repulse of her, and a denial of assistance to her; and it seems as if she did for a while desist from her application to him, and betook herself to his disciples to plead with him for her: and his disciples came; to the house where he was; who, it seems by this, had been elsewhere;

and besought him, saying, send her away;

not in any shape, with any sort of answer, without curing her daughter, or without a promise of a cure; no, they desired she might be dismissed, with a grant of her request, to her entire satisfaction, as appears from Christ’s answer: the reason they give is,

for she crieth after us;

not only because she was troublesome to them, was importunate with them, and would take no denial from them: she followed them wherever they went; there was no getting rid of her: but also, because her case was so moving, was delivered in such an affecting manner, and her cries were piercing, that they could not bear them; and therefore entreat him, that he would relieve, and dismiss her.

Matthew 15:24

Ver. 24. **But he answered, and said,**

To his disciples, who knew how limited their commission was, that they were not to go into the way of the Gentiles, not to preach to them, nor perform miracles among them; and therefore could not reasonably expect that either the woman, or they, on her behalf, should succeed in this matter.

I am not sent, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel;

as a priest, or as a Saviour and Redeemer, he was sent to make satisfaction and atonement for the sins of all God’s elect, and to obtain eternal redemption and salvation for all of them, whether Jews or Gentiles; but as a prophet, in the discharge of his own personal ministry, he was sent by his Father only to the Jews; he was the “minister of the circumcision”, Ro 15:8 that is, a minister to the circumcised Jews; he was sent only to preach the

Gospel to them, and work miracles among them, in proof of his Messiahship; and upon their rejection of him, then his apostles were to be sent among the Gentiles; but he himself was sent only to the Jews, here styled “the lost sheep of the house of Israel”: by “the house of Israel”, is meant the whole body of the Jewish nation, so called from Israel, the name of Jacob their father, from whom they sprung; and by the “lost sheep” of that house, are more especially designed the elect of God among them: for though all the individuals of that house were “lost” persons, considered in Adam, and in themselves, as the rest of mankind, and Christ, in the external ministry of the word, was sent to preach to them all; yet the elect of God are only “sheep”: they are the sheep of Christ, of his pasture, and of his hand, whom he has the particular care and charge of; and who, in their natural state, are lost and straying, and could never find their way, or recover themselves from their lost state in Adam, and by their own transgressions; but he came to seek, and to save them, and to these his ministry was powerful and efficacious.

Matthew 15:25

Ver. 25. **Then came she and worshipped him,**

She followed the disciples into the house; and perceiving another repulse by Christ’s answer to them, she pushes on, through all discouragements; her faith grows stronger, and her importunity greater: she had called Christ Lord, and the son of David before, but now she worships him as God:

Saying, Lord help me;

a short petition, but what fully and fitly expressed her case: the object she prays unto is the Lord, by which she owns his sovereignty, dominion, and power: the request she makes is for “help”, signifying that her case required it; that it was such, that she could not help herself, nor any creature help her, only he, which she firmly believed; and though it was her daughter, and not she herself, that was so miserably afflicted; yet such was her sympathy, love, and affection to her, that she makes the case her own, and calls helping her daughter, helping herself; for her daughter being relieved, she would be made easy.

Matthew 15:26

Ver. 26. **But he answered, and said,**

To the woman, as the Persic version reads it, and the sense requires:

it is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs;

which he said, to try her faith the more, and make

it the more illustrious; and that not so much from his own sense of things, as in the language of the Jewish people, and which she might not be a stranger to. By “the children”, are meant the Jews, to whom the adoption belonged; who, as a nation and people, were the children of God in a large sense; being distinguished by many blessings and favours, which others had not, and being under the more peculiar care and notice of God; not that all of them were the children of God by special grace: by “the bread”; which belonged to them, is meant the external ministry of the word, and the miracles of Christ wrought among them: and particularly such outward favours which related to the good of the bodies of men, by healing their diseases, and dispossessing them of devils: and by “the dogs” are designed the Gentiles, so called by the Jews in a way of contempt, because of their ignorance, idolatry, and impurity. Christ here speaks not his own mind, as if he reproached the Gentiles, and held them in scorn and contempt, but uses the common dialect of the people; and which, this woman, living upon the borders of the Israelitish nation, was acquainted with; so that it was not so shocking and surprising, or quite so discouraging, as it would otherwise have been. The Jewish doctors say ⁸⁷⁹, that the idolatrous Gentiles are not called men, that they are comparable to the beasts or the field ⁸⁸⁰, to oxen, rams, goats ⁸⁸¹, and asses ⁸⁸²: the foetus in the bowels of a Canaanitish servant, they say ⁸⁸³,”

כֹּלֵךְ בְּמִןּ בְּהֵמָה דְּמִי “is like the foetus in the bowels of a beast”.

Take the following passage, as an illustration of this, and as a further proof of the Jews calling the Gentiles dogs ⁸⁸⁴.

”A king provides a dinner for the children of his house; whilst they do his will they eat their meat with the king, and he gives to the dogs the part of bones to gnaw; but when the children of the house do not do the king’s pleasure, he gives the dogs the dinner, and the bones to them: even so: while the Israelites do the will of their Lord, they eat at the king’s table, and the feast is provided for them, and they of their own will give the

⁸⁷⁹ T. Bab. Bava Metzia, fol. 114. 2. Zohar in Exod. fol. 35. 4. Tzeror Hammor, fol. 1. 4.

⁸⁸⁰ Zohar in Gen. fol. 31. 1. & 34. 1. 2.

⁸⁸¹ Jarchi in Gen. 15. 10.

⁸⁸² T. Bab. Kiddushin, fol. 68. 1.

⁸⁸³ lb. fol. 69. 1.

⁸⁸⁴ Zohar in Exod. fol. 63. 1, 2. Vid. Tzeror Hammor, fol. 147. 4.

bones to the Gentiles; but when they do not do the will of their Lord, lo! the feast is לִכְלִיבֵי, “for the dogs”, and the bones are their’s.

”And a little after,”

thou preparest a table before me”; this is the feast of the king; “in the presence of mine enemies”; yblk Nwnya, “these are the dogs” that sit before the table, looking for their part of the bones.”

In which may be clearly discerned the distinction between children and dogs, and the application of the one to the Jews, and the other to the Gentiles, and the different food that belongs to each: and hence it is easy to see from whom Christ borrowed this expression, and with what view he made use of it.

Matthew 15:27

Ver. 27. **And she saith, truth, Lord,**

She owns all that he had said to be true, that he was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel: that she was indeed but a dog, a poor sinful creature, and unworthy of any favour; and that it was not right and fitting that all the children’s bread should be taken from them and given to dogs:

yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master’s table.

The Syriac and Persic versions add “and live”: thus she wisely lays hold upon and improves in a very beautiful manner, in her own favour, what seemed to be so much against her. It is observed ⁸⁸⁵ of the Syrophoenicians in general, that they have all, in their common talk, something hdu kai kecarismenon “pleasant and graceful”, as there is indeed in this smart reply of her’s, who was one of that people. She suggests that though the Gentiles were but dogs, and she one of them; yet their common Lord and Master had a propriety in them, and they in him; and were to be maintained and fed, and ought to live, though not in such fulness of favours and blessings, as the Jews, the children of God: nor did she desire their affluence, only that a crumb of mercy might be given her, that her poor daughter might be healed; which was but a small favour, in comparison of the numerous ones he heaped upon the children, the Jews: nor would this be any more detrimental to them, than it is to the children, for the dogs, under the table, to eat of the crumbs that fall.

Matthew 15:28

Ver. 28. **Then Jesus answered, and said unto her,**

As one surprised at the strength of her faith, and the clearness and justness of her pious reasoning; and not concealing himself, and the designs of grace, any longer from her, breaks out in great admiration of her, saying,

O woman, great is thy faith!

He seems surprised, that she, a woman, and a poor Gentile, should express such strong faith in him; calling him Lord, owning him to be the Messiah, worshipping him as God, believing him able to do what could not be done by human art; and though she met with such repulses, and even called a dog, yet still continued importunate with him, believing she should succeed:

be it unto thee even as thou wilt;

let thy daughter be healed, as thou desirest, and in the way, and at the very time thou wouldst have it:

and her daughter was made whole from that very hour:

power went forth from Christ, and dispossessed the devil; so that when she came home, as Mark observes, she found her daughter lying on the bed, quiet, and easy, and perfectly well. The conduct of our Lord towards this woman, and her behaviour under it, do, in a very lively manner, represent the methods which God sometimes takes with his people, when they apply to him in their distress; and the nature and actings of their faith upon him: as she, when she first applied to Christ for mercy and help, had not sword of answer given her; so sometimes they cry, and the Lord turns a deaf ear, or seems not to hear, and, in their apprehension of things, has covered himself with a cloud, that their prayer should not pass through; however, an immediate answer is not returned; yea, when others interpose on their behalf, and entreat for them, yet no favourable answer is returned, as was not by Christ to his disciples, when they besought him on this woman’s account: and yet, notwithstanding all this, as she, they are not discouraged, but ply the throne of grace with fresh suits, acknowledge that the worst of names and characters belong to them: that they are unworthy of the least of mercies, and should be content with the crumbs of divine favour, but cannot go away without a blessing; they lay hold on every word of God, and hastily catch at it, and improve everything in their own favour, that faith can come at, and so, in the issue, succeed in their requests: effectual, fervent, and importunate prayer, the prayer of faith availeth much with God.

Matthew 15:29

Ver. 29. **And Jesus departed from thence,**

From the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, where he would

⁸⁸⁵ Eunapius in Vita Libanii.

have been private and retired; but being discovered, and knowing that the fame of this last miracle would make him more public in those parts, he removed, and passed through the midst of the coast of Decapolis, as Mark says, “and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee”: the same with the sea of Tiberias. Joh 6:1, that is, he came to those parts of Galilee, which lay near the sea side, and went into a mountain: which was very usual with him, either for solitude, or for prayer, and sometimes, for better conveniency, to preach to the people: and sat down there: to take some rest, being weary with his journey, and as waiting for the multitude to come to him, both for instruction and healing.

Matthew 15:30

Ver. 30. **And great multitudes came unto him,**

From the adjacent places; having heard of his being where he was; and who had either attended on him before, or, however, the fame of him, and his miracles, had reached their ears: these flocked to him, having with them, in their hands, or arms, or upon their backs, or shoulders, leading some, and carrying others, in some form or another,

those that were lame;

either in their legs, or arms:

blind;

in one eye, or both, and that either from their birth, or since:

dumb:

the word signifies both deaf and dumb: these often meet in the same person: and if a man is born deaf, he is always dumb:

maimed:

having lost a limb, an arm, or a leg, or so enfeebled by some disease or another, as the palsy, that their limbs were useless to them. The Persic version reads it “leprous”: and many others; who were afflicted with various other diseases, too many to be mentioned particularly:

and cast them down at Jesus’ feet;

to ease themselves of their burdens, and with a view to move his compassion, believing he was able to cure them: nor do they say a word to him, or desire him to relieve these miserable objects; thinking it was enough to present them to him, and not doubting at all, but he would show favour to them:

and he healed them;

immediately, either by a word speaking, or by touching them, or by putting his hands on them, or without any such outward sign, through a divine power

proceeding from him, which, at once, removed all their disorders and complaints.

Matthew 15:31

Ver. 31. **Insomuch that the multitude wondered,**

The multitude of the spectators, who, though they came in expectation of seeing miracles wrought, yet these were so much beyond what they could have imagined, that they were amazed and surprised to see cures so instantly performed, in such a miraculous manner: these were such glaring proofs and evidences of the wonderful power of God, that they were astonished

when they saw the dumb to speak;

that is, such who before were dumb, now spoke; and the same is to be observed in the other following instances: some copies have also, “the deaf to hear”; and so the Arabic version: “the maimed to be whole”. This is left out in some copies; nor is it in the Arabic, Ethiopic, and Vulgate Latin versions, nor in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel; but the Syriac has it, and most Greek copies, and seems necessary; since these are particularly mentioned among the persons brought to be cured; and a wonderful cure this was, that persons who had not only lost the use of their limbs, but such who had lost the limbs themselves, should have them restored perfect; for doubtless, the power of our Lord was able to do this, and which was amazing to behold: the lame to walk, and the blind to see; as was prophesied of the times of the Messiah, and as things to be effected by him, Isa 35:5

and they glorified the God of Israel.

The Ethiopic version adds, “which had given such power to the son of man”, or “unto men”, which seems to be taken out of Mt 9:8. This must be understood both of the multitude that saw these miraculous operations, and the persons on whom they were wrought; who were both affected with them, and gave God the praise and glory of them, by whose power alone such things could be done, who is the one only and true God: and therefore, to distinguish him from the fictitious deities of the Gentiles, he is here styled the God of Israel, of the people of Israel, so called from Jacob their ancestor, whose name was Israel; by whom God was known, and worshipped, and was their Covenant God, and Father.

Matthew 15:32

Ver. 32. **Then Jesus called his disciples unto him,**

Who were at some little distance from him, to impart his mind unto them, whom he had made, and used, as his familiar friends; and to try their faith, and raise their

attention, and prepare them for the following miracle; as well as to teach them by his example, and accustom them to show bowels of mercy and compassion to persons in any kind of want and distress:

and said, I have compassion on the multitude;

which must be understood of him as man, whose bowels yearned towards them, having been so long without any food for their bodies, or very little; as he had compassion on the sick, and diseased, and healed them, so on the sound and whole, and was willing to feed them. Christ, our high priest, is a merciful one, and is touched with the feeling of the infirmities of men, of every sort, both of soul and body:

because they continue now with me three days;

which time had been spent in healing their bodily disorders, and in preaching to them for the good of their souls; which shows the diligence and indefatigableness of Christ, as well as the attachment of the people to him; who were so struck with his miracles and ministry, that though they had been so long from their habitations and families, knew not how to leave him; nor did they talk, or show any signs of departing from him, and returning to their houses, and business of life;

and have nothing to eat;

not that they had been so long without eating anything, though very likely it was but little, and what they brought with them, and was now expended; nor could they provide themselves in a desert place, and many of them were a great way off from home:

and I will not send them away fasting; he might have done it, nor did the multitude ask any food of him; but he could not bear the thoughts of dismissing them in such a condition; having had but very little sustenance all this while, and so might be said to be in a manner fasting during this time, at least now:

lest they faint by the way;

to their own houses, not having strength and spirit enough to travel, and get home: for “divers of them”, as Mark says, “came from far”.

