
A
COMMENTARY
ON THE
NEW TESTAMENT.
THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO
SAINT MATTHEW.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE GOSPEL
ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW.

ONE general observation will meet the Reader, at his entrance, on all the *four* Books of the Evangelists: namely, that they are directed to one and the same interesting subject. They form a corresponding harmony and agreement, in giving the history of the blessed JESUS. And they form therefore, when taken together, the whole of those inspired records, which GOD the HOLY GHOST hath thought proper to give to the Church, concerning the Person, Life, Ministry, Miracles, Discourses, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, and unchanging Priesthood of the Almighty SAVIOR of the world, *whom truly to know is life eternal.*

The word Gospel is borrowed from the Saxons, the early inhabitants of this island. They were accustomed to call our holy faith by this name. And hence, it is probable, that it hath been ever since distinguished by this title. But perhaps it was not always pronounced, as we are now accustomed to do, by the name *Gospel*; but rather *God's-spell*, meaning *God's blessing*. And surely, it is in the highest and fullest sense of the word, the greatest blessing which ever the LORD JEHOVAH bestowed upon mankind, in the gospel of salvation, by GOD's dear SON.

In the present acceptation of the word Gospel, is meant *glad tidings*; *great joy to all people*. And in this sense also it must be allowed, that CHRIST and his salvation is the most joyful tidings which were ever proclaimed to sinful, dying men. So much so, that one of the Prophets declared the very feet of them who were sent to preach it, were beau-

tiful. Isaiah lii. 7. Nay, angels themselves, as if earnest to become the first heralds of such blissful tidings to a lost world, hastened to come down upon the earth the moment the news brake out in heaven, and in a multitude together sung the song of redemption: *Glory (said they) to GOD in the highest, and on earth peace; good will toward men.* Luke ii. 10—14.

The Gospel, according to St. *Matthew*, opens with the genealogy of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, in the time of *Joseph* his reputed father; as that of the Evangelist *Luke*, traces the pedigree in the line of the Virgin *Mary*. And *Matthew*, carries on the history of CHRIST through the whole of our LORD's continuance upon earth; including a period of about *three and thirty years and half*. But the exercise of CHRIST's ministry did not exceed *three years and half*. Luke iii. 23.

The name of *Matthew*, or *Matthai*, signifies a *gift*, or a thing *given*. And this was not an unsuitable name for this Evangelist, for he might be truly said to be given to CHRIST. And thus the LORD JESUS speaks of his people, to whom he manifested his FATHER's name, that they were the men whom he had *given* him out of the world. Of such, JESUS said, that all whom the FATHER had *given* him, must come to him; and him that came, he would in no wise cast out. John xvii. 6, 9, compared with John vi. 37. But besides this name of *Matthew*, he was also called *Levi*. Luke v. 27. And this double name seems to decide, that though a *publican* by office, yet was *Matthew* a *Jew* by birth. For it was common with the children of Israel to give two names to their children; but not so generally with other nations. The history of *Matthew*, and his wonderful conversion, will meet the Reader in its proper place. I only here detain him in those general observations, to remark, that as a Son of *Abraham*, his engaging in the odious calling of a tax-gatherer for the *Romans*, which they called a *Publican*, and which the children of Israel considered as oppressive, must have been the more intolerable to them when performed by any of the seed of *Abraham*.

The Gospel of *Matthew*, is supposed by *some*, to have been written as early as within *eight* years after our LORD's ascension. But *others* place it at a later period, even to *fifteen* years. However, in either case, supposing the latest of the *two*, it may serve to teach us how graciously GOD the HOLY GHOST watched over the Church, that before that generation was passed away; among whom the wonderful actions of the LORD JESUS had been wrought; the records were made for the benefit of all succeeding ages of the Church, to the consummation of all things.

I shall make no further observations in a way of preliminary to the Gospel of St. *Matthew*, but proceed with the Reader to the perusal of the Gospel itself: praying only, that the same

gracious LORD who called *Matthew* from the receipt of custom, may, by the ministry of his writings, call many *from darkness to light, and from the power of Sin and Satan to the living GOD*. And, if the LORD will condescend to make this *Poor Man's Commentary* upon it useful to the blessed purpose, that both Reader and Writer may find the unction of the HOLY GHOST upon it, as they prosecute the delightful subject: may they be enabled to invite the LORD JESUS to their houses and hearts, as this Evangelist did; and call many Publicans and Sinners to sit down to the holy feast with JESUS and his disciples; that many, many may be the partakers of *this glorious Gospel of the ever blessed God*.

CHAP. I.

CONTENTS.

The Gospel opens with the relation of the genealogy of CHRIST after the flesh. We have an account of the miraculous conception: CHRIST's birth and name.

THE book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

There is somewhat very striking and particular in this opening of the Gospel. The Old Testament begins with the account of the Creation. The New Testament begins with the account of Him, by whom all things were created. Heb. i. 1, 2. The great design of this pedigree concerning CHRIST after the flesh, is to prove CHRIST's lineal descent from *Abraham*. For unless this be proved, the evidence that CHRIST is the promised seed, would be wanting. *For to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not to seeds as of many, but as of one, and to thy seed which is CHRIST.* Compare Gal. iii. 16. with Gen. xii. 3. and Gen. xxii. 18. Hence, therefore, the importance of this pedigree is evident. And the correctness of the one here given, is striking. I beg the Reader to observe it with a suitableness equal to its consequence. Perhaps it were a thing impossible in any other instance, but in the genealogy of CHRIST, to find among all the pedigrees of the Jews, from the days of our LORD to this hour, a correct genealogy of any one house, or tribe, or family, even for *fourteen* generations together: whereas in this of CHRIST, we have *three times fourteen*. What can more decidedly manifest the overruling providence and watchfulness of GOD!

2 Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob;
and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren;

3 And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar;
and Pharez 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.

There would be nothing particularly necessary for me to detain the Reader with in going over this pedigree of names, more than to mark the correctness, if the mere pedigree was all. But there is somewhat more worth noticing in this genealogy: and I venture to believe, that God the HOLY GHOST did intend that the Church should make other observations upon the record here given, and therefore I beg to point them out as they strike me.

In the *first* place, I desire the Reader not to overlook the pointed reference in every name here mentioned to the LORD JESUS CHRIST. Abraham had many sons beside Isaac, but none are noticed but him.

And the reason is plain. The promise in the charter of grace was, *in Isaac shall thy seed be called*. And hence to all the other Sons of Abraham; the Ishmaels, and the Esaus, of every generation, there is no respect. Amos iii. 2.

Secondly, In this pedigree we find many of the characters whose lives gave evident proof, that though by *nature* they were in the ancestry of CHRIST, yet in *grace* they had no relation to him. Not to enter into many particular proofs, it may be observed, that Roboam, (or Rehoboam,) Abia, and Jechonias, are marked in Scripture under peculiar tokens of divine displeasure. 1 Kings xii. 15. 1 Kings xv. 3. 2 Kings xxiv. 9. Jerem. xxii. 24, &c. Now the Reader ought to make due remarks upon these circumstances, in proof that grace is not hereditary. It descends not from father to son. Yea, on the contrary we are told, that *they which are sons of GOD, are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of GOD*. John i. 12, 13. And what a sweet thought to a child of GOD is the consideration, that from our union with CHRIST, as it was with the LORD JESUS when upon earth; so will it be with his people in heaven: *Whosoever (said JESUS) shall do the will of my FATHER which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother!* Matt. xii. 50.

Thirdly. It is remarkable in this pedigree of the LORD JESUS, that there are *four* names recorded in the female line; and *three* of them, in point of moral characters, are spoken of as exceptionable. *Thamar* is she, with whom *Judah* committed incest. Gen. xxxviii. 13. to the end. *Rachab* (or *Rahab*) the harlot. Joshua ii. 1. Heb. xi. 31. James ii. 25. And *Bathsheba*, with whom *David* committed adultery. 2 Sam. xi. 3, 4. Let the Reader pause over this view. We know that CHRIST was made *sin for us, who knew no sin*. And he was also made *a curse for us*. And he was made *in the likeness of sinful flesh*. See 2 Cor. v. 21. Gal. iii. 13. Rom. viii. 3. All these things are explained to us in the causes and reasons for the wonderful appointment. But was it needful also, that his holy, spotless nature should come through such channels of sin, and uncleanness? Was it absolutely necessary that He who was separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens, should be thus manifested to his Church by such ancestry? Reader! ponder well the subject! And do not overlook in it the unequalled humility of the SON of GOD!

Fourthly. I beg to detain the Reader with one observation more on this pedigree of JESUS. We find *Rahab* and *Ruth*, in this genealogy of CHRIST. Now both these women were Gentiles. *Rahab*, of *Jericho*; and *Ruth*, of *Moab*. And yet are here incorporated with Israel, and from this union after the flesh CHRIST came. Was this to shew, that though with Israel was deposited the promises, yet the Church of JESUS should be made of both Jew and Gentile? And, as in after ages, when redemption-work was finished, and the middle wall of partition taken down, both should be brought into one fold; yet before all this, yea, before the coming of CHRIST, the alliance of Jesus with his *Gentile* Church, as well as with the *Jewish*, should be shewn and proved by such an union as CHRIST after the flesh, arising out of both? Reader! ponder this well also, for it is blessed. See Isaiah xlix. 6. Gal. iii. 28.

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.

I think it more than probable, that the HOLY GHOST had some object in view in the division made of the three equal proportions of *fourteen* generations, in this genealogy of CHRIST. But though I am inclined to this opinion, yet I am free to confess I cannot explain it. But surely GOD the SPIRIT must have watched over those records with peculiar regard, or they could not but have been lost during the wars of *Canaan*, and the captivity in *Babylon*, which followed. And the correctness of this genealogy by *Matthew*, is striking. For the *Targum* is in perfect correspondence with it, only with this difference, and which is yet worthy of more particular regard, for that difference; namely, that while both the *Targum*, and *Matthew*, make the number of the generations from *Zorobabel* *fourteen*: the *Targum* call the last *Anani*, saying at the same time, "this is the King *Messiah*, who is to be revealed." And this is worthy of the greater attention, in that as the *Targum* is supposed to have began in the days of *Ezra*; therefore the *Messiah*, according to their own tradition, must have been long since. So that here is an additional evidence, (if it were needed,) to all the cloud of witnesses with which we are encompassed, to the truth as it is in JESUS.

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.

The subject of the miraculous conception, here intimated, being in itself so highly momentous, I would beg the Reader to attend to it with an affection equal to its vast importance. For this once admitted, brings up after it the glorious doctrine of the Atonement, with all the blessings connected with redemption. Let us consider therefore the subject particularly.

The expression here used respecting the miraculous conception, is most striking indeed. The birth of JESUS CHRIST was on this wise: *Mary was found with child of the HOLY GHOST*. And the parallel passage in *Luke*, is to the same amount. *The HOLY GHOST shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee.* Luke i. 35. Hence it must undeniably follow, that the conception was without the intervention of an human father, and wrought by the express work of GOD the HOLY GHOST. And, as if to confirm this still more, the Angel further declared, that what was conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary, was of the HOLY GHOST. Verse 20. So much then in proof of the agency of GOD the HOLY GHOST.

Let us next enquire, what Scripture speaketh further of divine agency on this wonderful subject. That GOD the FATHER had an hand in this great work, is as plainly declared by CHRIST himself,

under the spirit of prophecy. For, speaking to the FATHER of the inefficacy in all sacrifices to take away sin, and making a voluntary offer of himself, JESUS saith, *A body hast thou prepared me.* Compare Psm. xl. 6. with Heb. x. 5. And elsewhere, speaking still in the spirit of prophecy, CHRIST saith, *Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I am fearfully and wonderfully made: when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought on the lowest parts of the earth; that is, the dark chamber of his mother's womb.* Psm. cxxxix. 13, 14, 15.

Hence, therefore, in the agency of GOD the FATHER, which is here most plainly shewn, added to what we before noticed of the work of GOD the HOLY GHOST, every thing most decidedly proves, that the conception was wholly miraculous.

Let us next call into our view what the Scriptures relate concerning *Mary*. That she was what the Jews called *Almah*, that is, a pure virgin, will never be questioned by those who believe the word of GOD. And therefore I shall not think it at all necessary to dwell upon it. But, what I wish chiefly to have impressed upon the Reader's mind, respecting the part *Mary* bore in the miraculous conception, is this, that no taint of our corrupt nature was taken into the act. The promise at the fall was, *the seed of the woman* should bruise the serpent's head. And therefore CHRIST, to fulfil this promise, must be of *the seed of the woman*. By his incarnation in her womb, he fully proved this. But then this incarnation being without an human father, and accomplished wholly by the work of both GOD the FATHER and GOD the HOLY GHOST; the mere act of conception was all which *Mary* bore in the great deed. And as this conception was not by generation, in the ordinary way, so there was nothing in it that could pollute or defile. The angel's message to Joseph, most clearly shews this: *fear not, said he, to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the HOLY GHOST.*

And I desire the Reader to consider the subject yet further, for it is a point never to be lost sight of on this occasion. CHRIST is nowhere said in the scripture to be *begotten* of a woman, but *made* of a woman. GOD sent forth his SON, *made* of a woman. Gal. iv. 4. And who was the maker but GOD the FATHER? *A body hast thou prepared me.* And who wrought upon the body of the Virgin *Mary* but GOD the HOLY GHOST? *The HOLY GHOST shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee.* Now mark what follows. *Therefore also that HOLY THING which shall be born of thee, shall be called the SON of GOD.* So that it was not *man* generating, but GOD the HOLY GHOST *overshadowing*. Had *Mary's* conception been by the act of generation by man, no doubt but the same taint of sin must have followed, as follows all the generations of our race. Then, (as *David* said of his mother, and we may all say of ours,) *in sin did my mother conceive me.* Psm. li. 5. But the Virgin's womb became only the sacred chamber of formation; whereas CHRIST saith, he was *fearfully and wonderfully made.* And her conception was of that pure and *holy Thing* as the angel called CHRIST, being wrought by the HOLY GHOST, which was *holy, harmless, undefiled; separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.* And hence was fulfilled that which the Prophet was appointed to foretell. *The LORD hath created a new thing in the earth, a woman shall compass a*

man. Jerem. xxxi. 22. Hence CHRIST also is called *the second man, the LORD from heaven.* 1 Cor. xv. 47.

If I have succeeded in stating the scripture account of this most sublime subject, in terms sufficiently plain to be understood by the Reader of my *Poor Man's Commentary*; I shall hope, under divine teaching, that the Reader will not only henceforth be led to form proper and just apprehensions of the miraculous conception; but also be taught to connect with it the great and glorious doctrine of the atonement, which immediately follows. For wherefore was this miraculous conception of *Mary*, and this holy incarnation of CHRIST, but for the express purpose to make his soul an offering for sin? And wherefore this offering for sin, but *to do away sin by the sacrifice of himself*? And now the LORD JESUS CHRIST, having by that one offering of himself, once offered, *finished transgression, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in an everlasting righteousness*: this righteousness is *to all, and upon all that believe*: for by that one offering of himself once offered, he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. See Dan. ix. 24. Rom. iii. 21, 22. Heb. x. 14.

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

For the better apprehension of what is here said, it should be remembered, that it was the custom among the Jews to betroth, or make engagements for future marriages, before that any intention was formed of the time when the nuptials were to be consummated. Sometimes those betrothings were made years before the parties came together. Yea, Jewish parents sometimes contracted for their children, before the young persons had any knowledge of, and much less a predilection for, each other. Hence, in case afterwards matters arose of difference, there was a law made for disannulling. See Deut. xxii. 23, 24, and Deut. xxiv. 1, &c. Such was the case of *Joseph and Mary*. They were but betrothed to each other, though *Mary* is here called his wife. So that the miraculous conception took place before that they came together. Joseph is here represented as deliberating how to act on the occasion. And it must be confessed, that it affords an amiable picture of his mind.

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.

It is very probable that this was the same angel which announced to *Mary* the first tidings of her miraculous impregnation. And the

Church hath found cause to bless the LORD for his ministry. For without it we should not have had ability to have formed suitable and becoming conceptions, equal to what, under grace, we are now enabled to do, of an event in which we are so highly concerned. See Luke i. 26, &c.

I detain the Reader at this scripture, while observing the name of our adorable LORD, and the reason assigned by the angel, wherefore He is called JESUS, just to remark, what a precious name it hath been in all ages of the Church; it still is, and will be through all eternity. It is the same name, in point of significancy, as that of *Joshua*, or *Hoshea*, both meaning a Savior. One of the old writers hath made a very sweet and comprehensive sense of it, when he said, "In the name of JESUS, the whole of the Gospel is hid: for it is the light, the food, the medicine, yea, the very life of the soul." And if the Reader also makes his full remark upon the angel's words, he will say the same. *Thou shalt call his name JESUS!* Wherefore? It is immediately answered. *For he shall save his people from their sins.* Now observe the beauty and blessedness of those expressions. JESUS had a people then, even before his incarnation. And it was known, that this people would be sinners. And a provision was therefore made, in the grace of God, for their recovery, even before they had a being. And the very office of JESUS, is to save them from their sins. Yea, the very reason why he is called JESUS, is on this account. Precious LORD JESUS! I would say, Oh give thy people grace to see thee, and to know thee, in this most blessed name, and never to hear this sweet name, or to call upon thee by it, without connecting with it the angel's words. *Thou shalt call his name JESUS; for he shall save his people from their sins.* See Gen. xxii. 8—18. Psm. lxxii. 17. Isaiah vii. 14. Jerem. xxiii. 6. Dan. ix. 24. Acts iv. 12. Heb. vii. 25.

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.

It is always blessed when we are enabled by the Spirit's teaching, to find out the beautiful correspondence between one scripture and another, upon the same subject; for then we behold how one explains the other. Thus, as in this instance. The Prophet *Isaiah*, more than seven hundred years before the coming of CHRIST, declared the miraculous impregnation of a virgin: and at the same time told what the name of the son she should conceive and bring forth, should be called, in proof of the mysterious union of his nature, of God and man, in one person. See Isaiah vii. 14. Now here the event is accomplished, and the Evangelist refers back to that scripture in proof. Think, Reader, of the wonderful correspondence! Who but GOD could have foretold? What power less than GOD, could have

brought it to pass? And I beg the Reader to remark yet further; every thing in the prediction was mysterious. That a virgin should conceive; and that a virgin should bring forth a son. For the mysterious part was that she continued in both still a virgin. For there would have been nothing mysterious or uncommon, that a virgin should conceive, if the ordinary means for conception had been used. But the very prophecy implied what the fact proved, that it was without human means the virgin conceived; and when she brought forth her son, still she remained a virgin. And hence the grand infinite importance of the whole design; to accomplish redemption. And here I beg the Reader to ponder well the subject, and then let him with me humbly enquire, (for I do not presume to speak decidedly upon the subject) was not all this preached by the HOLY GHOST to the Church, in that law of Moses: *Whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and beast, it is mine.* Exod. xiii. 2. I humbly ask this question; was not this preaching CHRIST, at every birth of the first-born? And was not this law enjoined wholly on CHRIST's account? See then, Reader, if so, how JEHOVAH had an eye all along to this one great and glorious event. And then think, how precious the event of CHRIST's incarnation ought to be in our eye! But I beg to make one observation more on this interesting passage.—Though the LORD commanded the first-born, both of man and beast, to be sanctified to him, as a type of JESUS; yet, strictly and properly speaking, the opening of the womb at the birth cannot be called the *first* opening, either in man or beast. This must have taken place before. But, in the instance of CHRIST, and him *only*, it was strictly and properly so. He, and he alone, opened the womb. So that here, as in all other points, JESUS must have the pre-eminence. The types of Him could come no nearer in resemblance, than what is said of them. But CHRIST, miraculously conceived and miraculously born, truly and properly, in both acts, conception and birth, opened the womb of the virgin; as in the great work of redemption afterwards by his resurrection, he opened the womb of the earth. So that it was CHRIST, and CHRIST only, of whom JEHOVAH spake in all those scriptures, which declared, that *whatsoever opened the womb, should be sanctified to the LORD.* Hence He, and He only, became the true Nazarite to GOD. Oh! what beauties are there in the scriptures of our GOD! And what sweet, soul satisfying evidences do they bring with them, at the same time of the truth of our most holy faith. Reader! I pray you to be very cheery of them, in the present day of rebuke and blasphemy; and beg of GOD the HOLY GHOST, to enable you to bind them as frontlets between your eyes. They are always precious to a believer. And they will be eminently so, if I greatly mistake not; to the rising generation, in proportion as those glorious truths, in this land, will be less and less regarded. See John xvii. 19. Luke i. 35. Levit. xxvii. 26. Numb. iii. 13. Luke fi. 23, &c. Luke xviii. 8.

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 first-born son : and he called his name JESUS.

There is a great sweetness and modesty in the original word, for *knowing her not*. And the chastity of scripture language, is ever to be admired and esteemed. How much it teacheth a chastity of conversation among the people of God; even, when necessity at any time constrains us to speak of what relates to the present infirmities of our poor fallen nature.—When it is said, that *Mary* continued in the single state *unto the birth of Christ*; it saith no more than what the prophecy declared. A virgin was to conceive, and a virgin bring forth a son. This was literally accomplished. So that no question should arise concerning the chastity of the virgin, until the birth of CHRIST was accomplished. Very much hath been both said and written, in respect to the cohabitation of *Mary* with *Joseph*, after the birth of CHRIST. But the scriptures are wholly silent upon the subject. And therefore it becomes the Church of God to be silent also. Whether *Mary* did, or did not, continue in a single state, is no article of faith. All the after events of her life were to herself, and not to the Church. And it should seem, from the words of the LORD JESUS to her, at the marriage feast in *Cana of Galilee*, as if the LORD would discourage his people from ascribing unsuitable honors to the virgin. Though she was declared by the angel to be highly favored and blessed among women, in being singled out for the high honor in the miraculous conception; yet, in all other points, *Mary* stood upon the same footing with every child of God in the Covenant. And that *Mary* herself considered it as such, and looked for salvation, as all others of the redeemed do, in and by CHRIST, is evident from the song she sung upon the occasion: *Mary said, My soul doth magnify the LORD, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my SAVIOR.* Luke i. 46, 47, &c.

REFLECTIONS.

PAUSE, Reader! at this opening of the Gospel of JESUS CHRIST, the SON of GOD; and while beholding the relation of the pedigree of CHRIST, after the flesh, who was made *not after the genealogy of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life*; well may we both cry out, with the astonishment of the Prophet, *Who shall declare his generation?* Oh! for grace to discover the wonderful relationship between CHRIST and his people; and to exult with the Church, in the glorious truth: *Unto us a child is born: unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and he shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor; the Mighty God; the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace!*

And, Reader! as we have both such abundant cause, so let us seek from the LORD all suited grace, to bless him for the discovery here made; how the human nature of CHRIST was produced, by the body which God the FATHER prepared him; and by the overshadowing power of God the HOLY GHOST, by which he was conceived in the womb of the virgin. Let us both bless God for the gracious re-

velations of this stupendous event; whereby the necessity of atonement, and the infinite importance of it, is most fully shewn. And oh! thou dear LORD JESUS; never, never, may any of the children lose sight of thine infinite condescension, who, though in the form of God, and with whom it was no robbery to be equal with God: yet didst thou make thyself of no reputation, and took upon thee the form of a servant, and was found in fashion as a man, and didst humble thyself even to the death of the cross!

LORD JESUS! give us to know thee, to love thee, to delight in thee, by every endearing name, and office, and character, in which thou standest revealed to thy people. Thou art indeed Emmanuel; God with us; God in us; God for us! Thou art JEHOVAH our righteousness. Thou art indeed JESUS, for in that sweet name is comprehended every other. And what endears it yet more to our hearts, thou hast commanded us to call thee so: For in this blessed scripture it is said, *Thou shalt call his name JESUS; for he shall save his people from their sins.* Amen.

CHAP. II.

CONTENTS.

We have here related to us the birth of CHRIST; the visit of the Wise Men from the East, led by a star to worship him; the consternation induced in the minds of Herod, and the whole city of Jerusalem, at the event of CHRIST's birth; the ministry of an angel to Joseph, and the flight of Joseph, with his family, into Egypt.

NOW when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

I detain the Reader at the very entrance on this Chapter, to remark several very interesting particulars in this short, but sweet account of the birth of the LORD JESUS after the flesh. *Bethlehem*, which signifies the *house of bread*, had been expressly declared by one of the Prophets to be the place which should be rendered sacred to this great event. Micah. v. 2. And what place so proper to give birth to Jesus, who is himself *the bread of life and the living bread*? John vi. 41 to 58. And as our misery and leanness arose from originally leaving this *Bethlehem*, as was typified. Ruth i. to 6. So the LORD JESUS CHRIST begins his salvation at the very spot where our ruin began. Moreover, the humbleness of the place became most highly suited for the humble SAVIOR to make his first appearance, in substance of our flesh. For this *Bethlehem* was about five or six miles from Jerusalem, and a little city in *Judah*. Joshua xvii. 7. There was another *Bethlehem* in *Zebulon*. Joshua xix. 5. But as our LORD sprang out of *Judah*, so from *Judah*, in the midst of the tribes, he will arise. It was said of him, that he should *grow out of his place*. Zech. vi. 12. And here it is. I should not forget also to

observe, that some have called *Bethlehem, the house of flesh*; for *Lechem* may be so rendered. And if so, the beauty of the expression is doubled. CHRIST calls his body *the flesh, which he will give for the life of the world*. And both *John* and *Paul*, use the same. *John* i. 14. *1 Tim.* iii. 16. Reader! shall not you, and I, join the disciples' prayer! LORD! *evermore give us this bread!* *2 Sam.* xxiii. 15. *Luke* ii. 4. to 20. *Haggai* ii. 7—9. *Malachi* iii. 1. *John* vi. 51 to 57.

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.

I should be led to conceive, that this visit of the Wise Men was not immediately on the birth of CHRIST, but perhaps a considerable time after. Some have thought nearly *two years*. For as the flight into Egypt could not have been so immediately on the birth, we may reasonably infer, that the over-ruling providence of the LORD, did, in this instance, as in that of *Moses*, conceal the wonderful event to the most suited time for discovery. *Exod.* ii. 2. I mention this the rather, because it is no uncommon thing to behold representations of the virgin, and an infant, in pictures, by way of setting forth the nativity. Alas! how senseless and unbecoming are all such things in relation to the solemn subjects of holy scripture! And how much they degrade what they mean to embellish!—In relation to those wise men, we are wholly at conjecture who they were, or from whence, (more than from the East,) they came. Some have thought that they were men who practised magic, like *Balaam*. And it is remarkable, that this man prophesied of a star which should come out of *Jacob*. *Numb.* xxiv. 17. And JESUS himself is called *the bright and morning star*. *Rev.* xxii. 16. But be this as it may, certain it is that an angel from heaven proclaimed to the *Jewish* shepherds the birth of CHRIST. And why should it be thought incredible, that the same glorious intelligence was communicated to *Gentile* philosophers by the ministry of a star? Reader! let us both pause over this account of the wise men. Did they come from the East, over vast regions, to hail the SAVIOR? And shall not we feel constrained to welcome his approach? Did the LORD hang out in the heavens a light so direct to point to JESUS? And shall not you and I hope, that he will send out his light and his truth to guide us unto JESUS? Surely the grace shewn to those Gentiles ought to encourage us!

3 When Herod the king had heard *these things*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

That *Herod* should be troubled at this intelligence was natural enough; and from the character which follows in this chapter of this unfeeling man, it is easy enough to discover the cause of his trouble. But that all Jerusalem should be troubled, which one might have thought would have shouted aloud for joy at the account; how strange is this representation. *Zech.* ii. 10, 11. But, Reader! such is the reception JESUS meets with from even his own people, until by

his grace and Holy Spirit he shews them who he is, and how much they need him. Read Isaiah liii. 1, 2, 3. John i. 10, 11, 12, 13.

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 !

Herod, it should seem by this question, was no stranger to the prophecies of scripture, and had heard how *Israel* expected a king, that should arise to deliver them from bondage. And though the children of *Israel*, no more than *Herod*, had the most distant idea that this deliverance was of a *spiritual* nature ; yet it proves how general the expectation was at this time of the coming Savior. The dying *Jacob* had said, that *the sceptre should not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until the Shiloh should come.* Gen. xlix. 10. And now the intelligence is brought, and by wise men also, from the East, that the sovereign stranger is arrived. *Daniel* also had in his day mentioned the *time*. And from all calculations the time was fulfilled. Dan. ix. 24. to the end. Add to these, *Herod* knew, that he was by birth an *Edomite*, and a stranger, and therefore by the laws of *Israel* could not reign by just right. Deut. xvii. 15. See Psm. ii. 1—6. Acts iv. 27, 28. John xviii. 37.

5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea : 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*.

It is very blessed to behold, how the LORD is causing both Jews and Gentiles to minister unto his dear Son. Let the Reader turn to the 60th chapter of the prophecy of *Isaiah*, and observe how the LORD declared the Church's glory in CHRIST ; and compare what is there said with those Eastern sages worshipping CHRIST ; and the Jewish chief priests and scribes bringing forward the prophecies of their scriptures concerning Him, whom afterwards they despised ; and what testimonies by the way they become to *the truth as it is in Jesus* ! If the Reader compares the passage from *Micah* with what is here said by the chief priests and scribes, he will perceive, that the quotation is not correct. But the difference is not great. And let it be remembered that it is not *Matthew* which quotes the passage from the Prophet, but the chief priests and scribes.

7 Then *Herod*, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired 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.

I would beg the Reader to pause over those verses, for several interesting circumstances of improvement arise from them. What an awful picture is here drawn of the human heart, in the character of Herod! He was now an old man; had long reigned; and this young prince just born, supposing all that Herod might suppose of an earthly monarchy could not, in the nature of things, hastily arise to oppose him. And yet with what deep artifice and hypocrisy did he cover over the cruel design he had formed of murdering the newborn stranger. Look at the chief priests and scribes also. Though they saw, as well as *Herod*, with what earnestness and labor the wise men from the East had come, a vast journey to worship the king of the Jews; yet they who were Jews, felt no concern about the glorious æra of his birth; though their Prophets had so plainly declared both the *place* and the *time* of his coming. The wise men were told where they might find CHRIST; but none of the priests or scribes, it should seem, went with them to see him. But, Reader! do not fail to remark a circumstance yet more interesting than either; surely, it must have been the LORD, by his providence, over-ruling things, that so JESUS might remain in safety, until a more convenient season for his flight into Egypt should arrive.

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.

It appears that *Herod* had so disguised his intentions, that the wise men had no consciousness of it. So is it in common life. But the LORD readeth the heart. What a wonderful ministry was this star! Evidently it must have had a particular motion, and different from the ordinary course of the stars. For the star which had been first seen by them in the East, now appeared to them in those Western heavens. And it was not confined to the ministry of the night, for now it appeared by day. And very low it must have shone, for it even pointed to an house; *for it went before them until it came and stood over where the young child was!* Reader! do not fail to observe the grace of GOD in this providence. He who hung out this star, did not hang it out in vain. The same GOD who led Israel by the cloud, led those wise men by a star. And while hanging a light *without*, gave the proper apprehension of the meaning *within*. And the effect was, as might be supposed, *when they saw the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy!* And is it not so with his people, whom he guides to JESUS now? The *day dawn*, and the *day star*, when first shining in the heart, and pointing to CHRIST, calls forth the anxious enquiry after CHRIST. And when darkness at any time intervenes, how blessed is it again after such obscurity, and doubt, and mis-

giving, to have new discoveries of CHRIST; and in so clear and open a manner, leading to CHRIST, which, like this star, points to his very person, to shew where he is!

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.

I beg the Reader to remark with me, that the Wise Men saw not Joseph. For as Joseph was not the real but only the reputed father, his presence was not necessary; perhaps it might have been improper. But must not the same power which hung out the star, and directed the minds of these men to interpret the meaning of it, have influenced them also to worship CHRIST. For otherwise, how ill did the poverty of CHRIST's appearance correspond to the greatness of his dignity. It hath been supposed, that the gifts they presented of *gold*, and *frankincense*, and *myrrh*, had some significancy. Perhaps they might. But the HOLY GHOST is silent upon this subject. Instead, therefore, of conjecture, I would refer the Reader to those scriptures. Song v. 11. Song i. 13. Song iv. 14. Psalm lxxii. 10 to 15. 1 Kings x. 2.

12 And being warned of God in a dream, that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

I stay not to enquire further concerning the divine intimation to those men, but just to remark, how the LORD was watching over the whole of this most interesting event, in relation to CHRIST. But we cannot but be led to hope, that these Wise Men, who came so far to worship the LORD JESUS, and was so evidently guided in their enquiry after him, were brought by the same Almighty teaching, into a saving acquaintance with him. The man of *Æthiopia*, we read of in the after age of the church, was so blessed. Acts viii. 27 to 39. And it is probable, that the LORD had an eye of grace on those men. But it is remarkable, that there is no further account of them in the word of GOD. Oh! what unknown, unnumbered multitudes from the East and the West, will arise to the triumphs of the LORD JESUS, when he comes to make up his jewels! Luke xiii. 29. 2 Thess. i. 10.