Matthew 15:33

Ver. 33. **And his disciples said unto him,**

The former miracle of feeding five thousand men, besides women and children, with five loaves and two fishes, being quite out of their thoughts, they reply,

whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?

The question is big with objections, and is put with some vehemency and astonishment: the people to be

led were a multitude, a great multitude, a very great multitude, and these too had had but little, or no food, for a great while; and therefore would require the more to fill and satisfy them; and besides, it was a wilderness where they were, and where no provisions were to be had; and if they could have been got for money, they had not stock enough to purchase such a large number of loaves, as were necessary to feed so great a company with.

Matthew 15:34

Ver. 34. **And Jesus saith unto them,**

In a very mild and gentle manner, taking no notice of their stupidity, nor upbraiding them with their forgetfulness of the late miracle, and willing to exercise their patience, and try their faith, asks,

how many loaves have ye?

meaning in the common stock, and which they brought along with them, for their own supply:

and they said seven, and a few little fishes;

which they mention as so small a provision, that it was as nothing for such multitudes; their loaves of bread were but seven, and their fishes, which were ready dressed, dried, or boiled, &c. were few in number, and small, as to quantity and size.

Matthew 15:35

Ver. 35. **And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.**

Not regarding the smallness of the provisions, nor any further consulting with his disciples; but knowing his own power to increase this food, and determining to feed the multitude before he dismissed them, in an authoritative way ordered them to sit down upon the ground in rows, that they might be the better seen, and served.

Matthew 15:36

Ver. 36. **And he took the seven loaves and the fishes,**

Into his hands, and lifted them up, that it might be seen, and observed, that there were no other food than these, that so the miracle might appear in its true light:

and gave thanks;

to God for the provision, though it was so small, in the name of the whole company, according to the usage of the Jewish nation; who, if there were ten thousand⁸⁸⁶, one for the rest used to say,

”let us bless the Lord our God, the God of Israel, the God of hosts, that sitteth between the cherubim:”

⁸⁸⁶ {r} Misn. Beracot, c. 7. sect. 3.

teaching us to do so likewise, and to be thankful for, and content with our portion, be it more or less:

and brake them;

which also was the custom of the master of the family to do:

and gave to his disciples:

as a fresh trial of their faith, to reprove their unbelief, to put them in mind of the former miracle, and that they might be witnesses of this, and, in order to distribute to the people, which they accordingly did:

and the disciples to the multitude;

in doing which they obeyed their master's orders, though before they could not persuade themselves, that such a multitude of people could be filled with so small a quantity.

Matthew 15:37

Ver. 37. **And they did all eat, and were filled,**

Every one had a share of the provision, and that to full satisfaction; no one was overlooked and neglected, and everyone had as much as he could eat:

and they took up of the broken meat that was left, seven baskets full.

The disciples, after they had distributed to everyone his portion, went round, and collected the remaining fragments, and filled seven baskets therewith, according to the number of the loaves which were broken; and so had a full return for the loaves and fishes they spared on this occasion.

Matthew 15:38

Ver. 38. **And they that did eat, were four thousand men,**

This number of men, as well as of the baskets of fragments, clearly shows this to be a distinct miracle from the former of this kind, recorded in Mt 14:15. There the number of men were five thousand, here four thousand; there the quantity of food was five loaves and two fishes, here seven loaves and a few fishes; there the number of the baskets of fragments was twelve, here seven; though the quantity might be as large; since the word here used for a basket is not the same as there, and designs one of a larger size:

besides women and children;

who were not taken into the account, though they ate as well as the men, and whose number might be very large.

Matthew 15:39

Ver. 39. **And he sent away the multitude,**

Dismissing them, either with a prayer for them, or

with a suitable word of exhortation, to be thankful for the mercies, both spiritual and temporal, they had received, and behave agreeably in their lives and conversations:

and took ship;

being near the sea side, the sea of Galilee,

and came into the coasts of Magdala:

not far from Tiberias; for often mention is made of Magdala in the Talmud ⁸⁸⁷, along with Tiberias, and Chammath, another place in the same neighbourhood; and was famous for some Rabbins, as R. Joden and R. Isaac ⁸⁸⁸, who are said to be haldgm, "אלאדגמ ש". Thus the Syriac version reads it Magedo, and the Vulgate Latin Magedan; and Beza says, in one Greek exemplar it is read Magadan; and some have thought it to be the same with Megiddo, where Josiah was slain by Pharaohnecho, and which Herodotus calls Magdolos ⁸⁸⁹. The Evangelist Mark says, that he came into the parts of Dalmanutha, which was a place within the coasts of Magdala. This was not the place, but another of the same name near Jerusalem, from whence Mary Magdalene may be thought to have her name. The Ethiopic version renders it, "they went into a ship, and departed into the mountains of Magdala"; that is, Christ, and his disciples.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW CHAPTER XVI

1 The Pharisees require a sign. 6 Jesus warn

Matthew 16

- [1] The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven.
- [2] He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red.
- [3] And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?
- [4] 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. And he left them, and departed.
- [5] And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.

⁸⁸⁷ T. Hieros. Sheviith, fol. 38. 4. Maaserot, fol. 50. 3. Erubin, fol. 21. 4.

⁸⁸⁸ T. Hieros. Taanith, fol. 64. 3. T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 81. 2. & Nidda, fol. 33. 1. Bereshit Rabba, fol. 4. 4.

⁸⁸⁹ {u} I. 2. c. 159.

- [6] Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.
- [7] And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread.
- [8] Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?
- [9] Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?
- [10] Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?
- [11] How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?
- [12] Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.
- [13] When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?
- [14] And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.
- [15] He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?
- [16] And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.
- [17] And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.
- [18] And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.
- [19] And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.
- [20] Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.
- [21] From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.
- [22] Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.
- [23] But he turned, and said unto 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.

- [24] Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.
- [25] For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.
- [26] For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?
- [27] For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.
- [28] 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.

JOHN GILL'S COMMENTARY ON MATTHEW CHAPTER XVI

Matthew 16:1

Ver. 1. **The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came,** Not from Jerusalem, as in Mt 15:1 but from the neighbouring places: these were Galilean Sadducees and Pharisees, of whom mention is made in the Misna ⁸⁹⁰;

“says דְּרֹקֵי גַלִּילִי, “a Galilean Sadducee”, (i.e. one that was of the land of Galilee, as Bartenora on the place observes,) I complain of you Pharisees, because ye write the name of a ruler with the name of Moses, in a divorce; say the Pharisees, we complain of you Galilean Sadducees, that you write the name of a ruler with the name of God, in the same leaf:”

but though these two sects could not agree in this, and in many other things, yet they could unite against Christ, to whom they bore an implacable hatred.

And tempting, desired him that he would show them a sign from heaven:

they came with no sincere view to be taught by him, or learn anything from him; but if they could, to ensnare him, and get an opportunity of exposing him to the people; and therefore pretending dissatisfaction with the miracles he wrought on the earth, they ask of him to produce a sign from heaven, of his coming from thence, of his being the Son of God, and the true Messiah. They wanted some such sign, as the standing still of the sun and moon, in the times of Joshua; and as raining manna, in

⁸⁹⁰ 890 Yadaim, c. 4. sect. 8.

the times of Moses; or some such appearances of thunder and lightning, as at the giving of the law. The appearance of the rainbow, in a very extraordinary manner, is looked upon by the Jews as a sign of the Messiah's coming ⁸⁹¹.

“Says a certain Jew, when my father departed out of the world, he said thus to me; do not look for the Messiah until thou seest the bow in the world, adorned with light colours, and the world enlightened by it; then look for the Messiah, as it is written, Ge 9:16.”

Some very unusual and uncommon sight in the heavens, was what these men asked of Christ in proof of his mission from God.

Matthew 16:2

Ver. 2. **He answered and said unto them,**

Knowing full well their views, and having wrought sufficient miracles to confirm his Messiahship, he thought fit to give them no other answer than this:

when it is evening, ye say, it will be fair weather, for the sky is red;

when the sun is setting, it is a common thing for you to say, looking up to the heavens, and observing the face and colour of them, that it is like to be fair weather; no rain, that night, nor perhaps the next day, for the sky is red like fire, through the rays of the sun; which show the clouds to be very thin, and so will soon waste away, and consequently fine weather must follow.

Matthew 16:3

Ver. 3. **And in the morning, it will be foul weather today,**

When you rise in the morning, and take a survey of the heavens, it is a very usual thing with you to say, it is like to be windy or rainy weather today,

for the sky is red and lowring;

which shows, that the clouds are so thick that the sun cannot pierce through them, and its face is not seen; so that it may be reasonably concluded they will issue in rain, or wind, or both.

O ye hypocrites.

The Vulgate Latin, and Munster's Hebrew Gospel, leave out this appellation; but all other versions, as well as copies, have it: and it is an usual epithet, bestowed very justly by Christ, on these men; who pretended to be the guides of the people, took upon them to teach and instruct them in divine things, and set up themselves as men of great holiness, piety and knowledge; and yet,

instead of searching the Scriptures, and comparing the characters of the times of the Messiah therein fixed, with the present ones, spent their time in making such low and useless observations, and which fall within the compass of everyone's knowledge and reach.

Ye can discern the face of the sky;

very distinctly, and make some very probable guesses, if not certain conclusions, what will follow, good weather or bad:

but can ye not discern the signs of the times?

or, as the Syriac reads it, “the time”, the present time: if they had not been blind, they might easily have discerned, that the signs of the time of the Messiah's coming were upon them, and that Jesus was the Messiah; as the departure of the sceptre from Judah, the ending of Daniel's weeks, the various miracles wrought by Christ, the wickedness of the age in which they lived, the ministry of John the Baptist, and of Christ, the great flockings of the people, both to one and to the other, with divers other things which were easy to be observed by them: but they pretend this to be a very great secret.

“The secret of the day of death, they say ⁸⁹², and the secret of the day when the king Messiah comes, who by his wisdom can find out?”

Matthew 16:4

Ver. 4. **A wicked and adulterous generation,**

He says the same things here, as he did to the Pharisees on a like occasion, in Mt 12:39.

And he left them;

as persons hardened, perverse, and incurable, and as unworthy to be conversed with:

and departed:

to the ship which brought him thither, and went in it to the other side of the sea of Galilee; see Mark 8:13.

Matthew 16:5

Ver. 5. **When his disciples were come to the other side,....** Of the sea, as Munster's Hebrew Gospel adds, to Bethsaida, Mark 8:22 as they were either in the ship, or going from the shore to the said place, they recollected themselves,

that they had forgotten to take bread:

having but one loaf, as Mark says, in the ship; the seven baskets of fragments being either expended, or given away to the poor, of their own accord, or by Christ's orders. It seems, it was usual with the disciples to buy food at places most proper, and carry with them;

⁸⁹¹ Zohar in Gen. fol. 53. 2.

⁸⁹² Targum in Eccl. vii. 24.

since Christ often went into deserts and mountainous places, where provisions could not be had. This their forgetfulness to act according to their wonted method, might arise either from their being intent upon Christ's conversation with the Pharisees, and Sadducees, or from the suddenness of Christ's departure.

Matthew 16:6

Ver. 6. **Then Jesus said unto them,**

Either taking occasion from the disciples observing that they had forgot to take bread with them, or on account of what passed between him and the Pharisees and Sadducees, he gave the following advice to his disciples;

take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

Mark, instead "of the leaven of the Sadducees", says, "the leaven of Herod"; either because Christ might caution against all three; or because the Sadducees were generally Herodians, taking Herod to be the Messiah; or were on his party, or for his government, which the Pharisees disliked; and the Herodians were generally Sadducees. By "the leaven" of these is meant their doctrine, as appears from Mt 16:12. The doctrines the Pharisees taught were the commandments and inventions of men, the traditions of the elders, free will, and justification by the works of the law: the doctrine of the Sadducees was, that there was no resurrection of the dead, nor angels, nor spirits: now because they sought secretly and artfully to infuse their notions into the minds of men; and which, when imbibed, spread their infection, and made men sour, morose, rigid, and ill natured, and swelled and puffed them up with pride and vanity, Christ compares them to leaven; and advises his disciples to look about them, to watch, and be on their guard, lest they should be infected with them.

Matthew 16:7

Ver. 7 **And they reasoned among themselves,**

Either what should be the meaning of this caution of Christ's, and upon what account he should say this to them; or they were anxiously concerned what they should do for provision:

saying, because we have taken no bread;

for the phrase, "it is", is a supplement, and is not in the original text, which confines the sense to the first way of interpretation; the words may be read without it, and confirms the other sense, and which receives strength from what follows.

Matthew 16:8

Ver. 8. **Which when Jesus perceived,**

Without hearing any of their debates, but by his omniscience; for he knew the doubts and unbelief, and anxious solicitude of their minds, as well as their private reasonings one with another:

he said unto them, O ye of little faith;

a phrase used upon a like occasion, when he would dissuade his disciples from an anxious distressing care about a livelihood, Mt 6:30

See Gill "Mt 6:30":

why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?

blaming one another for your negligence and forgetfulness in this matter; distressing your minds, as if you should be famished and starved, because ye have not brought a quantity of bread, as you used to do with you.

Matthew 16:9

Ver. 9. **Do ye not understand,**

Meaning either the sense of the advice he had now given; or rather his almighty power displayed in the two miracles of feeding five thousand at one time, and four thousand at another, with a very small quantity of provision; for to this the word "understand" refers, as well as the following:

neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?

Have you forgot what was so lately done, namely, the feeding five thousand men, besides women and children, with five loaves and two fishes, when ye took up, after all were filled and satisfied, no less than twelve baskets of fragments? And can you, after this, distrust my power in the care of you? Have I fed so many with so small a quantity of food? and am I not able to feed twelve of you, though you have but one loaf? Why all these anxious thoughts and carnal reasonings?

Matthew 16:10

Ver. 10. **Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand,**

Have you forgot the other miracle done but a very little while ago, when I fed four thousand men, beside women and children, with seven loaves and a few small fishes;

and how many baskets ye took up?

no less than seven large baskets; and am I not able to provide for you? distress not yourselves about this matter; give not way to unbelief, which must argue great stupidity and insensibility.