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.

What an interesting subject the flight of Jesus into Egypt furnisheth! What! must the Son of God flee for safety? Yes! What a sweet lesson then doth it teach his people, in all their exercises. But wherefore Egypt? Here it was the church was first formed into a Church. Exod. iv. 22. And here then the Great Head of the Church shall go. The Prophet *Hosea* ages before had been taught to prophesy to the church, that *out of Egypt would God call his Son*. Hosea xi. 1. Let not the Reader take offence with the carnal world, at this humiliation of the Son of God. *It behoved him in all points to be like unto his brethren*. Sweet thought to my poor soul! Rev. xii. 4. Isaiah xix. 18. to end.

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.

It is worthy observation, here all along mention is made of the young child and his mother, without the least intimation of any relationship to *Joseph*. It appears from the history of those times, that *Herod* himself survived but a little space *CHRIST*'s departure into Egypt. What a beautiful observation the Psalmist makes of the shortness and transiency of all such characters. *For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be; thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be*. Psm. xxxvii. 10.

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 enquired 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.

Here is opened the mystery of iniquity, which lay brooding in the heart of *Herod*, all the while he put on the apparent regard he proposed to shew to the new born King. But, can the imagination form an idea so horrid, as that of the destruction of such a number of little harmless children, in order to be sure of the One? Alas! what is the human heart, in a state of unrenewed nature! But, Reader, be not

offended. Your heart, my heart, every man's heart by nature is the same. And we read this account of *Herod* to little profit, if we do not see in him the portrait of every son and daughter of Adam, by the fall. For there can be no difference in the same nature, but what sovereign grace hath wrought. What one man's nature hath done, every man's nature is capable of doing; yea, and would do, if the same corresponding causes, temptations, and opportunities, led to it, and grace did not restrain. Oh! who shall calculate, who shall tell, to what a desperate state of wickedness the whole nature of man is fallen, by the original apostacy of our first father? Reader! do you believe this? I do from my very heart. And I bless God the HOLY GHOST for the merciful discovery. For never should I have known the want of salvation, neither rightly valued that salvation, but for this divine teaching. Never should I have loved thee, or wouldest thou have been so endeared to my soul, blessed, precious LORD JESUS, as thou now art, had not God the HOLY GHOST, as thou didst promise concerning him, *convinced me of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.* John xvi. 8—11. Jerem. xvii. 9. 2 Kings viii. 11, 12, 13.

Concerning the murder of those babes: if the Reader will turn to Jerem. xxxi. from the 15th verse to the end; he will, I think, behold the sweet consolation that is there pointed out in CHRIST, as the everlasting remedy to this, and all other bereaving providences. And in relation to the infants themselves; they were only removed from the evil to come. Had they lived to old age, they would have lived to have seen the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, which the LORD JESUS so mournfully foretold; Matt. xxiv. Mark xiii. Luke xxi. when they would have said; *blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck.* If those sweet babes who died for CHRIST, died also in CHRIST, were they not such as John heard a voice from heaven concerning, saying, *blessed are the dead which die in the LORD,* Rev. xiv. 13. And is it not said, *precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.* Psal. cxvi. 15. And may we not without violence to the words suppose, that these little ones of CHRIST's fold, were among that holy army John saw on Mount Zion, when he said, *I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Zion, and with him an hundred and forty and four thousand, having his FATHER's name written in their foreheads.* See Rev. xiv. 1—5. See also 1 Thess. iv. 13. to the end.

19 But when Herod was dead, behold; an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,

Reader! pause over this verse, and contemplate the awful death of this man. Ah Herod! is this the termination of all thy grandeur? Hast thou so shortly after followed thy murdered subjects to the grave? If the Reader would see a striking representation of such an end as this of *Herod's*, he may find it, Isaiah xiv. 4—20. I cannot refrain from quoting what *Eusebius* hath related in his Ecclesiastical History (and which he had from *Josephus*) concerning the dreadful close of Herod's life. He saith "that a burning fever seized him, with an intolerable itching over his whole body. He was visited

with grievous wounds, which putrified, and bred worms. So that his whole body became so horridly offensive, that none could approach him. And such was his unbounded rage, as to be the dread of every one. Finding death drawing nigh, he attempted to destroy himself, but was prevented. At length he expired in agonies."

It is worthy remark, that three, out of the four *Herods* we read of in the New Testament were such awful characters. This was the *first*. The second is but just mentioned by the name of *Philip*. Mark vi. 17. The *third* was He who caused the beheading of John the Baptist. Matt. xiv. 1, 2. And the *fourth* was eaten by worms before his death. Acts xii. Reader! doth the LORD manifest to his dear children in poor circumstances, his contempt of riches, by bestowing them so often upon the most worthless of men? Oh! for grace to bless him for a sanctified use of humble poverty. 1 Cor. i. 26, 27.

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 Judea 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.

The most interesting of all subjects, is to eye CHRIST as the Great *Nazarene*. Few have ever considered the importance of the name; and yet there is none, by which the LORD JESUS is distinguished in his holy scriptures, more personally directed by way of emphasis, than this. For my part, so very highly significant is it in my view, that I venture to believe that all we read of in the word of God of the *Nazarites*, and the particularity of their order, had no one object whatever, but to point to CHRIST; and He, and he alone, is the One, and only One *Nazarite* to God. If the Reader will first turn to the following scriptures, and carefully read them, I will venture to offer him my view upon the subject. Numb. vi. 2—21. Judges xiii. 5. to the end. Lament. iv. 7. Amos ii. 11, 12.

The name of *Nazarite*, is evidently taken from *Netzar* the branch; and this is well known to be the name of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. The Patriarch Jacob had pointed to CHRIST, in that prophecy concerning Joseph the *Nazarite*: He *separated* from his brethren. Gen. xlix. 26. So that the whole concerning the law of separation,

had a direct reference to JESUS. In CHRIST therefore, being called *JESUS of Nazareth*, this must have been wholly upon this account: for CHRIST was born in *Bethlehem*, and not in *Nazareth*. And it should seem to have been nothing less than the overruling power of GOD, which could have so universally procured this name to CHRIST, when there were no causes but the LORD JESUS dwelling there which could have led to the idea. I have in my *Poor Man's Concordance* more fully dwelt upon this subject; so that I shall not in this place enlarge. I will only beg before I dismiss it to observe, that this name was made use of in a manner, and way particularly striking. The *Devils* used it. Mark i. 24. The *Apostles* used it while JESUS was upon earth. John i. 45. And again after our LORD's resurrection. Acts ii. 22. Acts iv. 10. The *band of armed men* which came to apprehend CHRIST used it. John xviii. 5. *Pilate* used it in his inscription on the cross. John xix. 19. The *servant maid* at the hall of Pilate used it. Matt. xxvi. 71. The *Angels* at the tomb used it. Mark xvi. 6. Yea the LORD himself from heaven used it. Acts xxii. 8. And if all these were intended (as I venture to believe they were) purposely to point to CHRIST as the true *Nazarene* to GOD, yea the only One; surely there is much blessedness in the view; and we see sufficient cause wherefore it was that JESUS came and dwelt in the city of Nazareth that he might be called a *Nazarene*.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! let you and I ponder well the sweet and interesting record here given of the birth of CHRIST. If angels, who needed no redemption, praised GOD at his birth, with what holy rapture and joy ought our songs to go forth in thanksgivings for the same. Behold! with what unequalled humbleness the SON of GOD, as man, when he came and tabernacled in our flesh, manifested himself to the church. But behold! how GOD the FATHER honoured his nativity, in not only sending wise men from the east to worship him, but in causing a star to point to the SAVIOUR. Was not this indeed sweetly fulfilling that blessed scripture; *the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising*. But did the LORD GOD, in order that his blessed SON should be known, grant such a starry influence to the wise men; and will he withhold the light of his grace from the hearts of his people? Will he not reveal CHRIST in all his glory, and suitableness, and all sufficiency, that, like them, we may fall down and worship him, and present him more than gold, and frankincense, and myrrh, even those graces of his Holy Spirit which are his own?

And was it needful that the LORD of life and glory should go down into *Egypt*, that what the Prophet had said of calling GOD's dear SON out of *Egypt* might be fulfilled? Surely then, LORD, it must be needful to call all thy sons from the *Egypt* of this world; for all by nature are in that house of bondage, before that an act of sovereign grace hath called them out. Was JESUS, the holy, harmless, undefiled LORD JESUS, here also, as in a thousand other instances, the forerunner and glorious Head of his redeemed? Oh for grace to follow the LAMB whithersoever he goeth!

But Oh! thou true and only real Nazarite of God! Precious Jesus, thou art indeed the Branch, the Plant of Renown, the Spiritual Joseph of thy people, whose branches run over the wall. Blessings be on the Head of Him, and on the Crown of the Head of Him that was the *Netzar*, the Separate, from thy brethren! Methinks I hear my LORD again say, as he did once in the days of his flesh: *for their sakes I sanctify myself!* Ever precious, and dear name, JESUS CHRIST of Nazareth! Thou art thy church's *Nazarene!*

CHAP. III.

CONTENTS.

This Chapter opens with an account of the ministry of John the Baptist. The description of his office and ministry. The Chapter closeth with an account of his baptizing the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and the glorious manifestations on the occasion.

IN those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea,

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.

I include the whole of these verses into one view, for the better apprehension, and of connecting together what is recorded of John the Baptist. And first let us pause and consider the person and character of this illustrious man. His birth, though not miraculous, was attended with such remarkable circumstances, as intimated a more than ordinary purpose intended from his ministry. As the herald and harbinger of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, the Prophets *Isaiah* and *Malachi* foretold of his coming. *Isaiah* xl. 3. *Malachi* iii. 1. And his birth was not only announced by the ministry of an angel, but it was declared of him by the same heavenly messenger, that *he should be filled with the HOLY GHOST even from his mother's womb.* *Luke* i. 13—17. And the LORD JESUS himself declared concerning him, that *among them that are born of women, there had not risen a greater than John the Baptist.* *Matt.* xi. 11. Now before the Reader goes a step further in the account of John, let him pause, and ponder over the precious testimony which this wonderful man, this greatest of men born of women, gave of his Almighty LORD and Master. For when the Jews upon John's appearing, sent to ask him who he was, and the object of his mission; he declared himself to be unworthy

of the office of even unloosening the very latches of CHRIST's shoes. *I am* (said John) *the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the LORD.* John i. 19—35. And what is a voice? It is a non-entity, a mere sound, light as air, and so short in its being and existence, if it can be called by such a name, that when it hath performed its office, it dies away in the air, is dissolved, and is known no more. Such said John am I, when considered in any comparative view with my LORD and Master. Reader! are you a believer in the GODHEAD of CHRIST? Oh! think what a precious testimony this is to that glorious doctrine of our holy faith! And should a reader of the *Arian* or *Socinian* heresy but glance the same; oh that the LORD the HOLY GHOST may graciously carry conviction to his very soul of the blessed truth, and bring him upon his knees with *Thomas*; crying out *My LORD and My God!*

The next thing to be noticed in the account of John, is of his office and ministry. He came preaching and baptizing. Baptizing was altogether a new rite in the church, and probably John was called the Baptist on this account, for he was the first who used it. But both his preaching the doctrine of repentance, and the use of baptism, were evidently intended only as preparatory to the coming of CHRIST: for no efficacy did John pretend to convey by his *preaching* the doctrine of *repentance*: for to CHRIST is reserved the power of communicating the grace of repentance in the heart: for it is said, that *he was exalted as a Prince and a Savior for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.* Acts v: 31. And John no less drew a line of everlasting distinction between his water ordinance, and the unction of the HOLY SPIRIT. I indeed *baptize you* (said he) *with water*; but *He shall baptize you with the HOLY GHOST and with fire.* Matt. iii. 11.

I pass over all notice of the endless disputes which have taken place in the church of CHRIST on the subject of baptism. The warmest advocates for immersion, who are themselves partakers of the baptism of the SPIRIT, will be free to confess that the *outward* sign, void of the *inward* effect, is nothing worth. And they who contend for infant baptism, if they know any thing of the LORD, must as readily allow, that nothing short of the regeneration of the heart, can be profitable before God. Here then let it rest. It is awful to behold thousands who have been baptized in their infancy by water only, and who, in riper years, live and die as complete infidels as those who never heard of CHRIST. And it is equally awful to behold numbers who have been immersed in riper years; and yet, by their after conduct, as fully proved that they never were baptized by the HOLY GHOST. Oh! LORD! grant to my soul the continual baptisms and *renewings of the HOLY GHOST, to be shed upon me abundantly, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD.* Titus iii. 5, 6.

The poor food, and the austere dress and manners of the Baptist, are particularly noticed by the Evangelist. His raiment perhaps, was somewhat in conformity to antient times. See 2 Kings i. 8. Zech. xiii. 4. The Locusts were among the clean beasts allowed for food. Levit. ii. 22. Reader! It is our happiness under the gospel to remember that *meat commendeth us not to God.* *The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the HOLY GHOST.* Rom. xiv. throughout. 1 Tim. iv. 1—5. Titus i. 15.

5 Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan,

6 And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

The wilderness of Judæa John preached in, is not to be considered by us as what we should now call a wilderness, that is a solitary place, for there were both towns and villages in it. The multitude thronging to him is not to be wondered at, when we consider how long an interval, even of 350 years, had taken place in the church, from the days of *Malachi*, the last Prophet.

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 ax 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.

The *Pharisees* were a sect who prided themselves upon a more than ordinary sanctity of life and manners. The Evangelist *Luke* hath drawn the portrait of one, which may serve as a sample of all. *Luke* xviii. 9—14. And their general character our Lord himself hath most strikingly marked in a whole chapter. *Matt.* xxiii. The *Sadducees*, in their very name, which implied *righteousness*, from *Sedek*, were of that class who justified themselves before God. What

unceasing persecutions our dear LORD sustained from both these characters I need not enumerate, for the history of the life of JESUS is full of them. But what a name did the Baptist give them; *O generation of Vipers!* A name which can belong only to the seed of the Serpent. And I pray the Reader, once for all, to observe this feature of character as uniformly given to the reprobate, and to them only, throughout the whole Bible. See Matt. xxiii. 33. Rev. xii. 9. John viii. 44. The children of the Kingdom are never once in all the word of God called by such a name. See Note on Ephes. ii. 3. I pray the Reader to weigh this consideration well, for it is highly important. And I pray the Reader to remark yet further with me, that (as far as my memory chargeth me) we do not find a single *Pharisee* or *Sadducee* who saw CHRIST in the days of his flesh, (*Nicodemus* excepted,) ever savingly converted. *Paul* was a Pharisee indeed, and of the highest order in point of high, self exalting notions: but then *Paul* lived not in the days of CHRIST's flesh, so as to know CHRIST; and saw nothing of JESUS, until he saw him in his glory in his way to *Damascus*. It furnisheth out a solemn consideration this, that not one (*Nicodemus* excepted) of those sects in the days of CHRIST, and who assumed a greater degree of holiness than others, was savingly converted!

The children of *Abraham*, according to the Covenant made with *Abraham*, were those of grace, and not counted after nature. The one decisive feature of this family is; *if ye be CHRIST's, then ye are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.* Gal. iii. 29. So hath it been in all ages. So was it then. So is it now. And such will it be for ever. The *Ishmaels*, and the sons of *Keturah*; the *Esaus*, and the whole troop of natural descendants from *Abraham*: these, as the HOLY GHOST hath said by *Paul*, *which are the children of the flesh; these are not the children of GOD; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. In Isaac shall thy seed be called.* Reader! think what a blessed thing it is to be able to say, as *Paul* did, *Now we brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.* Rom. ix. 7, 8. Gal. iv. 28.

13 ¶ Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

Here we have, at this verse, the introduction of the LORD of life and glory, in his public entrance upon his divine office, as the God-Man Mediator. *Luke* in his relation of this wonderful event, tells the Church, that at this time, JESUS himself began to be about thirty years of age. Luke iii. 23. Hence we learn that the SON of GOD waited the appointed time for the being manifested unto Israel. But let not the Reader suppose, that the long interval from his birth, to this public entrance upon his ministry, was spent without an eye to the redemption-work he became incarnate to perform. No doubt every act, and every incident, in the life of CHRIST, had respect to the great object for which he came. The poverty of his birth, the humbleness of his calling, as a carpenter, the meanness of his companions, to one who from all eternity had lain in the bosom of the FATHER; no doubt, some great and special ends were intended from the whole. That sweet and precious scripture answers every

enquiry, though it enters not into the full investigation of the cause: *Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren.* Heb. ii. 17. Precious JESUS! how ought such views to endear thee to thy people!

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.

It should seem from the modesty of John in first declining this office, that he had some consciousness concerning the Person of CHRIST. The relation John gives of himself, John i. 26—34, was that he knew him not, but only that he should be made manifest to Israel. But at this transaction of CHRIST's baptism, the knowledge of his person and character was to be more strikingly given to John. I beg the Reader to remark what John saith: *I have need to be baptized of thee.* Yes! though John was filled with the HOLY GHOST, even from his mother's womb, Luke i. 15, yet the work of GOD the SPIRIT upon the child of GOD, doth not supersede the necessity of the work of GOD the SON. All the office-work of each glorious person of the GODHEAD becomes essential in the covenant of redemption. And the baptism of the LORD JESUS is not water baptism; for it is expressly said, that JESUS baptized none. John iv. 2. Acts i. 5.

The importance of CHRIST's baptism is evident from what the LORD saith: *thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.* But who shall take upon him to explain all that is contained in this expression? It is most certain, that here, at this solemn transaction of CHRIST's baptism, he openly entered upon his office, and therefore it should seem the whole persons of the GODHEAD would publicly give the commission. The SON of GOD, all along in the Old Testament dispensation, had been set up and made known to the church as the *Messiah*, or anointed; and now therefore in the New, he shall have the public seal to the same. If the Reader will consult and compare a few scriptures on this point, they do, in my view, beautifully elucidate and explain each other. Isaiah xlviii. 16, 17. Isaiah lxi. 1. with Luke iv. 18. Acts x. 37, 38.

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.

Here is every thing that is solemn, sublime, and glorious to be contemplated in this transaction: but of the scene itself, we can only behold with the most profound reverence and holy awe, without at-

tempting to be wise above what is written. We behold the testimony of that glorious doctrine which is the foundation of our holy faith: that *there are Three which bear record in heaven; the FATHER, the WORD, and the HOLY GHOST, and these Three are One.* 1 John i. 7. And here they distinctly manifested themselves at the baptism of the LORD JESUS. Here is the FATHER, by a voice from heaven, manifesting himself. Here is GOD the SON, incarnate in the Water. And here is GOD the HOLY GHOST, manifesting his person in the likeness of a Dove, hovering over the person of CHRIST. What can be more conclusive and satisfactory, in proof of this precious doctrine of our most holy faith? In addition to the testimony this scripture brings, of the personality of the HOLY THREE in ONE, let not the Reader overlook the testimony it also brings of their perfect approbation of redemption-work. JEHOVAH is not only well pleased *with* CHRIST; but *in* CHRIST: all that are *in* CHRIST. CHRIST and his members: CHRIST and his church. And the whole persons of the GODHEAD, take the same delight and complacency together. For it is said, *GOD was in CHRIST reconciling the world to himself.* 2 Cor. v. 19. that is, the whole three persons, constituting the One Eternal, undivided JEHOVAH, were in CHRIST. GOD the FATHER was, and is, in CHRIST: for so saith the LORD JESUS. *Believest thou not that I am in the FATHER, and the FATHER in me? Believe me, that I am in the FATHER, and the FATHER in me.* John xiv. 10, 11. GOD the SON was, and is, in CHRIST. For GOD the SON, in his own eternal power and GODHEAD, had his Almighty hand in the work and purposes of redemption, as much as the person of GOD the FATHER, or GOD the HOLY GHOST. Neither could there have been any access to the Person of GOD the SON, as GOD, more than to the person of the FATHER, or the person of the HOLY GHOST, without CHRIST, as the God-Man-Mediator. The SON of GOD doth not lose the glory and perfection of his essential divinity, because of his infinite condescension, in assuming our nature for the purpose of redemption. And it is most exceedingly necessary, that in contemplating the great object of faith, true believers in CHRIST should everlastingly keep in view the GODHEAD of the SON of GOD, as one of the glorious persons constituting JEHOVAH; while we keep no less in view, that the SON of GOD, in his twofold nature, of GOD, and Man, in one person, becomes the CHRIST of GOD, *in* whom, and *through* whom, and *by* whom, we have access to JEHOVAH: FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, in grace here, and glory for ever. In like manner GOD the HOLY GHOST was, and is, in CHRIST. Not simply in his anointings, and endowments, without measure, given to CHRIST, in the qualifying him for the vast undertaking he came to perform; but as One of the glorious persons of the GODHEAD, was, and is in CHRIST, reconciling the world to himself, in common with the FATHER, and the SON. So that, as JEHOVAH, in his three-fold character of person; FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, were all alike concerned in the indignity shewn by the fall of man; so all alike were concerned in the recovery, by the glorious undertaking, and accomplishment of salvation by CHRIST JESUS. Such are the scriptural views of this most sublime subject. Before we desire further information, let it be considered, that it is proposed to us as an article of faith, and not for our full investigation. Perhaps it is impossible, in the present imper-

fect state of being, to know more. The LORD be praised for what he hath thought proper to reveal. And with this measure of knowledge, may the LORD give grace to both Writer, and Reader, of this Poor Man's Commentary, to be thankful.

I will only detain the Reader with a short observation more upon those verses, just to notice the descent of the HOLY GHOST, which both the LORD JESUS, and his servant John, saw in the form of a dove. Some visible appearance, to make it personal, was thought necessary. I presume not to say wherefore it was necessary, but only humbly propose the enquiry. Was it because in after ages heresies would spring up in the church, in denying the personality of God the SPIRIT? And was the LORD pleased, by way of giving his assurance to the glorious truth in the minds of his people, thus to assume a personal appearance? Let the Reader remember, I do not presume to determine the point: I only humbly ask the question. But whether I am right or not, certain it is, that both JESUS, and John, saw *the SPIRIT of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him.* John i. 32—34. Like a dove, I apprehend means as a dove lighting down, or hovering over. There is a great beauty in this scripture. The appearance of the HOLY GHOST shall not be in the form of a man: for this was specially belonging to the SON of GOD; but of a dove. And a dove was, of all the other creatures of GOD, the most suited, both to represent that glorious person, who thus descended, and abode upon CHRIST, and CHRIST himself. For, not to notice the meekness and gentleness of the dove, and the loving affections of its nature; it is worth remarking, that the dove hath no gall, neither talons. Sweet emblems of manifesting the frame of GOD the HOLY GHOST himself, when anointing JESUS in our nature, to the blessed offices he hath communicated to our nature! And sweet emblem, no less to shew, how JESUS should manifest to his people the tenderness and love of his heart, as doves do to each other. Reader! recollect what the Evangelist records of the LORD JESUS immediately after this descent of the HOLY GHOST, and never lose sight of it through life. *The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, (said that sweet SAVIOR) because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor: he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted; to preach deliverance, to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the LORD.* Luke iv. 18, 19.

REFLECTIONS.

WELCOME, John the Baptist, thou faithful herald of thy LORD! As the star of the morning becomes the sure pledge of day; so thy coming plainly foretold the LORD of his temple was at hand. But thrice welcome, yea, everlastingly and eternally welcome, thou glorious Sun of Righteousness, precious LORD JESUS, art thou in thy arising, with healing in thy wings, to all thy people. Oh! do thou, LORD, thou great baptizer with the HOLY GHOST, bring my soul, and the souls of all thy redeemed, under the continual and unceasing baptisms of thy Spirit: fill our hearts, fill our houses, fill thy church, thy whole people, with grace!

And from this blessed unction given to the souls of thy people, grant, LORD, to every one, grace, *according to the measure of the gift of CHRIST*; that we may bless and adore the HOLY THREE in ONE, who bear record in heaven; for the record given in this chapter, to the LORD JESUS CHRIST, on his entering upon his public ministry, at his holy baptism. And may the LORD mercifully grant, that the whole church of GOD, through divine teaching, may be enabled to keep in unceasing remembrance, the FATHER's testimony to his dear SON. And while my soul, and the souls of all his redeemed, are thus continually hearing, and receiving, the precious assurance of GOD's being well pleased with his dear SON, for his redeeming love to his church, and his finished salvation for his people; oh, for grace to love Him, whom JEHOVAH, in all the persons of the GODHEAD, loves; and to delight in Him, in whom JEHOVAH delighteth. Precious LORD JESUS! I would say, *Whom have I in heaven but thee; and there is none upon earth my soul desireth but thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.*

CHAP. IV.

CONTENTS.

CHRIST'S temptations. The call of his Apostles. His Preaching and Miracles.

THEN was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

I detain the Reader at this verse but for the moment, to observe, that there is a peculiar emphasis in the word *then*. When JESUS had thus received the anointings for his ministry, *then* more eminently the powers of darkness made a more furious attack upon him. Reader! as it was with the glorious Head, so is it with his members. The devil certainly doth not know GOD's children until they are awakened and regenerated by the HOLY GHOST. But no sooner is a work of grace wrought in their hearts, but all hell is up in arms.

2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.

It is remarkable in the Old Testament Scripture, of those that were types of CHRIST, concerning fasting, that they observed such seasons: *Moses*, Exod. xxxiv. 28. and *Elijah*, 1 Kings xix. 8. What a sweet thought is it, that the LORD JESUS was in all points as his people are, yet without sin! Precious LORD! was it not intended to prompt thy redeemed to come to thee with more confidence from fellow feeling?

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.

The subject of CHRIST's temptations, is a subject attended with much difficulty thoroughly to explain. One of the great causes for which the SON of GOD was manifested, was, that *he might destroy the works of the Devil*. 1 John iii. 8. And if we take the whole purport of scripture on this point, one mass of particulars, we shall be led to conclude, that the quarrel between CHRIST and the devil was *personal*. Jude 6. Rev. xii. 7, 8, 9. Now when CHRIST came upon earth, the conflict was with this accursed enemy. Hence CHRIST combated personally with Satan, when he began his temptations, and afterwards at the cross. Heb. ii. 14. He doth this also, when in his people he enables his redeemed to resist him, and at length brings Satan under their feet. James iv. 7. Rom. xvi. 20. And there is another triumph, scripture seems to intimate, which the SON of GOD will have over Satan, before the day of judgment; namely, when Satan is to be shut up, and restrained from his cursed temptations over the LORD's people. Rev. xx. 1, 2, 3. And, lastly, at the great day of all, then the devil will be brought forth for final judgment, and eternal punishment, before the whole world. Rev. xx. 10, &c.

I do not think it necessary to go minutely over the several temptations with which the devil assaulted CHRIST. The whole was necessary, no doubt, that CHRIST should fulfil all righteousness. But

it was necessary also, on the account of his redeemed. *For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.* Heb. ii. 18. Few have taken into their soul's comfort the whole blessedness of this account of JESUS. It is not meant simply to say, that as God, and as man, in one person, he knoweth what temptations are; but it is meant to say, that from his personal knowledge of them, and his own exercises in those seasons, he knoweth both what his people feel under temptations, and how to administer the very succour which will exactly suit their case and circumstances. And nothing can give equal relief as this assurance to every tempted Child of God?

Moreover, it should be added, that in those temptations, where-with JESUS was assaulted, the believer ought to draw comfort, if at any time his exercises are the same. In those temptations in the wilderness CHRIST was assaulted with the sin of distrust; unbelief; to worship the devil; and to self-murder. And if the tempter thus dared to attack the LORD of life and glory, is it a wonder that he should his members? Oh! for grace upon all occasions, when assaulted with the fiery darts of Satan, to look unto JESUS, and to take the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of GOD. JESUS will make all his redeemed more than conquerors, through his grace enabling them. And in due season, that song will be heard by every redeemed soul which John heard; *Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his CHRIST: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our GOD day and night.* Rev. xii. 10. And as in the instance of the glorious Head, so all his members, when temptations cease, the ministering services of angels are enjoyed. Heb. i. 14.

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 Nephthalim:

14 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,

15 The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, *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.

These are sweet views of JESUS, in his humbleness of character! And what a blessed testimony they become in proof of his mission. Isa. ix. 1, 2.

17 ¶ From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

It is observable that *Mark* records the same words of CHRIST'S Sermon!

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.

I pray the Reader not to overlook the sovereignty of the LORD's call. What a marvellous light, and what a marvellous power must have accompanied his words! And I pray the Reader to keep also in remembrance, what the HOLY GHOST hath said of those effectual calls of grace, by his servants. Rom. viii. 29, 30. 2 Tim. i. 9. 2 Peter i. 10.

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* Judea, and *from* beyond Jordan.

What a lovely picture is here drawn of the SON of GOD! Behold him thus going about preaching the kingdom, and healing every where. And, Reader! do not fail to connect with this view, that he is still the same, JESUS CHRIST, *yesterday, and to day, and for ever!* What diseases of his people doth he not know? And what sicknesses are there, that JESUS cannot cure? Read, I beseech you, what was said of him ages before his birth. Isa. lxiii. 7, 8, 9. Call to mind what is said of him in the days of his flesh. John xiii. 1. And follow him by faith to glory. Rev. vii. 17. and behold him feeding the church, where all tears are wiped away from all faces. And then ask, will he forget you; Oh, ye of little faith! Precious LORD JESUS! wherefore was it that *it behoved thee to be made like unto thy brethren?* Was it not that *thou mightest be both a merciful and a faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God?* And art thou not all this, and more, that thy redeemed might *come at all times boldly unto thy throne of grace, and obtain mercy, and find grace to help in all times of need?*

REFLECTIONS.

READER! let you and I pause over the view of CHRIST's temptations, and ponder well the wonderful subject. And was it needful that CHRIST should be thus exercised? Yes! The HOLY GHOST has said; *that in all things it behoveth him to be made like unto his brethren. Forasmuch as the Children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same.* The destruction of the devil was folded up in this. And the deliverance of his people from the power of hell was accomplished in the same. Hence therefore, in the victory of CHRIST in his seasons of temptations, the children of CHRIST discover their victory in their seasons and temptations in and by Him. And during the exercise, they know how JESUS, from fellow-feeling can, and will, minister to them every suited relief. *For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.* The issue therefore is never doubtful. The children may be tempted, as JESUS was, to unbelief, to a distrust of God, yea, to self-murder. Perhaps there never was a child of God but what, more or less, hath been so tempted. Yea, it should seem to be a sweet testimony of our fellowship with JESUS, as members with the Head. *Blessed is the man, saith the HOLY GHOST by James, that endureth temptation.* But the issue is never doubtful. As CHRIST overcame every assault of Satan, so CHRIST's redeemed must also in him. Reader! let you and I carry all our trials and temptations to JESUS. He knows them all before. But by our taking them to Him, we testify that we are looking wholly for strength from Him, and engaging CHRIST on our behalf. And, oh! the blessedness of having JESUS for our strength. The devil will leave us as he did Him, and the LORD of angels himself will come and minister every suited relief to our necessity!

Behold Reader! on the close of this chapter, how He, who in the opening of it, is said to have been assaulted by hell, is here manifesting forth his sovereignty as God. Oh! that that dear LORD, who thus in the days of his flesh, went about preaching his gospel,

and healing the bodies of the deceased, would now, in the day of his Almighty power, come forth in a preached gospel, and heal the souls of his redeemed. Precious LORD JESUS! behold the diseased state of thy church, and in compassion to Zion take the glorious cause into thine own Almighty hand. And as then, so now, LORD, cause the multitudes of thy people to come to thy standard, until thou shalt have brought all thy blood-bought children home to thy church, and all the blessed purposes of thy temptations and ministry be abundantly answered in the salvation of thy chosen. Amen.

CHAP. V.

CONTENTS.

We have in this Chapter, and the two which follow, our LORD's sermon on the Mount. A great variety of beauties is contained in it.

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,

We have a beautiful view of our dear LORD opening his commission as the Great Prophet of his church and people. The law had been given from the Mount, therefore JESUS will here also deliver his Gospel. But there were bounds set, when the law was given, which the people were not to pass. Not so with JESUS and his Gospel. JESUS saith, *Come ye near unto me and hear ye this.* I pray the Reader to turn to the sweet scripture, Isaiah xlviii. 16, 17. Oh! how blessed must it have been to have sat at JESUS' feet on this occasion, and to have heard the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth? Let the poor man learn how sweetly his LORD hath consecrated places for the manifestation of himself. JESUS preached on the mountain; from a ship; in the fields; every where and every place is sacred which the LORD makes holy. Moses found CHRIST first at the *Bush*. Exod. iii. 2. And Jacob, ages before, at *Bethel*, Gen. 28. 10—22. And why may not the Reader of this Poor Man's Commentary have gracious manifestations of the LORD JESUS at his labor, in his work, at home, or abroad; in the house of GOD, or in his own house. John xiv. 23. Isaiah ii. 3—5. Micah iv. 1, 2, &c. Heb. i. 1. Prov. viii. 1, &c.

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 peace-makers : for they shall be called the children of God.

10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake : for their's 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.

We have here the opening of our LORD's Sermon, and a most blessed sermon it is ! Let the Reader observe how JESUS opens it in pronouncing blessings. JESUS himself is the great comprehensive blessing of all blessings, and the blessedness of his people. It is worthy remark that the Old Testament ended, yea in the very last word of it, with the LORD's threatenings of a *Curse*. Malachi iv. 6. The first word of CHRIST's Gospel is *Blessing*. CHRIST himself is the WORD, the Uncreated Word, and the Blessing. John i. 1. How truly delightful is it to look at the Old Testament through the New, and to view the Law by the Gospel.

If the Reader looks attentively to this opening of our LORD's sermon, he will find no less than *eight* distinct characters JESUS speaks of as *blessed* ; namely, poor in spirit ; they that mourn ; the meek ; they who hunger and thirst after righteousness ; the merciful ; the pure in heart ; the peace-makers ; and the persecuted (and falsely reviled) for righteousness' sake. Now the question instantly ariseth ; where are these characters to be found ? Not in themselves it must be immediately confessed ; for when the LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that would understand and seek after GOD, we are told from the Word of GOD, that the result of that enquiry was, that there was none that did good, no not one. Psm. xiv. 1—3. Rom. iii. 10, &c. Hence therefore when the LORD came himself from heaven, and came, as he himself saith, *to seek and save that which was lost*, could JESUS mean, in coming, not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance, that he should find such characters as he hath here declared to be blessed. Oh ! how plain, how very plain is it, that the persons here spoken of are the redeemed given by the FATHER, made blessed in the righte-

ousness of the Son, and regenerated and sanctified by the HOLY GHOST. Reader! If we read the precious words of JESUS in this true gospel sense, we shall, under divine teaching, discover that all such as are here spoken of, are blessed in JESUS indeed. The first feature of character the LORD takes notice of them is, that they are *poor in spirit*, not poor in pocket; for outward circumstances, either in poverty or riches, have nothing to do with inward grace. Many that are poor in worldly things, are *rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom*. And many it is to be feared, by what we behold in the world, are poor in this life, and will be poor to all eternity in the life to come. But the *poor in spirit*, means poor in soul concerns. They know, through the LORD's teaching, their *spiritual* poverty, their lost, their undone estate before God. They are conscious they owe ten thousand talents, and have nothing to pay. Ruined in Adam, they view their lost estate, and are convinced that there can be no salvation but in CHRIST. Such JESUS declares to be blessed, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. They were chosen in CHRIST, and are thus training for the everlasting enjoyment of CHRIST, to all eternity.

The LORD next describes them (for they are all one and the same persons, all that he hath here declared to be blessed :) as *mourners*. *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted*. And this mark of grace follows the former. The eye of the soul is no sooner opened to see his state of poverty and wretchedness before God, but the heart melts at the view of it. Sin; in-dwelling, in-bred sin, opens a constant spring of sorrow. Like Paul they cry out, *Oh! wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?* And never, until JESUS is opened to their view, in all the glories of his person, blood, and righteousness: yea, until by the HOLY GHOST, CHRIST is brought personally home, and applied to the heart, and formed in the heart the hope of glory, can any comfort be found. And even to the close of life, the conscious sense of the remains of in-dwelling corruption, tends, under grace, to keep open an unceasing spring of our repentance towards God, while the soul is supported in the assured interest in CHRIST; by which, CHRIST is more and more endeared to the heart, to be more in love with him, and more out of love with themselves, until grace is finished in everlasting glory. It is such holy mourners, the LORD JESUS saith, shall be comforted. All the persons of the GODHEAD do now comfort them: the word of God is their comfort: ordinances are their comfort: the promises are their comfort: all the discoveries of pardoning love, grace, mercy, refreshments, manifestations of divine love, providences; all and every tendency of the LORD towards them are full of comfort: and, at length, when they come to drop the body in the grave, they will be indeed comforted, for they will be introduced unto the general assembly of the first-born, and dwell for ever in the joy of their LORD. Isaiah lxi. 1. James ii, 5.

In like manner, the whole of the features of character, which follow, if construed with an eye to the whole tenor of CHRIST's gospel, plainly shew forth whom the LORD JESUS had in view. *Blessed are the meek*: not the meekness of suppressed anger induced by the rigid constraints of philosophy; but the meekness induced by the fruits of the Spirit of God. Had CHRIST meant the mere moral virtue of meekness, such as it is called of the Stoic; who so much esteemed

as the *Romans* and the *Lacedemonians* of old? But yet they perished in their heathenism and sins. The meekness the SON of GOD pronounced blessed, is the meekness inwrought in the soul, by the gracious influence of GOD the HOLY GHOST. It is learnt of JESUS. Matt. xi. 29. It is wholly from JESUS. John xv. 4, 5. And it is his regenerated members of whom he saith, the LORD will *beautify the meek with salvation*. Psalm cxlix. 4. This meekness of the LORD's own creating in the soul is of great price. 1 Peter iv. 3.

So again, the blessedness pronounced on them *who hunger and thirst after righteousness*. It were a weakness of judgment indeed, to suppose, that the righteousness such souls most earnestly desire, is the righteousness of mere moral honesty and justice between man and man in life. These things the laws among men enforce, and the Scribes and Pharisees of our LORD's days, prided themselves upon them. Surely no one who reads his Bible can for a moment, if he thinks rightly, suppose that the SON of GOD came upon earth to preach what even unenlightened heathens had always insisted upon. This would be indeed to run back to the law of Moses, instead of preaching the Gospel of CHRIST. But the righteousness the SON of GOD had in view, when declaring these souls blessed which hungered and thirsted for it, was his own complete righteousness, which alone can justify a poor sinner in the sight of GOD. So that in the hungering for it, the soul gave evident proofs that he had no righteousness of his own to appear in before GOD, and therefore earnestly longed to be clothed with CHRIST's robe of righteousness, and garment of salvation. And graciously the LORD JESUS here declares all such shall not hunger in vain. He who excites the hunger in the soul, is He who also satisfieth it. And hence the promises and the performance. Psalm cxxxii. 9—16. Isaiah lxi. 1, 2, 3, 10, 11.

I must not trespass in my *Poor Man's Commentary*, to explain to the full on gospel principles the whole of the characters which the LORD JESUS hath here drawn, but were it not for enlarging, I might otherwise shew how beautiful a correspondence they all bear to each other. *Blessed are the merciful*. Not merely kindness to the bodies of men, no nor to the souls of men only. These are the *fruits and effects* of the mercifulness the LORD JESUS speaks of, and not the thing itself. But the mercifulness JESUS pronounceth blessed, is that mercy of soul inwrought by the regenerating influence of the HOLY GHOST, and from an union with CHRIST, the mercy of mercies. And from this source within, this union and communion with CHRIST, all the gracious acts will flow forth in mercy to others, and which the blessed souls themselves are receiving from their glorious merciful Head.

Blessed are the pure in heart; made so by regenerating grace; for by nature *the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked*. Jerem. xvii. 9. Hence the LORD promiseth his people *to take away the heart of stone, and give them an heart of flesh*. Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26. The people that are blessed are those whose hearts the LORD hath changed, who are indeed holy and pure in the cleansing and justifying purity and holiness of the LORD, their righteousness; but who feel conscious of the remains of indwelling corruption under which they groan. They see GOD in CHRIST in all the blessedness of salvation here in the life that now is, and they shall see him in the complete enjoyment of him in the life of glory that is to come.

The *peace-makers* are said to be *blessed*. But of whom doth CHRIST speak? Not simply peace-makers between man and man in the strifes of the world, for *there is no peace saith my God to the wicked*. Neither can it mean a man making his own peace with God, for that is impossible. CHRIST is the alone peace-maker, in making *our peace in the blood of his cross*. But the peace-makers here said to be blessed, shall be called the children of God. They are proved to be so by adoption and grace. And that *peace of God which ruleth in their hearts*, will manifest itself in acts of peace among them which make *peace*.

And the blessedness to those who are *persecuted for righteousness' sake*, and *reviled falsely* for CHRIST's sake, very plainly refer not to the mere act of *persecution* or *reviling*, but when those acts of cruelty are shewn to the followers of the LORD Jesus on *his account*, and for their attachment *to him*. Then, and then only, is it said by the LORD to be blessed.

I have studied as much brevity as possible in my illustration of those characters, that I might not unnecessarily swell the pages of the Poor Man's Commentary. But I hope enough hath been said in proof that our LORD's expressions are wholly to be considered on Gospel principles, and that the blessedness he pronounceth is the privilege of his redeemed in him.

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.

Well may the LORD's people rejoice, convinced of their interest in him. Luke x. 20. Philip. iii. 3. But with respect to the reward the LORD speaks of, let not the Reader for a moment overlook the cause. It is all of grace, not of debt. All on CHRIST's account, not their own. Ephes. ii. 8, 9. Rom. xi. 6. And blessed is the example of the Prophets in this particular. Heb. xi. 33. to the end. James v. 10, 11. The figures of *salt* and *light* are very expressive. CHRIST is the salt of the covenant. Levit. ii. 13. Numb. xviii. 19. with Mark ix. 49. CHRIST is the light of the world. John i. 4. And hence by so much as there is of CHRIST in his redeemed, by so much salt and light is there in the world. And well is it for the world that CHRIST's seed are in the earth. For without this salt the whole otherwise would be in a state of putrefaction ; and without this light the

whole would be in a state of darkness. Oh ! the blessedness of such a state of the church. *Such honor have all his Saints!* Philip. ii. 15.

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.

In this passage, we meet with the word *Amen*, or *Verily*, for the first time, and therefore, once for all, I beg to observe upon it, that it is of the highest import when used by CHRIST. It is indeed one of his precious names. JESUS therefore, in the use of it, puts his name to what he delivers. See Isaiah lxxv. 16. Rev. iii. 14. I must refer the Reader, for the sake of shortness, to my *Poor Man's Concordance* for the full explanation of it ; he will find it under the article *Amen* in that little work.

Reader ! do not fail to remark what the LORD JESUS here saith of the law, for most blessed it is to behold him as our law-surety, and our law-fulfiller. For as such he becomes the LORD our Righteousness, and is *the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*. Rom. x. 4.

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.

These are very strong expressions of CHRIST, in proof that nothing short of a whole and complete obedience to the law, can justify a soul before God. And hence the presumption of the Scribes and Pharisees. Oh ! the folly of the Pharisees of the present hour ! Oh ! the blessedness of being found, as Paul was, in CHRIST's righteousness ! Philip. iii. 8, 9.

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.

No doubt the Reader would wish to have a clear apprehension of the words *Raca* and *Fool*. The most acceptable service on these verses I can offer, will be to explain them. *Raca*, was a word used by the Jews to imply the utmost abhorrence, as if a man was spit upon, which was a mark of the greatest contempt among that people. For a man to call another *Raca*, was to call him a graceless wretch. But the word *Fool*, in the sense here intended, was, if possible, worse ; for it implied one predestinated to everlasting misery ; meaning a child of hell. Matt. 23—33. Jude 4. Nothing can be more proper than to have a just conception of those terms, and of the sense in which our LORD meant them. The word *fool*, when meaning a person dull or slow of understanding, totally differs from the word *fool* as here referred to by CHRIST. The LORD himself called his disciples fools in this sense, for their dulness of apprehension. Luke xxiv. 25. And both Paul and James, his Apostles, did the same upon similar occasions. 1 Cor. xv. 36. Gal. iii. 1. James ii. 20. But the folly which implies a state of reprobation, is totally different from this weakness of the mind. Isaiah speaks of it, chapter xxvii. 11. *For it is a people of no understanding*, meaning, to whom no grace is given. Not children of the kingdom, but the children of the wicked one ; *therefore he that made them* (saith the Prophet) *will not have mercy upon them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour*. In this sense, for any man to decide upon another, and say, thou fool ! thou child of hell ! is to endanger his own state before GOD. The LORD JESUS, who knows the heart, and knows them that are his, might truly, as he did, tell some in his day, that they were of the generation of vipers, and who could not escape the damnation of hell. But none but the Great Searcher of Hearts can be qualified or authorized to do so. And it should seem that *Moses* incurred the displeasure of the LORD, for calling the LORD's people *Rebels*, (which is a similar word to that of fool in this place,) at the waters of *Meribah*. Numb. xx. 10. I beg to refer the Reader to my *Poor Man's Concordance*, under the words *Rebel* and *Rebels*.

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.

CHRIST is our New Testament Altar, neither have we any other. It is painful to hear men call the communion table *Altar*, a name which belongs only to JESUS. But seen in this point of view, when drawing nigh at any time to JESUS, and recollecting some offence given to our brother, how truly doth this correspond to the union and harmony subsisting between CHRIST and his members, to come to

Him as the Head, and to bring with us, by faith, the whole body in our arms to the LORD. John xvii. 21. I Cor. xii. 25, 26, 27. For the members are to have the same care one for another, as one member of the body hath for its fellow member.

25 Agree' with thine adversary quickly, while 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.

These are sweet verses if referred to that lawsuit we all have, by reason of sin and transgression, with God. An adversary doth not always mean the evil spirit. It is indeed one of his names. I Pet. v. 8. But the LORD saith *I will be an adversary to thine adversaries*. Exod. xxiii. 22. And the LORD is represented as an adversary to his people in the day of their sorrow. Lament. ii. 4. In this sense JEHOVAH hath a controversy and a lawsuit with his people by reason of sin, and the LORD JESUS recommends his church in these verses, to make up the breach quickly while we are in the way, that is, JESUS himself is the way, and the only way of reconciliation. Reader ! what a refreshing thought ! CHRIST is our peace. Micah v. 5. GOD was in CHRIST *reconciling the world unto himself*. 2 Cor. v. 19. And now there is *no condemnation to them that are in CHRIST JESUS*. Rom. viii. 1. But to those who live and die in the natural enmity of their mind, CHRIST becomes the judge, to whom the ungodly are delivered. John v. 22. Angels are the officers of judgment. Matt. xiii. 41, 42. And the prison is explained to us in the Scriptures as Hell, where they will be cast and remain for ever. 2 Pet. ii. 4. Rev. xx. 15.

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.

Reader ! do not fail to observe the spiritual nature of the law of God. It is not limited to actions, but includes thoughts. The heart is the forge where all actions are worked. And whether they be brought forth into actual deeds or not, in the eye of the LORD the intention is the same. Surely the whole earth is at once brought in guilty before God. It is the grossest mistake in the world for any man to take shelter from guilt, in a supposed exemption from this or that particular sin. The heart sin, the nature sin, the mother sin, it is this which gives birth to all. And that it doth not break out in all men alike, is not from any difference in nature, for all are the same, but from certain restraints, particularly the restraints of grace. Read what the LORD said to *Abimelech* on this subject, which may serve to explain the cause to every man. Gen. xx. 6.

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.

The law made a provision for the putting away a wife in cases of adultery, Deut. 24. i. &c. But the LORD JESUS saith that this was permitted only in consequence of the hardness of their hearts ; for from the beginning of the creation of God it was not so. Mark x. 5, 6, 7, &c. And what a sweet thought is it to the souls of God's people married to JESUS, that notwithstanding all their adultery and spiritual fornication, our gracious Husband never put his wife away. See those blessed Scriptures in confirmation. Isaiah liv. 5, &c. Jerem. iii. 1. Hosea ii. 19. 20. And though the LORD in several scriptures speaks of the justice of the deed, Jerem. iii. 8. Hosea ii. 2. yet the LORD demands where is the bill of divorce, and to which of his creditors did he sell her. Isaiah l. 1. So that there never was a divorce, for the LORD GOD of Israel saith, that *he hateth putting away*. Malachi ii. 14—16. Hosea ii. 7.

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.

What a beautiful train of thoughts arise from those words of Jesus. Not only the prohibition of the LORD to what is so highly unsuitable and offensive in oaths and the like, but the injunction to a simple confirmation of the Yea and Nay among the followers of Him whose name is Amen.

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 the evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on the 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.

Who can read the justice and equity of that strict law, which enjoins an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, without having his mind directed to the contemplation of CHRIST as our surety. In him this law was literally fulfilled, when *he who knew no sin became sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* Oh! how blessed so to contemplate CHRIST. 2 Cor. v. 21.

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.

Was there ever such a refinement of the most perfect law of the LORD as is here drawn? And where shall we look for the fulfilment of it but in the LORD JESUS himself? He indeed, and He only, observed it in the fullest extent of it. And therefore the close of the chapter is express to the purpose with an eye to him. *Be ye perfect*; that is, in the perfection of JESUS, for there is no other way of finding perfection but in him. What men talk of respecting sincerity for perfection, is a fancy formed no where but in their own brain. But as the members of the body partake in all that belongs to the head, so the members of CHRIST's body are considered perfect in him. And when JESUS saith be ye perfect, he wills what he commands; his biddings are enablings. Be ye perfect in me. Hence the answer by the Prophet; *Surely in the LORD have I righteousness and strength*: Or as the apostle renders it, *perfect in CHRIST JESUS*. Isaiah xlv. 24, 25. Coloss. i. 28. 1 Cor. i. 30.

REFLECTIONS.

HAIL! thou Almighty Prophet of thy people, blessed LORD JESUS! We praise thee for thy gracious proclamation in the Mount. Oh! grant thy people to be poor in spirit, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom. Holy mourners we shall be when the LORD hath convinced us of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. And Oh! for that meekness in JESUS, that hungering and thirsting for JESUS and his righteousness, as those who are conscious that they have neither in themselves, and seek all in the LORD. Defer not, O our God, to induce all those graces of thy Spirit in the hearts of all thy redeemed, that *mercy* they may learn from thee, *purity of heart* find in thee, and as children of God, may walk in peace and love, as CHRIST also hath loved us, and given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to GOD for a sweet smelling savor. And to all the persecutions and revilings of life, be looking stedfastly to JESUS, *who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despised the shame, and is set down on the right hand of the Majesty on high*! And grant dearest LORD, while learning under the influences of thy Holy Spirit, to mortify the deeds of the body that we may live. Oh! for grace to be living out of ourselves upon thee and thy fulness, and never to lose sight for a moment that thou art in our stead and law-room all that is here enjoined, and hast both magnified the law and made it honorable, and fulfilled the whole for us and our salvation. Yea! blessed JESUS! thou art the LORD our righteousness, and all thy people are righteous in thee. Amen.

CHAP. VI.

CONTENTS.

This Chapter is a continuation of the former. Most blessedly the LORD JESUS prosecutes the subject of his Sermon through the whole of it.

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.

The LORD JESUS is here giving instructions concerning the gift of *alms*. And his directions are so plain that they need no comment. Alms-giving, when given with an eye to the divine glory, and the real love of men, is the gift of the heart, therefore there needs no lookers on. What flows *from* God will tend *to* God. JESUS is then in all, and a respect to him is the aim of all.

5 ¶ And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites *are* : for they love to pray standing 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 in 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.

Here the LORD speaks of *prayer*, and which is yet more express in reference to the LORD. Secret it must be between God and the soul, even in the public congregation, for what indeed is prayer but immediate communion, in which the only parties are JEHOVAH and his people. No lookers-on, no standers-by, can be supposed to interrupt the conference. But alas! how little understood by the great mass of what the world calls worshippers! Strictly and properly speaking, there can be no prayer, where there is no acquaintance. And until the Child of God is brought into an acquaintance with God in CHRIST, however he may offer a multitude of words, the heart is not interested, and consequently there is no prayer. But when we have received the spirit of adoption, and the new born child of God is brought forth into the spiritual life, instantly the cry of the soul is, Abba, Father! Reader! if the LORD the HOLY GHOST hath awakened your soul, regenerated your nature, and brought you into an heartfelt acquaintance with God in CHRIST, your own feelings, under divine teaching, will form the best comment on those precious words of Jesus; for you then know all that the LORD hath here said of secret communion with your Father. But otherwise, in secret or in public, you are a stranger to real prayer. Every graceless person is a prayerless person.

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.

We have here the pattern of prayer; which the LORD JESUS himself hath given. It were to hold up a small taper to the sun, to attempt an explanation of it, so plain, so evident, and so suited to every capacity. I only desire for myself, and every one whom God the HOLY GHOST directs in the use of it, that the sweet spiritual sense of it, by his most gracious power, was incorporated in our very heart, for then we should enter into the spiritual enjoyment of it, whenever we thus approach the throne. JEHOVAH in his threefold character of person, is indeed our FATHER, as JESUS taught, for he said in the moment of his departure, when redemption-work was finished, *I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.* John xx. 17. And as we adore him on his throne in heaven, so we pray that his name may be hallowed on earth, and his kingdom of grace be established here among all his redeemed, as his kingdom of glory is, and will be, established above to all eternity. And the bread we pray for in the daily supply, is not simply the bread of the body which

perisheth with using, but the bread of the soul, and which endureth to everlasting life, even JESUS himself, the living bread, *of which whosoever eateth shall live for ever.* As CHRIST is the gift of God, so the cry of the hungry soul is, LORD! *evermore give us this bread!* The pardon of sins the renewed soul needs daily, hourly, as he needs the bread of life. And therefore the petition comes in very sweet for forgiveness to our sins, as we delight to forgive the trespasses of others. And as the LORD alone can keep his people in the hour, and from the power of temptation, so JESUS hath graciously taught us to pray that the LORD would keep us from the evil one who goeth about as a roving lion, seeking whom he may devour. And most blessed is the concluding part, in ascribing all glory to the LORD. *For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever.* Rom. xi. 35. JESUS puts his name to the whole. *Amen.* And unless JESUS doth so, our Amen is nothing. It were to be devoutly wished, that every individual, in every congregation, would consider this when the Amen is pronounced. It should be done with the greatest reverence and solemnity, and with an eye to CHRIST. For it is not simply saying, as some have interpreted the word Amen, so be it, or be it so; thereby giving our confirmation to what hath been spoken. But it is calling upon the LORD JESUS by one of his names, even the *Amen*, to confirm it. We should feel the striking nature of the expression, if at the end of sermons, or prayers, or in any other part of our ordinances, we were solemnly to close all with saying JESUS. But yet in fact we do this when we say *Amen.* For this is as truly the name of the LORD JESUS as any other. May the LORD give both to Writer and Reader a right understanding in all things!

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.

We must not suppose from those expressions at the close of the LORD's prayer, as if the condition of our forgiveness was suspended upon our forgiving of others. Our glorious LORD could not be supposed to mean this, because our pardon and acceptance with God is wholly on CHRIST's account. But it is meant as a blessed evidence of grace. Paul, his servant, marks the feature of a renewed heart as a precious token of JESUS's love reigning there; *be ye kind* (saith he) *one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for CHRIST's sake hath forgiven you.* Ephes. iv. 32.

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.

We have our LORD's direction in these verses concerning the proper observance of *Fasts*. In which JESUS doth not condemn seasons of humbling the soul, but he reproves the Pharisaical method of pretending to mortify the body. Perhaps nothing in the Church of CHRIST hath opened to greater evil under the cloak of religion, than *Fasts* and *pretended Fasts*. It was the reproach those Pharisees of our LORD's days presumed to throw upon the SON of GOD himself and his disciples, that they observed them not. *Why* (say they) *do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees, but thine eat and drink?* Luke v. 33. How little do they know the true spirit of the Gospel of CHRIST, who consider an abstinence from food as a real fast of the soul towards GOD! *Fasts* and *Festivals*, the former to mortify, and the latter to gratify the body, what are these things in the view of the LORD? *The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the HOLY GHOST.* Rom. xiv. 17. And we may say upon all those things as the Apostle doth upon another occasion; *for meat commendeth us not to GOD, for neither if we eat are we the better, neither if we eat not are we the worse.* 1 Cor. viii. 8. It is astonishing to behold, what the pride and corruption of our poor fallen nature prompts us to do, in substituting any thing in the place of real vital godliness. Oh! what would we give or suffer, in respect to the body, to atone for the sin of the soul? And the reason is obvious, could men but see it. For it tends to gratify the pride of our unhumbed nature. Any thing but CHRIST. To rely wholly upon the person, and finished salvation of the LORD JESUS, who but those taught by the Spirit of JESUS can fully do it? But those things which the Apostle saith, *have indeed a shew of wisdom in will, worship, and humility, and neglecting the body*: Oh! how much they tend to lead the heart from CHRIST, instead of directing to CHRIST. Coloss. ii. 16, to the end.

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.

These directions of our LORD are so very plain that they need no comment. I detain the Reader, however, just to ask the question, not to decide upon that verse: *if therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness?* Doth not JESUS allude to that kind of head-knowledge, void of heart-influence, which devils and some men possess; whereby they have a clear apprehension of the great truths of God; but no affection towards them. Such was that of *Balaam*. Numb. xxiv. 3, 4. His eyes (he saith himself) were opened, but no regeneration of heart. He knew the LORD, but felt no love towards him. The devils in the days of our LORD gave the same testimony. *We know thee who thou art, the HOLY ONE of GOD!* Luke iv. 33, 34. But *Balaam*, in the midst of this knowledge, hired himself out to curse the people of God. And devils remain devils with the full conviction of the GODHEAD of CHRIST, and his great salvation upon them. Reader! think what an awful state, to have an historical head-knowledge of the LORD JESUS only; void of a life-giving, soul-renewing grace, from the Spirit of CHRIST! And what increased sorrows will this very knowledge induce in another world?

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, Where-withal 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.

Who can add to the beauties, as well as doctrines of those *blessed* words of Jesus, by any attempted illustration. I have often read the contents of those sweet verses, and always I hope with increasing delight. Oh! who considers the eternal love of God, in *CHRIST*, to his church and people, can pause a moment with any doubt of his everlasting watchfulness and care in all the departments of nature, providence, grace, and glory. Chosen in *CHRIST*, blessed in *CHRIST*, preserved in *CHRIST*, and called! Ephes. i. 3—5. 2 Tim. i. 9. Jude 1. And in his providential mercies, how constant and unremitting, Isaiah xxvii. 3. Job. xxxvi. 7. how tender, Isaiah lxvi. 13. Zech. ii. 8. Isaiah xxxi. 5. how new and seasonable, Lament. iii. 25. and how sure and everlasting. Isaiah liv. 10. If I detain the Reader one moment longer over these verses I hope he will pardon me. I beg him to observe, if he hath not before, the very great beauty in the images here made use of to express the love contained in those expressions of Jesus. *Behold the fowls of the air!* Not the fowls of the barn, not the poultry, fed daily by some appointed hand, but the fowls of the air, who have neither store-house nor barn, and whose lodging of to night may be taken away before the morrow, and they are obliged to seek a new one. *Behold the lilies of the field!* Not the cultivated and watered plants of the garden, but the lilies of the field, exposed to be trodden down by the feet of the ox or the ass, and plucked up by every traveller. And doth Jesus give beauty to those, and which perhaps hath no eye but his to see their beauty? Doth Jesus watch them and water them, and cause his sun to shine upon them? Oh! then, ye redeemed of the Lord, ye that are the purchase of his blood, yea, if possible, more than even

this; part of himself and *members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones*; can he forget you, overlook you, yea, overlook and forget himself! Precious LORD JESUS! I would say, both for myself and every one of thy children, give us all grace to leave all our concerns with thee, and anxious only to be found of thy kingdom, regenerated by thy HOLY SPIRIT, adopted into the family of CHRIST and GOD, and justified in thy all-sufficient righteousness, we may take no thought for the morrow, knowing that *whether we live we live to the LORD, or whether we die we die to the LORD, so that living or dying we are the LORD's.*

REFLECTIONS.

READER! Pause over this part of our REDEEMER's sermon, as over the preceding portion of it, and let us both look up for grace in the teaching of GOD the HOLY GHOST, to gather the many precious instructions it contains. Jesus presupposeth that his redeemed give alms according to the ability he hath given them. And if you and I have received of the *upper* springs of the LORD's grace, shall we not be ready to give, and glad to distribute of the *nether* springs of the LORD's bounty? Not dear LORD to be seen of men, no! nor with the most distant view to recommend ourselves to thee. All we have is thine, and of thine own do we give thee, in imparting of what we have to refresh the bowels of our poorer brethren. Oh! for grace that all may be done *from* thee, and *for* thee, and from love to thee.

And in our approaches to thy throne in prayer, oh! grant that all may be in and through the LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. For if LORD we have found peace in the blood of thy cross, our access to the Father will be by one Spirit through thee. Not to be seen of men, but graciously accepted of GOD *in* CHRIST, *through* CHRIST, and both in the words and works of CHRIST.

In the abstinence of the body, and in the humblings of the soul, in dying daily to the world, and crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts, oh! for grace *from* CHRIST to be walking daily *with* CHRIST, casting all our care upon him who careth for us. And while seeking, above all things, the kingdom of GOD and his righteousness, may we be for ever on the look-out for *the glorious appearing of the great GOD and our SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST.* Even so LORD prepare us for thy coming! Amen.

CHAP. VII.

CONTENTS.

The LORD JESUS in this Chapter concludes his Sermon on the Mount, and a very blessed close he makes of it, in comparing the wise hearers of it to those who build on the Rock, and the foolish to those who build on the Sand.

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?

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?

I pass over the several most blessed things which the LORD JESUS here treats of, as being in themselves so plain, and by Him so beautifully expressed, as to render all explanation unnecessary. But I detain the Reader at the close of the passage, to beg his special and particular attention to that unequalled argument the LORD JESUS condescends to make use of, in representing the great predisposing grace of our heavenly Father to bless his children, under the figure of the solicitude of an earthly parent. It is as if JESUS had said; Is a poor worm of the earth, one of the fallen sinful sons of Adam, so prompt to listen to the cries of his children because he is a father, as to give them the best things the moment they ask them; think then how earnest the Great Father of mercies must be to give his Holy Spirit to his children, and who hath already given the greatest of all blessings, and unasked as it was, when giving them his only begotten Son. John xiv. 16, 17.

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.

This golden rule needs no comment. Oh! that all the followers of the LORD JESUS made it their rule with all men. It is said of one of the heathen emperors, *Alexander Severus*, that he was so great an admirer of this maxim, that he caused it to be written for public use, and often mentioned it in honor of CHRIST and the Christian religion. What a reproach to Christians who act not up to it!

13 ¶ Enter ye in at the straight gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

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.

Nothing can be more interesting than what the LORD JESUS hath here said. And no form of words can be more decisive to mark the

godly man from the hypocrite. I only detain the Reader to observe, how very awful those words of CHRIST are concerning false Teachers, in the great day of account. Preaching or prophesying in the name of CHRIST, and doing even miracles in the name of CHRIST, these are no proofs of the regeneration of the preacher's own heart. And very awful will it be then found; if there be no union with CHRIST here, there can be no communion with CHRIST to all eternity. And observe, that the LORD JESUS doth not say that this will be the portion of a few, but many! Oh! for grace to be found among the blessed few who have CHRIST formed in their hearts, *the hope of glory!*

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.

Here the LORD closeth his discourse, and plainly sheweth whose are his from the men of the world. CHRIST is the Rock of Ages. The Precious Corner Stone JEHOVAH hath laid in Zion. And all that believe in him shall never perish, but have everlasting life. While on the contrary, those who build on the sand of their own attainments, when the storms of life come upon them, sink under the unequal pressure, and are buried in the everlasting ruins of their own confusion, and shall never come to the habitations of the blessed. The close of the LORD's sermon was, as might be expected. They were astonished at his doctrine. He spake as never man spake, and his word was with power.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! having gone over the whole of this blessed Sermon of CHRIST, let us sum up the contents, and beg of GOD the HOLY GHOST to write all the gracious truths contained in it in our hearts. And

while we hear the LORD giving to his Church the whole Gospel of Salvation, oh! what a blessed consideration is it, that JESUS himself hath fulfilled all, and is all to his redeemed. Never may the Church of JESUS forget this, but receive CHRIST as the Father's gift, and the complete salvation of JEHOVAH to the end of the earth!

Precious, blessed LORD JESUS! so may my soul hear these sayings of thine, and embrace them, that building upon thee as the foundation, the superstructure, and the whole, both of Law and the Prophets, when the LORD shall arise to shake terribly the earth, I may be found firm on the rock, *against which the gates of hell shall never prevail.* Despised as thou hast been, and still art, by Jews and false Christians, and a stone of stumbling and rock of offence; yet to me be thou more precious than the mountains of spices. In thy person, work and offices; in thy character and relations; in thy complete righteousness and salvation; be thou my LORD, my hope, and everlasting portion. LORD grant that I may never build on the sandy performance of any thing of my own, or mix up with thy complete work the hay and the stubble of any legal righteousness, which can stand no wind of the day of God's wrath; but be thou the all in all, of all grace here, and of glory for ever. Amen.