Matthew 16:11

Ver. 11. **How is it that ye do not understand,**

That you should be so senseless and void of thought, after such instances, as to imagine, that I concerned myself about what bread you brought with you; one would think you could not but know,

that I spake it not to you concerning bread,

taken in a literal sense; but must be thought to speak figuratively and mystically, and to have an higher sense and meaning, when I said to you,

that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the Sadducees;

how could you think that I had any regard to the leaven taken in a literal sense, the Pharisees and Sadducees approve or disapprove of?

Matthew 16:12

Ver. 12. **Then understood they,**

Without any further explication of his sense and meaning,

how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread:

which sense they first took him in; imagining, because the Pharisees were very particular and precise what sort of leaven they made use of ⁸⁹³, that Christ forbade them buying bread that was made with leaven according to their directions: and since their rules in everything prevailed much in all places, they were concerned what bread they must, or could buy; but now they perceived that he did not speak of this, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. It was very common with the Jews ⁸⁹⁴ to call the corruption and vitiosity of nature by the name of *שאר שבירה* "leaven in the lump": hence our Lord calls their doctrine so, because it proceeded from thence, and was agreeable thereunto; and uses the phrase on purpose to expose it, and bring it into neglect and contempt.

Matthew 16:13

Ver. 13. **When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi,**

The towns that were in the neighbourhood of this city; which city went by several names before, as Leshem, Jos 19:47 which being taken by the Danites, they called it Dan; hence we read of *דן דקירי* "Dan, which is Caesarea" ⁸⁹⁵. It was also called Paneas, from the name of the fountain of Jordan, by which it was situated; and which

⁸⁹³ Misn. Pesach, c. 2. sect. 2, 3. T. Hieros. Sabbat, fol. 3. 3.

⁸⁹⁴ T. Hieros. Beracot, fol. 7. 4. T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 17. 1. Bereshit Rabba, fol. 29. 4. Caphtor, fol. 38. 2. Tzeror Hammor, fol. 73. 2.

⁸⁹⁵ Targum Hieros. in Gen. xiv. 17.

Pliny says ⁸⁹⁶ gave the surname to Caesarea; and hence it is called by Ptolomy ⁸⁹⁷ Caesarea Paniae; and by the name of Paneas it went, when Philip the ⁸⁹⁸ tetrarch rebuilt it, and called it Caesarea, in honour of Tiberius Caesar; and from his own name, Philippi, to distinguish it from another Caesarea, of which mention is made in the Acts of the Apostles, built by his father Herod, and so called in honour of Augustus Caesar; which before bore the name of Strato's tower. The Misnic doctors speak of two Caesareas ⁸⁹⁹, the one they call the eastern, the other the western Caesarea. Now, as Mark says, whilst Christ and his disciples were in the way to these parts; and, as Luke, when he had been praying alone with them,

he asked his disciples, saying, whom do men say that I the Son of man am?

He calls himself "the son of man", because he was truly and really man; and because of his low estate, and the infirmities of human nature, with which he was encompassed: he may have some respect to the first intimation of him, as the seed of woman, and the rather make use of this phrase, because the Messiah was sometimes designed by it in the Old Testament, Ps 80:17 or Christ speaks here of himself, according to his outward appearance, and the prevailing opinion of men concerning him; that he looked to be only a mere man, born as other men were; was properly a son of man, and no more: and therefore the question is, not what sort of man he was, whether a holy, good man, or not, or whether the Messiah, or not; but the question is, what men in general, whether high or low, rich or poor, learned or unlearned, under the notion they had of him as a mere man, said of him; or since they took him to be but a man, what man they thought he was; and to this the answer is very appropriate. This question Christ put to his disciples, they being more conversant with the people than he, and heard the different opinions men had of him, and who were more free to speak their minds of him to them, than to himself; not that he was ignorant of what passed among men, and the different sentiments they had of him, but he was willing to hear the account from his disciples; and his view in putting this question to them, was to make way for another, in order to bring them to an ingenuous confession of their faith in him.

Matthew 16:14

⁸⁹⁶ Hist. l. 5. c. 15, 18.

⁸⁹⁷ Geograph. l. 5. c. 15.

⁸⁹⁸ Joseph. Antiqu. l. 18. c. & de Bello Jud. l. 3. c. 13.

⁸⁹⁹ Misn. Oholot, c. 18. sect. 9.

Ver. 14. **And they said, some say that thou art John the Baptist,**

It was the opinion of some of the Jews, that he was John the Baptist risen from the dead. This notion was spread, and prevailed in Herod's court, and he himself, at last, gave into it.

Some Elias;

the Tishbite, because an extraordinary person was prophesied of by Malachi, under the name of Elias; and who was to come in his power and spirit before the great day of the Lord; and it being a prevailing notion with the Jews, that Elias was to come before the Messiah; See Gill "Mt 11:14" they concluded that he was now come:

and others Jeremias;

this is omitted both by Mark and Luke; the reason why he is mentioned, is not because of what is said of him, in Jer 1:5 but because the Jews thought he was that prophet spoken of, in De 18:15 that should be raised up from among them, like unto Moses: and this is the sense of some of their writers⁹⁰⁰: and in their very ancient writings a parallel is run between Moses and Jeremy⁹⁰¹.

"R. Judah, the son of R. Simon, opened De 18:18 thus: "as thee", this is Jeremiah, who was, as he, in reproofs; you will find all that is written of the one, is written of the other; one prophesied forty years, and the other prophesied forty years; the one prophesied concerning Judah and Israel, and the other prophesied concerning Judah and Israel; against the one those of his own tribe stood up, and against the other those of his own tribe stood up; the one was cast into a river, and the other into a dungeon; the one was delivered by means of an handmaid, and the other by the means of a servant; the one came with words of reproof, and the other came with words of reproof."

Now they fancied, either that the soul of Jeremy was transmigrated into another body, or that he was risen from the dead.

Or one of the prophets;

one of the ancient ones, as Hosea, or Isaiah, or some other: they could not fix upon the particular person who they thought was risen from the dead, and did these wondrous works among them. From the whole it appears, that these persons, whose different sentiments

of Christ are here delivered, were not his sworn enemies, as the Scribes and Pharisees, who could never speak respectfully of him; saying, that he was a gluttonous man, a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners, a very wicked man, and far from being one, or like one of the prophets: they sometimes represent him as beside himself, and mad, yea, as being a Samaritan, and having a devil, as familiar with the devil, and doing his miracles by his assistance; but these were the common people, the multitude that followed Christ from place to place, and had a great opinion of him on account of his ministry, and miracles: wherefore, though they could not agree in their notions concerning him, yet each of them fix upon some person of note and worth, whom they took him for; they all looked upon him as a great and good man, and as a prophet, as John the Baptist was accounted by all the people, and as one of the chief of the prophets, as Elias and Jeremiah; and they that could not fix on any particular person, yet put him into the class of the prophets: but still they came short of the true knowledge of him; they did not know him to be a divine person, which his works and miracles proved him to be: nor to be that prophet Moses had spoken of, who was alone to be hearkened unto, though his ministry was a demonstration of it: nor that he was the Messiah, so much spoken of in prophecy, and so long expected by the Jewish nation, though he had all the characters of the Messiah meeting in him. The chief reason why they could not entertain such a thought of him, seems to be the mean figure he made in the world, being of a low extract, in strait circumstances of life, regarded only by the poorer sort; and there appearing nothing in him promising, that he should deliver them from the Roman yoke, and set up a temporal kingdom, which should be prosperous and flourishing, which was the notion of the Messiah that then generally obtained: and since they could not, by any means, allow of this character as belonging to Jesus, though otherwise they had an high opinion of him; hence they could not agree about him, but formed different sentiments of him; which is usually the case in everything, where the truth is not hit upon and received.

Matthew 16:15

Ver. 15. **He saith unto them, but whom say ye that I am?**

Without taking any further notice, or making any reflections on the different sentiments of men concerning him, he put this question to his disciples, and which is

⁹⁰⁰ Baal Hatturim in Deut. xviii. 15. R. Abraham Seba; Tzeror Hammor, fol. 127. 4. & 143. 4.

⁹⁰¹ Pesikta Rabbati apud R. Abarbinel, Praefat. ad Jer. fol. 96. 2.

what he had chiefly in view, that he might have their sense of him; and which he puts in a different form, and leaves out the phrase, the son of man, because they knew he was more than a man: nor was his mean appearance an offence to them; they had believed in him, became his disciples, and were followers of him: but it was not enough to believe in him, they must confess him; both are necessary: therefore he does not say, whom believe ye, but whom say ye that I am? You who have been with me so long from the beginning; you who have heard so many discourses from me, and have seen so many miracles wrought by me; and who are to be the teachers of others, to preach my Gospel, and publish my salvation to Jews and Gentiles, what have you to say of me? Whom do you say I am? as for those men, it is no great matter who they say I am; but of great moment and consequence are your sense and confession of me. Such who have long sat under a Gospel ministry, or who have been long in the church and school of Christ, it is expected of them, that they should know more of Christ than others; and should be come to a point about his person and office, and be ready to make a confession of their faith, and give a reason of their hope in him; and especially such who are, or are to be preachers of Christ to others: these ought to be well acquainted with him, who, and what he is; they should have no doubt, nor hesitation in their minds, about him, but be fully satisfied concerning him; and be free, and open, and ready to declare what they know and believe of him.

Matthew 16:16

Ver. 16. **And Simon Peter answered and said,**

Either of his own accord, and for himself, being a warm, zealous, and forward man; one that dearly loved Christ, truly believed in him, and was ready to make a confession of him; or, as the mouth of the rest, in their name, and with their consent; or, at least, as full well knowing the sentiments of their minds. Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God: a short, but a very full confession of faith, containing the following articles: as that there is a God, that there is but one God; that he is the living God, has life in himself, is the fountain of life to others, and by this is distinguishable from the idols of the Gentiles: that Jesus is the Christ, the Christ of God, the true Messiah, that was promised by God, prophesied of by all the prophets, from the beginning of the world, and expected by the people of God: a character that includes all his offices, of prophet, priest, and king, to which he is anointed by God; and that this Messiah was

not a mere man, but a divine person, the Son of God; not by creation, as angels and men are, nor by adoption, as saints, nor by office, as magistrates, but by nature, being his own Son, his proper Son, the only begotten of the Father, of the same nature with him, being one with him, and equal to him. This confession, as it is uniform, and all of a piece, and consistent with itself, and is what all the disciples of Christ agreed in, so it greatly exceeds the most that can be made of the different sentiments of the people put together. They took him, one and all, to be but a mere man; their most exalted thoughts of him rose no higher: but in this he is acknowledged to be the Son of God, a phrase expressive of his divine nature, and distinct personality: they thought him to be a dead man brought to life; but here he is called the Son of the living God, as having the same life in him the Father has: they indeed judged him to be a prophet, but not that prophet that was to come, superior to all prophets; but here he is owned to be the Christ, which not only takes in his prophetic office in a higher sense than they understood it, but all his other offices, and declares him to be the promised Messiah; which they who thought, and spoke the most honourably of him, could not allow of.

Matthew 16:17

Ver. 17. **And Jesus answered and said unto him,**

Not waiting for any other declaration from them; but taking this to be the sense of them all, he said,

blessed art thou Simon Bar Jona, or son of Jona,

or Jonas, as in Joh 1:42. His father's name was Jonah, whence he was so called: so we read ⁹⁰² of R. Bo bar Jonah, and of a Rabbi of this very name ⁹⁰³, שמוֹנֵה בַר יוֹנָה, Rabbi Simeon bar Jona; for Simon and Simeon are one, and the same name. Some read it Bar Joanna, the same with John; but the common reading is best; Bar Jona signifies "the son of a dove", and Bar Joanna signifies "the son of one that is gracious". Our Lord, by this appellation, puts Peter in mind of his birth and parentage, but does not pronounce him blessed on that account: no true blessedness comes by natural descent; men are by nature children of wrath, being conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity: though he was Bar Jona, the son of a dove, and his father might be a good man, and answer to his name, and be of a dove like spirit; yet such a spirit was not conveyed from him to Peter by natural generation: and though he might be, according

⁹⁰² Juchasin, fol. 85. 1.

⁹⁰³ Ib. fol. 105. 1.

to the other reading, Bar Joanna, or the son of a gracious man, yet grace was not communicated to him thereby; for he was not “born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God”, Joh 1:13. He was a blessed man, not by his first, but by his second birth; and the reason why our Lord makes mention of his father, is to observe to him, that he was the son of a mean man, and had had, but a mean education, and therefore his blessedness in general was not of nature, but of grace, and this branch of it in particular; the knowledge he had of the Messiah, was not owing to his earthly father, or to the advantage of an education, but to the revelation he had from Christ’s Father which is in heaven, as is hereafter affirmed. He is pronounced “blessed”, as having a true knowledge of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ, whom to know is life eternal; and all such as he are so, appear to be the favourites of God, to have an interest in Christ and in all the blessings of his grace; are justified by his righteousness, pardoned through his blood, are accepted in him, have communion with Father, Son, and Spirit, and shall live eternally with them hereafter.

For flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee:

nothing is more frequent to be met with in Jewish writings, than the phrase of “flesh and blood”, as designing men in distinction from God: so the first man is said ⁹⁰⁴ to be

“the workmanship of the blessed God, and not the workmanship רבבשר ודם, “of flesh and blood””

Again ⁹⁰⁵, בֶּשֶׂר וְדָם, “flesh and blood”, who knows not the times and seasons, &c. but the holy, blessed God, who knows the times and seasons, &c. Instances of this way of speaking are almost without number: accordingly, the sense here is, that this excellent confession of faith, which Peter had delivered, was not revealed unto him, nor taught him by any mere man; he had not it from his immediate parents, nor from any of his relations, or countrymen; nor did he attain to the knowledge of what is expressed in it, by the dint of nature, by the strength of carnal reason, or the force of his own capacity and abilities:

but my Father which is in heaven;

from whom both the external and internal revelation of such truths come; though not to the exclusion of the Son, by whose revelation the Gospel is taught, and received; nor of the Holy Ghost, who is a Spirit of wisdom and revelation, but in opposition to, and distinction

from any mere creature whatever. Neither the Gospel, nor any part of it, is an human device or discovery; it is not after man, nor according to the carnal reason of man; it is above the most exalted and refined reason of men; it has in it what eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive of: its truths are the deep things of God, which the Spirit of God searches and reveals: and which men, left to the light of nature, and force of reason, must have been for ever ignorant of, and could never have discovered. The Gospel is a revelation, it consists of revealed truths; and which are to be received and believed upon the testimony and credit of the revealer, without entering into carnal reasonings, and disputes about them; and it is the highest reason, and the most noble use of reason, to embrace it at once, as coming from God; for this revelation is from heaven, and from Christ’s Father; particularly the deity, sonship, and Messiahship of Christ, are doctrines of pure revelation: that there is a God, is discoverable by the light of nature; and that he is the living God, and gives being, and life, and breath, and all things, to his creatures; but that he has a Son of the same nature with him, and equal to him, who is the Messiah, and the Saviour of lost sinners, this could never have been found out by flesh and blood: no man knows the Son, but the Father, and he to whom he reveals him; he bears witness of him, and declares him to be his Son, in whom he is well pleased; and happy are those who are blessed with the outward revelation of Jesus Christ in the Gospel, but more especially such to whom the Father reveals Christ in them the hope of glory!

Matthew 16:18

Ver. 18. **And I say also unto thee,**

Either besides what he had already said concerning his happiness; or, as the father had revealed something great and valuable, so likewise would he; or inasmuch as he had freely said and declared who, and what he was, in like manner he also would say what Peter was, thou art Peter: intimating, that he was rightly called Peter, or Cephas, by him, when he first became a follower of him, Mt 4:18, which words signify the same thing, a rock, or stone; because of his firmness and solidity, and because he was laid upon the sure foundation, and built on the rock Christ, and was a very fit stone to be laid in the spiritual building. The aptness of this name to him is easy to be seen in his full assurance of faith, as to the person of Christ, and his free, open, and undaunted confession of him.

⁹⁰⁴ Zohar in Gen. fol. 43. 3.

⁹⁰⁵ R. Simeon in Jarchi in Gen. ii. 2.

And upon this rock will I build my church:

by the church, is meant, not an edifice of wood, stones, &c. but an assembly, and congregation of men; and that not of any sort; not a disorderly, tumultuous assembly, in which sense this word is sometimes taken; nor does it design the faithful of a family, which is sometimes the import of it; nor a particular congregated church, but the elect of God, the general assembly and church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven; and especially such of them as were to be gathered in, and built on Christ, from among the Jews and Gentiles. The materials of this building are such, as are by nature no better, or more fit for it, than others: these stones originally lie in the same quarry with others; they are singled out, and separated from the rest, according to the sovereign will of God, by powerful and efficacious grace; and are broken and hewn by the Spirit of God, generally speaking, under the ministry of the word, and are, by him, made living stones; and being holy and spiritual persons, are built up a spiritual house: and these are the only persons which make up the true and invisible church of Christ in the issue, and are only fit to be members of the visible church; and all such ought to be in a Gospel church state, and partake of the privileges of it: these materials are of different sorts, and have a different place, and have a different usefulness in this building; some are only as common stones, and timber; others are as pillars, beams, and rafters; and all are useful and serviceable; and being put, and knit together, grow up as an holy temple to the Lord: and are called, by Christ, “my” church, because given him by the Father; and he has purchased them with his own blood; are built by him, and on him; inhabited by him, and of whom he is the head, king, and governor; though not to the exclusion of the Father, whose house they also are; nor of the Spirit, who dwells in them, as in his temple. This church Christ promises to “build”. Though his ministers are builders, they are but under builders; they are qualified, employed, directed, encouraged, and succeeded by him; he is the wise, able, and chief master builder. This act of building seems to have a special regard to the conversion of God’s elect, both among Jews and Gentiles, particularly the latter; and to the daily conversions of them in all ages; and to the building up of saints in faith and holiness; each of which will more manifestly appear in the latter day; and are both generally effected through the word, and ordinances, as means, the Spirit of Christ blessing them. By the rock on which Christ builds his church, is meant, not the person of Peter; for Christ does not say, upon

thee Peter, but upon this rock, referring to something distinct from him: for though his name signifies a rock, or stone, and there may be some allusion to it; and he is so called because of his trust and confidence in the Lord, on whom he was built; but not because he was the foundation on which any others, and especially the whole church, were built: it is true, he may be called the foundation, as the rest of the twelve apostles of the Lamb are, Eph 2:20 without any distinction from them, and preference to them; they and he agreeing in laying doctrinally and ministerially Christ Jesus as the foundation of faith and hope, but not in such sense as he is; neither he, nor they, are the foundation on which the church is built, which is Christ, and him only. Moreover, what is said to Peter in these, and the following words, is not said to him personally and separately from the rest of the apostles, but is designed for them, as well as him, as appears by comparing them with Mt 18:18. As he spoke in the name of them all, to Christ; so Christ spake to him, including them all. Peter had no preeminence over the rest of the apostles, which he neither assumed, nor was it granted; nor would it ever have been connived at by Christ, who often showed his resentment at such a spirit and conduct, whenever there was any appearance of it in any of them; see Mt 18:1 and though Peter, with James, and John, had some particular favours bestowed on him by Christ; as to be at the raising of Jairus’s daughter, and at the transfiguration of Christ on the mount, and with him in the garden; and he appeared to him alone after his resurrection, and before he was seen by the rest of the disciples; yet in some things he was inferior to them, being left to deny his Lord and master, they did not; and upon another account is called Satan by Christ, which they never were; not to mention other infirmities of his, which show he is not the rock: and, after all, what is this to the pope of Rome, who is no successor of Peter’s? Peter, as an apostle, had no successor in his office; nor was he bishop of Rome; nor has the pope of Rome either his office, or his doctrine: but here, by the rock, is meant, either the confession of faith made by Peter; not the act, nor form, but the matter of it, it containing the prime articles of Christianity, and which are as immoveable as a rock; or rather Christ himself, who points, as it were, with his finger to himself, and whom Peter had made such a glorious confession of; and who was prefigured by the rock the Israelites drank water out of in the wilderness; and is comparable to any rock for height, shelter, strength, firmness, and duration; and is the one and

only foundation of his church and people, and on whom their security, salvation, and happiness entirely depend. Christ is a rock that is higher than they, where they find safety in times of distress, and the shadow of which is refreshing to them; and therefore betake themselves to him for shelter, and where they are secure from the wrath of God, and rage of men: he is the rock of ages, in whom is everlasting strength; and is the sure, firm, and everlasting foundation on which the church, and all true believers, are laid: he is the foundation of their faith, and hope, and everlasting happiness, and will ever continue; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The Jews speak of the gates of hell: sometimes of the gate of hell, in the singular number ⁹⁰⁶; and sometimes of the gates of hell, in the plural number. They say ⁹⁰⁷, that

שלשה פתחים יש ליהנום, “hell has three gates”, one in the wilderness, one in the sea, and one in Jerusalem.”

They talk ⁹⁰⁸ of

לְ חַרְרֵי דְגֵיהֶנּוּם, “over the gates of hell”, whose name is Samriel; who has three keys in his hands, and opens three doors.”

And elsewhere ⁹⁰⁹ they say, that

“he that is appointed over hell his name is Dumah, and many myriads of destroying angels are with him, and he stands לְ פִתְחוֹת דְגֵיהֶנּוּם “at the gate of hell”; and all those that keep the holy covenant in this world, he has no power to bring them in.

”Our Lord may allude to these notions of the Jews, and his sense be, that all the infernal principalities and powers, with all their united cunning and strength, will never be able to extirpate his Gospel, to destroy his interest, to demolish his church in general, or ruin anyone particular soul that is built upon him. Again, the gates of “Hades”, or hell, sometimes seem to design no other than the gates of death, and the grave, and persons going into the state of death; see Job 38:17 where the Septuagint use the same phrase as here; and then the sense is, that neither death, nor the grave, shall finally, and totally prevail over the people of God, and members of Christ; but they shall be raised out of such

a state, and live gloriously with him for ever. By it here is not meant Peter himself; though it is true of him, that Satan, and his posse of devils that beset him, did not prevail against him, so as to destroy his grace, hurt his estate, and hinder his salvation: nor could death, in all its frightful appearances, deter him from holding, and preaching, and maintaining the doctrine of Christ; and though death, and the grave, have now power over him, yet they shall not always detain him: but rather, it designs the doctrine Peter made a confession of; which, though it may be opposed by hell and earth, by Satan, and his emissaries, by the open force of persecutors, and the secret fraud of heretics, it may be brought into contempt by the scandalous lives of professors; and though the true professors of it may die off, yet truth itself always lives, and defies the power of death, and the grave: or else the church in general is meant, and every true believer. These words do not ascertain the continuance of anyone particular congregated church, but secures the church universal, which will continue as long as the sun and moon endure, and the perseverance of everyone of God’s elect; and assure that death, and the grave, shall not always have the dominion over the saints, but that they shall be rescued from them. Once more, this “it” may refer to Christ the rock, who, though he was brought to the dust of death, by the means of Satan, and the powers of darkness, yet to the ruin of him that had the power of death; and though death, and the grave, had power over him for a while, yet could not hold him; he rose victorious over them, and ever lives, having the keys of hell and death, to open the gates thereof, and let his people out when he thinks fit.

Matthew 16:19

Ver. 19. **And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven,**

By the kingdom of heaven is meant the Gospel, which comes from heaven, declares the king Messiah to be come, speaks of things concerning his kingdom, is the means of setting it up, and enlarging it, displays the riches of his grace, and gives an account of the kingdom of heaven, and of persons’ right unto it, and meetness for it. “The keys” of it are abilities to open and explain the Gospel truths, and a mission and commission from Christ to make use of them; and being said to be given to Peter particularly, denotes his after qualifications, commission, work, and usefulness in opening the door of faith, or preaching the Gospel first to the Jews, Ac 2:1 and then to the Gentiles, Ac 10:1 and who was the first

⁹⁰⁶ T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 39. 1. Succa, fol. 32. 2. Bava Bathra, fol. 84. 1.

⁹⁰⁷ T. Bab. Erubin, fol. 19. 1. Menasseh ben Israel, Nishmat Chayim, fol. 33. 1, 2.

⁹⁰⁸ Zohar in Gen. fol. 47. 4.

⁹⁰⁹ Ib. fol. 7. 1.

that made use of the keys of evangelical knowledge with respect to both, after he, with the rest of the apostles, had received an enlarged commission to preach the Gospel to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. Otherwise these keys belonged to them all alike; for to the same persons the keys, and the use of them, appertained, on whom the power of binding and loosing was bestowed; and this latter all the disciples had, as is manifest from Mt 18:18 wherefore this does not serve to establish the primacy and power of Peter over the rest of the apostles; nor do keys design any lordly domination or authority; nor did Christ allow of any such among his apostles; nor is it his will that the ministers of his word should lord it over his heritage: he only is king of saints, and head of his church; he has the key of David, with which he opens, and no man shuts, and shuts, and no man opens; and this he keeps in his own hand, and gives it to none. Peter is not the door-keeper of heaven to let in, nor keep out, whom he pleases; nor has his pretended successor the keys of hell and death; these also are only in Christ's hands: though it has been said of the pope of Rome, that if he sends millions of men to hell, none should say to him, what dost thou? but the keys here mentioned are the keys of the kingdom of heaven; or of the Gospel, which was shut up in the Jewish nation, through the ignorance, malice, and calumnies of the Scribes and Pharisees, who would neither embrace it, or enter into the kingdom of God themselves, nor suffer others that were going to enter into it; and through their taking away the key of knowledge, or the right interpretation of the word of God; and through a judicial blindness, which that nation in general was given up to: and this was shut up to the Gentiles through the natural darkness that was spread over them, and through want of a divine revelation, and persons sent of God to instruct them: but now Christ was about, and in a little time he would (for these words, with what follow, are in the future tense) give his apostles both a commission and gifts, qualifying them to open the sealed book of the Gospel, and unlock the mysteries of it, both to Jews and Gentiles, especially the latter. Keys are the ensigns of treasurers, and of stewards, and such the ministers of the Gospel are; they have the rich treasure of the word under their care, put into their earthen vessels to open and lay before others; and they are stewards of the mysteries and manifold grace of God, and of these things they have the keys. So that these words have nothing to do with church power and government in Peter, nor in the pope, nor in any other man, or set of men whatever; nor to be understood of church censures,

excommunications, admissions, or exclusions of members: nor indeed are keys of any such similar use; they serve for locking and unlocking doors, and so for keeping out those that are without, and retaining those that are within, but not for the expulsion of any: but here they are used in a figurative sense, for the opening and explaining the truths of the Gospel, for which Peter had excellent gifts and abilities.

And whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.

This also is not to be understood of binding, or loosing men's sins, by laying on, or taking off censures, and excommunications; but only of doctrines, or declarations of what is lawful and unlawful, free, or prohibited to be received, or practised; in which sense the words, אור ומותר, "bound and loosed", are used in the Talmudic writings, times without number, for that which is forbidden and declared to be unlawful, and for that which is free of use, and pronounced to be so: in multitudes of places we read of one Rabbirowa, "binding", and of another מְחִיר "loosing"; thousands, and ten thousands of instances of this kind might be produced; a whole volume of extracts on this head might be compiled. Dr. Lightfoot has transcribed a great many, sufficient to satisfy any man, and give him the true sense of these phrases; and after him to mention any other is needless; yet give me leave to produce one, as it is short, and full, and explains these phrases, and points at the persons that had this power, explaining Ec 12:11 and that clause in it, "masters of the assemblies".

"these (say they ⁹¹⁰) are the disciples of the wise men, who sit in different collections, and study in the law; these pronounce things or persons defiled, and these pronounce things or persons clean, הללוואורני והללני מחיריני, "these bind, and these loose"; these reject, or pronounce persons or things profane, and these declare them right."