CHAP. VIII.

CONTENTS.

We have here the LORD JESUS confirming his word by miracles. JESUS cleanseth a Leper, healeth the Centurion's servant, the mother-in-law of Peter, with many others; stilleth the waves of the sea, casteth out devils from two poor creatures, and permitteth them to enter into the swine.

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.

Though this act of cleansing the Leper is by *Matthew* recorded as the first of CHRIST's miracles, yet we have no authority so to conclude, for *John* records the first miracle to have been at the marriage feast. *John* ii. 14. And *Mark* and *Luke* do not place it in the same order. *Mark* i. 40. *Luke* v. 12. And some have thought that

this man was *Simon the Leper*. Matt. xxvi. 6. But the chief points to be regarded in the history of this man's cleansing will be more to our purpose to attend to. The leprosy was a disease so peculiar, that it was always considered as a mark of divine displeasure on those who were visited by it. Hence *Miriam*, the sister of *Aaron* was smitten by it. Numbers xii. 10, &c. *Gehazi* the servant of *Elisha*. 2 Kings v. 27. *Uzziah* the king of Judah. 2 Chron. xxvi. 19, &c. And as the disease was considered as coming from the LORD in judgment, so it was deemed unlawful by the Jews in any to attempt to heal it. This was the LORD's sole prerogative. 2 Kings v. 7. Add to these, the unhappy persons afflicted by it were shut out, and precluded all civil and religious communion.

Now what the leprosy is to the body, such is sin to the soul. None but God can pardon the sinner, and nothing but the blood of CHRIST can cleanse the sinner. So that the whole of our nature, by reason of sin, is leprosy before God. The representation of this cleansing was set forth under the Law. Levit. xiv. But it is the Gospel of CHRIST, which gives us the only possible cure in the person, work, and righteousness of GOD our SAVIOR. Ezek. xxxvi. 25, &c. 1 John i. 7.

This poor creature, which came to JESUS, is the representative of every poor sinner, when convinced of the leprosy of sin, from the teaching of God the HOLY GHOST. Such an one is convinced of CHRIST's ability, because God the SPIRIT hath taught him who CHRIST is, and what CHRIST is able to perform. But it appears, that this man's faith was but slender; for though he had no doubt of CHRIST's ability, yet he had doubts whether the SON of God would exercise it towards him. LORD, (*said he*) *if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean!* I beg the Reader to remark this weakness of faith. Perhaps my Reader knows somewhat of the same in his own experience. And if so, may the LORD put a cry into his heart, that he may say with the Apostles, LORD! *increase our faith!* But when he hath done this, let him look unto JESUS, in his tenderness to this poor man, and observe, that the weakness of his faith, did not restrain CHRIST's mercy and power.—For we are told, JESUS *put forth his hand and touched him, saying, I will, be thou clean: and immediately his leprosy was cleansed.* I beg the Reader to observe with me, not only the gracious act of CHRIST's healing him, but touching him also in doing it. Touching a leper! Yes! JESUS, though made in the likeness of sinful flesh, contracted none of our pollutions when taking our flesh. His unspotted purity could not be defiled by an union with our nature. The sun shines, and imparts all its warmings, healings, life-giving properties, but yet contracts no defilement from the dung-hill objects to which it communicates those blessings. And JESUS sheds his blissful, sin-withering, soul-cleansing influence, without being tainted with the maladies of defiled churches, and defiled souls, into which he shines, and on which he ariseth, as *the Sun of righteousness, with healing in his wings.* Malachi iv. 2.

The precept which the LORD gave him, to tell no man of his cure, seems to have been intended, not with a view to conceal the knowledge of the mercy he had received from the world; but only that he should first make it known to the priest, as had been enjoined by the law. Our first acknowledgments for all mercies, and especially

for Spiritual mercies, in the salvation of our souls by the LORD JESUS CHRIST, are due to the LORD. JESUS, our Almighty High Priest, the Author and Giver, of our blessings, is first to be eyed and acknowledged in our blessings. But when this is done, it is a suited frame of mind to call upon the whole world to the contemplation of the divine goodness towards us. *O come hither and hearken, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul.* Psal. lxvi. 16.

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.

We have here another of CHRIST's miracles. *Capernaum* was a city of *Galilee*, not far from *Nazareth*. A *centurion* was an officer among the Romans. This man had a servant sick of the palsy.

Luke, in his account of this case, saith, that the servant was dear unto his master. Luke vii. 2, &c. Be that as it may, it appears that the centurion, though a Gentile, had such views of CHRIST, as none but the LORD could have given him. Reader! what a precious thought it is to us poor Gentiles; that in CHRIST JESUS *there is neither Jew nor Greek; bond nor free; for we are all one. And if we be CHRIST's, then are we Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.* Gal. iii. 28, 29. If I detain the Reader a moment longer in the contemplation of this miracle of JESUS, it shall be to observe two or three of the striking features in this man's faith. Such was his apprehension of CHRIST's power, that he said it was unnecessary for JESUS to come to see the patient; for his word only would heal. What could manifest his belief of the GODHEAD of CHRIST more than this? And his sense of his own unworthiness, became another testimony what views he had of JESUS. There is a great beauty, as well as strong reasoning, the centurion made use of, respecting the exertion of CHRIST's power. As the soldiers under his command, must go, or come, at his pleasure; so the whole army of diseases, he knew, were under the controul of CHRIST. Think, Reader! what faith there must have been in this Gentile? Do not overlook the 11th verse in this passage! But if such was the faith of the centurion, what grace doth the whole manifest of the person of JESUS, the great Author, and Giver of faith, from whom every portion of it the centurion had received? Oh! thou dear LORD, do thou increase our faith!

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.

What a beautiful representation is here made, in a short compass, of the lovely, and all-loving JESUS! With a word only the LORD healed! Think of his sovereignty: think of his grace. And let not the Reader overlook what is said of his taking our infirmities, and bearing our sicknesses. Mark, I pray you, it is said, that *Himself did it.* JESUS CHRIST personally did this. It is the Person of CHRIST, as God-man, in this instance, we are everlastingly to keep in view. Not the person of the FATHER, neither the person of the HOLY GHOST, for neither of those glorious persons took our nature: but the person of JESUS, GOD-MAN-Mediator. And I very earnestly desire the Reader to pause a moment over the wonderful relation. *Himself*

took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses. In himself, there was no possibility of his becoming sick; for sickness is the sole effect of sin; and as there was no taint of sin in his holy nature, there could be no sickness, which is the sole consequence of sin: yet, as by imputation he bore our sins; so by sympathy he bore our sicknesses. Yea, in this sense, he knew and felt more what sin, and the sorrows of sin and sickness are, than the sinners themselves for whom he bore them. For as JESUS sustained the persons of his redeemed; so he sustained their sorrows. He that felt the whole weight and burden of their sins, and the divine wrath as their surety, must have known more, and felt more, both of the bitterness of sin itself, and all the dire effects of it, than the whole body of sinners themselves. And if, as it is said, the righteous soul of *Lot* was vexed with the *filthy conversation of the wicked, day by day*, (2 Peter ii. 7.) what must have been the feelings of the LORD JESUS, during his whole life upon earth, in beholding the sins of his redeemed, and which he himself bore; and for which he gave himself a ransom. Reader! do not dismiss this view of the passage, before that you have first considered what a most blessed opening it gives us of the person of our LORD. And let me add, that of all the arguments under the grace of the HOLY GHOST, to restrain from the commission of sin in the LORD's people, this is the highest and the best. Oh! what a sad return for such unequalled love! A child of God might well say with Joseph, when tempted, *how can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God.* Gen. xxxix. 9. Rom. viii. 13.

18 ¶ Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandments 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.

As this is the first place in the Gospel we meet with the phrase *SON of MAN*, in reference to the person of CHRIST; and especially as it is a phrase the LORD JESUS was pleased frequently to make use of, and delighted in; I beg the Reader not to pass it by hastily. I do not presume to speak decidedly upon it, but yet I would humbly ask, Did not the SON of GOD take pleasure in shewing thereby his wonderful condescension, and his wonderful love to our nature? Think, Reader! what an endearment of character it is in JESUS. You and I might well exceed *Solomon's* surprize. He thought it a matter,

as well he might, of infinite surprize, that the LORD should condescend to dwell by his gracious presence in the temple. But had *Solomon* lived to see, as you and I have done, GOD tabernacled in substance of our flesh, what would he then have said! Precious *JESUS*, dwell in me, and reign and rule in me, and be my GOD, and cause me to be thy servant! Amidst this great multitude, and amidst the forwardness of one, and the backwardness of another, how few truly followed CHRIST? The dead in trespasses and sins, do indeed bury their dead; for to be carnally minded is death. And all that are Christless and unregenerate, are dead while they live. 1 Tim. v. 6.

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?

What a beautiful representation is here given of the two-fold nature of CHRIST. Behold the man, in his human nature, sleeping! Behold the GODHEAD, in his divine nature, rebuking the winds and sea. Let the infidel look at this, and ask himself, who but the Creator could thus command the mighty waters? Let not the child of GOD overlook the sweet consolation the passage brings with it, to hush all the winds and storms of life. *JESUS* may, to your view, be inattentive, as though he heard not, when the ship of life in which you are embarked is filling with waves, and when in the distress of your soul you are crying out, LORD, save, or I perish. But, remember, GOD incarnate is with you in the vessel, and he will bear the whole up until the time of deliverance. Then will he do by you, as he did in this instance with his disciples, arise, and rebuke both winds and sea, and there shall be a great calm. Storms of fear, and storms of temptation, must all subside at the command of *JESUS*.

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.

We meet with the relation of this miracle, and somewhat more particularly enlarged, in the fifth Chapter of Mark's Gospel. I refer the Reader therefore to that part of my Commentary, for my observations upon it. I only detain the Reader for the moment, to observe, that the place, though mentioned differently, is one and the same. *Matthew* here calls it the country of the *Gergesenes*. *Mark* and *Luke* call it the country of the *Gadarenes*. But as it was on the lake of *Tiberias*, right over against *Galilee*, it is but one and the same. It was called in the days of *Joshua*, and indeed long before, the country of the *Girgashites*. Gen. xv. 21. Deut. vii. 1. *Joshua* iii. 10. The Syriac version gave it the name of *Gadarenes: Gergesa* and *Gadara*, was the same city.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! let you and I look on, and behold the wonders of our wonder-working God. See the leprous man cleansed; the paralytic healed; the raging fever subdued; yea, the winds, sea, and devils, in a moment brought under the word of our Jesus. But let us not stop here. He that cleansed the poor leper in his body, can and will cleanse all the leprosy of soul in his people. He that gave strength to the palsy of nature, can and will make the crippled in soul to leap as an hart; and all the feverish lusts of his redeemed, Jesus will subdue! Oh! thou gracious God of our salvation! no storms of hell,

nor storms of indwelling corruption, nor storms of the world, shall drown thy people! JESUS, though for a while may appear to our impatient minds as inattentive, but he hath said, *For the sighing of the poor, and the oppression of the needy, now will I arise, saith GOD!* And oh! with what tenderness and fellow-feeling, the LORD JESUS enters into all the concerns of his redeemed. Truly LORD, it may be said of thee, thou dost thyself take our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses! Oh! vouchsafe thy continual presence with us! and never, never LORD, do thou depart out of our coasts!

CHAP. IX.

CONTENTS.

The LORD JESUS is here represented in the exercise of his ministry; working miracles, and going about through all the cities and villages, preaching his gospel, and healing every disease of the people.

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 multitude saw *it*, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.

In the relation of this miracle by Mark, he names *Capernaum* as the place where it was wrought; so that this may serve to teach us, that when CHRIST's own city is spoken of, it means *Capernaum*, and not *Bethlehem*, where CHRIST was born. This miracle is among the many, one of the highest in confirmation both of his GODHEAD, and of his mission as the Messiah. The Prophet had said, *Behold,*

your God shall come and save you; and then shall the lame man leap as an hart. Isaiah xxxv. 4, 5, 6. Observe, the first act in proof of CHRIST's eternal power and GODHEAD which he manifested towards this man with the palsy, was to pardon his sins. The reasoning of the Scribes was well founded *in truth*, though formed by them *in malice*, that none but GOD himself can forgive sins. And the LORD JESUS, by the exercise of this authority, and in the cure of the body, which immediately followed, proved that he was GOD. The second act in proof of his GODHEAD was, that JESUS *knew their thoughts*, and acted upon that knowledge, by telling them what they thought. This also is the sole prerogative of GODHEAD; and this CHRIST exercised. Jerem. xvii. 10. Rev. ii. 23. And the evidence the LORD JESUS immediately gave of his person and power in the cure of the palsy, confirmed the whole beyond a doubt. When the Reader hath duly considered these grand things in this miracle, I would beg to call his attention to other considerations, which arise out of it. In this miracle the LORD JESUS seems to demand attention to his character as Messiah; for he calls himself *the SON of Man*. It was to be among the features of Him that was to come to be known under this character. Hence when John sent his disciples to ask JESUS whether he was the very person that should come, or were they to look for another, the LORD JESUS referred to those testimonies, in proof that he was the very SON of Man. Compare Isaiah lxi. 1. with Matt. ii. 2—6. And hence JESUS also, in his discourse with the Jews, when they attacked him for healing the man on the sabbath day, declared that all authority was given to him to execute judgment, because he was *the SON of Man*. So that over and above his own personal power and GODHEAD, in the essence of JEHOVAH, he here acted in his mediator-character, and thereby manifested who he was, and the great object for which he came. I pray the Reader, in order that he may have a clear apprehension of this subject, and to distinguish between the SON of God's person, as one of the persons in the GODHEAD, and his office-character, as mediator, GOD and MAN in one person, that he will turn to those scriptures in proof before he goes further, John v. 17. to the end. John xvii. 2, 3. Matt. xxvi. 62—65. There is one point more in this miracle, which merits our earnest attention; namely, the tenderness and compassion of JESUS, which unasked, pardoned the sin of the soul, while healing the disease of the body. Well might the astonished beholders, in the contemplation of this miracle, express their thankfulness to GOD. But how is it, that under such impressions, no saving conviction of CHRIST is said to have been wrought upon their hearts? The Reader will find an answer to this, and similar questions of the like nature, Isaiah vi. 9, 10. Matt. xiii. 14. Mark iv. 12. Luke viii. 10. John xii. 40. Acts xxvii. 26. Rom. xi. 8. For other observations on this miracle, I refer the Reader to Mark ii. 2—12.

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.

The call of *Matthew* is most interesting, and serves to mark the distinguishing grace of God. His name from *Mattan*, a gift, seems suited to one who received the free gift of the Lord. Here was no preparation, no enquiry after CHRIST; no waiting at ordinances, yea, not so much as a conscious sense in the heart of *Matthew*, of his want of salvation. He was sitting in his gainful office of a *Publican*, or tax-gatherer: an office odious to all the people of Israel, and when exercised by a descendant of Israel, yet more hateful. Such was *Matthew*; and so employed, when the LORD JESUS passed by, and called him from a tax-gatherer, to be an Apostle and Evangelist. Oh! what grace was here? How truly was that scripture fulfilled, *I am found of them that sought me not*. Isaiah lxxv. 1. What an astonishing instance of mercy was this. How very powerful must have been the call! How gracious on the part of JESUS! How surprizing to the heart of *Matthew*? And observe the instant effects. No sooner doth JESUS call, but *Matthew* obeys. And as JESUS opened *Matthew's* heart to receive him, *Matthew* opens his house to welcome JESUS. Neither is this all. For as this one Publican had found mercy from the Lord, *Matthew* invited other Publicans to come and find mercy also. There is enough in CHRIST for all. What a lovely view to behold the Great Redeemer, encircled at *Matthew's* table, with *Publicans* and Sinners! The murmuring of the *Pharisees* is just as might be expected, and such as hath marked *Pharisees* in all ages. But what a lovely answer the LORD gave to the charge. The very character of CHRIST, as the Physician of the Soul, naturally led him to haunts of sickness, for the exercise of his profession. And by referring them to that memorable passage in the prophet Hosea vi. 6. JESUS took the words as applicable to himself in confirmation of his office: *ГЕНОВАЪ Rophe, I am the LORD that healeth thee*. Exod. xv. 26.

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.

It is wonderful to see how fond men have been in all ages to substitute any thing, and every thing, in the room of real godliness, and a change of heart. Fasting and alms-giving, and services, however costly, shall be set up, provided they may find pardon to the sins of nature. But all these are not regeneration. It is the old nature still. It is still the old creature, only dressed up in a new form: not transformed in the renewing of the heart. Jesus makes use of two beautiful similitudes to shew the folly of it. The new cloth put into the old garment; and the new wine into old bottles: neither of which can receive into union what is altogether the reverse of themselves. The strength of the new cloth will only tend to rend the old; and the old dried skins of bottles must burst if new fermenting wine is put into them. In like manner, the new robe of Jesus's righteousness cannot be joined to patch up our filthy rags: neither can the new wine of the Gospel be received into the old unrenewed skin of nature. But when the HOLY GHOST hath by regeneration made all things new, and CHRIST's righteousness is received as the new robe of salvation; and the blood of CHRIST as the wine that maketh glad the heart of man; both then are preserved and blessed. Judges ix. 13. Psm. civ. 15. Isaiah lxi. 10. See Mark ii. 18, &c.

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.

We have here two most interesting miracles of the Lord Jesus; and they are blended into one view, because the one runs into the other, and both serve mutually to illustrate the glory of Jesus. The importunity of the poor man, that Jesus should hasten to his child, and the interruption which took place from the woman in detaining CHRIST for her cure, are finely worked up, both to heighten the miracle, to exercise the faith of the patient, and to manifest the sovereignty of the Lord. What an interruption was this woman's stopping CHRIST to the ardor of the ruler. How he must have felt! How his fears must have increased; lest, according to his views, CHRIST should come too late. And *Mark*, in the relation of this miracle adds to *Matthew's* account, that *while Jesus was speaking with this woman, there came certain from the ruler's house which said, thy daughter is dead, why troublest thou the master?* *Mark* v. 35. And *Luke* in like manner, *Luke* viii. 49. Let the children of God in their exercises of faith, while at any time the Lord is suspending his gracious answers to prayer, or bringing them into difficulties, or under all their dead and dying frames, think of this! Remember, it is one thing to feel and know our own totally lost and helpless state; and another to have lively faith in the LORD JESUS-CHRIST. For it is not what we are, but what CHRIST is. And it is good to have the sentence of death in ourselves, that we may not trust in ourselves, but in him that raiseth the dead. Oh! the blessedness of entering into the full enjoyment of those sublime truths of JESUS, when he saith, *I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die.* *2 Cor.* i. 9. *John* xi. 25, 26.

The account of this woman, is uncommonly interesting. *Mark*, and *Luke*, add to the account of her *twelve years* labouring under this disease, that she had spent all her living upon physicians, and had

suffered many things of many of them, and was nothing better, but rather worse. What a striking representation of the sinner, who is seeking relief to his sin-sick soul, in any thing short of CHRIST! Such it is, and such it must be, in every case, and circumstance of spiritual malady. None but JESUS can cure. *Twelve years, or eighteen years*, as the woman in the synagogue, (Luke xiii. 11.) or *eight and thirty years*, as the man at the Pool of Bethesda, (John v. 5.) are all the same, until CHRIST is found! Oh! that every poor sinner, crippled by sin, was made sensible of this: that instead of looking to Physicians of no value; in tears, and attempted reforms in their own strength, might, like this woman, be led to CHRIST. Job xiii. 4. We never can sufficiently admire the faith of this woman; neither can we sufficiently bless Him, who gave her such strong faith; for she said of CHRIST, *if I may but touch his garment I shall be whole*. Reader! let us not hastily pass away from the view of such illustrious faith, in this daughter of faithful Abraham, without first crying out with the Apostles, LORD! *increase our faith!* I must beg the Reader also to notice the humbleness of the woman, in the midst of such exalted faith; *she came behind* CHRIST! The greatest faith is always blended with the greatest humility. Never will a soul lay lower *before* GOD, than when that soul is entering into the sweetest communion *with* GOD. The higher views we have of the LORD's grace, the humbler views shall we have of our own understandings. Gen. xviii. 27. Ezra ix. 56. And I must beg the Reader also in noticing this woman's humbleness, in coming *behind* CHRIST, to remark; that our approaches to JESUS, in every direction, behind, or before, is the same. *The lamb is in the midst of the throne*. Rev. vii. 17. Hence JESUS is acceptable, all around, and in every direction. *They shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south. They shall come that are ready to perish*. Isaiah xxvii. 13. So that any poor sensible sinner, who, like this woman, hath been spending all in pursuits after healing, and found none, because never looking wholly to JESUS; but now being led by the HOLY GHOST to CHRIST; though blushing to come *before* CHRIST in the sight of any fellow creatures, from consciousness of disease, shall come *behind* CHRIST; the touch of faith, the trust *in* CHRIST, will find virtue *from* CHRIST; and, like her, the sinner be made perfectly whole.

We must not dismiss our review of this miracle before that we have also considered the grace and favor manifested by the LORD JESUS to this woman; for this is the chief point in the miracle. JESUS, which had, unknown to her, given her this lively faith to believe in him, as instantly gave his blessing to that faith. And however unnoticed, as she might suppose herself to have been, JESUS gave her to understand, that he both knew her complaint, and the cure he had wrought for her. Reader! what a precious consideration it is, that however unknown our cases are to men, they are all well known to our GOD. In the greatest throng, as well as in the secret place, JESUS sees all, knows all, and both appoints, and will sanctify, all and every individual case and exercise of his people. We never can sufficiently admire the abundant tenderness the LORD JESUS manifested upon this occasion, to this poor woman. She wished the cure to be in secret: but no! JESUS will have her faith in him made public. His grace to poor sinners shall be proclaimed thereby; and her trust

in him shall make her history illustrious through endless generations. Both *Mark* and *Luke* relate this miracle with more particulars than *Matthew*; for they observe, that when the woman touched CHRIST's garment, JESUS, immediately knowing in himself what was done, and that healing virtue was gone out of him, (Reader! mark that, in testimony of his GODHEAD,) turned himself about, and said, *who touched me?* And when all denied, his unconscious disciples wondered how JESUS should make such an enquiry, while such a multitude were thronging and pressing him. But He, who knew all that had passed, while looking round to eye her, (as he did in after days look on Peter, *Luke* xxii. 61.) by his grace in her heart, inclined her to come and look on him. And oh! what a precious interview then took place, which neither of the Evangelists could relate; the love, and joy, and thankfulness to JESUS, in the consciousness of her cure, and the delight in the heart of JESUS in beholding the blessed effects of his salvation. Such, Reader! is now the case in every recovered sinner! And such will be the case of the whole Church of God, in every individual instance, *when the ransomed of the LORD shall return to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads, they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Isaiah xxxv. 10.*

It is high time to follow JESUS to the Ruler's house. Here death had taken place, and according to all human calculations, all hope was over. But not so with Him who came to be the life and light of men. As the LORD JESUS quickeneth the dead in trespasses and sins, so he was pleased in several instances to manifest the sovereignty of his power, in raising from the dead many of the bodies of his people. *Matt. xi. 5.* Oh! with what ease can JESUS now raise up our dead, and dying affections! Never should a soul despair that reads this miracle. Neither when the enemy, or graceless friends would tempt one to give it over, saying, in words like those who came to the ruler, *thy daughter is dead, trouble not the Master*; even then, when hope seems hopeless: oh! what cannot JESUS accomplish? And while he saith, be not afraid, only believe, may my soul say with one of old; *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him!* *Job xiii. 15.*

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 straightly charged them, saying, *See that no man know it.*

31 But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country.

Concerning this miracle, I beg the Reader particularly to observe, that the cry of those men was evidently the cry of faith: for the name by which they distinguished CHRIST, *Thou SON of David!* was the known character in which the Jews were taught to expect CHRIST. And the opening of the blind eyes was to be a token of his mission. Isaiah xxxv. 5. xlii. 7. lxi. 1.

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.

Let the Reader, as he beholds the succession of miracles, and remarks the woeful effects of sin, from whence all the maladies of the world are derived, contemplate the glory and loveliness of Him who came to do away sin by the sacrifice of himself! Oh! the awful estate of being possessed with an evil spirit! Such are everlastingly dumb to proclaim the praises of God. Well is it for us that *the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil.* 1 John iii. 8.

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.

What an interesting sight must it have been to have seen JESUS thus engaged, preaching the doctrines of grace, and confirming the word with ministering to all the wants of nature. And I beg the Reader not to overlook what is said of JESUS on those occasions: he was *moved with compassion*, that is, the compassions of JESUS were the compassions of God-Man, the divine and human nature blended. It is most essential to the proper apprehension of JESUS's feelings of our

infirmities, always to keep this in view. For the LORD JESUS, having the same human nature as we have, hath the same affections; the same feelings as we have. And therefore, though the infinite perfections of his divine nature, give all that dignity and power which make his mercies *divine*, yet from his human nature being united to the GODHEAD, his compassions are no less *human* mercies also. Oh! the blessedness of such views of JESUS. See Heb. iv. 15, 16. The similitudes of a shepherd, and harvest, are too plain to need a comment. But as CHRIST alone is the shepherd of his flock, and the LORD of the harvest, the only One who can authorize to the ministry in the labors of it; we are to pray, but it is the LORD who must send suited servants to the harvest.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! behold your GOD and SAVIOR in this Chapter. See how he manifests who he is by what he wrought. As GOD! he pardons sin, as in the instance of the Paralytic! He reads the thoughts and reasonings of men's hearts, as in the case of the Scribes. He cures the souls, gives health to the bodies, raiseth the dead, casts out devils, and as man, yea the GOD-MAN CHRIST JESUS, he is moved with compassion, and his bowels yearn over the lost estate and misery of our poor, ruined, and diseased nature. Oh! who that had seen his grace to *Matthew*; to the woman with the bloody issue; to the ruler of the synagogue, and his dead child; to the blind and the dumb; but must have said with the Prophet, *behold your GOD is come to save you!* And who that had seen him, at the table of *Matthew*, encircled with Publicans and Sinners, but must have said, was ever grace like this, in the unequalled condescension of the Son of GOD!

Oh! blessed LORD JESUS! do thou now still regard thy people, still behold them in all the miseries and sorrows of a state of nature and sin, in their palsied, blind, dumb, dead, and dying circumstances. Oh! thou Great Shepherd of thy blood-bought flock! Exalted as thou now art, at the right hand of the Majesty on high, send forth thine under pastors in thy fold, and let thine heritage be no longer scattered. Yea! dearest LORD JESUS! come thyself and visit them as thou hast said with thy great salvation, and bring them home to thy fold in heaven, from all places whither they are now scattered *in the dark and cloudy day!* Amen.

CHAP. X.

CONTENTS.

In this Chapter we have the call of the Apostles, and CHRIST'S mission given to them, to work miracles, and preach the Gospel.

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.

We have here the LORD JESUS calling his Apostles. Their number *twelve*. Perhaps in allusion to the twelve tribes of Israel. The Church is represented by twelve stars. Rev. xii. 1. And the twelve foundations of the New Jerusalem are not without the same signification. Rev. xxi. 12—14. Yea, JESUS speaks of them, as sitting upon thrones to judge *the twelve tribes of Israel*. Luke xxii. 30. The call of every disciple of CHRIST is the same. The HOLY GHOST, by *Peter*, shews that the election of the church is discoverable by it. 2 Pet. i. 10. For if he hath *saved* us, he will *call* us. 2 Tim. i. 9. And whom he *called*, them he also *justified*. Rom. viii. 30. Oh! how truly evident this is, in the life of every believer. And in his ministers who are sent by him (and those unsent by *him* have no authority at all), how sure the spiritual effects which follow. JESUS's word, by them, works over unclean spirits; and all soul diseases, and sicknesses, in JESUS's name and power are healed.

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 Alpheus, and Lebbeus, whose surname was Thaddeus;

4 Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.

I do not think it necessary to dwell upon the names of the Apostles, having, in my *Poor Man's Concordance*, already noticed each particular. But shall only briefly observe in this place, how blessed were those holy men, whose names were first written in the book of life: all excepting the traitor *Judas*; and his place was also marked from all eternity. Acts i. 25. John xvii. 12.

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, enquire 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 Gomorrhah in the day of judgment, than for that city.

We have in these verses, the Apostles' commission, where they were to preach, and what their preaching was to consist of; namely, of the near approach of CHRIST's kingdom; that is, CHRIST's Person and CHRIST's Salvation. The kingdom of grace distinguished from the law, and the kingdom of glory to which that grace led. John i. 17. And what a beautiful view is here afforded of those holy men going forth with their lives in their hands to preach JESUS. No gold, no silver, no money in their purse! And the awful consequence to those who rejected their preaching is read to us most solemnly, in that, *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* will find more favor at the last day!

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 worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter 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.

Our Lord's own words are so plain, so beautiful, and so expressive, that they would suffer rather by the attempt of a paraphrase, and cannot need a comment. I would only beg to observe upon them, that though they had a special reference to the first, and immediate disciples of Jesus, yet certainly Jesus had an eye to all his Apostles; that is, all sent forth by the HOLY GHOST to preach his Gospel to the end of time. Persecutions, and the offence of the cross, are never to cease. Were they to do so, we should lose one of the evidences of the Gospel. And as Jesus hath promised his unceasing presence with his people, so in an eminent manner with his sent servants. And what can express his attention more than in what the LORD hath closed the chapter with; that the smallest gift done in the name of CHRIST, is, in his eye, done to himself.

REFLECTIONS.

LET all the followers of the LORD JESUS, and especially his Ministers, behold in the commission here given by him to his Apostles, the love of his heart, and the interest he takes in all that concerns them. And let not our view of the unfaithfulness of hirelings in any age of the Church, give the smallest distress to true Pastors. Jesus chose a *Judas* to mingle with his faithful Apostles, though he knew that he was a devil when he chose him. But though he went in and out with the disciples, yet had he no part nor lot in the matter; and when he died, he went, as it is said, *to his own place*. Tares with the wheat, goats with the sheep, are nevertheless as distinguishable and separate as though they had never come together. *The LORD knoweth them that are his*. In the end, an everlasting separation will take place.

In the mean time, the persecution, hatred, and frowns of every enemy, shall minister rather to the Redeemer's glory, than to the smallest injury of the Redeemer's cause. And it never should be forgotten, that JESUS is *with his people always to the end of the world*. JESUS, therefore, looks on, knows all, sanctifies all, and blesseth all to his people's good! And JESUS speaks as in this chapter, to drive away all fear from the heart of his redeemed. *To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am sat down with my Father in his throne.*

CHAP. XI.

CONTENTS.

We have in this Chapter the Message of John the Baptist to CHRIST, and the LORD's answer. Towards the close of it, JESUS upbraids the cities around him for their hardness of heart, and unbelief, and thanks his Father for revealing his truths to his people.

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.

When the LORD JESUS had finished his charge to his disciples, and was about to depart on his own personal ministry, he received a message from *John the Baptist*. We have noticed somewhat of this wonderful man, chap. iii. to which I refer. *John* was now in prison, for honestly telling *Herod*, that his intention of taking his brother *Philip's* wife, was unlawful. Matt. xiv. 4. *John* had given the most ample testimony to the Redeemer's person and character, and that not from human authority, but divine. John i. 30—34. He now sends his disciples to JESUS for their conviction also. I cannot for a moment conceive, that *John* himself had any doubts concerning CHRIST, though some writers have ventured to think so. Let the Reader turn to the Sermon *John* preached to the Jews, and judge for himself. John iii. 27, to the end. Our LORD's answer to *John's* disciples is very striking. I beg the Reader to turn to those Scriptures which speak of the Messiah in the Old Testament, and compare them with the life and ministry of JESUS in the New, and he will at once discover the beautiful correspondence. Gen. iii. 15. xxii. 17. xlix. 10. Isaiah xxxv. 4, 5, 6. lxi. 1. viii. 14, 15. Rom. ix. 33. 1 Pet. ii. 7, 8. And when the Reader hath duly pondered those blessed scriptures in proof, I will detain him but for the moment to observe, what a gracious testimony the LORD himself hath provided for his poor, doubting, fearful disciples, who, in the absence of higher evidences, can still say they love his name, amidst all their weaknesses and undeservings. John xxi. 17.

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.