And a little after,

"get thyself an heart to hear the words of them that pronounce unclean, and the words of them that pronounce clean; the words of them Nyrowa, that "bind", and the words of them מְחִיריני that "loose"; the words of them that reject, and the words of them that declare it right"

But Christ gave a greater power of binding and

910 T. Bab. Chagiga, fol. 3. 2.

loosing, to his disciples, than these men had, and which they used to better purpose. The sense of the words is this, that Peter, and so the rest of the apostles, should be empowered with authority from him, and so directed by his Holy Spirit, that whatever they bound, that is, declared to be forbidden, and unlawful, should be so; and that whatever they loosed, that is, declared to be lawful, and free of use, should be so; and accordingly they bound some things which before were loosed, and loosed some things which before were bound; for instance, they bound, that is, prohibited, or declared unlawful, the use of circumcision, which before, and until the death of Christ, was enjoined the natural seed of Abraham; but that, and all ceremonies, being abolished by the death of Christ, they declared it to be nothing, and of no avail, yea, hurtful and pernicious; that whoever was circumcised, Christ profited him nothing, and that he was a debtor to do the whole law: they affirmed, that the believing Gentiles were not to be troubled with it; that it was a yoke not fit to be put upon their necks, which they, and their fathers, were not able to bear, Ga 5:1. They bound, or forbid the observance of days, months, times, and years; the keeping holy days, new moons, and sabbaths, which had been used in the Jewish church for ages past; such as the first day of the new year, and of every month, the day of atonement, the feasts of the passover, pentecost, and tabernacles, the jubilee year, the sabbatical year, and seventh day sabbath, Ga 4:9. They loosed, or declared lawful and free, both civil and religious conversation between Jews and Gentiles; whereas, before, the Jews had no dealings with the Gentiles, nor would not enter into their houses, nor keep company with them, would have no conversation with them; neither eat, nor drink with them; but now it was determined and declared, that no man should be called common, or unclean; and that in Christ Jesus, and in his church, there is no distinction of Jew and Gentile, Ac 10:28. They also loosed, or pronounced lawful, the eating of any sort of food, without distinction, even that which was before counted common and unclean, being persuaded by the Lord Jesus Christ, by the words he said, Mt 15:11. They asserted, that there is nothing unclean of itself; and that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; or that true religion does not lie in the observance of those things; that every creature of God is good, and fit for food, and nothing to be refused, or abstained from, on a religious account, provided it be received with thanksgiving, Ro 14:14. And these things now being by them bound or loosed, pronounced unlawful or lawful,

are confirmed as such by the authority of God, and are so to be considered by us.

Matthew 16:20

Ver. 20. **Then charged he his disciples,**

When Peter had so freely and fully confessed him to be the Messiah, and which was the sense of all the disciples; and when Christ had expressed his approbation of his confession, and had promised such great and excellent things upon it, he gave a strict charge unto his disciples, **that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.**

The word Jesus is not in some copies; and is left out in the Syriac, Arabic, and Persic versions; nor does it seem absolutely necessary; it was enough to charge them to tell no man that he was the Messiah: his reasons for it might be, lest his enemies, the Scribes and Pharisees, should be the more provoked and incensed against him, and seek his death before his time; and lest the jealousy of the Romans should be stirred up, who might fear he would set up himself against Caesar, as king of the Jews, which might lead them to take measures obstructive of his further designs; and lest some persons, hearing of this, should rise and proclaim him king of the Jews, who were big with the notion of the Messiah being a temporal prince: and moreover, because the disciples were to attest the truth of this after his resurrection; and he chose, for the present, that the people should collect this from his own ministry and miracles, which were sufficient to lead them into the knowledge of it, without any declarations of their's: and though they were possessed of true faith in him, as such, for themselves, as yet they had not the gifts and abilities to defend those doctrines respecting his person, and his offices, they had after the Spirit was poured down upon them.

Matthew 16:21

Ver. 21. **From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples,**

From the time that Peter made the confession concerning Jesus, as that he was the Messiah, and Son of God, and which things were clear to all the apostles, he began to teach them more expressly, and to point out to them more clearly, and plainly, his sufferings and death, than he had done before: and this he chose to do now, partly because that their faith in him was well grounded and established, so that they were the better able to bear these things he told them, which before might have been more staggering and discouraging to them; and partly, that being forewarned of them, they would not be so

shocking when they came to pass: as also to destroy all their expectations of a temporal kingdom, which they might now be big with, he having so fully and freely owned himself to be the Messiah: and this also furnishes out some reasons why Jesus would not have his disciples, for the present, declare him to be the Messiah, that his death might not, by any means, be prevented, which was so necessary; since, should the princes of the world know him, they would not crucify him: and besides, seeing he was to suffer, and die, and rise again for the salvation of his people, it was proper that all this should be over before he was so publicly declared to be the Messiah, the Saviour, and Redeemer.

How that he must go to Jerusalem:

the metropolis of the nation, where the great sanhedrim sat, who only could take cognizance of him, under the imputation of a false prophet, and condemn him to death, and which therefore would be in the most public manner; and though it would add to his reproach, would leave no room to be doubted of. The word “must”, not only belongs to his going to Jerusalem, but to his sufferings, death, and resurrection; all which must be because of the immutable decree of God, the council, and covenant of grace, and peace, the prophecies of the Old Testament, and the redemption and salvation of God’s elect; these required them, and made them absolutely necessary:

and suffer many things of the elders, chief priests, and Scribes:

who would lie in wait for him, send persons to apprehend him, insult, reproach, and despitefully use him; load him with false charges, accusations, and calumnies, and deliver him to the Gentiles, to be mocked, scourged, and crucified: and this is aggravated as what would be done to him, not by the common people, or the dregs of them, but by the principal men of the city, by the sanhedrim, which consisted of the “elders” of the people, their senators; for this is not a name of age, but of office and dignity; and of the “chief priests”, the principal of them, those of the greatest note among them, who were chosen members of the grand council; and of “the Scribes”, a set of men in high esteem for their learning and wisdom: and be killed; signifying, that he should not die a natural death, but that his life should be taken from him in a cruel and violent manner, without any regard to law or justice; indeed, that he should be properly murdered; but for the comfort of his disciples, and that they might not be overmuch pressed and cast down, at the hearing of these things, he adds,

and be raised again the third day

according to the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and the type of Jonas.

Matthew 16:22

Ver. 22. **Then Peter took him,...** The Arabic version reads it, “called to him”: the Ethiopic, “answered him”; and the Syriac, “led him”; he took him aside, by himself; and as the Persic version, “privately said to him”, or he took him by the hand in a familiar way, to expostulate with him, and dissuade him from thinking and talking of any such things;

and began to rebuke him:

reprove and chide him, forgetting himself and his distance; though he did it not out of passion and ill will, but out of tenderness and respect; looking upon what Christ had said, unworthy of him, and as what was scarce probable or possible should ever befall him, who was the Son of the living God, and overlooking his resurrection from the dead, and being ignorant at present of the end of Christ’s coming into the world, and redemption and salvation by his sufferings and death:

saying, far be it from thee, Lord, or “Lord,

be propitious to thyself”, or “spare thyself”: the phrase answers to *dl ox*, often used by the Targumists⁹¹¹ and stands in the Syriac version here. The Septuagint use it in a like sense, in Ge 43:23. Some think the word “God” is to be understood, and the words to be considered, either as a wish, “God be propitious to thee”: or “spare thee”, that no such thing may ever befall thee; or as an affirmation, “God is propitious to thee”, he is not angry and displeased with thee, as ever to suffer any such thing to be done to thee: but it may very well be rendered, by “God forbid”; or as we do, “far be it from thee”, as a note of aversion, and abhorrence of the thing spoken of: this shall not be done unto thee: expressing his full assurance of it, and his resolution to do all that in him lay to hinder it: he could not see how such an innocent person could be so used by the chief men of the nation; and that the Messiah, from whom so much happiness was expected, could be treated in such a manner, and especially that the Son of the living God should be killed.

Matthew 16:23

Ver. 23. **But he turned,**

Either to Peter, changing his countenance, and looking sternly upon him, or rather to the disciples; for Mark says, “when he had turned about and looked on his

⁹¹¹ Targum Hieros. in Gen. xlix. 22. & Targum Onkelos in 1 Sam. xx. 9.

disciples, he rebuked Peter”: Peter had took him aside, and was arguing the case privately with him; but what he said was so offensive to him, that he chose to reprove him publicly before the disciples; and therefore turned himself from him to them, in a way of resentment,

and said unto Peter;

in their hearing, and before them all,

get thee behind me, Satan.

The Persic version renders it, O infidel! as he was at present, with respect to the sufferings, death, and resurrection of Christ: some take the word Satan, to be a general name for an adversary, or enemy, as it is used in 2Sa 19:22 and think that Christ calls Peter by this name, because he was against him, and opposed him in this point; which sense abates the harshness of this expression. But it seems rather to mean the devil, who took the advantage of Peter’s weakness and ignorance; and put him upon dissuading Christ from suffering, for the salvation of his people: though it should be known, that the word Satan, is used by the, Jews ⁹¹², to signify the vitiosity and corruption of nature; of which they say, שָׂטָן הוּא, this is Satan; so the messenger, or angel Satan, 2Co 12:7 may be thought to be the same; See Gill on “2Co 12:7” And then our Lord’s sense is, be gone from me, I cannot bear the sight of thee; thou art under the influence of the corruption of thy heart, and nature; thou talkest like a carnal, and not like a spiritual man; and therefore Christ denominates him from his carnality, Satan, one of the names of the vitiosity of nature, whom a little before he had pronounced blessed; being then under the influence of another spirit, as appeared from the noble confession of his faith in Christ: this change shows the weakness of human nature, the strength of corruption, the inconstancy and fickleness of frames, and the imperfection of grace in the best of saints.

Thou art an offence unto me;

or a stumbling block to me, a cause of stumbling and failing; not that he really was, but he endeavoured to be, and was as much as in him lay; and had he given heed unto him, would have been so. It may be observed, that nothing was more offensive to Christ, than to endeavour to divert him from the work his farther called him to; he had agreed to do; what he came into this world for, and his heart was so much set upon; namely, to suffer and die in the room of his people, in order to obtain salvation for them: never were such words uttered by him, and such resentment shown to any, but to the devil himself, when

he tempted him to worship him.

For thou savourest not the things that be of God;

meaning his sufferings and death, which were the appointment of God, the counsel of his will, the provision of his covenant; what he foretold in the prophecies of the Old Testament, and what he had an hand in, and in which the glory of his grace, power, and justice, was concerned, and were the end of the mission of his Son into this world; which things were out of sight and mind, and were not regarded by the apostle at this time;

but those that be of men:

he thought of nothing but worldly grandeur in the kingdom of the Messiah, as a temporal prince and Saviour; and of the continuance of Christ’s natural life, for his own carnal and worldly advantage; which showed him to be, at this time, greatly under the influence of corrupt nature. So, though the blood, righteousness, sacrifice, and death of Christ, are savoury things, things to be savoured, minded, and regarded by believers, and accounted precious; and they do mind them, so the word signifies, Ro 8:5 when being blessed with a spiritual and experimental knowledge, and application of them to themselves, they exercise faith, hope, and love upon Christ, with respect unto them; when they remember them aright in the ordinance of the supper, the love from whence they spring, and the benefits that come hereby; and when they discern the Lord’s body in it, a crucified Jesus, and the blessings of grace which come by him, and ascribe their whole salvation to his sufferings and death, and taste the sweetness there is in these things, eating his flesh and drinking his blood by faith; yet being left to themselves, they do not savour, mind, and regard these things, but carnal things, and human schemes; as when they are dilatory to profess a crucified Christ, and submit to those ordinances of his, which set forth his sufferings and death; or are negligent in their attendance on them, their place being often empty at supper time; or if they do attend, their hearts go after other things.

Matthew 16:24

Ver. 24. **Then said Jesus unto his disciples,**

Knowing that they had all imbibed the same notion of a temporal kingdom, and were in expectation of worldly riches, honour, and pleasure; he took this opportunity of preaching the doctrine of the cross to them, and of letting them know, that they must prepare for persecutions, sufferings, and death; which they must expect to endure, as well as he, if they would be his disciples:

if any man will come after me:

⁹¹² T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 16. 1. Tzeror Hammor, fol. 6. 2, 3. & passim.

that is, be a disciple and follower of him, it being usual for the master to go before, and the disciple to follow after him: now let it be who it will, rich or poor, learned or unlearned, young or old, male or female, that have any inclination and desire, or have took up a resolution in the strength of grace, to be a disciple of Christ,

let him deny himself:

let him deny sinful self, ungodliness, and worldly lusts; and part with them, and his former sinful companions, which were as a part of himself: let him deny righteous self, and renounce all his own works of righteousness, in the business of justification and salvation; let him deny himself the pleasures and profits of this world, when in competition with Christ; let him drop and banish all his notions and expectations of an earthly kingdom, and worldly grandeur, and think of nothing but reproach, persecution, and death, for the sake of his Lord and Master: and

take up his cross;

cheerfully receive, and patiently bear, every affliction and evil, however shameful and painful it may be, which is appointed for him, and he is called unto; which is his peculiar cross, as every Christian has his own; to which he should quietly submit, and carry, with an entire resignation to the will of God, in imitation of his Lord:

and follow me;

in the exercise of grace, as humility, zeal, patience, and self-denial; and in the discharge of every duty, moral, or evangelical; and through sufferings and death, to his kingdom and glory. The allusion is, to Christ's bearing his own cross, and Simeon's carrying it after him, which afterwards came to pass.

Matthew 16:25

Ver. 25. **For whosoever will save his life,**

Whoever is desirous of preserving himself from troubles, reproaches, persecutions, and death; and takes such a method to do it, as by forsaking Christ, denying his Gospel, and dropping his profession of it; and by so doing, carries favour with men, in order to procure to himself worldly emoluments, honour, peace, pleasure, and life,

shall lose it;

he will expose himself to the wrath of God, to everlasting punishment, the destruction of soul and body in hell, which is the second death, and will be his portion:

and whosoever will lose his life for my sake:

that is, is willing to forego all the pleasures and

comforts of life, and be subject to poverty and distress, and to lay down life itself, for the sake of Christ and the Gospel, rather than deny him, and part with truth,

shall find it;

in the other world, to great advantage; he shall enjoy an immortal and eternal life, free from all uneasiness and affliction, and full of endless joys and pleasures.

Matthew 16:26

Ver. 26. **For what is a man profited,**

Such persons, though they are only seeking their own profit, will find themselves most sadly mistaken; for of what advantage will it be to such a man,

if he shall gain the whole world;

all that is precious and valuable in it; all the power, pleasures, and riches of it; if with Alexander, he had the government of the whole world, and with Solomon, all the delights of it; and was possessed with the wealth of Croesus, and Crassus,

and lose his own soul?

If that should be consigned to everlasting torment and misery, be banished the divine presence, and continually feel the gnawings of the worm of conscience that never dies, and the fierceness of the fire of God's wrath, that shall never be quenched, he will have a miserable bargain of it.

Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Or, "for the redemption" of it, as the Ethiopic version renders it: see Ps 49:8. If he had the whole world to give, and would give it, it would not be a sufficient ransom for it; the redemption of an immortal soul requires a greater price than gold and silver, or any corruptible thing; nothing short of the blood and life of Christ, is a proper exchange, or ransom price for it. But in the other world there will be no redemption; the loss of a soul is irrecoverable: a soul once lost and damned, can never be retrieved. This passage is thought to be proverbial; what comes nearest to it, is the following⁹¹³:"

If a scholar dies, we never find an exchange for him; there are four things which are the ministry or service of the world, אַמ אַבְדוּ יֵשׁ חַלִּיפֵינִי, if they are lost, they may be changed; and they are these, gold, silver, iron, and brass, Job 28:1 but if a scholar dies, wtrwmt wnlaybm ym, who will bring us his exchange? or an exchange for him: we lost R. Simon, "who will bring us his exchange?"

⁹¹³ 913 Midrash Kohelet, fol. 72. 3, 4. T. Hieros. Beracot, fol. 5. 3.

Matthew 16:27

Ver. 27. **For the son of man shall come in the glory of his Father,**

This is a reason, proving the truth of what is before asserted, that men's lives may be lost by saving them, and be found by losing them, whatever paradoxes they may seem to be; and that the loss of a soul is irrecoverable, and no compensation can be made for it; and points out the time, when all this will appear: for nothing is more certain, and to be depended upon, than that Christ, who, though he was then a mean and contemptible man, and attended with the sinless infirmities of human nature, wherefore he calls himself, "the son of man", should come; either a second time to judgment at the last day, in the same glory as his Father, as his Son, equal with him, and clothed, with power and authority from him, and as mediator, to execute judgment: with his angels; the Holy Ones, so the Syriac and Persic versions read, and so some copies; who will add to the glory of his appearance; and will be employed in gathering all nations before him, and in executing his will: or, in his power, to take vengeance on the Jewish nation; on those that crucified him, or did not believe in him, or deserted and apostatised from him. And then he shall reward every man according to his works, or work; either that particular action of putting him to death, or their unbelief in him, or desertion of him; or any, or all of their evil works, they had been guilty of: for though good works are not the cause of salvation, nor for which men will be rewarded; though they may be brought into judgment, as proofs and evidences of true faith, in the person, blood, and righteousness of Christ, by which good men will be acquitted and discharged; yet evil works will be the cause of condemnation, and the rule of judgment; and the reason of adjudging to temporal punishment here, and eternal destruction hereafter.

Matthew 16:28

Ver. 28. **Verily I say unto you**

This is a strong asseveration, Christ puts his "Amen" to it; declaring it to be a certain truth, which may firmly be believed:

there be some standing here;

meaning either his disciples, or some of the audience; for it is clear from Mark 8:34 that the people were called unto him with his disciples, when he said these words:

which shall not taste of death:

that is, shall not die; a phrase frequently used by the Jewish doctors: they say ⁹¹⁴; "All the children of the

world, טַמְּוִיִּן טַמְּוִיָּה דְמוּתָהּ, "taste the taste of death?" That is, die: till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom; which is not to be understood of his personal coming in his kingdom in the last day, when he will judge quick and dead; for it cannot be thought, that any then present should live to that time, but all tasted of death long before, as they have done; for the story of John's being alive, and to live till then, is fabulous, and grounded on a mistake which John himself has rectified at the close of his Gospel: nor of the glorious transfiguration of Christ, the account of which immediately follows; when he was seen by Peter, James, and John, persons now present; for that, at most, was but an emblem and a pledge of his future glory: rather, of the appearance of his kingdom, in greater glory and power, upon his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension to heaven; when the Spirit was poured down in an extraordinary manner, and the Gospel was preached all over the world; was confirmed by signs and wonders, and made effectual to the conversion and salvation of many souls; which many then present lived to see, and were concerned in: though it seems chiefly to have regard to his coming, to show his regal power and authority in the destruction of the Jews; when those his enemies that would not he should reign over them, were ordered to be brought and slain before him; and this the Apostle John, for one, lived to be a witness of.

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Appendix 1

Firstborn Matthew 1:25

Faulty versions omit the term "first born son" of Mary and by its omission endorses the Roman Catholic doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary.

Correct Versions

(KJV) And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

(1611 KJV) And knewe her not, till shee had brought forth her first borne sonne, and he called his name Iesus.

(1587 Geneva Bible) But he knew her not, til she had broght forth her first borne sonne, & he called his name Iesus.

(1526 Tyndale) and knewe her not tyll she had brought forth hir fyrst sonne and called hys name Iesus.

Counterfeit Versions

(1901 ASV) and knew her not till she had brought forth

2. & in Num. fol. 50. 4. & 51. 2. 4. Vid. Bereshit Rabba, sect. 9. fol. 7. 3, 4. Midrash Kohelet, fol. 83. 2.

914 Zohar in Gen. fol. 27. 4. & 37. 1. & in Exod. fol. 19.

a son: and he called his name JESUS.

(CEB) But he didn't have sexual relations with her until she gave birth to a son. Joseph called him Jesus.

(CEV) But they did not sleep together before her baby was born. Then Joseph named him Jesus.

(ERV) But Joseph did not have sexual relations with her until her son was born. And he named him Jesus.

(ESV) but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

(GNB) But he had no sexual relations with her before she gave birth to her son. And Joseph named him Jesus.

(HCSB) but did not know her intimately until she gave birth to a son. And he named Him Jesus.

(NASB) But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

(NIV) But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

(RSV) but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus.

(NRSV) but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

(NAB-Roman Catholic) He had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him Jesus.

(NWT-Jehovah's Witness) But he had no intercourse with her until she gave birth to a son; and he called his name Jesus.

Textus Receptus - Traditional Text

kai ouk eginwsken authn ewV ou eteken ton uion authV
ton prwtotokon kai ekalesen to onoma autou ihsoun
Hort-Westcott - Critical Text

kai ouk eginwsken authn ewV [ou] eteken uion kai
ekalesen to onoma autou ihsoun

Corrupted Manuscripts

This verse is corrupted in the following manuscripts:

Aleph 01 - Sinaiticus - Nineteenth Century Counterfeit

B 03 - Vaticanus - Fourth century

1 (Minuscule) - Seventh century

13 (Minuscule) - Eighth century

33 (Minuscule) - Ninth Century

071 - Fifth/Sixth century

Manuscripts which agree with the Textus Receptus for this verse

Byzantine Text (450-1450 A.D.)

C 04 - Ephraemi Rescriptus - Fifth century

D 05 - Bezae Cantabrigiensis - Fifth century

K 017 - Ninth century

W 032 - Fourth/fifth century

Delta 037 - Ninth century

PI-041 - Ninth century

28 (Minuscule) - Eleventh century

565 - (Minuscule) - Ninth century

700 - (Minuscule) Eleventh century

892 - (Minuscule) - Ninth century

1010 - (Minuscule) - Twelfth Century

1079 - (minuscule) - Tenth Century

1241 - (Minuscule) - Twelfth century

Published Critical Greek Texts with Corruptions

Omit "her firstborn"

Lachmann, Karl - 1842

Tischendorf, Constantine - 1869

Tregelles, Samuel - 1857

Alford, Henry - 1849 revised in 1871

Westcott and Hort - 1881

Weiss, Bernhard - 1894

Nestle - 1927 as revised in seventeenth edition in 1941

Nestle-Aland - 1979 - Twenty Sixth Edition

Nestle-Aland - 1993 - Twenty Seventh Edition

United Bible Societies - 1983 - Fourth Edition

Von Soden, Freiherr - 1902

Affected Teaching

The Greek word for "firstborn" is omitted in both (B) and (Aleph). By removing this word in the modern versions, it endorses the Roman Catholic doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary. The word "firstborn" automatically indicates that Mary did have other children and the Bible tells us that she did in the following:

(Mark 6:2-3 KJV) And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? {3} Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.

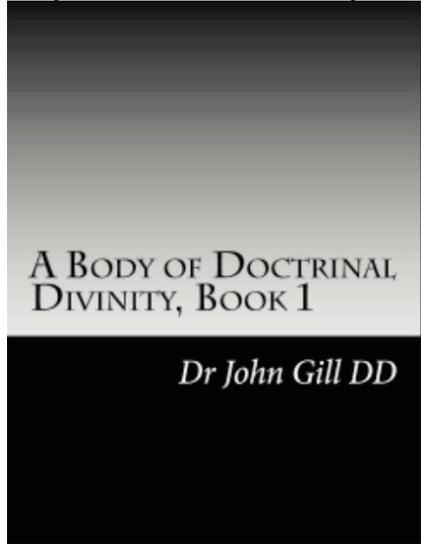
By removing the word "firstborn" it can also set up erroneous beliefs that Mary had children before she had Jesus. That word "firstborn" is pivotal to the doctrine of the Virgin Birth. The removal of this word is a serious breach of truth and can lead to the denial of the Virgin Birth of Christ. If Christ was not born of a Virgin, then we will still be in our sins and bound for Hell. The modern versions, along with the Jehovah's Witness version, all agree with the Roman Catholic Institution's teaching that Mary was a perpetual Virgin. For someone to say that the modern versions do not stem from Roman Catholic Manuscripts is willful denial of the truth, keep in mind the two manuscripts which omit "Firstborn." The two are Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, both manuscripts were in the hands of the Roman Church, yet have become the primary manuscripts underlying the modern versions.

So tonight or tomorrow when your Pastor reads the narrative about the birth of Jesus from the book of Matthew in

a modern version, then realize he is perpetuating the Roman Catholic error of the perpetual virginity of Mary which has caused many true Christians to be put to death under their inquisition because they refused to believe what was false in light of Mark 6:1-3.

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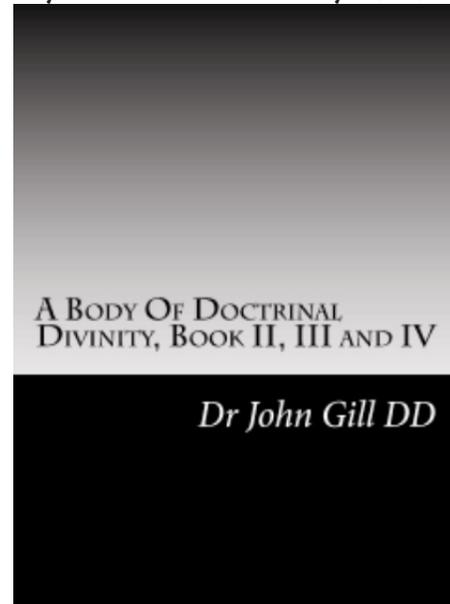
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12 Of Actual Sins And Transgressions.

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6 Of The Resurrection Of Christ From The Dead.

7 Of The Ascension Of Christ To Heaven

8 Of The Session Of Christ At The Right Hand Of
God

9 Of The Prophetic Office Of Christ

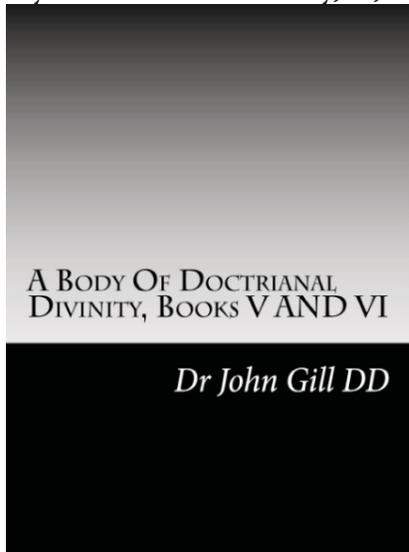
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12 Of Christ's Blessing His People
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14 Of The Spiritual Reign Of Christ

A Body of Doctrinal Divinity, V, VI**A System OF Practical Truths****Book V**

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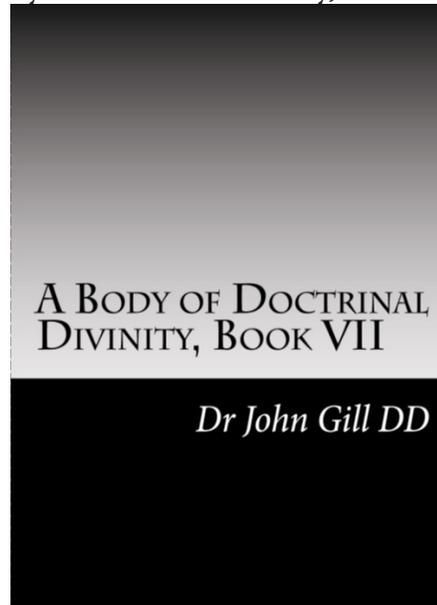
12 Of Effectual Calling

13 Of Conversion

14 Of Sanctification

15 Of The Perseverance Of The Saints

Christ

A Body of Doctrinal Divinity, Book VII**A System Of Practical Truths**

Authored by Dr John Gill DD, Created by David
Clarke CertEd

List Price: \$7.99

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Black & White on White paper

118 pages

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BISAC: Religion / Christian Theology / Systematic

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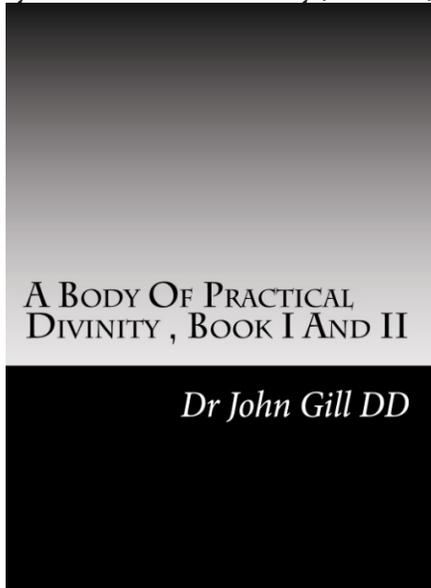
6 Of Of The Conflagration Of The Universe

7 Of The New Heavens And Earth, And The
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8 Of The Millennium Or Personal Reign Of Christ
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A Body Of Practical Divinity , Book I, II