The last words in this passage of our LORD's discourse, implies somewhat contained in it which requires deep attention. In this view I conceive the 10th verse to be the most weighty. If the Reader will turn to the Scripture which the LORD JESUS quotes from his servant, the Prophet Malachi, (Chap. iii. 1.) he will discover a very striking difference in the manner in which JESUS useth the words, from what they are there. In the words of the Prophet, it is JEHOVAH the LORD of Hosts speaking to the Church concerning John: He shall prepare the way before *me*. But here, as the LORD of his temple, CHRIST is spoken to on the same subject; and now the words are, behold I send my messenger before *thy* face, which shall prepare *thy* way before *thee*. What a decisive proof of the Oneness in the divine nature, in the *me* and *thee*; JEHOVAH's *way*, and CHRIST the Mediator's *way* is one and the same. And what can be more full in point to the GODHEAD of CHRIST? And hence it must undeniably follow, that the way of both, being one and the same; He, who is the LORD of his temple, and the Angel of the covenant, is One, with the other Persons of JEHOVAH, in nature, in essence, in way, will, and work; in property, honor, and worship; and in all the divine attributes, perfections, and glory! Hail! thou Almighty JESUS, whom all thy people delight in! Oh! for ears to hear what the SPIRIT saith concerning thee to the Churches! See Chapter iii. and Commentary throughout.

If I detain the Reader a moment longer on this discourse of JESUS, it shall only be to make a short observation on that passage in it, in which the LORD speaks of *the kingdom of heaven suffering violence, and the violent taking it by force*. There can be no doubt concerning what is meant by *the kingdom of heaven*, for the whole tenor of scripture refers this to *the kingdom of grace* upon all occasions, when speaking of the things of this life. But the violence this kingdom is said to suffer, and the being taken by force, these are terms not so clearly to be understood. The whole tide of Commentators, as far as I have seen, are all running in one, and the same opinion, that the words have reference to John's preaching, and the effects wrought upon the minds of the multitude thereby which flocked to his baptism. But I am free to confess, none of them satisfy my mind upon this subject. John's preaching of repentance can hardly be supposed to imply a violence done to CHRIST's kingdom, neither did it produce such an holy earnestness as might carry the expression of *the violent taking it by force*. See the parallel passage. Luke xvi. 16. I do not presume to speak decidedly on this, or any other portion of

the word of God, which may be considered in the least of doubtful meaning; but I am rather inclined to think, the violence CHRIST's kingdom is said to have sustained by John's preaching, refers more to the opposition made *against it* by the powers of darkness, than to the conciliating the minds of men *to it* by his outward ministry. John's chief scope of preaching was, as the herald of CHRIST, to testify of his approach, and that now it was very near. The hellish malice of the enemy is thereby the more excited, in proportion as Satan knew his kingdom was now tottering in the centre. See Malachi iv. 1. And as John called the great mass of *Pharisees* and *Sadducees*, which came to his baptism, *a generation of Vipers*, (See the Commentary on Matt. iii. 7.) it might be said the kingdom suffered violence from them, but cannot be conceived, that these were among the violent said to take the kingdom by force. But I leave the Reader to his own thoughts on the passage, under divine teaching, without adding aught more upon it.

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 wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.

How just the statement JESUS hath here made, of the inefficacy both of law and gospel, unaccompanied with the grace of God. The waywardness of children is a striking figure in proof. For neither the melody of salvation by CHRIST, nor the awful threatenings by the law of Moses, have the least influence on the ungenerate heart. Reader! think of the infinite importance of the work of God the HOLY GHOST in conversion!

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 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.

Reader! in the view of *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida*, and the awful woe pronounced upon those cities, which had been favoured with such high privileges, and regarded them not, think what will be the final condemnation of *Great Britain* in this particular? Would Jesus find faith, real saving faith, were he now to come among us? It is an awful thought! Luke xviii. 8. Matt. vii. 22, 23. Heb. ii. 3.

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.

* If I were to enter into the full Paraphrase and Comment upon this most sublime address of CHRIST to the Father, and the discourse connected with it to his people, it would swell many pages. The contracted nature of this work will not allow me. I must beg, however, the Reader not to pass it over, until that he hath first remarked with me, how the LORD JESUS thanks his Father for the *distinguishing grace*

bestowed upon his people; that while hiding the wonders of redemption from *the wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight*, (Isaiah v. 21.) the LORD reveals his mercy unto the humble and the lowly. And I beg the Reader to observe further, the cause which JESUS assigns; namely, God's own appointment. To all the bold and presumptuous reasonings of the human mind, which have been or may be hereafter brought forward, against the exercise of JEHOVAH'S sovereignty, the answer is direct. *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?* Surely the LORD is not called upon to give account of the motives of his holy will and pleasure, to any of his creatures. One thing we know, namely, that *his counsel and purpose must stand, and he will do all his pleasure*; and that all He doeth is right. His conduct towards his creatures, is by an unerring standard. His mercy is not moved by any good in us, neither is it kept back by our undeservings; for neither our merit, nor our misery, can be said to have had any hand in disposing the purposes of His sovereign will towards us. That the LORD hath taken occasion from our misery, to magnify the abounding riches of his mercy, is true; but then his mercy was before our misery, and his own everlasting love the sole cause of our blessedness in CHRIST, therefore our LORD'S own words are most blessed in point: *Even so Father! for so it seemed good in thy sight!*

I must beg to detain the Reader with a short remark more upon those very blessed words of JESUS, (for very blessed they are in my view) in which the LORD hath said, that the knowledge of the persons of the GODHEAD is *wholly in themselves*; and that none can know the SON but the FATHER; neither can any know the FATHER save the SON, and *he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him*. If those words of the LORD JESUS, were but duly attended to by those who call themselves Christians, after CHRIST, and consequently profess to believe, that what CHRIST hath said is true, (I mean such as deny his eternal power and GODHEAD, of every class and description,) could they, consistently with their own creed, presume to so daring an act of impiety, when JESUS himself hath said, that *no man knoweth the SON but the FATHER*? They it seems, in direct defiance of this scripture, declare *they know* the SON; and with an uncovered front, which makes one tremble at their blasphemy, advance further, and say that He is *not* One with the FATHER, over all God blessed for ever! Reader! do not fail to keep in remembrance those blessed words of JESUS, which so plainly, and so fully declare, that none can know the SON but the FATHER; than which there cannot be a more decisive testimony, that CHRIST is God.

But when the Reader hath duly pondered this unanswerable testimony of JESUS, to the certainty of his GODHEAD, I crave his indulgence to dwell a little longer on this precious passage. If the revelation, both of the FATHER and of the SON (for both are One) be made, and is made, by JESUS concerning the FATHER, and by the FATHER concerning the SON, oh! think how blessed it must be, when the LORD gives to any poor sinner a spirit of wisdom and revelation in this divine knowledge. I beg the Reader not to shut the book until he hath, in regular order, turned to those scriptures in blessed confirmation of this most unquestionable truth. And *first*, according to the order of those words, *No man knoweth the SON but the*

FATHER. See CHRIST's testimony to Peter. Matt. xvi. 13—17. See Paul's testimony also, concerning himself on this grand point. Gal. i. 11—16. Paul was called from the error of his way by CHRIST from heaven. So that, as he saith, *he never received the Gospel from man neither was taught it by man, but by JESUS CHRIST*. A plain and decided testimony that he knew CHRIST to be GOD. And the same Apostle saith, that it was GOD the FATHER that revealed his SON to him. Add to these, JESUS himself saith, *No man can come to me, except the FATHER which hath sent me, draw him*. John vi. 44. So much for the revelation of the SON by the FATHER, and of which Paul was so well convinced, agreeably to what our LORD hath said in this scripture, that none can know the SON but the FATHER and by his revelation of him, that the Apostle expressly prays for the Church at *Ephesus*, that *the Father would give unto them a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him*. I beg the Reader to read the whole passage Ephesians i. 15, to the end. Now then, in like manner, let the Reader consult those scriptures, which equally prove that the knowledge of the FATHER is only with the SON, and his redeemed, to whom the LORD JESUS reveals him. And here in proof, read John i. 18; then turn to John vi. 46; then John x. 15; and lastly, to mention no more, John xiv. 9, 10. Oh! the preciousness and blessedness of these things! Reader! may not you and I (if so be the LORD JESUS hath mercifully given us a spiritual knowledge herein,) may we not take to ourselves what JESUS said to Peter; and consider the same blessedness as ours also: for *flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto us, but our GOD and FATHER which is in heaven*. See also Luke x. 23, 24. John xvi. 13, 14, 15. 2 Cor. iv. 6.

I must not trespass further by enlarging on the many other blessed things contained in the close of this Chapter. But otherwise what a subject might be opened concerning the *All things* JESUS saith, as Mediator, are delivered unto him by his FATHER? (see the Commentary on Luke 10—22.) and of JESUS's invitation to the weary and heavy laden to come to him, and to find rest unto their souls? But I beg the Reader to consult some of the numberless scriptures on these glorious truths of our GOD: and may the HOLY GHOST open their beauties and saving influences to his soul! Psalm cxvi. 6. Isaiah xxviii. 12. Hebrews iv. 9.

REFLECTIONS.

WILL any send my soul to question, whether JESUS be indeed He that should come: or can there be a possibility of cause to look for another? Oh! no. He is the altogether lovely: and the chiefest and the fairest among ten thousand. Now, even now, as well as in the days of his flesh, the spiritually blind, are receiving from him their sight: the lame in soul, JESUS makes to leap as an hart; leprous sinners are cleansed in the fountain of his blood; the deaf hear the words of the book; the dead in trespasses and sins are raised; and the poor in spirit, hear and know the joyful sound, and through grace walk in the light of GOD's countenance. And can there be another JESUS: another Gospel which we have not received? Oh! thou dear LORD! blessed for ever blessed be thou for having said, *blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me!*

LORD! grant if it be thy blessed will, that it never may be the condemnation of our land like *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida*! Great Gospel privileges we have indeed; but what must follow if we neglect, or reject *such great salvation*?

Reader! let you and I listen to the sweet and gracious invitation, which JESUS gives to the weary in sin, and to the heavy laden under the burthen of it. Oh! for grace to learn of thee, thou meek and lovely SAVIOR! Thou art indeed, both a rest and resting place, for thy people. In thee, my soul would rest from sin, and rest to GOD. Thou art both a shelter from the wind, and a covert from the tempest. Thou art my hiding place, thou wilt preserve me from trouble. Thou wilt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Haste, haste my soul, to thy rest, thy JESUS; *for the LORD hath dealt bountifully by thee!*

CHAP. XII.

CONTENTS.

We have our LORD represented to us in this Chapter going on with his ministry. The sin against the HOLY GHOST is here spoken of.

AT that time Jesus went on the sabbath-day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungered, 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 hungered, and they that were with him;

4 How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shew-bread, 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.

I do not think it necessary to swell my *Poor Man's Commentary*, with making observations on whatever is plain and obvious. Our LORD, who is both the original institutor, and LORD of the Sabbath, hath clearly shown, how mercy is to supersede mere works of sacrifice. But if the Jews were so tenacious of the ordinary sanctity of the sabbath, as to prohibit every thing but what was indispensable; what would those men have said, had they lived in the present hour, when reverence both for the sabbath, and the LORD of the Sabbath, is so generally set aside. Ye people of GOD, in whose hearts the fear of the LORD is! see to it that ye stand up, as *Moses* did in the gap, to turn away the LORD's wrath from what may be generally expected; the LORD avenging the breach of his sabbaths. Jesus! be thou the very sabbath of my soul! See Mark ii. 23.

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 he 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,

Here was an immediate opportunity for CHRIST to prove himself LORD of the Sabbath, in healing this diseased man. The case is simply, but earnestly related: and the effect as might have been expected. But what I would have the Reader particularly to regard in this case, is the spiritual sense of it. This man with a sinew shrunk hand, was not in idleness at his own house, but in the synagogue. He was waiting in the way of ordinances. It is good to be found waiting on the LORD, and in the way of the LORD's own appointing. He seemed unconscious of the mercy the LORD intended for him: neither is it said, that he knew JESUS, much less that he made any application to JESUS. Preventing mercies, are sweet mercies. *I was found of them*, saith the LORD, *that sought me not*. Isaiah lxxv. 1. No doubt, Jesus knew this poor man was in the synagogue. And

He, of whom it is said, that *he must needs go* through Samaria, because there was a poor sinner who needed his mercies there, probably went to this Synagogue on purpose to manifest his grace to this man, with his withered hand, who needed him no less. John iv. 4. But what I would more particularly beg the Reader to notice, in the features of this miracle of CHRIST; is the precept of JESUS to the man: *Stretch forth thine hand!* I beg once for all to remark, that CHRIST's bid-dings are enablings. Unless the LORD JESUS had accompanied his command with power; and while bidding the sinner's shrunk hand to be stretched forth, he had communicated ability to obey, no blessing would have followed. It is truly blessed to eye this in every minute circumstance of life. Hence Paul was commissioned to direct the Philippians, *to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling*: because that the LORD himself would *work in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure*. Philip. ii. 12, 13. And hence the same Apostle adds, in the same Epistle, *I can do nothing of myself, but I can do all things through CHRIST who strengtheneth me*. Philip. iv. 13. It is truly blessed, to be enabled through grace, to have the lowest opinion of ourselves, that our views of JESUS, may be the more exalted; and to be sensible of our nothingness, that the LORD may have all the glory!

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.

It is striking to observe that those very scrupulous persons who professed so high a regard for the LORD's day, yet scrupled not to consult on that day, how they might destroy the LORD of life and glory.—Reader! did you ever notice any of the Pharisees of the pre-

sent hour, (for they are the same in all ages). Oh! what vast regard they would have you suppose they have for the morality of the Gospel! But the LORD JESUS, who reads under this covering the heart of such men, tells us that notwithstanding all this, they should receive the greater damnation. Matt. xxiii. 14. Now observe this was not for any immoralities, or for the neglect of prayers, and the like; for they were rigid to an excess in duties as they called them. But it was for setting up a righteousness of their own, against the righteousness of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. *Beware ye (saith JESUS) of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy!* Luke xii. 1.

But let us turn from the disgusting views of such characters, to contemplate the beautiful picture the Prophet *Isaias* hath drawn of JESUS, and which the Evangelist copies in this scripture from the original. See *Isaiah* xlii. 1—4. The Prophet introduceth JEHOVAH the FATHER as calling upon the Church to behold him; and as commending his person, in his gracious office as the Church's husband, and the Mediator, and as One in whom his soul delighteth. Nothing can be more blessed than what GOD the FATHER saith of him. And when his redeemed can answer to GOD the FATHER's approbation of him, as his servant; in their approbation of him as their surety, head, and Saviour, the subject is blessed indeed, *I will put my spirit in him*, saith JEHOVAH. *I will put my soul and body in his Almighty hands*, saith the poor awakened sinner. *He shall shew judgment to the Gentiles*, saith GOD. He hath shewn both judgment and mercy to me, saith the poor Gentile, whom grace hath recovered from sin and destruction. *He shall be a meek, a tender hearted SAVIOR*, saith the Father, so that even *the bruised reed he shall not break, and the smoking flax* of his people's weaknesses, *he shall not quench*, JESUS is all this and more, saith the poor sinner; *for he hath remembered me in my low estate, for his mercy endureth for ever!* Oh! the unknown, the unnumbered mercies in the bowels of JESUS, which he bears to all his redeemed; and by which he manifests his grace to them, *otherwise than he doth to the world.* John xiv. 21, 22.

I detain the Reader for the moment, just to observe on the word *judgment*, in this passage, that though in the first view of it, there might be thought somewhat harsh in it, but it is not so. Bringing forth *judgment to the Gentiles, and unto victory*, implies, that JESUS will compleat the work of his free grace for his redeemed, in a way of judgment so wise, and excellent, that it shall commend his administration for the deed, while every thing of tenderness shall mark his features of character; so that the *bruised reed* and the *smoking flax*, which are in his way, he will not tread upon nor injure.

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?

Let the Reader always connect with the view of the miracles of JESUS, his compassion to the soul, while healing the body. It is the blind and dumb in spirit, JESUS came to deliver.

24 But when the Pharisees heard *it*, they said, This *fellow* doth not cast out devils, but by Belzebub 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.

I pray the Reader to observe in these verses, several weighty things. *First*: the testimony here given to CHRIST'S GODHEAD. JESUS *knew their thoughts*. A thing impossible had he not been God. *All the Churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts*. Rev. ii. 23. *Secondly*.—Observe the several persons of the GODHEAD mentioned in the casting out of devils. JESUS saith, *I*; that is, GOD the SON, THE SPIRIT; that is, GOD the HOLY GHOST. And GOD; that is, GOD the FATHER. *Thirdly*.—When JESUS, in answer to the blasphemy of the Pharisees, who ascribed his work of casting out devils to the power of *Beelzebub*, saith, *by whom do your children cast them out?* he did not admit the thing, as if any, in reality, had cast out devils among them, for it was impossible: but the LORD took occasion to reprove them on their own principles. Magic was an old practice. Exodus vii. 11. Numbers xxiv. 1. And even after CHRIST'S return to glory, we read of exorcists. Acts xix. 13—17. But the disposing devils, was the prerogative of JESUS only. 1 John iii. 8.

But when the Reader hath paid all due notice to these things, I would beg his attention yet a little further, to what the LORD JESUS hath here said, of the kingdom of Satan. It is a point rightly to apprehend, of great importance, in the doctrines of the Gospel; and no child of God should be ignorant of it.

That Satan hath set up, and maintained an empire of sin, in the very heart of man, is a truth too certain to be questioned, and the awful effects of it, too well known to be denied. Holy Scripture, gives many sad relations of it. In fact, it was the setting up this kingdom against God and his CHRIST, for which the devil and his angels are said to have been cast out of heaven, and to have left their own habitation. Rev. xii. 7—12. Jude 6. At his expulsion from heaven, he seduced our first parents, and in them involved the whole of their posterity in the fall. And from that hour to the present, it is *he which worketh in the children of disobedience*. Hence the several names by which he is known: *the Great Dragon; that old Serpent, the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world; the strong man armed; the Prince of the power of the air; the God of this world; and whose vassals are led captive by him at his will*. Rev. xii. 7, &c. Ephes. ii. 2. 2 Cor. iv. 4. 2 Timothy ii. 26.

Now the whole purpose and design of the Gospel is directed to overthrow this kingdom of Satan, and to introduce and restore perfect order, among all the works of God. Hence it is said, that for this purpose, *the SON of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil*. 1 John iii. 8. And hence we find the LORD JESUS entering upon this service, immediately on his entrance into his ministry. *First*, by his own personal conquest over him on the cross. Heb. ii. 14, 15. Coloss. ii. 15. *Secondly*, at the conversion of his members; when, as in the scripture, the stronger than the strong man armed, even CHRIST, cometh upon him, destroyeth all his armor, and divideth the spoils. In every single instance of the saving conversion of a soul to God, this may be said to have been wrought, when that soul is *translated from the kingdom of darkness, into the kingdom of God's dear Son*. John xii. 31. John xiv. 30. John xvi. 7—11. 1 John ii. 13, 14. 1 John iv. 4. And a compleat victory is promised to the Church in the end. 1 Cor. x. 13. Rom. xvi. 22. *Thirdly*, there is a promise also of another triumph of JESUS, when a more signal display of victory will be shewn, in the LORD JESUS setting up a kingdom in the earth, before the day of judgment, and when Satan's power will be shut up and restrained. Rev. xx. 1—7. And, finally, at the universal judgment, the total and everlasting destruction of Satan's kingdom will take place. See Rev. xx, 10, &c. Such are the views scripture holds forth of these momentous truths!

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.

I must postpone the observations on this passage to my Commentary on the similar one, Mark iii. 28, to which therefore I refer.

34 O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

I would beg the Reader to pause over this verse ; and to collect the sense of our LORD's expression, in calling those men whom he had in view, *generation of vipers*. It is a very solemn consideration, but therefore the more to be regarded, that throughout the whole word of GOD, this generation is spoken of, in one and the same uniform character. Indeed, the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent, are expressly marked and defined, from the first moment in which the LORD declared, he would put enmity in the seed, to each other. Genesis iii. 15. Hence those strong expressions of CHRIST: *Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.* John viii. 44. And hence, as in this verse, JESUS speaks of it as a thing impossible, that they should do otherwise than what is evil. *How can ye being evil speak good things? Ye believe not* (said JESUS), *because ye are not of my sheep.* John x. 26. And elsewhere, he calls them, *serpents and a generation of vipers*, which cannot escape the *damnation of hell!* Matt. xxiii. 33. See Matt. xiii. 38. Matt. xxv. 33. And in like manner, his servants the Apostles adopt the same language. Paul called *Elymas* the sorcerer, *child of the devil.* Acts xiii. 10. And Peter speaking of the same race, calls them *curled children*; and as *brute beasts made to be taken and destroyed.* 2 Peter ii. 12—14. And John if possible, yet more strongly defines the stock; for when speaking of *Cain's* murdering his brother, he asketh the question by way of answering it. *And wherefore* (said he) *did Cain slay his brother? Because he was of that wicked one.* 1 John iii. 12. See those scriptures in further confirmation. Gal. iii. 16—29. 1 John iii. 8, 9.

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.

I pause over this verse, by way of observing, once for all, the scriptural sense of a *good man*. The word of GOD hath expressly said, that *there is none good, no not one.* Psm. xiv. 3. Rom. iii. 10. Eccles. vii. 20. Proverbs xxiv. 16. Rom. v. throughout. Hence therefore, as the word of GOD, cannot but be in perfect agreement with itself, in every part; it is evident, that by a *good man*, is meant one that is regenerated and born again; one that is renewed in the spirit of his mind, and justified in CHRIST JESUS. Paul speaks of such. 1 Cor. v. 11. So that this man differs from the natural man, yea, from what he himself once was, before this sovereign act of grace had passed upon his mind; and therefore now, out of the good treasure of his heart, in CHRIST; and from the graces of his Holy Spirit

planted there, he brings forth the sweet and precious fruits in life and conversation, of the person, work, and righteousness of Jesus. Philip. i. 27. Psalm lxvi. 16.

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.

As words as well as actions, yea thoughts, which are the womb of both, plainly manifest the state of the heart, whether renewed by grace, or remaining in the old state of unrenewed nature; the idle sinful discourse of the unawakened sinner, (for it is to such our Lord is here speaking,) daily testify the state in which he is; and who is already prejudged by his conversation; just as in like manner the lips of the gracious manifest that they are born to God, to whom there is no condemnation. Rom. viii. 1. Song iv. 11. Malachi iii. 16, 17, 18. I beg the Reader not to lose sight of this passage as referring to the unregenerate sinner living and dying out of CHRIST.

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.

I pass over all the several subjects contained in this passage of Jesus, from making any observations upon them, being in themselves self-evident; in order to call the Reader's attention to one here spoken of, which may not perhaps at first be so immediately plain and obvious. I mean, respecting the unclean spirit in his departure and return. The unclean spirit, no doubt, means the devil. And when men, under the cursed influences of the devil, are living in the open and notorious vices of profaneness, drunkenness, dishonesty, sabbath-breaking and the like, they may be said to have an *unclean spirit*. But if any outward reform takes place in such characters, and we behold a change wrought upon them, so that they are more decent in life and conversation, the devil may be said to have gone out from them, under the character of an *unclean spirit*. But if there be no saving change wrought in the soul by the regenerating power of the HOLY GHOST: if the devil be *gone out* of his own accord, and not *driven out* by the *stronger* man, he, even Jesus (see verse 29); this man's heart is still as much as ever under Satan's government; for he calls it *his house*, and saith *he will* return to it; yea, and he doth return to it, if so be there be no saving change wrought upon the man's heart by grace. So that, though he goes out an *unclean* devil, yet he comes back only somewhat cleaner, but still a devil, and reigns, and rules in his house, of the man's heart, as much as before. Yea, our Lord saith, that the last state of this man is worse than the first. For if, while under the same awful influence of an unrenewed, ungenerated heart, the man is prompted to put on the appearance of an outside sanctity; and covers over the uncleanness that is *within*, with a seeming zeal for religion *without*: these, are like the seven other spirits of the devil, more wicked than the former, because more desperately deceiving, both himself and the world; and of consequence, the end is more dreadful. And who shall calculate the numbers there are living under this most wretched of all delusions? Who shall say, the many, who go out of life well pleased with this whitening sepulchre-reform; in whose heart, no saving change hath been wrought; nor any acquaintance made with the person, work, or grace of God the HOLY GHOST. John iii. 3—9. Acts xix. 2. Reader! see to it that no change satisfies your mind, but that which is wrought by the HOLY GHOST and CHRIST, *formed in your heart the life of glory*. Romans viii. 9—17. 2 Cor. v. 17.

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.

It is a matter of no small importance in the faith of every child of God, to have right apprehensions of our Lord's relations after the flesh. As *Joseph* was only the reputed father of CHRIST (and not in reality), very plain it is, that on this side JESUS had none. And whether the Virgin *Mary* had, or had not children after the birth of CHRIST, it is of no moment to enquire, for it forms no article of faith: neither is it in the least connected with the present question. That *Mary* was a pure Virgin, at the time of her conception; that she continued so, to the birth of CHRIST; and that her conception, was altogether miraculous, by the HOLY GHOST, and without the intervention of an human father: these are the grand and the only points essential to be proved; and these are all most fully proved and ascertained in the scriptures. And hence it will follow, that any further relationship after the flesh, CHRIST had none. But his brethren are the members of this *mystical* body, and not his *personal* body. CHRIST and his seed, are spoken of as one. He the head, and they the members; and concerning whom JEHOVAH saith, *I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring.* Isaiah xliv. 3. Isaiah lix. 21. In that holy portion of human nature which constituted CHRIST's body, underived from man, and given of GOD, from all the persons of the GODHEAD: (see in proof, Psalms xl. 6. Hebrews x. 5. Psalms cxxxix. 13—16. Heb. ii. 14—16. Luke i. 35. and Commentary on Matt. i. 18.) was formed the holy seed of all his members. And as it is said of *Levi*, that he was in the loins of his father, when *Melchisedec* met him, Heb. vii. 10; so must it be said of the seed of CHRIST: they were in CHRIST; chosen in CHRIST; blessed in CHRIST; yea, beheld in CHRIST, *before the world began.* Ephes. i. 3, 4, 5. Isaiah viii. 18. Heb. ii. 11. So that when the LORD JESUS, in answer to the person, speaking to him of his relations, as stated in this Chapter, stretched forth his hand towards his disciples, and pointing to certain among the throng, and said, *behold my Mother and my Brethren!* these were CHRIST's

relations both in nature and grace. And if the Reader will turn to the following scriptures in proof, they will serve to throw great light upon the subject. As the everlasting *Father*, Isaiah ix. 6. *Brother*, John xx. 17. *Husband*, Isaiah liv. 5. *Friend*, John xv. 15. See the Poor Man's Commentary also on Chapter i. verse 22--25.

REFLECTIONS.

HAIL thou glorious LORD of the Sabbath! Do thou blessed JESUS, manifest to my soul, and in my soul, that thou art both LORD of the Sabbath and of my heart; by reigning there, and ruling there, and giving me to eat of the shew-bread of thy body, which is the bread of life, that I may have eternal life abiding in me. And do thou by me, O LORD, as thou didst to the poor man in the Synagogue, to all the withered affections of my poor nature; both bid me, and enable me, to stretch forth the hand of faith, and lay hold of eternal life in thee!

And oh! Almighty Father! in thy gracious office-work in covenant mercies, give me to hear thy sweet proclamation of thy servant whom thou hast chosen, and in whom, as the Church's Head and Surety, thou art well pleased, and hast delighted. Oh! for the teachings of God the HOLY GHOST, to know JEHOVAH's chosen and JEHOVAH's beloved, as my beloved, a meek SAVIOR, a tender hearted SAVIOR, a well qualified and powerful SAVIOR; who though so gentle as not to break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, yet so mighty as to send forth judgment unto victory, and in whose name the Gentiles shall trust.

And no less Almighty SPIRIT, do thou so teach, and guide me into all truth, that out of the good treasure by regeneration, and the daily renewings of thy grace which thou hast put into my heart, I may bring forth good things, while the generation of vipers, by their evil things, manifest the seed from whence they spring. Yea! LORD give me to see and know, by heartfelt experience, from thy sovereign work there wrought, that I am of the mystical relationship of CHRIST, and among the number whom JESUS will own as his brother, and sister, and mother.

CHAP. XIII.

CONTENTS.

The LORD JESUS is here instructing his disciples in Parables. Towards the close of the Chapter, the LORD assigns his reasons for this mode of teaching.

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.

I detain the Reader on the very entrance of this Chapter, to remark several interesting things which ought to be noticed. First, observe the unwearied ministry of the Lord. It was *the same day* in which he had before preached, as in the foregoing Chapter. Oh ! what a call on all his *sent* servants in the ministry, to be alive to the work of the Sanctuary ! John ix. 4. 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2. The *place* of CHRIST's preaching. Not the synagogue, but the sea-side. Teaching us that all places are sanctified when the HOLY GHOST makes them so. And the *multitudes* which attended CHRIST's ministry, serve to shew how eager the people were to hear this divine preacher, *who spake as never man spake*. John vii. 46.

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 hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty.

Very happily for the LORD's people, Jesus hath not left this parable of the sower to our interpretation, but hath given it himself, and which therefore supersedes all the labors of his servants. And so plain and clear is our LORD's explanation of it, that a little child, under grace, may understand it. I detain not the Reader to add to what Jesus hath here said, but only to observe upon it what a beautiful vein of instruction runs through the whole of it. When the LORD JESUS compares himself to a Sower, and the seed he soweth to the Gospel of his kingdom, we enter at once into the blessedness of apprehension concerning the whole purport of salvation. But when Jesus speaks of the devil, under the figure of the fowls of the air, catching away that which was sown in the heart, it should be remembered, that it is the ministry of the word, and not the grace, of the LORD JESUS that is thus rendered unprofitable. The heart is sometimes put for the memory; as in the instance of *Mary*. And she kept all these sayings *in her heart*; that is, in her memory. Luke ii. 51. So that by the devil's catching away the word from them that understand it not, (See also what is meant in scripture of the want of understanding. Job. xxviii. 28.) means not that he taketh away what was sown of grace in the heart, for grace implanted by the LORD can never be taken away; but that he causeth the *graceless* hearers to forget what they heard. In them, as well as all others of the unprofitable hearers, as children *not* of the kingdom, is fulfilled that striking prophecy of *Isaiah*, which, from its vast importance, is quoted no less than six times in the New Testament; namely, in this Chapter, verses 14, 15. Mark iv. 12. Luke viii. 10. John xii. 40. Acts xxviii. 26. Rom. xi. 8. In like manner, concerning the Sun arising on the Stony-ground hearers, we are not to suppose that our LORD meant the Sun of righteousness, for He ariseth not to scorch, but to warm, and with healing in his wings. But by the sun being up, is meant the sun of persecution, the drying, scorching heat of what the Church complained of, Song i. 6. the anger of men. The persons here spoken of were never rooted in CHRIST, and therefore no dews of heaven to water them; and moreover the seed is said not to have fallen *into* the ground, but *upon* stony ground. And those men who, from hence, have argued of the possibility of falling *from* grace, should first have observed, that they never were *in* grace. It is impossible to lose *that* we never had. An union *with* CHRIST, brings after it a communion *in* CHRIST. These Stony-ground hearers never had root, and, as such, could not do otherwise than wither away. To the same purport is what is said concerning *the seed sown among thorns*. It is not supposed that the characters here alluded to, are the openly prophane, and such as are inattentive to divine things, but rather such as make much profession. They have received conviction in the head, of the importance of salvation, but from never having felt it in their heart, and no saving grace having passed upon them, this world's riches are preferred to the riches of eternity, and their hearts, like ground over-run with thorns, and wholly unfruitful. By the *good ground*, into which the seed is cast, is meant an heart renewed, and made good by sovereign grace, for every man's heart by nature is evil. And the different product from hence, is also wholly from the same grace, and not man's improvement. But it is blessed for the soul of that man, whose increase is but of the lowest kind, ~~that~~ all is of the same *quality*, though

not of the same *quantity*. The drop of dew on the blade of grass, is as truly water as the ocean. And an union with CHRIST, makes the blessed, the humblest soul, as much as the highest. For it is all of JESUS, and *from* JESUS, and *to* JESUS, all the glory.

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.