A System of Practical Truths

Authored by Dr John Gill DD,
Created by David Clarke Cert.Ed

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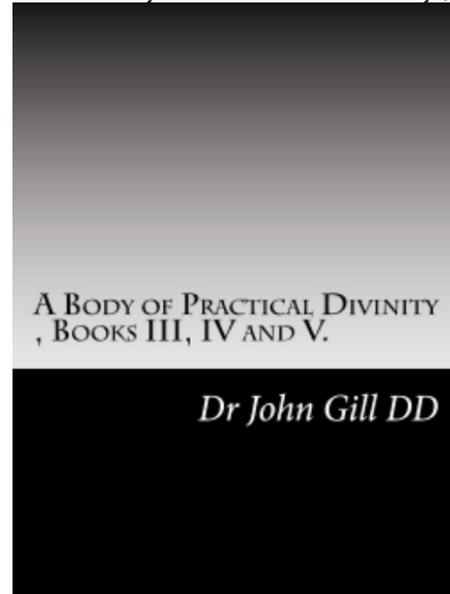
3 Of The Officers Of A Church, Particularly Pastors

4 Of The Duties Of Members Of Churches To Their
Pastors

5 Of The Office Of Deacons

6 Of The Discipline Of A Church Of Christ

A Body of Practical Divinity , III, IV, V



A System of Practical Truths

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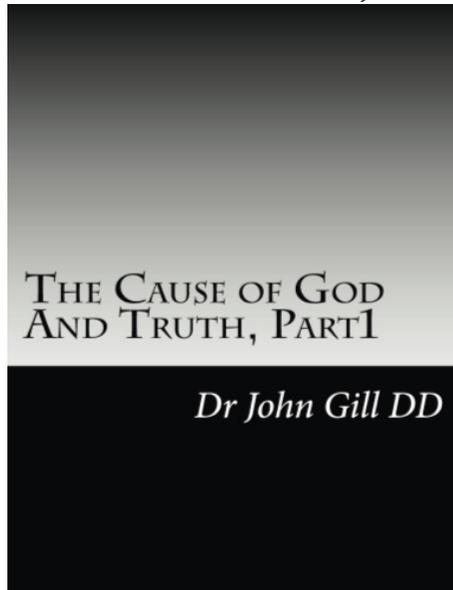
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- 4 The Proof Of This Custom Only From The
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- 5 The Reasons Why Christian Baptism Is Not
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Pretended Jewish Baptism Of Israelites And Proselytes

The Cause of God And Truth, Part 1

Authored by Dr John Gill DD, Created by David
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The following work was undertaken and begun about the year 1733 or 1734, at which time Dr. Whitby's Discourse on the Five Points was reprinting, judged to be a masterpiece on the subject, in the English tongue, and accounted an unanswerable one ; and it was almost in the mouth of every one, as an objection to the Calvinists, Why do not ye answer Dr. Whitby ? Induced hereby, I determined to give it another reading, and found myself inclined to answer it, and thought this was a very proper and seasonable time to engage in such a work.

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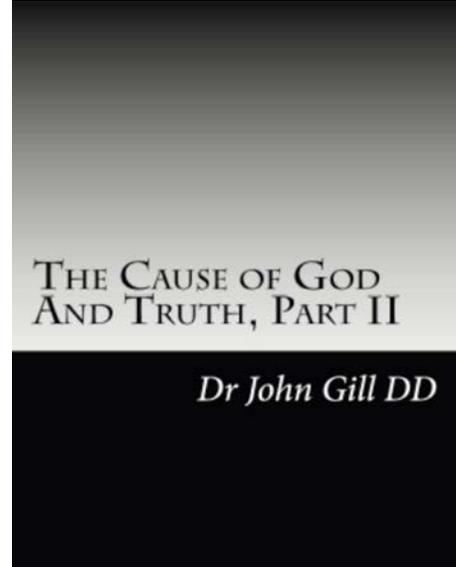
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The Cause of God And Truth, Part II



Authored by Dr John Gill DD, Created by David
 Clarke CertEd

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BISAC: Religion / Christian Theology / Systematic

This is volume 2 of this 4 part series and it should be known that the following work was undertaken and begun about the year 1733 or 1734, at which time Dr. Whitby's Discourse on the Five Points was reprinting, judged to be a masterpiece on the subject, in the English tongue, and accounted an unanswerable one ; and it was almost in the mouth of every one, as an objection to the Calvinists, Why do not ye answer Dr. Whitby ? Induced hereby, I determined to give it another reading, and found myself inclined to answer it, and thought this was a very proper and seasonable time to engage in such a work. In the year 1735, the First Part of this work was published, in which are considered the several passages of Scripture

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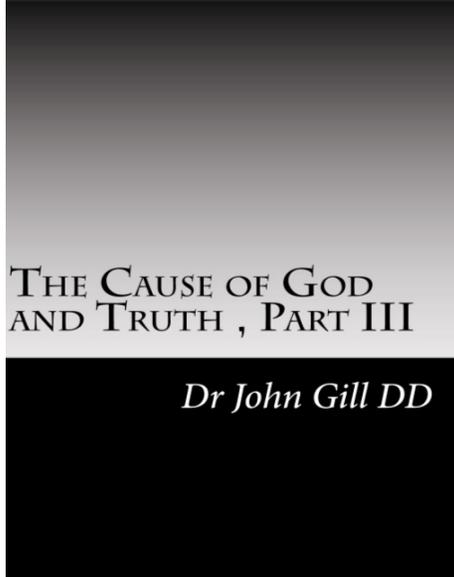
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John 14:16.

John 10:28.

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The Cause of God and Truth Part III:



The Doctrines of Grace
 Authored by Dr John Gill DD, Authored by David Clarke CetEd
 List Price: \$9.99
 8.5" x 11" (21.59 x 27.94 cm)
 Black & White on White paper
 108 pages
 ISBN-13: 978-1544810591 (CreateSpace-Assigned)
 ISBN-10: 1544810598
 BISAC: Religion / Christian Theology / Systematic
 This book contains John Gill's answers to Dr Whitby objections to The Doctrines of Grace under the following heads.

- Chapter
- 1 Of Reprobation.
 - 2 Of Election and Reprobation.
 - 3 Of Redemption.
 - 4 Of Efficacious grace.
 - 5 Of The Freedom of the Will of Man.
 - 6 Of The Perseverance of the Saints
 - 7 Of The Prescience and Providence of God.
 - 8 Of The State and Case of the Heathens.

The following work was undertaken and begun about the year 1733 or 1734, at which time Dr. Whitby's Discourse on the Five Points was reprinting, judged to be a masterpiece on the subject, in the English tongue, and accounted an unanswerable one ; and it was almost in the mouth of every one, as an objection to the Calvinists, Why do not ye answer Dr. Whitby ? Induced hereby, I determined to give it another reading, and found myself

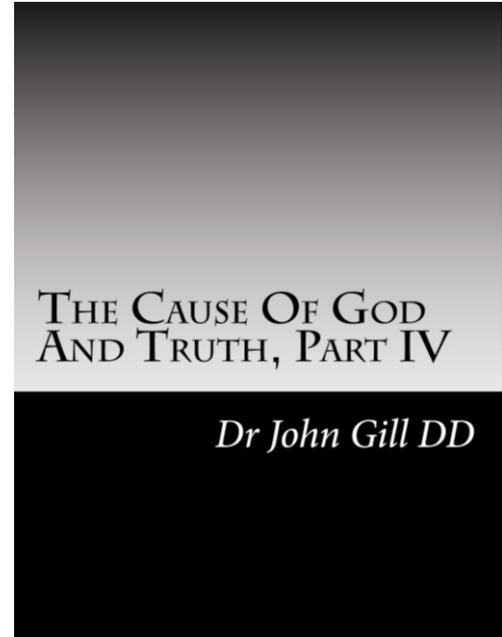
inclined to answer it, and thought this was a very proper and seasonable time to engage in such a work.

In the year 1735, the First Part of this work was published, in which are considered the several passages of Scripture made use of by Dr. Whitby and others in favour of the Universal Scheme, and against the Calvinistical Scheme, in which their arguments and objections are answered, and the several passages set in a just and proper light. These, and what are contained in the following Part in favour of the Particular Scheme, are extracted from Sermons delivered in a Wednesday evening's lecture.

The Second Part was published in the year 1736, in which the several passages of Scripture in favour of special and distinguishing grace, and the arguments from them, are vindicated from the exceptions of the Arminians, and particularly from Dr. Whitby, and a reply made to answers and objections to them.

The Third Part was published in 1737.

The Cause Of God And Truth, Part IV



Authored by Dr John Gill DD, Created by David Clarke CertEd

List Price: \$8.99
 8.5" x 11" (21.59 x 27.94 cm)
 Black & White on White paper
 126 pages
 ISBN-13: 978-1544848709 (CreateSpace-Assigned)
 ISBN-10: 1544848706
 BISAC: Religion / Christian Theology / Systematic
 It should be known by the reader, that the following work was undertaken and begun about the year 1733 or 1734, at which time Dr. Whitby's Discourse on the Five

Points was reprinting, judged to be a masterpiece on the subject, in the English tongue, and accounted an unanswerable one ; and it was almost in the mouth of every one, as an objection to the Calvinists, Why do not ye answer Dr. Whitby ? Induced hereby, I determined to give it another reading, and found myself inclined to answer it, and thought this was a very proper and seasonable time to engage in such a work.

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The Second Part was published in the year 1736, in which the several passages of Scripture in favour of special and distinguishing grace, and the arguments from them, are vindicated from the exceptions of the Arminian, and particularly from Dr. Whitby, and a reply made to answers and objections to them.

The Third Part was published in 1737, and is a confutation of the arguments from reason used by the Arminians, and particularly by Dr. Whitby, against the above doctrines ; and a vindication of such as proceed on rational accounts in favour of them, in which it appears that they are no more disagreeable to right reason than to divine revelation ; to the latter of which the greatest deference should be paid, though the Rationalists of our age too much neglect it, and have almost quitted it ; but to the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them.

In this part of the work is considered the agreement of the sentiments of Mr. Hobbes and the Stoic philosophers with those of the Calvinists, in which the difference between them is observed, and the calumny removed ; to which is added, a Defence of the Objections to the Universal Scheme, taken from the prescience and the providence of God, and the case of the Heathens.

The Fourth Part was published in 1738, in which the sense of the ancient writers of the Christian Church, before the times of Austin, is given ; the importance and consequence of which is shown, and that the Arminians have very little reason to triumph on that account.

This work was published at a time when the nation

was greatly alarmed with the growth of Popery, and several learned gentlemen were employed in preaching against some particular points of it ; but the author of this work was of opinion, that the increase of Popery was greatly owing to the Pelagianism, Arminianism, and other supposed rational schemes men run into, contrary to divine revelation, This was the sense of our fathers in the last century, and therefore joined these and Popery together in their religious grievances they were desirous of having redressed ; and indeed, instead of lopping off the branches of Popery, the axe should be laid to the root of the tree, Arminianism and Pelagianism, the very life and soul of Popery.

This is Part 4 of 4 parts, and a new edition, with some alterations and improvements, is now published by request.

This work contains:

Chapter

1 Of Predestination

2 Of Redemption

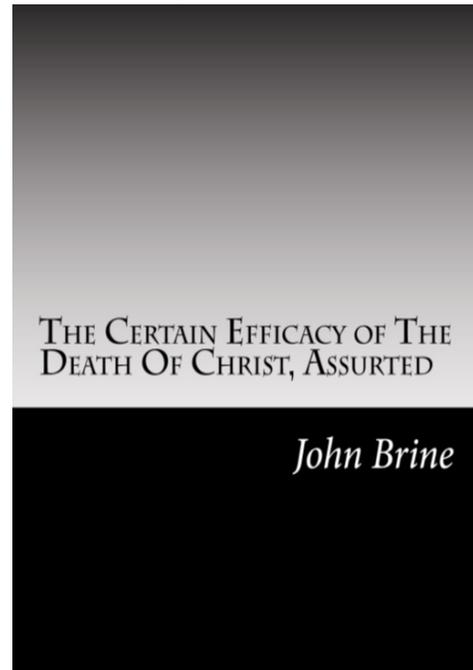
3 Or Original Sin

4 Of Efficacious Grace

5 Of Perseverance

6 Of The Heathens A Vindication of The Cause of God and Truth

**The Certain Efficacy of The Death Of Christ,
Assurted**



Authored by John Brine

Created by David Clarke

List Price: \$7.99

8.5" x 11" (21.59 x 27.94 cm)

Black & White on White paper

114 pages

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ISBN-10: 1973922258

BISAC: Religion / Christian Theology / Soteriology

This work declares the Glory of God in all his Perfections, the Honour of Christ, and the eternal Happiness of his People, all of which are intimately concerned in them. This is treated in four parts: In the First John Brine endeavours to prove the limited Extent of the Death of CHRIST, and the certain Salvation of all those for whom he died.

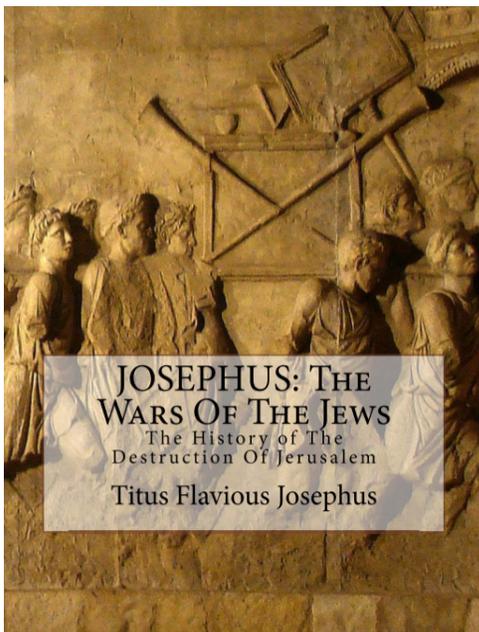
In the Second, the Objections which are usually urged by the Arminians, and others, will be answered.

In the Third shall attempt to prove the Impossibility of the Salvation of the Non-Elect, upon the Supposition of no other than a conditional Provision of Salvation being made for them.

In the Fourth Part shall attend to what he delivers on the Subjects of the Imputation of original Sin to Men, the Charge of Sin on CHRIST, and the Imputation of his Righteousness to his People.

This has been republished by Bierton Particular Baptists to further the cause of God and truth, it opposes Arminianism, Islam, and duty faith.

Josephus: The Wars Of The Jews



**JOSEPHUS: THE
WARS OF THE JEWS**
The History of The
Destruction Of Jerusalem
Titus Flavius Josephus

The History of The Destruction Of Jerusalem

Authored by Titus Flavius Josephus, Designed by
Translated by William Winston

ISBN-13: 978-1985029132 (CreateSpace-Assigned)

ISBN-10: 1985029138

BISAC: Religion / Christianity / History / General

Josephus was an eye witness to those events that he records in this book, 'The Wars of The Jews', or 'The History of The Destruction Of Jerusalem'.