The Lord himself hath explained very fully, and very blessedly, this parable in the 36th, and five following verses, which supersedes the necessity of any observations from me. I therefore only detain the Reader to remark, that in this parable, the Lord comes closer home than in the former. In that parable, the world at large was spoken of as receiving the seed of the gospel, and the reception of it hath been shewn, by the greater part receiving it in the way-side, on stony ground, and amidst thorns. But in this parable of the Tares springing up among the Wheat, is meant the *professing* Church of CHRIST, where the children of the wicked One are mingling with the children of the kingdom. Here, therefore, they spring up together, and grow together: but from the first moment, however undiscerned by the eyes of men, as perfectly known to God from everlasting, as when ripened into their full state. The tares can no more become good seed, than good seed can become tares. They are from a different stamina, a totally different race. So JESUS explained it to his disciples, and, blessed be God, so the Lord's children find. And though they are *to grow together until the harvest*, and the Church of God, while on earth, will never be free from tares, yet *the Lord knoweth them*

that are his, and by the sweet soul-refreshing dews of his Spirit, and the healing of the Sun of Righteousness upon their hearts, often the LORD giveth his people to know *whose they are, and to whom they belong*. Oh! the unspeakable mercy of being of the seed of CHRIST, and heirs of the kingdom. Reader! I beseech you to turn to those scriptures. Isaiah xlv. 3, 4, 5. Isaiah lix. 21. Gal. iii. 16—29.

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.

Different from all the Commentators I have seen, I cannot but think, that neither the great men of the earth, neither kings nor princes, are at all alluded to in this similitude; as if the Gospel, from small beginnings, attracted the notice of such men. But the simple beauty of this parable is, according to my view, that as a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump; so the grace of God, when put by the HOLY GHOST into the heart of a sinner, small and unnoticed as it is, produceth such vast things, that angels look with wonder and astonishment at the change which is wrought. Luke xv. 7.

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.

This parable, like the former, is meant to shew what wonderful works are wrought, when the grace of God, like leaven, sanctifieth the whole nature.

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.

I should apprehend, that what is here said, is figuratively said, with an eye to the vast difference in divine teaching, from the mere hearing the word of God. Every thing is a parable, even in the word of God, until the LORD is the teacher. Ezek. xx. 49.

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.

Our LORD's explanation of the parable of the Tares, is so plain and simple, that it can need nothing further by way of illustration, I only pray the LORD to give both Writer and Reader such a sense of it, that it may be found we have *the hearing ear*, and *the seeing eye*, to know these things which are freely given to us of God.

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.

The treasure may most probably be CHRIST, hid, in the field of the Scripture, from the wise and prudent, but revealed unto babes. The merchant-man seeking goodly pearls, may perhaps be designed to set forth the LORD JESUS CHRIST, who is seeking and must gather the goodly pearls, even his redeemed, which are the jewels of his mediatorial crown. Or if the merchant be designed to represent the spiritual merchant seeking CHRIST, as the pearl of great price, then it will shew, that the finding, and possessing him, includes all treasure; and gladly will a child of God then turn his back upon all the objects which might otherwise be desirable, in this waste and howling wilderness.

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.

What a beautiful representation is here made of the Son of God! He calls his servants scribes, and points out how needful it must be, that those who were well instructed themselves, should be forward to instruct others.

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.

Reader! even now the offence of the cross is not ceased! And, the LORD be praised, it never shall. Oh! what a blessedness is it, that amidst all the unworthiness that is in us, there is none in CHRIST. LORD! grant that I may never be offended, but in the midst of the present perverse and crooked generation, be *strong in the LORD, and in the power of his might.*

REFLECTIONS.

READER! let you and I pause over this sweet Chapter, and mark the condescending love of JESUS, in thus adopting his discourse, under the imagery of parables, surely it serves to teach us the tenderness of his heart towards his redeemed, as if to come down to the humblest capacities of his people; and that none might err in the apprehension, he varies his subject by illustrating under various similitudes the important truths relating to his kingdom. But that all might be impressed of the everlasting line of distinction between his children, and the children of the wicked One, under whatever figure, or parable, he states the subject, JESUS never loseth sight of this. The good *seed*, or the *leaven*, the *treasure* hid in the field, or the *good* gathered into vessels, all are made to represent the very reverse of the *way-side* hearers, the *stony ground*, the *thorns*, and the *tares*; which uniformly set forth the state of the reprobate and the seed of the devil. In every part of this blessed Chapter, the LORD JESUS hath drawn, as with a sun-beam, the striking difference, and shewn that characters, springing from such different stocks, never can coalesce; so that the good seed may become tares, or the tares good seed. LORD JESUS! give thy people grace to discover, that amidst all their complaints of unprofitableness, and the like, still thy redeemed are thine, and the LORD will own them. Oh! for grace, to have all our fruit in JESUS, and the end everlasting life.

CHAP. XIV.

CONTENTS.

This Chapter opens with an account of Herod's having murdered John the Baptist. In the after part we have the relation of some of the miracles of CHRIST.

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 birth-day 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.

What a vast variety of solemn thoughts arise from this short, but affecting narrative of the death of John the Baptist. The cruelty of the actors, the implacable hatred of the human mind, towards this poor Prophet, the savage feelings of Herod's guests, and, above all, the LORD's providence in the appointment! what endless meditations arise from these, and the like subjects, suggested by the event. Oh! what a proof the whole brings of that solemn scripture: *The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance, he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. So that a man shall say, verily, there is a reward for the righteous, verily, he is a God that judgeth the earth.* Psalm lviii. 10, 11. Reader! pause over the subject. Who that would desire truly to know to what a state the human nature is reduced by the fall of man, must learn it, under divine teaching,

from such savage instances as are here exhibited. What one man is capable of doing, all are; and, but for restraining grace, if temptations arose to prompt to like acts, would do. The seeds of every sin are in every heart, the same by the fall. Reader! do you believe this? Yes! if God the HOLY GHOST hath convinced you of sin. And until this is feelingly known in the heart, never will the infinitely precious redemption by the LORD JESUS CHRIST be understood or valued. Oh! how precious to them that believe is JESUS! 1 Pet. ii. 7. Hence a child of God reads this account of Herod, therefrom to abhor himself, and to love JESUS! 1 Cor. iv. 7.

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 to 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.

I pray the Reader after he hath duly pondered the many blessed instructions contained in this miracle, to attend to one feature in our LORD's character, which can never be too often regarded, nor too affectionately valued; I mean the movement of CHRIST's heart upon

this occasion, which is here sweetly noticed and testified, in the immediate act of healing the sick among the multitude. It ought to be our chief delight to notice, in every act of JESUS where it is more immediately recommended to our view, those actions of our LORD where his human feelings are brought forward to our observation. What can be so truly blessed as to mark the tendencies of CHRIST's love to his people, in that very nature of ours which he hath taken into union with the GODHEAD, and in which, and through which, the mercies of his divine nature flow to us in a way and manner which are peculiarly his own; that is to say, the mercies and compassion of the GOD-MAN CHRIST JESUS! Oh! what an endless subject of joy ariseth to the mind of the redeemed, when properly considered from this one point of view! The mercies and compassions of my GOD and SAVIOR, are the mercies and compassions of GOD, for *He is One with the FATHER over all, GOD blessed for ever. Amen.* But they are no less the mercies and compassions of the Man CHRIST JESUS, for, *verily, He took not on him the nature of Angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham*, and on purpose that *he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to GOD, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.* So that by this blessed compound of the two natures, his GODHEAD gives him an infinite fulness to supply all mercy towards his redeemed, and his Manhood gives him a fellow feeling, that those mercies come to us through an human channel, and in, and by both, they are the sweet, precious, and most affectionate compassions of the GOD-MAN CHRIST JESUS, who is *the Head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him which filleth all in all.* And, Reader! without amplifying, in this place, the subject, think what will be the communications of glory, if such be now the communications of grace, when *we shall see him as he is, and we shall know even as we are known!*

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.

Those retirings of the LORD are sweet incidents in his life, and they are held forth to the Church in strong endearments of character. But who shall undertake to describe them? Who shall take upon them to say, what passed in those hallowed seasons between CHRIST in his Mediator-character and the FATHER? We read of the transfiguration, Matt. xvii. 1—9. We read also of his agony in the garden, Luke xxii. 41—45. But here we pause. Every circumstance in the life of JESUS is, and must be, pregnant with somewhat great, but our part is in silence, and holy awe, to exercise our contemplation!

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.

Many very blessed instructions arise out of this short memorial of CHRIST's grace to his disciples, which we ought, through the LORD's teaching, to gather. The ship tossed with the waves, and the winds contrary, represents the case of the Church of JESUS at large, and the instance of believers in particular. It is such the LORD comforts in that sweet scripture: *Oh! thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted—In righteousness shalt thou be established; thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee.* Isaiah liv. 11, &c. And how often, amidst such frights as situations like the tossing of waves induce, is JESUS very near, as He was to his disciples, and we not conscious of it. *Hagar*, in the wilderness, could, and did say; *Thou LORD seest me.* Gen. xvi. 13. But you and I too often forget the certain truth. I pray the Reader to remark in the case of *Peter's* faith, how *strong* that faith may be, and indeed is, when at the command of the Almighty Giver of it, the LORD calls it forth; but how *slender*, when the Lord suspends his powerful arm in the support of it. But do not, Reader, overlook the gentle words of JESUS, even in reproof. *Oh thou of little faith!* (said Jesus) *wherefore didst thou doubt?* The LORD did not say, *Oh thou of no faith:* for faith he had, through JESUS giving it to

him; but his exercise of it was *little*. And let the Reader not fail to remark, the sequel of the whole: *When they were come into the ship, the wind ceased*. Yes! so is it always when JESUS makes himself known unto his people. *Fear not, I am with thee. Be not dismayed, I am thy God*. Look at that precious scripture. Isaiah xliii. 1, 2. I entreat the Reader, not to overlook the conviction wrought on the minds of the mariners of the GODHEAD of CHRIST by this event. They worshipped Jesus, and confessed who he was. The Reader will recollect also, how frequently this conviction was wrought on the multitude which followed CHRIST; and yet how shortly after the sense of it wore off. Luke iv. 22—29. Matt. xxi. 9. Mark xv. 13, 14.

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.

How delightful is it to behold JESUS, in those interesting moments, when fulfilling the Prophet's prediction of him. It was one mark of his divine character, to heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people. And here we behold the corresponding testimony. Isaiah xxxv. 4, 5, 6. Luke iv. 17, 18. But what I beg the Reader more particularly to observe, in this account of CHRIST, is, how fully it manifested his character as the God-man Messiah. Think, Reader, I beseech you, what an endearing representation this is of JESUS, that by his living so many years in this world as we do, and combating with the same exercises as we combat with; how blessedly suited he was, *having borne our sins, and carried our sorrows*, to sooth the sorrows in others, which he bore himself. Oh! how suited also now in glory, to recollect in his own trials what he felt, and to feel for others. The Apostle makes this the very basis of all comfort. *For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted: he knoweth how to succour them that are tempted*. Heb. ii. 18.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! let us gather a short lesson from the history of John the Baptist. To look at John, when falling a sacrifice at the instigation of a worthless woman, and to overlook the LORD in the appointment, is to consider second causes, and not the first; and very sure will it be, that we shall then make wrong conclusions. Here is a faithful servant of the LORD, borne down by oppression; and here is an inextinguishable woman triumphing in the godly man's death. But what follows? Ayé, there's the grand concern. *Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with him. Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him.*

Oh, for grace, to eye the LORD's sovereignty in all : for this alone will give energy to the lively actings of faith, and keep the soul in peace.

But let me turn from the servant to contemplate the Master! Oh, for grace to eye CHRIST, in the several blessed views here given of him; in feeding and supporting his people, and healing all their diseases. Precious LORD JESUS! do thou manifest thyself to my poor soul under that endearing character, as, JEHOVAH ROPHE, the LORD that healeth the people. And oh! for grace and faith in lively exercises upon his person, blood, and righteousness; that while JESUS is coming forth to bless, my soul through the HOLY GHOST, may be going forth to meet him; and like the people in this Chapter, may my faith be so strong in the LORD, that I may be convinced even the hem of CHRIST's garment, touched by faith, will make me perfectly whole. Amen.

CHAP. XV.

CONTENTS.

In this Chapter we have CHRIST's discourses with the scribes. The woman of Canaan, seeking to JESUS for her daughter : and the LORD feeding the multitude in the wilderness.

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.

It is worthy observation, how much men in all ages are disposed to rest in forms and customs, rather than know the power of godliness. Any thing, every thing shall be attempted or set up, if the LORD will relax in his demands. But what a precious thought is it to the believer in CHRIST, that neither washen nor unwashen hands, are any thing: but *faith which worketh by love*. One verse of scripture throws to the ground every thing of will worship. *The blood of JESUS CHRIST cleanseth from all sin*. So runs the glorious charter. And such in correspondence is the dependance of the faithful.

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.

I pass over the whole of this passage as being in itself too plain to need a Comment. But I beg to call the Reader's attention to that one verse in the middle of it. *Every plant (saith Jesus), which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up.* Than which nothing can more decidedly shew, the everlasting and unchanging love of Jesus to his people. Planted by sovereign grace, made one in CHRIST, and receiving the distinguishing tokens of his love: it is impossible they who are thus planted by the LORD, can fall. But on the other hand every *one* which is not of this stock, is sure to fall. Oh! the blessedness of distinguishing grace. LORD! sweetly give grace to the improvement of thy people, that we may know where we are, and to whom we belong. And avert from thy redeemed, false teachers and false guides: that we may not be in danger of being led by the blind, and both fall into condemnation.

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.

We here enter upon that beautiful history, of the woman of Canaan, whose faith is so highly commended by CHRIST. Every particular in it is interesting. The Evangelist saith, that she was a woman of Canaan; consequently a Gentile. Mark adds in his account of it, Mark vii. 26, that she was a *Syrophœnician*; that is, she belonged to that part of *Phœnicia* which bordered on *Syria*. She came from those coasts to seek after CHRIST. But who taught her of JESUS? And how came she to know that CHRIST was the SON of David? Surely none but GOD himself could be her teacher, or give her such faith as to follow JESUS. I pray the Reader, before he goes further, to turn to two scriptures in proof. Isaiah liv. 13, and John vi. 37—40. And when the Reader hath duly pondered these precious truths, let him behold JESUS directing his steps towards *Tyre* and *Sidon* to meet this woman, before that she was coming out of those coasts to meet CHRIST. Yes! for so the charter of grace runs: *It shall come to pass that before they call I will answer; and while they are yet speaking I will hear.* Isaiah lxx. 24. So sure, so very sure is that scripture; *If we love him, it is because he first loved us.* 1 John iv. 19.

But what was it that prompted this poor woman to come to CHRIST? *Her daughter was grievously vexed with a devil.* And who but JESUS could help her? The SON of GOD was manifested *that he might destroy the works of the devil.* 1 John iii. 8. How blessed is it to have such a deliverer to fly to, under distresses. If every mother, every father, whose children are under evil possessions, had the same knowledge of JESUS, and faith in JESUS, as this poor woman had: how would they hasten to his mercy-seat to spread their sorrows before him and seek his favor. I pray the Reader to notice how comprehensive her petition; and the ground upon which she asked for mercy. *Have mercy on me, O LORD!* CHRIST himself is mercy: the first born in the

womb of mercy. And the ground on which she hoped it was, that JESUS is the *Son of David*, meaning, God in human nature. God and man in one person; *Emmanuel* God with us. Let not the Reader overlook this. Here is a poor woman, a Gentile, pleading for mercy, with CHRIST, because he is CHRIST; while thousands who saw JESUS daily, knew nothing of him! Whence could this be? Surely from the LORD himself. So that we gather two grand truths from the case of this woman, illustrated as it is, by her history; namely that God and none other could have taught her of JESUS. And, secondly, that that teaching infallibly led her to seek to CHRIST, as the CHRIST of God. John vi. 45, 46.

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.

But JESUS answered her not a word. What a discouragement was here. Is this the LORD JESUS, who commanded every poor, weary, and heavy laden sinner, to come to him, assuring them, that *they should find rest unto their souls*. And doth JESUS remain silent, and seemingly inattentive to the earnest cries of this poor creature? Oh! ye that know the history of this woman, and behold that the end of the LORD is very pitiful and gracious, learn from hence how to form conclusions, when at any time, there is a silence at the heavenly throne. JESUS both hears, and sees, and knows all your sorrows: yea, himself it is, that measures out your portion of exercise; and is all the while infinitely more disposed, to administer the needed comfort, than you are to ask it. But he waits to be gracious: that is, waits the properest time, which is the best time to answer his purpose, and your real happiness. JESUS, therefore, for the present answers the poor woman not a word. And this gives occasion to the disciples to interest themselves in her behalf. *Send her away: she crieth after us.* They knew not what was in the LORD's intention. Ministers of CHRIST, do well to bear the persons, and the wants of the LORD's people in their prayers before the throne; and like their Master, in his High Priestly office, go in before the mercy-seat, as JESUS doth, with their names upon their breast and in their hearts. But here they rest. They can go no further.

I am not sent, saith JESUS, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Commentators generally agree, that CHRIST, as the minister of the Circumcision, meant to say by this, that his commission was only to Israel. And on confirmation when he sent his disciples out to preach, he commanded them *not to go in the way of the Gentiles*. Matt. x. 5, 6. But I am free to confess, that notwithstanding all this, I do not conceive that the LORD JESUS could mean that his commission was limited to the Jewish nation. *He came to seek, and save that which was lost.* And what was lost, but his spouse, his Church, to whom he betrothed himself, before all worlds? And was not the Gentile Church, as much as the Jewish, included? Read those scriptures, Isaiah xlix. 1—6. Song vi. 9. John x. 15, 16. Gal. iii. 28, 29.

The LORD's answer to the disciples, was therefore meant, for the further exercise of her faith.

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 master's table.

The poor woman, a true daughter of Abraham, *who against hope believed in hope*, still held out, under all discouragements; and therefore now ventures nearer to JESUS. She *worshipped him* in testimony of her belief in his GODHEAD; and the cry of the soul goes forth in the most vehement earnestness, saying, LORD *help me!* Oh! for grace on trying seasons, to be more clamorous, when discouragements abound; and to rest on JESUS, when every promise leading to JESUS seems shut up. *Though he slay me (said one of old) yet will I trust in him.* Job xiii. 15.

Still the exercise of her faith is not finished. JESUS now speaks for the first time to her; but it must have seemed what the LORD said as very cutting to the heart. *It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs.* Think, Reader! how she felt, to hear those words drop from the lips of CHRIST. JESUS knew her, loved her, and from the first moment she cried to him; had all along determined to do for her, even more than she had asked; yet still, that faith the LORD had given her shall be tried. She is to stand forth, an everlasting monument in the Church of God, for her illustrious faith; and therefore let faith have her perfect work and lack nothing. And oh! what but grace could have enabled her to hold on and hold out; or have taught her to make that sweet reply to JESUS: *Truth, LORD! yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's 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.

Here finisheth the wonderful subject, in the LORD's manifested grace, and her soul's joy. *O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt.* As if JESUS threw the reins of government into her hand, saying, as by the Prophet, *Concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me.* Isaiah xlv. 11. And was there ever a more finished instance of grace and mercy, not only in following up this daughter of Abraham's petition; but planting such faith in her heart, as might sustain so long, and painful a trial. Reader! I pray you, dismiss it not, until you have gathered some, at least of the many blessed instructions it contains, for your own private encouragement, under the lesser exercises of your faith.

And, *First.* Behold the sovereignty of Almighty grace, in this chosen vessel of God; and taken from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.

How evident is it, that JESUS hath a Church, to be gathered from all nations. They shall come *from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south.* And the certainty of their coming is in the covenant. *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.* Psm. cx. 3.

Secondly. Mark the grace of the LORD, in disposing the way for this poor Gentile to come to CHRIST. By inducing afflictions of body, and giving grace in the soul, she is brought to Jesus. Oh! how often the LORD thus mercifully deals with his people.

Thirdly. Learn from the LORD's dealings with her, how to form proper judgment of his dealings with all his people. Though from the first, more disposed to grant than she to ask; yet to enhance the blessing, and to improve her faith, the mercy is suspended for a space. So Jesus doth by all. And sweet it is, when by waiting upon the LORD, we renew our spiritual strength.

Fourthly. Behold what humbleness of soul grace accomplisheth in the heart. Truth, LORD, said this poor member of CHRIST's mystical body, I am unworthy of children's fare. Reader! depend upon it, in proportion to our views of CHRIST's glory, such will be our views of our own unworthiness. It is CHRIST alone that shall be exalted. And now this poor Canaanite is sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of our God, and of his CHRIST!

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.

We have here renewed instances of JESUS's grace, both to the souls and bodies of men. He manifested his power and GODHEAD, and proved his being the Messiah in fulfilling what had been prophesied of him. Isaiah xxxv. 5, 6. Isaiah lxi. 1, &c. But it would swell this work of the "Poor Man's Commentary" much beyond the limits proposed, to notice every miracle of the LORD JESUS, with observations, in a way of improvement. Of the LORD it must be truly said, as said the Psalmist ages before, who contemplated his coming; *his greatness is unsearchable*. Psm. cxlv. 3.

REFLECTIONS.

Who can read in the opening of this Chapter, the pitiful substitution of outward acts of religion for the defect of inward purity, but with painful mortification, when we consider in such proofs to what a sad state of ruin, our whole nature is reduced by the fall? Alas! what are these Scribes and Pharisees, but representatives of all men in the Adam-race, until a work of mercy in salvation hath passed upon the soul? Do we not all draw nigh to GOD with our mouth, and honor him with our lips, while our hearts are far from him; until GOD the HOLY GHOST, hath revealed CHRIST to us, in his person, offices, and character, and *we are brought nigh by the blood of his cross*?

What a beautiful relief, from such a universal corruption of nature is the subject this Chapter introduceth us to, of the woman of *Canaan*. Oh! ye parents of perverse children, and children under the dominion of Satan; oh! may ye learn for them, for yourselves, yea, for the whole Church of CHRIST, how to come to JESUS. Who shall say what mercies JESUS is continually manifesting of the same kind? And if we feel interested, as that we cannot but feel interested, for our own, and their everlasting welfare, that neither we nor our offspring should remain under the worst of all distresses, even soul-distresses in Satan's influence; oh! let us come out of all the coasts of the *Tyre* and *Sidon* of this world, and look unto JESUS: and beholding his mercy here, let us hope for mercy for all Israel: for with him is *plenteous redemption*.

JESUS! do thou have compassion, LORD, as thou hadst in the days of

thy flesh, and beholding the multitudes in the wilderness, send us not empty away, but feed us with thyself; and command a blessing upon thy bounty: for thou LORD art the bread of life, of which *whosoever eateth shall live for ever!*

CHAP. XVI.

CONTENTS.

The sign of Jonas, the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees guarded against; Peter's profession of CHRIST, and the LORD foretelling his death, are the several subjects of this Chapter.

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 lowering. 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.

It is very awful to behold men in an unwakened, unregenerate state, professing, like those Pharisees, great concern for religion. In all ages there have been multitudes amusing themselves, and deceiving others, on this ground. Signs from heaven, false interpretation of the Prophets, and men untaught by God the HOLY GHOST, setting up a system of instruction for others. To all such the cross of CHRIST will be as offensive as to the Pharisees of old. But to all such there will be no sign given but like that of *Jonas*, to offend them still more, and to work no work of grace.

5 And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.

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.

The caution the LORD gave to his disciples then, of a leaven in their doctrine, I venture to believe, was generally intended as a caution to all his disciples, in every age of the church. And never was there a period where the caution was more needful than now. Oh! what a leaven mixes in the present hour with the pure doctrines of CHRIST, and even in churches calling themselves Christian? Freewill, self-righteousness, improvements of grace, and conditional salvation with some, and the denial of the HOLY SPIRIT's agency, with the work of regeneration, and the justifying righteousness of the LORD JESUS CHRIST with others, to say nothing of numberless other corruptions which have crept in among men, to the great injury of *the faith once delivered unto the saints*, these too plainly prove that the precept of CHRIST, to beware of the leaven of deception and error in doctrine, is highly seasonable in the present day of the Church.

13 ¶ When Jesus came into the coasts of Cesarea 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 Bar-jona: 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.

The question JESUS here put to his disciples, is that grand and momentous question which every one should ask his own heart, for in the proper apprehension of it consists everlasting life. John xvii. 2, 3. Some read the words thus. Whom do men say that I am? Do they call me the Son of Man? Do they indeed know me in my human nature, the seed of the woman promised? Reader! it is blessed, yea very blessed, so to know him. Heb. ii. 16, 17, 18. The various opinions concerning CHRIST at that time, may serve to shew that there always hath been, and always will be, as now, great variety of notions concerning CHRIST. But, Reader! there can be but one right judgment, and that must be formed from divine teaching. And hence, when Peter for himself and his few faithful companions, declared that JESUS was the CHRIST of GOD, the LORD made this remarkable answer; that *flesh and blood could not reveal the glorious truth; and none but the Father which is in heaven.* I beg the Reader to pause over this account of CHRIST for his own sake, and see whether his knowledge of CHRIST comes from the same Almighty teaching. If, my brother, like *Peter*, you know and believe that CHRIST is the Christ of GOD, most evident it is, from what JESUS hath here said, that you have never learnt it from flesh and blood, but GOD himself hath been your teacher, and, like *Peter*, you are blessed in that knowledge also. See those sweet Scriptures; Matt. xi. 27. John vi. 45, 46. Gal. i. 15, 16. Ephes. i. 17, 18. 1 Cor. xii. 3. Ephes. iii. 14, &c. What follows in the promise made to Peter, is not simply to *Peter* as *Peter*, but as representing the LORD's body, his Church. CHRIST himself is the rock JEHOVAH hath laid in Zion. So the Prophet was commissioned to tell the Church. Isaiah xxviii. 16. And so *Peter* himself, in reference to CHRIST, explained it. 1 Pet. ii. 6, 7, 8. Hence when JESUS said, *upon this rock will I build my Church*, he meant himself, on whom *Peter* and all true believers are alike built, and from their union with CHRIST, neither hell nor corruption shall be able to prevail. By the keys of the kingdom of heaven, given to *Peter*, I venture to believe (but I do not presume to decide) is meant the power and prevalency of prayer, whensoever JESUS, by his outpouring of his Spirit, gives a spirit of prayer. And certain it

is, that when the LORD the HOLY GHOST gives a spirit of grace and supplication to a child of GOD, the prayer, indited by the *Spirit*, is in conformity to the will of GOD, and exactly in unison with the intercession of CHRIST. Hence the binding, or loosing, both in earth and heaven, must be secured, because all the Persons of the GOD-HEAD are engaged in the agency. *Whatsoever ye ask in my name, (said JESUS,) believing, he will give it you.* John xvi. 23.

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.

Observe with what tenderness the LORD JESUS begins to prepare the minds of his disciples for the great event coming. Oh! the love of JESUS! But observe the mistaken views of *Peter* upon the occasion. No doubt it was love in *Peter* to the person of his LORD, which could not bear the thought of his dear LORD's sufferings. But alas! *Peter* what would have become of CHRIST's Church, if JESUS had not died to redeem it? I have often paused over the passage. Think what CHRIST said to his dear servant; *get thee behind me Satan!* Is this *Peter*, who, but a little before, JESUS, the SON of GOD, declared to be blessed? Never did the LORD JESUS use such language, and that to a child of GOD, and one of his own redeemed ones. But, Reader! while you and I consider, as in the instance of *Peter*, how a soul may be made blessed in the abundance of revelations, yet what temptations the same may fall into, when the LORD remits but a moment his teachings: and while we learn this from the character of this Apostle, let us yet abundantly more look unto the LORD JESUS in this instance, and see how his zeal for his Father's glory, and an holy love to his body, the Church, made him long for the hour, when, by his sufferings and death, he should accomplish redemption for his people. Oh! thou precious LORD JESUS! with what earnestness didst thou enter on this baptism of sufferings, and how wast thou straitened until it was accomplished!

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?

How graciously the LORD took occasion, from the mistaken views of *Peter*, to warn and teach all his disciples to be on their guard against all such influence. All the disciples, as well as *Peter*, were tainted with the same misapprehensions. And, Reader! are we not all? But ease, in this life, is not attainable with following the cross of JESUS. And the profit of the whole world, with the loss of the soul, would leave a man poor indeed.

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,

These verses are blended as if expressive of the same truth. Every coming of CHRIST is glorious, both when he comes first to awaken a soul, and in all the after visits of his grace, until he finally comes to take his redeemed home to glory. And JESUS puts his name, the *Amen*, the *faithful witness*, to the truth of it, that some then present would not, like holy *Simeon*, see death until they had seen CHRIST's kingdom of grace, leading to a sure kingdom of glory. And this was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, and is fulfilled in every instance of a redeemed soul, when awakened *from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan to the living God*.

REFLECTIONS.

LORD, I pray thee! keep my soul from every leaven, which, mingled with the compleat justifying righteousness of my LORD JESUS CHRIST, would rob my GOD of his glory, and my soul of happiness. And doth my GOD and SAVIOR demand of my poor soul who JESUS is, amidst the varieties of creeds and professions of the present day? Oh! for the teaching of GOD the HOLY GHOST, the revelation of GOD my Father, and the blessed manifestation of the SON of GOD to my heart, that I may bear a fixed, unalterable, and decided testimony, before Angels and Men, that thou art the CHRIST of GOD, the LORD, my righteousness. Oh! yes! thou HOLY ONE of Israel! thou art indeed the CHRIST of GOD, the Word of GOD, the Lamb of GOD, the wisdom of GOD, and the power of GOD, for salvation to every one that believeth. And oh, my honoured LORD, as thou hast said, flesh and blood cannot reveal it, and none but GOD the Father can give a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of CHRIST, hath the LORD given to me this spirit of wisdom and revelation in the

knowledge of my LORD; then let me take to myself the blessedness of the discovery, and *rejoice in hope of the glory of God*. Oh! for grace to savour the things which are of GOD, and not those which are of men. Give me, blessed JESUS, grace to follow thy cross, and learn all the necessary exercises of self-denial, that being conformed to thy image here; *I may be satisfied when I awake up after thy likeness hereafter!*

CHAP. XVII.

CONTENTS.

We have here an account of CHRIST's Transfiguration. A Lunatic is healed by JESUS. The LORD again foretels his approaching death. The Tribute Money.

AND after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart.

2 And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

Three of the Evangelists have recorded this wonderful scene of CHRIST's glory. Mark ix. 2. Luke ix. 28. And three of the Apostles were present at it. One of them, *Peter*, was commissioned by the HOLY GHOST to give a new record of it just before his own death, to intimate the vast impression it had made upon his mind. 2 Pet. i. 16, &c. It is worthy remark, that JESUS should single out *Peter*, *James*, and *John*, to be with him at this display of his glory, who were to be present with him at his humiliation in the garden. No doubt it is the truest preparation to the followers of the LORD JESUS, to know CHRIST in his power, who are to be brought under exercises concerning his humiliation. Luke xxii. 28, 29, 30. I do not presume to add a word to what the Evangelists have here said of this transfiguration, by way of explaining what even my conception cannot equally form an idea of. We know that *the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us*. John i. 14. And we know also, that *in Him*, that is, CHRIST, *dwelleth all the fulness of the GODHEAD* bodily. Coloss. ii. 9. All that we can possibly frame to ourselves of this transfiguration therefore is, that the GODHEAD shone forth in the manhood in a more than ordinary manner. The SON of GOD was pleased to manifest himself in his double-nature glory more than in the usual appearances of CHRIST in the days of his flesh. It was a moment of peculiar manifestation of the glories of his person. It was the personal glory of the God-Man, as God-Man, and every child of GOD must find cause to bless the LORD for the mercy. If the Reader will turn to the following scriptures, he will, perhaps, be led to discover somewhat similar. Exod. xxiv. Exod. xxxiii. 20. Isaiah vi. Ezek. i. 26, &c. Dan. x. 5, 6.

3 And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.

Moses and *Elias* were seen, and it should seem were known by the Apostles, though the former had been dead *fifteen hundred years*, and the latter near *nine hundred*. I think we may safely infer from hence, that the Church of CHRIST are well known to each other in the several members of CHRIST's mystical body, and they who sleep in JESUS, as well as those alive in JESUS, have communion with their glorious Head. Sweet consideration to the believer. 1 Thess. iv. 13, &c. Rom. xiv. 8.

4 Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

It appears by what both *Mark* and *Luke* have related of this wonderful scene, the Apostle was in such a state of rapture that he knew not what he said. No doubt his whole soul was absorbed in the contemplation, and, like *Paul* upon another occasion, perhaps, not dissimilar, knew not whether he was in the body or out of the body. 2 Cor. xii. 1—4. The proposal of making tabernacles upon earth for those inhabitants of heaven, plainly shews in what a state *Peter's* mind was. But *Peter* might well say, it was good to be present at such a scene. And yet who should have thought, that a man present at such a manifestation of CHRIST's glory, and one who had before received the testimony of being blessed in the revelation God the FATHER had made to him concerning the Person of CHRIST, (see chap. xvi. 15—19.) would ever afterwards have denied CHRIST. (Matt. xxvi. 69—75.) Oh! that such an example may be commissioned of our God, to teach both Writer and Reader of this *Poor Man's Commentary*, what *Peter* himself, in the after stages of life declared, that *they that are kept, are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation*. 1 Pet. i. 5. Depend upon it, the safety of CHRIST's whole Church is in CHRIST, and not in ourselves.

5 While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.

This is a most blessed proclamation, and infinitely precious to the Church of CHRIST. JEHOVAH had before, at the baptism of JESUS, given testimony to CHRIST's person and character, and here again confirms it. I stay not to make any observations concerning the splendor and glory of the scene, but rather to consider the blessedness of the thing itself. JEHOVAH bears testimony to CHRIST as the beloved SON of GOD. *One with the FATHER over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.* And again, as the begotten SON of GOD, to the purposes of salvation, *the brightness of the FATHER's glory, and the express*

image of his person. And his being well pleased with Him, and in Him, confirms JEHOVAH's favor to the Church in CHRIST, being well pleased with Him as the Head of his body, the Church, and the Church in Him. *In whom I am well pleased.* Not only with Him, but in Him, that is, his whole Church, in Him, being always considered as part of himself, *members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.* The LORD is well pleased for his righteousness' sake, he will magnify the law, and make it honorable. Isaiah xlii. 21. So that when commanded to hear him, the Church is to accept CHRIST, in all the fulness of his complete salvation, both in his person, office, character, and relations, and to be so completely pleased with Him, as the LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, as JEHOVAH is pleased with Him, the glorious surety, sponsor, and complete justifying righteousness of his whole body, the Church, *the fulness of Him which filleth all in all.* Reader! Are you well pleased with JESUS? It is an important question. The soul that is so, makes JESUS, what JEHOVAH hath made him, the whole of salvation. Accepts CHRIST as all, looks to CHRIST for all. Pleads CHRIST in all, as the sole means of salvation. Not as procuring favor to the acceptation of our prayers, and tears, and repentance, and faith, but as the very cause, the very righteousness, in which the whole Church, and every individual of the Church, is accepted, and appears in before GOD. He that expressed himself in those words of scripture, felt this to the full. May it be my soul's language also. *I will go in the strength of the LORD GOD: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only.* Psm. lxxi. 16. Reader! what saith your experience to this statement? Oh! for grace, and the sweet influence of GOD the HOLY GHOST, always upon my heart, that as often as I read those words of GOD the FATHER, or they are brought to my recollection, concerning his testimony to GOD the SON, saying, *this is my beloved SON in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him,* may my soul be enabled to say, and *this is my beloved SAVIOR, in whom I pray to be found well pleased, in life, and death, in time, and to all eternity!* Amen.

6 And when the disciples heard *it*, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.

7 And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.

8 And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.

It is not to be wondered at that the disciples should be thus affected. GOD is awful, even in mercies. See how Israel was struck with fear on *Mount Sinai.* Exod. xx. 18—21. But see, Reader, the tenderness of JESUS. *He came and touched them,* Precious Redeemer! how hast thou, by the assumption of our nature, opened a way of communicating mercies to us, and lessening our fears. And Reader! I pray you to remark, that the very first words JESUS spake to his disciples after GOD the FATHER had commanded them to hear him, was, *be not afraid.* And doth it not follow, from hence, that such is the love of GOD our FATHER to the Church, in CHRIST, and knowing

that all love is in the heart of CHRIST towards his people, thus he commands concerning him. And GOD the SON, having taking our nature for the express purpose, manifests that his whole heart towards them is love. And GOD the HOLY GHOST, from his everlasting love also to CHRIST, and his Church in him, takes care to make the whole effectual, in *directing the heart of the redeemed into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for JESUS CHRIST!* Oh! for grace, under those blessed assurances, to possess such faith in JESUS, as may raise our souls above all fears, while conscious of an union with CHRIST, and acceptance in CHRIST. The sudden departure of *Moses and Elias* may serve to teach us, that none but JESUS can be our abiding comfort. Every thing here below is short and transitory. Oh! what a blessed thought it is. JESUS hath said, *Lo! I am with you always,* Matt. xxviii. 20.

9 And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.

10 And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?

11 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.

12 But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.

13 Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

There is somewhat very blessed in this prohibition of JESUS, concerning making known the vision. It doth not appear that the other disciples were made acquainted with it. *Peter* insists upon it much, after the LORD's return to glory, but not before. And the reason seems evident. The LORD's purposes are for his Church. They shall have, in due season, evidences enough, but to others, there is nothing that will carry conviction. So the Prophet declared, and so the Scriptures all along have shewn. *Isaiah* vi. 9. *Acts* xxviii. 22, to the end. Nothing can be more plain and evident, from this explanation of CHRIST, that the prophecy of *Malachi*, chap. iv. 5. concerning the coming of *Elijah*, had been grossly perverted by the Scribes. *John the Baptist* was indeed foretold by the Prophet *Isaiah*, in strong features of character, chap. xl. 3. and *Malachi* had been commissioned by GOD the HOLY GHOST, to speak of John also; chap. iii. 1. but the prediction of *Elijah's* coming, gave no authority to this expectation of the Scribes and Pharisees. *John the Baptist* could not be *Elias*, though he might be said to come in the spirit and power, with which he appeared, being commissioned, in like manner, by GOD the HOLY GHOST.

14 ¶ And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a *certain* man, kneeling down to him, and saying,

15 Lord have mercy on my son; for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for oft times he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water.

16 And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.

17 Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me.

18 And Jesus rebuked the devil: and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour.

19 Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?

20 And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

21 Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.

We have this miracle more particularly related by *Mark*, chap. ix. 14, &c. to which, therefore, I refer, as well as for the observations offered upon it, which will there be more fully considered. In the mean time, I only beg to detain the Reader with a short remark on the slenderness of the disciples' faith; in their inability to accomplish the cure of this child. This Epilepsy, or falling sickness, of the child's body, it should seem, had afforded handle to the devil to exercise his cruel devices on the child's soul; and no doubt the permission, as it laid the foundation for the greater manifestation of *CHRIST*'s glory, was graciously ordered. But the slenderness of the disciples' faith, was simply this it should seem, not in their faith in *CHRIST*, but their exertion of that faith in this act of working miracles, as they had been commissioned to do. The *LORD JESUS*, when he said, O faithless, and perverse generation, did not speak to his disciples, for though they were indeed men of little faith, yet certainly not faithless. It was the men of that generation whom *JESUS* called faithless and perverse, for in *Mark's* account of this miracle, it appears, that

from the inability of the servants of CHRIST, to heal the child, they began to triumph as though the same defect was in the Master, therefore JESUS called that generation faithless and perverse, But the weakness of the disciples' faith, opens a subject of encouragement to the timid disciples of JESUS, in every age of the Church, which, under grace, we ought to make improvement from. Let it be remembered therefore, that with respect to our own personal salvation, the smallest portions of faith, as they are *from* CHRIST, do prove an union *with* CHRIST, as truly as the largest gifts the LORD may be pleased to bestow upon his members. The drop of water in the dew, is as truly water as all the rivers of the world. It is the same in nature and in *quality*, though not in *quantity*. The same may be said in respect to faith. And this ought to comfort and encourage a poor child of GOD under weak faith, whose cries for an increase of faith are great and continual. Luke xvii. 5. Moreover those portions of faith, which are of the operation of the Spirit of GOD, however small and inconsiderable, yet carry with them the true marks of a child of GOD: *Unto you* (saith Paul to the Church) *it is given in the behalf of CHRIST, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.* Philip. i. 29. Faith is the gift of GOD. And wheresoever this grace is given, it proves the possessor of it to be a child of GOD. For when Paul preached among the Gentiles, we are told, that *as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.* Acts xiii. 48. And as to the act of being justified by faith, it is plain from the whole tenor of Scripture, that while it is blessed to have strong and lively acting of faith on the person, work, and righteousness of GOD our SAVIOR, yet the babe in CHRIST, as well as the strong man in the LORD, is as truly justified, because it is CHRIST which justifieth, and not the strength of our faith in CHRIST which contributes thereto. *By him,* (saith Paul) that is, by CHRIST, *all that believe*, whether slender faith or strong faith, *all that believe, are justified from all things.* Acts xiii. 39.

22 ¶ And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men:

23 And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry.

I cannot allow those verses to pass without calling upon the Reader to remark, with me, how much the LORD JESUS seemed to delight in the prospect of his great accomplishment of redemption. Every feature in his character marks this. In proof, see Matt. xvi. 22, 23. Luke ii. 48, 49. Luke xii. 50. John xii. 27, 28. John xiii. 27.

24 ¶ And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute *money* came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute?

25 He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What

thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?

26 Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free.

27 Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.

It should seem, that this tribute money was not what the publicans gathered for the Roman emperors, but for the temple service. The SON of GOD had no right to pay it, strictly speaking, for He himself was LORD of the temple. Mal. iii. 1. Heb. iii. 6. But, as the Head and Husband of his people, becoming debtor thereby to the whole law, it was justly due. See Gal. iv. 4. Luke ii. 22. Exod. xxx. 12—15. Matt. iv. 15. But what a beautiful occasion JESUS took therefrom to manifest his power and GODHEAD by the fish with money. And, Reader! if to supply this pressing occasion, JESUS wrought a miracle *then*, will he be inattentive to any of the wants of his people *now*? Oh! how blessedly doth every incident in the life of CHRIST, minister instruction, grace, and comfort?

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT a lovely chapter is this to read to us the interesting events in the life of CHRIST, when GOD the HOLY GHOST is here leading the Church by the hand, to contemplate CHRIST in his glory, and CHRIST in his humiliation. We follow him, by faith, to the Mount of Transfiguration, and we hear him informing his disciples, soon after, of his sufferings which were shortly to follow at Jerusalem! Precious LORD Jesus! cause both views to have their gracious influences upon the hearts of thy redeemed! Oh! may it be my portion to follow thee often, by faith, both to the Mount of *Tabar*, and to the Garden of *Gethsemane*. Surely every meditation will tend, under the teaching of GOD the HOLY GHOST, to strengthen my soul in the belief of JESUS. What, though the privileges of thy people now, are not like those highly favoured disciples, to behold *Moses* and *Elias* ministering to my LORD, yet in JESUS himself I have all. In the sweet communion with the Master, I shall miss not the absence of all his servants. Yea! I shall rejoice to be alone with JESUS, having to communicate to my LORD, and to receive from him those precious soul-transactions, in a joy with which no lookers-on can meddle. It is blessed, yea very blessed, my honored LORD, to behold the inability of thy disciples, that my GOD and SAVIOR's power and grace may be more fully known. And whatever fears, from the weakness of faith in my poor heart, and nature's feelings by reason of the remains of indwel-

ling-sin, may arise on entering the cloud, yet will my soul receive an holy joy, unspeakable, and full of glory, when I hear my GOD and FATHER's gracious voice proclaiming the divine approbation; *this is my beloved SON, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him.*

CHAP. XVIII.

CONTENTS.

The LORD JESUS is here teaching his disciples humbleness. He speaks of his own, and his FATHER's good pleasure, for the salvation of every one of his little ones. The Chapter is closed in a parable.

AT the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

2 And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,

3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

5 And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.

6 But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and *that* he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

It is more than probable, the disciples, looking forward to temporal kingdom, of their Master, (for it is most certain at this time and long after, they thought of no other; see Acts i. 6.) had often been parcelling out for themselves, some of the highest departments in it. Mark ix. 33, 34. Hence the method our LORD took to correct their error, was as gentle and affectionate, as it was wise and conclusive. Among the old writers, it was conjectured that this little child, was *Ignatius*. But there is no warrant for the conclusion. This antient father hath indeed, in his Latin Epistle to the Church at *Smyrna*, said, that "he saw CHRIST in the flesh, after his resurrection:" but this doth by no means warrant the former account of his being the child, which the LORD set in the midst of his disciples. But it is very blessed, (and the Reader I hope will not lose sight of it,) on what the LORD places the truest qualification for an entrance into his kingdom; namely, the conversion of the heart to GOD. For this proves an union with CHRIST, in the regeneration of the soul by GOD the

HOLY GHOST : and to offend one of CHRIST's little ones so regenerated ; by despising them as CHRIST's, and to make light of the SPIRIT's work in their heart, subjects the despiser to everlasting misery. John iii. 3. Gal. iv. 6. Matt. x. 40, 41, 42.

7 ¶ Woe unto the world, because of offences ! for it must needs be that offences come ; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh !

8 Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast *them* from thee : it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.

9 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee : it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.

10 Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones ; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

11 For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.

12 How think ye ? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray ?

13 And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that *sheep*, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.

14 Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

Every word here is so plain, as to need no comment ; and so blessedly spoken by CHRIST himself, as would be injured by me. I only beg to observe, upon the whole, what a charming thought it ought to be, to the humblest and poorest of CHRIST's little ones, while upon earth, that those who minister to them, as their Angels, are always in the view of beholding the face of God in heaven. Heb. i. 14. And

let the Reader further observe upon this sweet and precious passage, that so earnest is GOD our FATHER, for the present and everlasting welfare of CHRIST's redeemed ones, that none of them, no not the least of them shall perish! Oh! the safety of the whole Church of JESUS! Isaiah xxvii. 2, 3. John x. 27, 30.

15 Moreover if thy brother should trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

16 But if he will not hear *thee*, *then* take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

18 Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

19 Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

I pray the Reader to remark, the affection JESUS insists upon, to subsist between *brethren*. And indeed as they are members of CHRIST's body; brethren of JESUS, and of each other; one spirit moves in all. 1 Cor. xii. throughout.

20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

To the little infirmities, which from the remains of indwelling corruption, may, and will, occasionally break out, how precious is the direction of JESUS. Oh! that it were more generally adopted in the Church of CHRIST! And what an unanswerable argument doth the LORD here leave upon record, for the constant meeting together of his whole body, both in private and public ordinances. Zech. ii. 5, 10, 11. Matt. xx. 28.

21 ¶ Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?

22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times : but, Until seventy times seven.

23 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.

24 And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.

25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

27 Then the Lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

28 But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him an hundred pence : and he laid hands on him, and took *him* by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

29 And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

30 And he would not : but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

31 So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.

32 Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me :

33 Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee ?

34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him

to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

It was blessed for the Church, that GOD the HOLY GHOST put it into the mind of *Peter*, to ask this question, which gave rise to one of the most beautiful Parables of our LORD; and which, no child of GOD would have lost for a world. The parable itself, in its first plain and obvious sense, represents the boundless mercy of the LORD, in cancelling a most enormous debt, even *ten thousand talents*; which, counted by our *English* coin, would amount to no less a sum than fifty-four millions and upwards, of our money. A sum almost incredible! But what sum can represent the greatness of our mercies! What insolvency come up to the insolvency of sin! But I confess, I cannot explain in my view the parable of our LORD, in reference to this spiritual sense of it, unless with certain limitations.

The kingdom of heaven is well known to mean the Church of CHRIST in the present dispensation. The parable saith, that the LORD of this kingdom, that is, CHRIST, would take account of his servants: that is, his people, his Church, his chosen. Not the whole world. For though by creation the earth is the LORD's, and all that is therein; yet here the LORD is speaking of his redeemed. The *one* brought to him in debt is the representative of *all*. And his debt was so great, that the everlasting slavery of himself, and all the race to which he belonged, could never cancel the debt nor pay it. In this state, the LORD forgives him. Now the debt forgiven could never be recalled. His cruelty to his fellow-servant, horrible as it was, could never unsay what his LORD had said. Neither is the pardon of our sins suspended upon our pardon of others. But the sense of the Parable seems to be this: How truly undeserving must be all those who are made partakers of the rich, full, and free salvation of GOD, who in the view of their ten thousand talents forgiven, are unkind and unforgiving to their fellow creatures. And in this sense the tormentors, to whom the unforgiving servant was delivered, will be a source of disquietude to his mind, as long as the conscious sense of his ingratitude shall remain. But though this must be agreeably to the whole tenor of Scripture, the general sense of the Parable; yet we are not authorized to strain the sense of the Parable too far. The general scope of our LORD's meaning by it, is evidently this; to shew, that as we hope for mercy, we are supposed to shew mercy: and the consciousness of sins pardoned in CHRIST should prompt us, and will prompt the heart of grace to be merciful to every one who bears the image of CHRIST, and to forgive from our heart, every one his brother their trespasses.

REFLECTIONS.

How truly blessed is it to have our hearts brought under divine teaching, and made like the simplicity of a weaned child. See my soul in the instance of these disciples of JESUS, how much our minds

are wedded to the concerns of this world. Oh! for grace to be converted, and become as little children, that we may be truly great in the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed LORD JESUS! may I never lose sight of this promise that thy presence is eminently manifested in the assemblies of thy people: for sure I am, that all the beauty and glory; all the power and efficacy; all the success and blessing, which can be derived from ordinances, can only be derived, because JESUS hath assured his Church, that wherever two or three are gathered together in his name, there he is in the midst of them, and that to bless them.

Thanks to my dear LORD for this beautiful and instructive Parable. Yea, LORD! my debt was so great, in ten thousand talents as made me insolvent for ever. In vain were it for me to say, LORD have patience with me and I will pay thee all. Never to all eternity, could I have done it. Oh! then add a grace more to the merciful forgiveness of all; and incline my heart to be merciful, even as my father which is in heaven is merciful! Precious JESUS! help me to imitate thee in all things!

CH A P. XIX.

CONTENTS.

The LORD JESUS is here prosecuting his ministry; healing the sick; conversing with the Pharisees; receiving little children; discoursing with his disciples.

AND it came to pass, *that* when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judea, beyond Jordan;

2 And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there.

3 ¶ The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?

4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made *them* at the beginning, made them male and female,

5 And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?

6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.

7 They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?

8 He saith unto them, Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

9 And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except *it be* for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

There can be no question, but that the married state from the beginning of the creation of the world, was intended as a beautiful representation of the mystical union between CHRIST and his Church. Gen. ii. 18—21 to the end, explained by Ephes. v. 23 to the end. And all the after stages, in the departure of our nature by adultery, could not destroy the first, and legitimate connection. JESUS betrothed his Church to himself for ever. Hosea ii. 19, 20. And though *Moses* as the LORD JESUS said, for the hardness of the hearts of the *Israelites*, did permit a bill of divorcement, yet not so will JESUS. His language is: *though thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet return unto me saith the LORD.* Jer. iii. 1. Deut. xxiv. 1—4. Hence the Church recovered by sovereign grace, sings aloud, *I will return unto my first husband.* Hosea ii. 6, 7.

10 His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with *his* wife, it is not good to marry.

11 But he said unto them, All *men* cannot receive this saying, save *they* to whom it is given.

12 For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive *it*, let him receive it.

How little do these men form proper conceptions in what the kingdom of heaven in grace is made, who have fancied the qualifications for the enjoyment of it consists in things outward; instead of that regeneration of the heart, which the LORD himself describes, as the best and only qualification, by the blood and righteousness of JESUS CHRIST. Men may *make* themselves what they may in nature, but it is the LORD who alone *makes a new heart* in grace. John iii. 3. Ezek. xxxvi. 24—32.

13 ¶ Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put *his* hands on them, and pray : and the disciples rebuked them.

14 But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

15 And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence.

Strange it is that any should forbid godly parents from presenting their little ones to JESUS, when we see how positive the command of God was to bring children to the LORD the eighth day from their birth. Gen. xvii. 9—14.—Was the LORD so tenacious under the old dispensation to have little ones brought to him: and is He regardless under the new?

16 ¶ And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?

17 And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? *there is none good but one, that is, God*; but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

18 He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,

19 Honour thy father and *thy* mother, and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

20 The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?

21 Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go *and* sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come *and* follow me.

22 But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

23 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I

say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

24 And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

25 When his disciples heard *it*, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?

26 But Jesus beheld *them*, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.

I beg the Reader particularly to notice our LORD's answer to the question of this man, in calling CHRIST *good*. *Why callest thou me good?* As if JESUS had said, Thou knowest that there is, there can be none good but *one*, that is GOD. Hast thou then from the miracles I have wrought, received conviction that I am (and which is indeed the case) GOD. This seems to have been the sense of our LORD's question. And then, as if to deal with him as GOD, JESUS sends him to discover his ruined state, in the conviction of his own heart, from the breach of the commandments; and enumerates a few, as a decision for all. And so wholly untaught of the SPIRIT was this youth, that he knew nothing of the plague of his own heart, and therefore with the confidence of a poor, dark, blind, and ignorant mind, he declared, that he had kept the whole of GOD's law; when it was notorious from scripture, that he had broken the whole. James ii. 10. The LORD therefore only touched him a little more closely concerning one point, and which served to detect him in all. Oh! what a deceitful heart, the human heart is, and how incapable of doing any one thing towards its own salvation? Jerem. xvii. 9, 10, Rev. iii. 17.

27 Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?

28 And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

29 And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

30 But many *that are* first shall be last; and the last *shall be* first.

Reader! do not fail to observe the blessedness of those who follow CHRIST, in the regeneration? But in doing this, yet more particularly note the cause. It is for JESUS's sake, and by the LORD JESUS's righteousness. All *for* him and all *by* him. And in this redemption, the last and least, in the view of others, are first and greatest in the esteem of CHRIST. So essential it is to know him, whom to know is life eternal. Precious LORD! how reverse to the custom and manners of the world, is thy kingdom!

REFLECTIONS.

OH! thou glorious and gracious bridegroom of thy Church! Everlasting praises to thy name, it is not lawful for JESUS to put away his wife, whatever the world may do, for every cause. The LORD GOD of Israel hath said, that *he hateth putting away*. And while JESUS himself hath said by his Apostle, *Husbands love your wives, and be not bitter against them*; will JESUS be bitter against his? What! though she hath, since from everlasting he betrothed himself to her, fallen away, and sunk into misery and sin; will not JESUS recover her from this state? Yea, will it not be to his glory so to do? Yes! thou dear LORD! it will be to thy greater glory to recover her, than though she had never fallen. And the whole inhabitants of heaven will praise thee, and love thee the more also when thou shalt bring her home, cleansed from all her sins, in thy blood, and shalt present her to thyself *a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but shall be without blame before thee in love!*

Blessed Master I would humbly enquire of thee concerning eternal life, as this youth; but not what good thing that I must do to attain it. For alas! if the possession of heaven could be obtained with only a single act of goodness; never to all eternity should I find it. *When I would do good, evil is present with me.* Oh! then for grace to know thee, to love thee, to follow thee, as my only good; my hope, my righteousness, my portion for ever! Amen.

CHAP. XX.

CONTENTS.

This Chapter contains, the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard: JESUS's discourse with the mother of Zebedee's children: and the cure of two blind men.

FOR the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man *that* is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard.

2 And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

3 And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market place,

4 And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way.

5 Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.

6 And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle?

7 They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard: and whatsoever is right, *that* shall ye receive.

8 So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them *their* hire, beginning from the last unto the first.

9 And when they came that *were hired* about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.

10 But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.

11 And when they had received *it*, they murmured against the good man of the house,

12 Saying, These last have wrought *but* one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.

13 But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny?

14 Take *that* thine *is*, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee.

15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?

The kingdom of heaven, means the kingdom of grace, leading to the kingdom of glory. The man represented under the character of householder is God. Ephes. iii. 16. The vineyard is the Church. Isaiah v. 1, &c. The different seasons of hours intimate the different ages of the world, as well as the different ages of life. And by the market place, is intended the word and ordinances of the Gospel.

Idle persons may be found under the word and ordinances, as well as the diligent, who use the means of grace profitably. The day of hire means the day of life. The evening the close of it: and the wages of a penny, means not the merit of man but the gift of God. *For the wages of sin is death:* but it is the *gift* of God which is eternal life; and this *through JESUS CHRIST our LORD.* Romans vi. 23.

The equality of wages, is a beautiful illustration of the free and sovereign grace of God; because, strictly and properly speaking, it is all free: no merit, no pretensions of merit, in one more than another, making the smallest claim to favor. The Vineyard, the Church, and the Laborers in the Church, all the gift of God the FATHER, the purchase of God the SON, and the whole cultivation from the work of God the HOLY GHOST. And however different the measures of grace, and strength, and ability given; yet the whole is the LORD's not theirs; and every thing speaks aloud that the whole efficiency is of him. *Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, said the LORD of hosts.* Zech. iv. 6.

Now what a beautiful similitude is here, of the kingdom of grace! Such is the Church of JESUS, as a vineyard gathered out of the world's wide wilderness; chosen (as scripture expresseth it) by God the FATHER; purchased by God the SON; and set apart in the regenerating and purifying grace of God the HOLY GHOST. Reader! at what age are you standing? Hath the LORD called you at the early morning of life, the mid-day, the afternoon, or evening? Are you *in* the vineyard of the LORD of Hosts? or are you still idle in the market-place? Oh! the unspeakable blessedness of knowing, under divine teaching, that we are *saved and called with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace given us in CHRIST JESUS before the world began.* 2 Tim. i. 9.

16 So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

See the Note on Matt. xxii. 14.

17 ¶ And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them,

18 Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death.

19 And shall deliver him to the Gentiles, to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify *him*; and the third day he shall rise again,

I pray the Reader not to overlook our LORD's delight in speaking of his approaching death. This is the third time the LORD reminds his disciples of it within a few Chapters. Chap. xvi. 21, and Chap. xvii. 22, 23. And again in this place. Every act of JESUS testified

his promptness to the work, as though he longed for it. *Lo! I come (said JESUS) to do thy will, O God. I delight to do it: yea, thy law is in the midst of my bowels.* And when *Peter* out of love (though a mistaken love) for his master, wished it to be otherwise; JESUS rebuked him, yea, called him *Satan*, for what he said. Never did the meek and loving SAVIOR ever drop such an expression before: so very intent was he on finishing the work his FATHER gave him to do, and so much displeased was he with any one who wished it to be otherwise. Precious LORD JESUS! was this thine ardent love to thy spouse the Church, as one longing to bring her out of the prison-house of sin and Satan, though all the cataracts of divine wrath for sin were broken up, to be poured on thy sacred head!

20 ¶ Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping *him*, and desiring a certain thing of him,

21 And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.

It is probable that this mother of *Zebedee's* children was *Salome*. Matt. xxvii. 46. Mark xv. 40. Both the mother and sons had no views at this time of any kingdom but a kingdom of this world. It is remarkable that the poor woman asked nothing for herself, but for her sons. Oh! how the feelings of nature exceed those of grace! How much more anxious parents are, to see their children rise to the enjoyment of the things of this world, than they are to see them made wise unto salvation for those to come.

22 But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able.

23 And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.

What a tender answer of CHRIST! And true enough both *James* and *John* drank of the same cup though not to the dregs, as JESUS did in the after exercises of their life. *James* was the first of the Apostles who bore testimony to CHRIST, by his blood, Acts xii. 2. And *John* tells the Church in his banishment, of his sufferings for the testimony of JESUS. Rev. i. 9. I beg the Reader not to overlook our

LORD's expressions, concerning the sitting at his right hand in glory. *It is not mine to give but for whom it is prepared of my Father.* For I beg the Reader to notice, that the words put in between those words of CHRIST, *it shall be given to them*, are not in the original, neither ought they to have been introduced in the translation. And the doctrine without them is the pure doctrine of the Gospel. It is not mine to give but to those whom the Father hath given to me, in an everlasting covenant which cannot be broken. But *all whom the Father hath given me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.* And elsewhere JESUS expresseth the same blessed truth : for speaking to his Father he saith : *As thou hast given him power over all flesh : that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.* John vi. 37. John xvii. 2.

And what a glorious consideration is it that such a provision is made for the LORD's redeemed ones in the eternal purpose, council, and will of JEHOVAH : Father, Son, and Holy Ghost : nothing disposing to the gift of such unequalled mercy but the divine favour : and neither depending upon the merit of man, nor any of the after arrangements of life. Oh ! the glories of grace ! *Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift !*

24 And when the ten heard *it*, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.

25 But Jesus called them *unto* him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.

26 But it shall not be so among you ; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister ;

27 And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant :

28 Even as the son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

In the conduct of the disciples towards *James* and *John*, we behold a renewed instance of the effects of our fallen nature. No man hath ever calculated, or can indeed calculate, the vast injury sustained by Satan's seduction of our first parents, and the whole race of human nature in them. Oh ! how doth the thought of it tend to heighten the immense mercies in the recovery of the Church by CHRIST. Reader ! see in the disciples of JESUS, the proof of a body of sin and death, though the soul be renewed by grace. They were men of like passions with ourselves. How many heart aches would it have saved me in days past, had I learnt of JESUS the humbling lesson he here taught them, in what the growth of grace consists : namely, in being more and more lowly in heart, from a conviction of unwor-

thiness, and more and more to see my need of JESUS. Precious example in this minister of salvation; who came *not to be ministered unto*, but though LORD of all, became servant of all, and *who gave his life a ransom for many*. John xiii. 14. Philip. ii. 7. 1 Timothy ii. 6.

29 ¶ And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him.

30 And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, *thou* Son of David.

31 And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, *thou* Son of David.

32 And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I should do unto you?

33 They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened.

34 So Jesus had compassion *on them*, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.

There is no doubt, but that the miracle Jesus wrought on those men is the same which *Mark* takes notice of Chap. x. 46, and *Luke* Chap. xviii. 35: although both those Evangelists mention but of *one* blind man, while here *Matthew* speaks of *two*. But there is no contradiction in the history. It is the fact of the miracle itself, each writer had in view, and not the very circumstances of each. Many very precious instructions arise out of it, which I pray God the HOLY GHOST to bring home to the heart of his people. The grace of Jesus in the act; the proof he thereby gave of his Messiahship. Isaiah xxxv. 5. The place where it was wrought, near *Jericho*, the cursed city. Joshua vi. 26. 1 Kings xvi. 34. JESUS bestows blessings; himself becoming a curse for his people, that they might be made the righteousness of GOD in him. 2 Cor. v. 21. The sovereign act of JESUS, in the freeness and fulness of his mercy, as a testimony of his GODHEAD; for on the supposition of an eyeless socket, it is not simply giving sight to the blind but a new creation. And who but GOD himself can do this? The conduct of those blind, also hold forth many sweet instructions. They were in the highway begging. It is good to be found in the highway of ordinances, where JESUS passeth by. The cry of those men under a sense of their misery, and JESUS's power, afford great lessons to teach men how to pray, and not to faint. But who taught them that JESUS was the Son of David; that is the Messiah which should come? Who indeed, but he to whom they came could lead them to himself? Observe also, how earnest, how clamorous they

were; and how they held on, spite of the unkind multitude who rebuked them. Oh! how earnest ought we to be, when we ask JESUS for the light of the soul. And if men revile, or would stifle our cries, may the LORD give us grace to be the more importunate; *have mercy on us, O LORD, thou Son of David!* And do thou blessed Master and LORD, give the grace to thy children, both to be sensible of our spiritual blindness; and to be as earnest in the cry of the soul for deliverance from it: and may that grace of thine in our hearts be more powerful to lead to thee, than all the world, or sin, or unbelief, to keep from thee. But may all thy redeemed, though blinded by sin, be so taught by grace, that they may besiege thy throne night and day, until the LORD hath heard and answered prayer; and then follow thee in the regeneration, *beholding with open face, as in a glass, the glory of the LORD, and be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the LORD.* 2 Cor. iii. 18.

REFLECTIONS.

Who can read in this Chapter, the striking Parable of the householder hiring laborers into his Vineyard, and not feel conviction at the free, sovereign, purposing, appointing, carrying on, and completing grace of God? Is not the Vineyard of the LORD of hosts, his Church: and every plant in it of the LORD's right hand planting? What! if JESUS sends his under servants his ministers to labor in his service; or calls his people to sit down under his shadow, do either lessen the right and property of the Almighty owner? Is not the whole his, by gift, by purchase, by right, by conquest, and by power? And is it not separated by redeeming grace from the world's wide wilderness, and fenced in with love? Ye ministers of my God! esteem it the highest honor, to labor within the sacred inclosure, and be more anxious to win souls than to win kingdoms. Ye children of the LORD! whether in the early, mid-day, or later calls of his grace; bless God for the distinguishing mercy. Soon will the evening of life come; and the LORD of the Vineyard will call ye home, from his courts below to his heaven above.

Precious LORD JESUS! I behold thee by the eye of faith in thine ascent to Jerusalem! Yes! truly there thou wast delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification! Grant me dearest LORD to be more anxious to be brought under the continual baptisms of thy spirit, than to arrive at the highest temporal honors. A door-keeper in thy house, far exceeds the golden tents of the ungodly.

In the review of my LORD's mercy to those poor blind men, and the grace imparted to them to be so earnest with JESUS for bodily sight; teach me, thou gracious giver of eyes to the blind, to imitate their cries for spiritual apprehension of my LORD's person, work, and righteousness. Oh! for grace to see the king in his beauty, and to have my soul so awakened to desires after CHRIST, that I may follow my GOD and SAVIOR by faith here, till in open vision I shall see *him as he is, and dwell with him for ever!*

CHAP. XXI.

CONTENTS.

The LORD JESUS is here described as riding into Jerusalem. He casteth the buyers and sellers out of the temple. We have also the account of the withered Fig-tree, and the parable of the husbandman.