He records historic events that took place during and after the times of the New Testament scriptures.

The book of Revelation was a prophecy, given to Jesus Christ, and published by the Apostle John, about those things that were shortly to come to pass in his day.

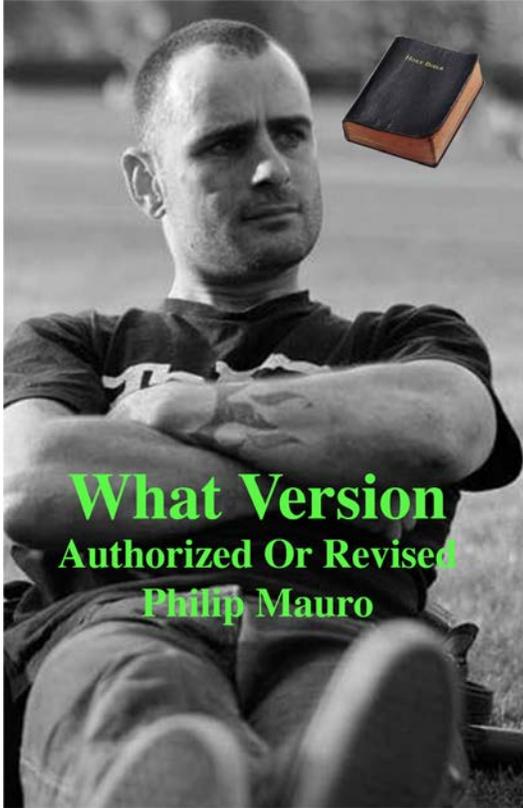
From the internal evidence of the book Revelation was written before the Neuronic persecution, of 66 A.D. and before the fall off Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple, in 70. A.D. This is because the book records that the temple in Jerusalem was still standing at the time the book was written and not around 95 A.D. as Eusebius mistakenly says.

The historic events that Josephus records are remarkable as they give evidence to the fulfillment of Prophecy given by the Lord Jesus in his Olivet prophecy. In fact the book of Revelation was a prophecy of those events that were shortly to come to pass when Jesus spoke to John who wrote the Revelation. Jesus had informed his Apostles about future events and they lived in expectation of there fulfillment in their day.

Josephus gives the historic evidence of the fulfillment of those prophecies and that confirms scripture fulfillment.

We recommend the James Stuart Russell's book, 'The Parousia' as a very good introduction to this subject and advertised at the back of this book in our Further Publications.

What Version Authorised Or Revised



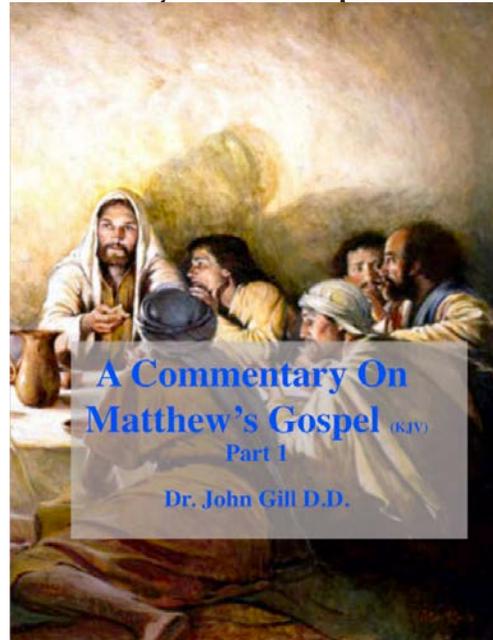
Philip Mauro

The book discusses the issues relating to the reliability of the Authorised Version of the Bible and the failings of the so-called Revised Versions. It reminds the reader the greek printed text, produced by Erasmus in 1516, was derived from a broad set of 8 extant Greek manuscripts available to him in his day and in constant use by Christians to that day and not Latin bibles. Since 1861 there has arisen those who claim the Authorised Version is not accurate and Wescott and Hort produced a new compiled Greek Printed text manuscript, derived from, and base upon, two 4th C handwritten extant manuscripts. Codex Sinaiticus, written in Greek and Codex's Vaticanus, written in Latin. They claimed that since these manuscripts were the oldest extant manuscripts in the world (400 years after the original writing of the new testament scriptures) they were far superior and more reliable than the text underlying the Authorised version of the bible. And since 1945 all Bible translations are based upon the New Greek manuscript text of Wescott and Hort published in 1861. This is an eclectic text and not the Received Text used by the translator of the Authorised Version of the Bible and know by Christians, throughout the Christian age, as the Word of God. It has been republished by Bierton

Particular Baptist to educate serious minded people about the subject of Bible translations and support the Authorised version of the Bible. Philip Mauro was a lawyer in America, who practiced before the Supreme Court. He prepared briefs NOTES for the Scopes Trial WHICH was an American legal case in July 1925 THAT had made it unlawful to teach human evolution in any state-funded school.[1] The trial publicized the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy, which set Modernists, who said evolution was not inconsistent with religion,[4] against Fundamentalists, who said the word of God as revealed in the Bible took priority over all human knowledge. The case was thus seen as both a theological contest and a trial on whether "modern science" should be taught in schools. Mauro was ALSO passenger on the British ocean liner RMS Carpathia when it rescued the passengers of the Titanic in April 1912. It is hoped that this book will rescue any that are sinking in the sea of the natural Modern man's opinion as to the reliability of the Authorised Version the bible.

[Available from Amazon \(Click to view\)](#)

A Commentary On The Gospel Of Matthew



By John Gill

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

Matthew was a Jew and one of the 12 Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ and named Levi. He was a tax collector for the Romans. There are two strong traditions that

Matthew made a personal copy of his gospel and gave it to Barnabas, a companion of the Apostle Paul.

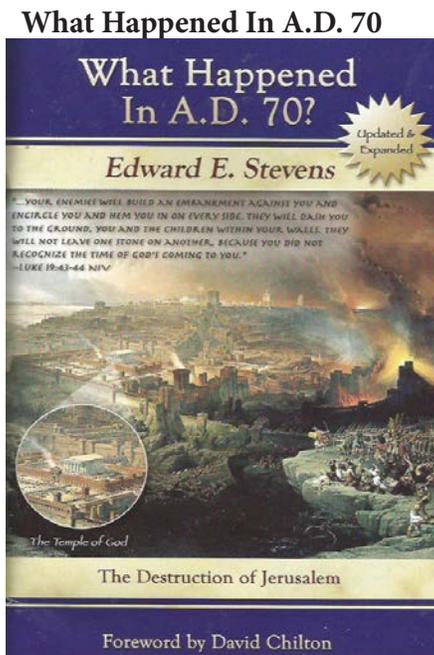
Matthew tells of the birth and lineage of Jesus. The life death, resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and the final words of Jesus before his ascension into heaven.

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

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

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

And PART 2 chapter 17 to 28.



This book introduces a view of Bible prophecy which many have found extremely helpful in their Bible study. It explains the end time riddles which have always bothered students of Bible prophecy. It is a *consistent view* which makes the book of Revelation much easier to understand. It establishes when the New Testament canon of scripture was completed, demolishes the liberal attack on the inspiration of the New Testament, and is more *conservative* on most other issues than traditional views. And there is *no compromise* of any essential Biblical doctrine of the Christian faith.

The key to understand any passage of scripture has always been a good grasp of the historical setting in which it was originally written (*audience relevance*). Two

thousand years from now our history, culture, politics and language will have changed dramatically. Imagine someone then having to learn the ancient language of “American English” to read our USA newspapers! If they saw one of our political cartoons with a donkey and elephant, what would they think? How would they go about understanding it? Not only would they have to study the language, but also our culture, history, politics and economics. The same applies to Bible study. If we are really going to understand what all the “donkeys and elephants” (beasts, harlots, dragons, etc.) Symbolize in the book of Revelation, we will have to seriously and carefully study the language, history, culture and politics of the First Century. Of course, the truths essential for salvation are couched in simple language that everyone can grasp. But there are numerous scriptures in the Bible which are “hard to understand” (cf. 2 Pet 3:16), and Bible prophecy is one of those things which must be approached with much more focus on the original historical art cultural context (audience relevance)

One of the main purposes of this book is to provide a closer look at the historical framework behind the New Testament. Many have found it helpful to lay aside (at least temporarily) the legion of speculative opinions about the book of Revelation, and look at a more historical alternative, which is that *the book of Revelation was written to the first century church and had primary relevance to them*. It warned of events that were about to happen in their lifetime, and prepared them for the tribulation and other events associated with the End of the Jewish Age.

Atheists, skeptics, Jew, Muslims, and liberal critics of the bible use the supposed failure of those end times events to occur in the First Century to undermine the integrity of Christs and the inspired NT writings.

Non-Christian Jews laugh at this supposed non-occurrence, and use it as evidence that Jesus is not the Messiah. Their forefathers in the flesh rejected Jesus in His first coming because He did not fulfill the Old Testament prophecies in the materialistic and nationalistic way that they were expecting, even though Jesus told them that His Kingdom was not of this world, and that it would be within them instead. Yet it seems that many futurists today are expecting that same kind of materialistic and nationalistic kingdom to arrive at a future return of Christ Are they making the same mistake about the Second Coming that the Jews made about His first coming? Jesus repeatedly said His Kingdom is “not of this world” and that it would “not

come with observation.” It is a spiritual entity, and it has arrived We live in it. Both futurist Christians and non-Christian Jews need to realize this.

Christians are finally beginning to seek alternatives to the fatally flawed *futurist* interpretation. This book introduces the Preterist view.

“Preterist” simply means past in fulfillment It means that Christ has already fulfilled His promise to return and consummate redemption in Himself and His ongoing spiritual kingdom (the church). We should be like the noble-minded Bereans and “search the scriptures daily to see whether these things are true” You might want to have your Bible open alongside as you read.

Edward E. Stevens

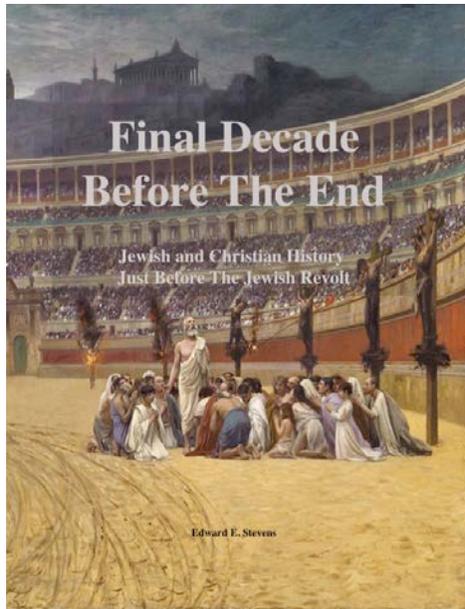
INTERNATIONAL PRETERIST ASSOCIATION

<https://www.preterist.org/>

Bradford, Pennsylvania

April 17,2010

Final Decade Before The End



Ed. Stevens

Ever since the booklet, **What Happened In AD 70?** was published in 1980, there have been constant requests for more detailed information about the Destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish, Roman, and Christian history associated with it. Over the years since then I have studied Josephus, Yosippon, Hegesippus, Tacitus, Suetonius, Eusebius, the Talmud, Midrash, Zohar, Pseudepigrapha, Church Fathers, Apocrypha, Dead Sea Scrolls and other Jewish/Christian writings, trying to determine exactly what happened, when it happened, and the effect it had upon the Church.

Then in 2002, after I began to promote J. S. Russell’s

view of a literal rapture, the demand for historical documentation of the fulfillment of all eschatological events dramatically increased. That forced me to dig much deeper. So in 2007 I put together a 21-page chronology of first century events. Two years later in 2009, we published a more substantial 73-page manuscript entitled, *First Century Events in Chronological Order*. That helped fill the void, but it did not go far enough. It only increased the appetite for a more detailed and documented historical reconstruction of first century events.

The book of Acts does not give a lot of details about the other Roman and Jewish events that were happening while Paul was on his various missionary journeys. For those events, we have to go to the other contemporary Jewish and Roman historians such as Josephus and Tacitus. The closer we get to AD 70, the more important all of those Jewish and Roman events become. They form an important backdrop behind the Christian events, and show how all the predictions made by Jesus were literally fulfilled. Every High Priest and Zealot leader that we encounter from AD 52 onwards are directly connected with the events of the Last Days. Things are heating up, not only for the Christians, but also for the Jews and the Romans.

Paul on his missionary journeys was clearly following a plan which was providentially arranged for him by Christ: (1) to plant new churches among all nations and not just Jews, (2) appoint elders and deacons in every church (Acts 14:23; 1 Cor. 4:17), (3) write inspired epistles to guide them, (4) instruct his fellow workers to “teach these things to faithful men who would be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2), and (5) establish the Gentiles in the Church and make them one united body with the Jews (Eph 4). Everywhere Paul went, he followed this pattern. We see this clearly as we study the historical narrative in Acts and Paul’s other epistles that were written during this time. These are essential patterns that the apostles evidently bound upon both Gentile and Jewish Christians, and which were intended to be the pattern for all future generations of the eternal Church (Eph 3:21; 2Tim 2:2).

We begin our study by looking at the most likely dates for Matthew (AD 31-38) and Mark (AD 38- 44), and then proceed to the first three epistles of Paul (Galatians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians), which were written on his second missionary journey (AD 51-53). Including these five books in our study allows us to date all twenty-seven books of our New Testament, and show how the NT canon was formed and completed before the outbreak of

the Jewish War in AD 66. The study of New Testament canonization in itself is a good reason for reading this work, without even looking at the historical fulfillment of all of the endtime prophecies that we document here.

After looking at the dates for those first five books, we then move on into the third missionary journey of Apostle Paul which began in AD 54. It was during this final dozen years (from AD 54 until AD 66) when the birth pangs and signs of the end started increasing in both intensity and frequency, along with a quickening pace of NT books being written. We show how 19 of our 27 NT books (70 percent) were written during those last five years just before the Neronic persecution (AD 60-64). The Great Commission was finished, and the rest of the endtime events predicted in the Olivet Discourse were fulfilled during that time of “tribulation” upon the church and the “days of vengeance” upon the unbelieving Jews (Luke 21:22).

Edward E. Stevens
INTERNATIONAL PRETERIST ASSOCIATION

<https://www.preterist.org/>

Bradford, Pennsylvania

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