AND when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples,

2 Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her : loose *them*, and bring *them* unto me.

3 And if any *man* say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them ; and straightway he will send them.

4 All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying,

5 Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy king cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.

It is worthy remark, that the four Evangelists all notice this triumphal entrance of CHRIST into Jerusalem, five days before his death, as if to testify the prophecy concerning it. Isaiah lxii. 11. Zech. ix. 9. And it is worthy of still further remark, that none but CHRIST ever made such a public entry, and therefore the conclusion is undeniable. Behold ! how distinguished from every other king, is Zion's king. No trumpets, no gorgeous apparel, no courtly attendants, but as the LORD himself was meek and lowly, every accommodation corresponded to the humble appearance ! Such was, and is, JESUS !

6 And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them.

7 And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set *him* thereon.

8 And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way ; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed *them* in the way.

9 And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of

David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the Highest.

But what was wanted in outward pomp, was amply made up in inward joy. And what, but the over-ruling power of God the SPIRIT, could have stirred up such a multitude to shout their Hosannas! Think how JESUS was welcomed to their hearts! See the Poor Man's Concordance; under the word *Hosanna*.

10 And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?

11 And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.

What an astonishing effect was wrought on the city at this approach of JESUS. Though the LORD had been so long going in and out among them, yet so astonished were they at this entrance of our God and SAVIOR, that all men marvelled. Reader! have you never seen (I have) somewhat of the same kind in the present day, among the carnal and Christless, musing in their hearts when at any time hearing of JESUS! See a striking instance, John vii. 40 to the end. I pray the Reader to remark, with me, the unconscious evidence the multitude gave to the real person of CHRIST, the only true Nazarite of GOD. If my Reader hath near him my little penny publication of the "Poor Man's Concordance," I would beg him to turn to the article *Nazarene*, for an explanation of the important name of CHRIST, as the only true Nazarite. He will discover that the name is of an infinitely higher import than perhaps he at first might suppose.

12 ¶ And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple; and overthrew the tables of the money changers, and the seats of them that sold doves,

13 And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.

14 And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them.

I pray the Reader to pause over this account of his adorable LORD. According to my view of things, perhaps there is not, among the miracles of CHRIST, hardly an higher proof of his GODHEAD. I wish the Reader to notice it as it deserves. To behold JESUS in the humble dress of a poor Jew, whipping the drove of cattle, with all the buyers and sellers, out of the temple, and overthrowing before him the counters of money, and the seats of the dove-sellers, and with such an holy countenance of zeal as none dared to oppose; surely it carried with it an invincible proof of his mighty power and authority! And I beg the Reader, upon this, and many similar occasions which have

occurred, to observe how plainly he mingled with his human appearance, tokens of his divine. The blind and the lame coming to him for healing, afforded an additional testimony to his divine person and character.

15 And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were sore displeased,

16 And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?

What a blessed account is here, of the minds of those children being over-ruled by the divine power, thus to bear testimony to the person of JESUS. For to what other source can it be ascribed? It is probable that many of the parents of those children were among the money-changers, and the buyers and sellers, profaning the temple. And whence should those children have learnt of CHRIST'S person and character as the Son of David? How have they been taught to sing Hosannah? Reader! do not fail to observe how the LORD accomplisheth his prophecies, by means the most unlooked for, and unexpected. *David*, by the spirit of prophecy, a thousand years before, had described this very event, that *by the mouths of babes and sucklings, the LORD would call forth praise*. And here we see it fulfilled. Psalm viii. 2.

17 And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there.

18 Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered.

19 And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away.

20 And when the disciples saw *it*, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig-tree withered away!

21 Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this *which is done* to the fig-tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain,

Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done.

22 And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

Our LORD's departure into *Bethany* to lodge for the night, and his return in the morning, gave occasion for the display of another miracle, respecting the barren fig-tree. No doubt the design was to preach by it to the people. The leaves of a mere profession, without fruit in, and from CHRIST, will stand in no stead in the day of enquiry. Nothing short of an union with CHRIST's person, can bring up after it communion and interest in what belongs to CHRIST.

23 ¶ And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?

24 And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things.

25 The baptism of John, whence was it? From heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him?

26 But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet.

27 And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

28 But what think ye? A *certain* man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard.

29 He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went.

30 And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not.

31 Whether of them twain did the will of *his*

father? They say unto him, The first, Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.

32 For John came unto you in the way of righteousness and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen *it*, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.

33 Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country:

34 And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.

35 And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.

36 Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise.

37 But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.

38 But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.

39 And they caught him, and cast *him* out of the vineyard, and slew *him*.

40 When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?

41 They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out *his* vineyard unto other husbandmen which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.

42 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner:

this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

43 Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation, bringing forth the fruits thereof.

44 And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

45 And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them.

46 But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.

The whole of our Lord's discourse and reasoning is so plain, and self-evident, that I do not conceive it can be, in the smallest measure, necessary to enlarge upon it. I only detain the Reader, therefore, to remark upon the whole of what is here contained, that from our Lord's giving the preference to publicans and harlots, to that of self-righteous Scribes and Pharisees, we may safely conclude that nothing was more offensive to the Lord of life and glory, than a frame of mind which, of all others, is more immediately levelled against the leading doctrines of his gospel. Oh! for grace to be always aware of the *leaven* of the Scribes and Pharisees, which the SON of GOD himself declares to be *hypocrisy*. Luke xii. 1.

REFLECTIONS.

PAUSE, my soul, over this view of thy Redeemer! Did the Prophet, ages before CHRIST was born, call upon Zion to rejoice greatly, and Jerusalem to shout aloud, because her king was coming to her, meek and lowly, and having salvation; and did the SON of GOD, in his character as King of Zion, actually make his entry in the very manner the Prophet described; and did all those effects follow in confirmation of the glorious truth? And wilt not thou, my soul, join the heavenly Hosannas, and sing aloud, *blessed is He that cometh in the name of the LORD, Hosanna in the highest!*

And is it one and the same person who is here described as hungry, and needing the common sustenance to support nature, yea looking to a fig-tree to supply a pressing occasion? Oh! precious Jesus! how sweetly accommodating is thy lovely example, to the wants and exercises of thy people? Yes! thou dear LORD, it did indeed *behave thee to be made like unto thy brethren, that thou mightest be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to GOD*. And having suffered being tempted, thou knowest how to *succour them that are tempted*.

LORD! give thy people grace to see, that while unawakened,

unregenerate sinners, like those husbandmen in the parable, though living in thy Church, and outwardly feasting upon the good things of thy vineyard, have no inward joy or communion with the LORD of his vineyard, there are those redeemed of the LORD whose right it is in CHRIST, and who will finally be brought home to the joy of their LORD; while those miserable men will ultimately be destroyed, and have their portion with hypocrites in outer darkness, *where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

CHAP. XXII.

CONTENTS.

We have, in this Chapter, the Parable of the Marriage-feast, and CHRIST's discourses with the Scribes and Pharisees.

AND Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said,

2 The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son.

3 And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding : and they would not come.

4 Again he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner : my oxen, and *my* fatlings are killed, and all things are ready, come unto the marriage.

5 But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise :

6 And the remnant took his servants, and entreated *them* spitefully, and slew *them*.

7 But when the king heard *thereof*, he was wroth : and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

8 Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.

9 Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.

10 So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good : and the wedding was furnished with guests.

We shall enter, through the teaching of GOD the HOLY GHOST, into the beautiful design of our LORD, in this parable, if we take with us, all the way we go through it, the leading features the SON of GOD hath drawn. The kingdom of heaven is uniformly meant to describe the kingdom of grace, in the present gospel state of the Church. The certain king, here spoken of, is GOD our FATHER. And the marriage is that union the SON of GOD hath been mercifully pleased, at the call of GOD his FATHER, to make with our nature, and with each Person in that nature, whom GOD the FATHER hath given to him, whose redemption CHRIST hath purchased, and GOD the HOLY GHOST hath regenerated, for the purpose of grace here, and glory hereafter.

This marriage took place, in the plan and counsel of JEHOVAH, before all worlds. The Church was then presented by the Father, and fore-viewed by the SON, and sanctified in the will and design of GOD the HOLY GHOST, when CHRIST betrothed her to himself for ever. And although, in the ordination of the divine will, this Church of JESUS was to be involved in the Adam-fall of our nature, in common with the whole race of men, yet the original connection could not be dissolved by this spiritual adultery, but rather afforded occasion for the SON of GOD to get more glory and honour by her recovery, in the wonderful means he accomplished in time, by the salvation he wrought for this purpose.

The Church, therefore, departing from her glorious husband, and having lost the image of GOD by sin, and having mingled with the heathen, and learned their works, this parable represents the King as sending forth his servants to bring his Church home to her lawful LORD and Husband again, notwithstanding all her baseness and unworthiness of departure.

The invitation to this purpose is represented under the image and similitude of a great dinner, in which a plentiful table is spread, the richest food is provided, servants are in waiting, and all with one voice say, *all things are ready, come to the marriage!* It were needless to observe, that the several parts of the parable, in the servants being again and again sent, and the contempt shewn by some, and the cruelty by others; are meant to set forth the various ages of the Church, in which Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles, have ministered to this one end, and the events which have followed. These things are so plain, that every one who is acquainted with the Bible, cannot but know them. All that seems necessary for the least additional information on this subject, is to observe, that the final issue of the LORD's design, can neither be frustrated, nor unaccomplished. The LORD JEHOVAH, in his threefold character of persons, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, hath made, for this, an effectual security. The Church is One with CHRIST, her Head and Husband, from all eternity. Hence every individual which constitutes a part in that mystical body, notwithstanding the after act in the Adam-nature, and Adam-fall, is secured from a pre-union with the LORD, her Husband, from everlasting ruin. Hence their effectual call and conversion is engaged for in covenant settlements. A secret union subsisted between CHRIST and his members from all eternity. And this brings up after it an open espousal of every one of them at the season of their conversion. *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.* And hence they are carried safely on through all the periods of time, and will be

brought home to a more public display of the divine love, at the marriage supper of the Lamb in heaven. Rev. xix. 9.

11 ¶ And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment :

12 And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment ? And he was speechless.

13 Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast *him* into outer darkness ; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

This man without a wedding garment, is the representative of all, be they many, or few, who are found, in the day of enquiry, without the garment of CHRIST's righteousness. The parable doth not say that he was without a garment, for no doubt he was clothed, as many are, in a righteousness of his own. But his crime was, that it was not a *wedding* garment. A garment of his LORD's. A proof of his marriage, his union, and oneness with Jesus. This ought to be particularly attended to, and clearly understood. How often is it heard in the mouth of the untaught by God the HOLY GHOST, that this wedding garment is good works, an holy life, and charity, and the like. Alas ! if our acceptance at CHRIST's table upon earth, or at his marriage supper in heaven, rested upon what some are so fond of talking of, but not a single son or daughter of Adam's fallen race ever knew ; I mean good works and an holy life, no guests would be found for either. Neither doth this wedding garment consist in the adorning of a renewed soul by the graces of the HOLY SPIRIT, such as faith, repentance, or any, or all, of the sweet effects of the LORD's work in the soul. These are all blessed and essential things in the life of grace, and every child of God, called by grace, will be blessed in the enjoyment of them, but they are not CHRIST. These are the *effects*, not the *cause* ; the *fruits* of regeneration, but not the *root* of salvation. The wedding garment, therefore, is none of these. And though it is blessed, yea very blessed, when grace is in lively exercise, to behold how true believers in CHRIST, from an union with CHRIST, act faith *upon* him, and live *to* him, and his praise ; *adorning the doctrine of God our SAVIOR in all things* : yet these form no part in the wedding garment, which is wholly *of* CHRIST, wrought out *by* CHRIST, and is put on the believer *by* CHRIST. Every act of theirs is polluted, and must be cleansed in the blood of CHRIST, as well as their persons ; for without this cleansing, neither the one, nor the other, can find acceptance before God. Reader ! I pray you to seek for the teaching of God the HOLY GHOST, to have a clear apprehension of these things. And both in ordinances now, as well as the appearing before God hereafter, see to it, that you have this wedding garment, the want of which made this man speechless, and the possession of which, proves the betrothing of every child of God, by

which the whole body of CHRIST's church is made ready and prepared by Him, as a bride adorned for her husband. Rev. xxi. 2. See Ephes. v. 23 to the end.

14 For many are called, but few *are* chosen.

This close of the parable is the same with which JESUS closed the one of the Laborers in the Vineyard, and is very striking and solemn, but very obvious and plain upon the pure principles of the gospel. *Calling*, by the outward sound of the word, and the being *chosen* by the eternal purpose of sovereign grace, are very distinct things. In preaching the Gospel, to a mixed multitude of hearers, every one within the sound hears the gracious invitation which the LORD gives to his Church; and, in one sense, it may be said the call to the duties of life goes forth to the whole world, and is a command from God, as a Sovereign, to hear and obey. But this *outward* call, differs widely from the *inward* work, wrought by the HOLY GHOST in the hearts of the redeemed, and which comes *not in word only, but in power*. Paul, the Apostle, beautifully describes the difference; when speaking to the Church, he saith, *We are bound to give thanks alway to God, for you brethren beloved of the LORD, because God hath, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, where unto he called you, by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our LORD JESUS CHRIST*. Provision is made for this effectual calling of the LORD's people in time, 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14. from their being chosen, in CHRIST, before the foundation of the world. Ephes. i. 3, 4. 2 Tim. i. 9. So that the whole process of grace, from the first awakenings of the soul, until grace is consummated in glory, while all these prove the everlasting love of God to his redeemed, in CHRIST, they become no less the fruit of that love, and are the sure earnest of eternal glory. Rom. viii. 29, 30.

15 ¶ Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in *his* talk.

16 And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any *man*; for thou regardest not the person of men.

17 Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cesar, or not?

18 But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, *ye* hypocrites?

19 Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny.

20 And he saith unto them, Whose *is* this image and superscription?

21 They say unto him, Cesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Cesar the things which are Cesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.

22 When they had heard *these words*, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way.

A sweet instruction ariseth from hence to the children of God. If JESUS was thus beset, wonder not that his people should be. Oh! how earnest are the ungodly to wound the followers of the LORD! Reader! pray consult that sweet scripture. John xv. 18—21.

23 ¶ The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him,

24 Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

25 Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother:

26 Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh.

27 And last of all the woman died also.

28 Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her.

29 Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.

30 For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.

31 But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying,

32 I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

33 And when the multitude heard *this*, they were astonished at his doctrine.

It is worth observing, how the malice of both Sadducees and Pharisees was over-ruled to the Lord's glory and the comfort of his people. For had not those men brought forward this question, the Church would not have had the explanation, which it now hath, of this precious doctrine in this place; neither should we, most probably, have had those discoveries the Lord Jesus hath here given concerning himself at the bush of Moses. But what a blessed confirmation our Lord's answer to those men in this place is, to all the other unanswerable testimonies on this great point of the resurrection. Jesus hath put it on its own basis, and, from the covenant relation between Christ and his people, most fully shewn that God, that is (God in Christ) is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to him; their souls, among the spirits of just men, made perfect, and their bodies, from an union with Christ, resting in this covenant hope of being raised at the last day. *For if the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.* Rom. viii. 11.

34 But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together.

35 Then one of them, *which was* a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying,

36 Master, which *is* the great commandment in the law?

37 Jesus said unto him, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

38 This is the first and great commandment.

39 And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

41 While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them,

42 Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, *The son of David.*

43 He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying,

44 The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?

45 If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?

46 And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any *man* from that day forth ask him any more *questions*.

It is very blessed to discover, that let JESUS be attacked by Pharisees or Sadducees, every thing tends to the LORD's glory, the promotion of his people's happiness, and the confusion of his enemies. Our LORD's conference with the Pharisees is of this kind, and so plain as to need no comment. But I would rather take occasion, from the LORD's question to the Pharisees, to propose the same, both to myself and Reader. What think ye of CHRIST, is the grand question of the whole subject contained in the word of God. And I beg the Reader to observe, JESUS doth not say, what think ye of *me*, but what think ye of CHRIST; that is, as GOD's CHRIST, the anointed, the sent, the sealed of the FATHER. For unless we have proper apprehension, both of his person and offices, in his double nature, and in his commission, our views of him will not be suitably formed. So that in this one question is involved a thousand others. What think ye of CHRIST? What think ye of his person, of his offices, characters, relations? What think ye of the completeness, fulness, suitableness, all-sufficiency of his salvation? What think ye of CHRIST as to his worth, preciousness, beauty, glory? What, as to his value, importance, his absolute necessity, and the living without knowing him, and the dying without enjoying him? Oh! for the proper apprehension of JESUS! Oh! for the absolute and certain union with him, and interest in him! The soul that hath so learned CHRIST, will best know how to enter into the full sense of our LORD's question; and will best appreciate the being found in him, so as to render all other knowledge of no value, but the knowledge of CHRIST, the power of GOD, and the wisdom of GOD, for salvation to every one that believeth.

REFLECTIONS.

BLESSED LORD JESUS! Was there ever condescension like thine, to marry our nature? To pass by the nature of angels, and to take on thee the seed of Abraham! And didst thou, LORD, so fix thy love upon thy Church, that though thou knowest from the beginning that our whole nature would deal very treacherously, yet this did not prevent thy gracious design, but thou didst determine to pay our dreadful debt, to rescue us out of the hand of every enemy, to disannul our agreement with sin, and to call back thy spouse, the Church; who, as a treacherous wife, had departed from her first husband? Did JESUS indeed, in the prosecution of this great design, send forth his servants in all ages of the Church; Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles, to call home his own, and to bring all his redeemed to the marriage supper of the Lamb in heaven? Oh! peerless, unequalled love! Oh! matchless sovereign mercy! LORD JESUS! grant that when thou comest in at the last day to see thy guests at thy table, my poor soul may not be found like the man without a wedding garment, and from

being Christless now, I should be speechless then. But oh! thou dear LORD! may my soul be found of thee in that all-decisive hour, so adorned in thy spotless righteousness, that both now, and then, my soul may sing the holy triumphs of the Church, and find the blessedness of it. *I will greatly rejoice in the LORD: my soul shall be joyful in my God: for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.*

Dearest LORD JESUS! while Pharisees, and Herodians, and Sadducees, all confederate against thee; Oh! do thou cause my poor soul to be attached to thee more and more. Give me to enter into a proper apprehension of all the mysteries of faith, and the doctrine of the resurrection; that, convinced of an interest in the covenant of redemption made with *Abraham*, and the heirs with him of the promise, I may make the study of CHRIST, and the knowledge of CHRIST, the great essentials of everlasting life? and esteem CHRIST, and him crucified, the *one thing needful*, beyond all the knowledge of the earth. Oh! the blessedness of this living to CHRIST, and rejoicing in CHRIST, and making him, what God hath made him, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end of salvation; convinced that *there is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved.*

CHAP. XXIII.

CONTENTS.

In this Chapter the LORD JESUS is engaged in exhorting his disciples, and the multitude, against the doctrine of the Scribes and Pharisees. The Chapter closeth with CHRIST's pathetic lamentation over Jerusalem, as a City given up to destruction.

THEN spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples,

2 Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees, sit in Moses' seat:

3 All, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, *that* observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.

4 For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay *them* on men's shoulders; but *they themselves* will not move them with one of their fingers.

5 But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments,

6 And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues.

7 And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.

8 But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, *even* Christ; and all ye are brethren.

9 And call no *man* your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.

10 Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, *even* Christ.

11 But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.

12 And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

This chapter, if there were no other in the whole book of God, to alarm the mind on the awful consequence of Pharisaical righteousness, is enough, in itself, to awaken the most serious apprehensions on that account. Jesus, who knew what was in man, and to whose divine knowledge every heart was open, beheld in those men such false sanctity, that no language appeared sufficiently strong, to mark his severe displeasure at their conduct. Every thing done by them was done, the Lord said, with a view to the approbation of men. And the strong images of whited sepulchres, blind guides, and the like, which the Lord represented them by, may serve to shew in what a light he considered them. In these first verses of the chapter, the Lord Jesus cautions his hearers against the imitation of their conduct. In the following he pronounceth the most awful woes upon them.

13 But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in *yourselves*, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

15 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him two-fold more the child of hell than yourselves.

16 Woe unto you, *ye* blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing;

but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor!

17 *Ye* fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?

18 And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty.

19 *Ye* fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?

20 Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon.

21 And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein.

22 And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.

23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier *matters* of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

24 *Ye* blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.

25 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.

26 *Thou* blind Pharisee, cleanse first that *which* is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.

27 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead *men's* bones, and of all uncleanness.

28 Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

29 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous,

30 And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.

31 Wherefore be ye witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets.

32 Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.

33 *Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?*

Here are no less than *eight* solemn woes denounced upon the very men who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. And what made the woes more terrible, they were pronounced by One that was meekness itself. And what is, if possible, yet more awful, the same Almighty Judge, who cannot err, in the close of this solemn denunciation, calls them by the several names which mark their character, and explains the whole: *Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?* That is, ye cannot escape it. The phrase is a stronger way of expressing a thing, by way of question, than if in so many words the thing was said. We have a similar method of speech by the Apostle. *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation.* Heb. ii. 3. That is, we cannot escape. See also Mark viii. 36.

I very earnestly beg the Reader's close attention to the subject contained in this chapter, concerning the Pharisees of our Lord's day, and our Lord's decision of their character. I pray God the HOLY GHOST to be the guide and teacher, both of him that writes, and him that reads, that we may have a clear apprehension, on a doctrine so truly important. It is one of the plainest doctrines in the Bible, that the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, are in their nature so directly opposed to each other, that there can be no possibility of junction. Each is defineable by their very nature, and must remain so, to all eternity. Now then, by serpents and a generation of vipers, the brood of the old serpent the devil is marked. And hence from the beginning, the LORD GOD declared the everlasting hatred this serpentine race should bear to the family of CHRIST. *I will put enmity between thee and the woman: and between thy seed and her seed.* Gen. iii. 15. Hence therefore, when the LORD JESUS saith: *Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers; how can ye escape the damnation of hell?* The answer ariseth out of the question; serpents and vipers must be together: and it is fit they should. They cannot be apart. And for the self-same reason that where CHRIST is there must his members be; so the old serpent, and all the hatch of his incubation can never be separated from each other. See Matt. xii. 34. Rev. xii. 9. John viii. 44.

I beg to detain the Reader one moment longer, on this momentous but solemn subject. Our LORD hath considered it so very important in itself, that he hath consumed the greater part of a long chapter upon it. And therefore it may well claim a little more of our serious consideration.

The Pharisees of our LORD's days, were so *generally*, yea, I might almost say so *universally* considered under this character, that we do not find one of them savingly converted to the LORD; *Nicodemus* only excepted. *Paul* the Apostle, was also a Pharisee, as he tells us himself, and drank into the spirit of self-righteousness as deep as most men. But then it should be remembered, that he was not in the days of our LORD's ministry. And by his conversion (as well as *Nicodemus*) he was proved not to be of that family, whom our LORD declared to be *a generation of vipers*. But it opens a solemn subject of consideration, that among all the Pharisees we read of, of that day; we read of none called by sovereign grace, saving that ruler of the Jews *Nicodemus*. John iii. 1, &c. John vii. 50. John xix. 39.

And wherefore this exclusion, but from the cause assigned? How should it be otherwise with those who in the Adam-fall received the serpent's seed, and for whom no provision was made for recovery in the seed of the woman, not having the union seed in CHRIST. (See Isaiah xlv. 3. Isaiah liii. 10. Isaiah lix. 21. Psm. xxii. 30, 31.) How should it be otherwise? Whereas the seed of CHRIST, though involved by *nature* in the Adam-transgression with the whole race; yet being one with CHRIST in *grace*, had security for their preservation from the everlasting ruin of the fall by virtue thereof: for *the root being holy, so also must be the branches*. For that portion of human nature united to the GODHEAD, contained in it, the seed of holiness to all his children. Hence the promise runs to this amount in the charter of grace. *To Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds as of many, but as of one; and to thy seed, which is CHRIST.* Gal. iii. 16. And hence also the seed of CHRIST are secured in all the covenant promises. And as it is said of *Levi*, on whom the promise was equally entailed with Abraham, that *he was in the loins of his father Abraham, when Melchisedec met him, and blessed him*: so was the whole Church in CHRIST, before the fall took place, in the Adam-generation: whereby every individual of the Church was preserved in CHRIST JESUS, and in time called. Jude 1.

One word more, and I will relieve the Reader's attention. How did this generation of vipers manifest their serpentine hatred to CHRIST, and bring upon themselves those awful denunciations? Not for their immoralities, for they prided themselves in being highly moral. Not for their neglect of their public or private worship. For they did both. Neither were they chargeable, as far as outward actions went, with the common vices of drunkenness, adultery, and the like. What was it then, which brought down upon them the LORD's severest judgments? Certainly, nothing more or less, than by this Pharisaical righteousness, teaching the people to slight the person and work of JESUS, as what were unnecessary for acceptance with GOD. They compassed sea and land the LORD told them, to make one proselyte, and when this was done, they made him two-fold more the child of hell, than themselves. That is, they labored to undermine the necessity of salvation by CHRIST, in setting up, and teaching others

to do the same, a righteousness of their own: and thus by denying the fall of man, and the necessity of a recovery by grace, they set up the kingdom of Satan, and like children of hell, fought against the kingdom of grace.

Reader! pause over the awful subject! If such be the views which arise out of Pharisaical righteousness; we can no longer wonder at any of our LORD's expressions in this Chapter. And under the conviction, that nothing can be more in opposition to the very first principles of the Gospel; nothing more fatal to the humblings of grace; nothing which equally tends to make the cross of CHRIST of little worth, and the righteousness of CHRIST of no effect; I would say for myself, and every one, whose present and everlasting welfare I feel concerned,—From all self-righteousness, spiritual pride, hardness of heart, and contempt of thy word and commandments, Good LORD! deliver us!

34 ¶ Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and *some* of them ye shall kill and crucify; and *some* of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute *them* from city to city;

35 That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.

36 Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.

These verses very properly follow here, in confirmation of the former. For as *Cain* the first murderer, began to shew this bitterness of spirit against *Abel*; so every persecution and blood shed, the cause of CHRIST had suffered, from his days to the end of the holy war, will be required of the serpent generation. Hence John expressly saith, in so many words, the reason wherefore *Cain* killed his brother *Abel*, was, because he belonged to that serpent family. *Not as Cain*, (saith he) *who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother.* 1 John iii. 12. To the same purport JESUS said, to some which were in his days: *Ye are of your FATHER the DEVIL, and the lusts of your Father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning.* John viii. 44.

37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *thou* that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, and ye would not!

38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate,

39 For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Having much exceeded the limits to be observed in a work of this kind, in this Chapter, I reserve the comment on those verses to Luke xiii. 34. where we meet with the same pathetic lamentation of CHRIST.

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PAUSE Reader! pause my soul, over the contents of this Chapter. Surely nothing can be more solemn, nothing more affecting. Behold the SON of GOD, who came to seek and save that which was lost; pronouncing sure and certain destruction upon a class of men, who in every age have stood up with pretensions for greater holiness than others, and like one of them in the Parable, all of them more or less ready to exclaim: GOD! *I thank thee that I am not as other men are!* Hear the LORD calling them serpents; a generation of vipers, which cannot escape the damnation of hell. And what were they considered in their department among men? How were they distinguished *then*? How are they known *now*?

The LORD calls them Pharisees. Men unhumiliated in their minds. Who never felt the plague of their own heart. Uncircumcised in heart and ears. They never tasted the wormwood and the gall of a fallen state. They never were pricked to the heart under the deep conviction of a fallen state. And not feeling the want of CHRIST; they utterly despised him.

LORD JESUS! keep my soul humble at the foot of thy cross. Every day, and all the day, may I learn the infinitely precious consolations of salvation as alone in thee, and more and more from a deep sense of the want of thee, be led to see and enjoy my compleat interest in thee. And oh for grace like Paul, to count *all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of CHRIST JESUS my LORD*: and to count *all things but dung, that I may win CHRIST and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of CHRIST; the righteousness which is of GOD by faith.* Oh! the blessedness that CHRIST is made of GOD to all his redeemed; *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, that he that glorieth may glory in the LORD!*

C H A P. XXIV.

CONTENTS.

We have in this Chapter the LORD JESUS instructing his disciples, and in particular he foretells the destruction of the temple: and with it is blended the promise of his future coming.

AND Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple.

2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down,

It is worthy our observation, that this was the last visit Jesus made to the temple. So that when he left it, it was to return no more. And when Jesus left it, the glory was departed from it. The Prophet *Haggai* was commissioned by the LORD, to tell the people, that *the glory of this latter house should be greater than the former*. And it was made so in the presence of JESUS when he entered it, in substance of our flesh. *Haggai ii. 9*. But when the LORD of his temple departed, then what Jesus said in the close of the foregoing Chapter, was fulfilled: *your house is left unto you desolate*. Matt xxiii. 38. What a precious thought to all his redeemed; JESUS never leaves them! Heb. xiii. 5. Matt. xxviii. 20. This prediction of JESUS, we are told, was literally fulfilled when *Titus* sacked Jerusalem. For though the stones of the temple, were some of them of an enormous size, yet so it was, not one of them but what was broken or thrown down. The prophet *Micah*, had said, *Zion should be ploughed as a field*. Micah iii. 12. And here was the accomplishment, Reader! what an awful thing is it, even considered only in a temporal point of view, and as it respects nations to slight JEHOVAH'S CHRIST? And how awful, in the day in which we live is it, to consider what a CHRIST despising generation is the present.

3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what *shall be* the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.

5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

8 All these *are* the beginning of sorrows.

9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.

10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

While we consider the great events here spoken of, as having a peculiar and special reference, to the then age, and to the end of the Jewish state as a nation, we may, without violence, consider our Lord's words, as having a further respect to the events of his gospel, which followed. False Christs and false prophets, are signs always to be noticed in the Church history. Wars, and rumours of wars, are all ministering to CHRIST's kingdom. Every period in the Church to the present hour, hath been marked with these things. They are exercises to the faithful, and truly profitable, under the Spirit's teaching, to establish the heart in grace. Moreover, the expressions of *enduring to the end and being saved*, meant nothing more than a *temporal* deliverance; and when *the Gospel had been preached in all nations, the end then being come*: meant not the end of the world, but that when the disciples were gone forth after the day of Pentecost; this was the last sign of CHRIST's prophecy, concerning the overthrow of Jerusalem, and so the end of the Jewish state was come.

15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

16 Then let them which be in Judea, flee into the mountains:

17 Let him which is on the house-top not come down to take any thing out of his house:

18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!

20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath-day:

21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as

was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

I cannot think with some, that the Prophet *Daniel* referred to some image set up in the temple, by way of profaning it. For we read in the history of those awful times, when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, that on the soldiers entering the temple and finding no image there, as they had been accustomed to in their idolatrous services, they ridiculed the Jewish religion, saying, that they worshipped the clouds. I rather am inclined to interpret the passage in *Daniel*, which is called, *the overspreading of abominations, he shall make it desolate*, Dan. ix. 27; as having respect to the Roman armies. But be this as it may, the LORD JESUS pointed to this as the immediate forerunner of the impending ruin. The verses which follow, are descriptive of great misery. But in the midst of this awful view, I beg the Reader not to overlook that sweet verse of mercy to the elect. Except *those days*, said JESUS, *be shortened*; (that is, the sweeping destruction going forth at that visitation) *there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake*, said the Redeemer, *those days shall be shortened*. Reader! do not overlook the mercy; and much less overlook the LORD of the mercy. If the days had been lengthened out, as the savage Romans wished, until the whole seed of Israel had been cut off: from whence could there have been a race preserved for the propagating the seed of CHRIST, out of which the elect after the flesh were to come? Here as in that beautiful similitude of the cluster in which the new wine is found. Isaiah lxxv. 8. Was one looking on, which said: *destroy it not; for a blessing is in it. So, saith the LORD, will, I do for my servant's sake, that I may not destroy them all*. Reader! who shall say, from that hour to the present, and so on to the end of time, how frequent and how numerous, the instances, where mercy is shewn to the graceless, for the elect's sake, which in the Adam race of nature, are to come forth from their loins. How many among the unregenerate live on, and are preserved; because CHRIST's seed after the flesh are appointed in their day and generation? Did the world but know this; or could the world but be made sensible of the blessings they derive from CHRIST's seed; would they persecute them as they now do, and like Pharaoh to Israel, often make their lives grievous by reason of their bondage. Exod. ii. 23. Oh! ye ungodly, ye careless, and christless people of this land! What would ye do were the LORD to call home his own, and house them all at once, from your persecutions? Surely you may truly say with the Prophet: *Except the LORD of HOSTS had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah!* Isaiah i. 9.

23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.

24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false

prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it were* possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

I detain the Reader again, at this blessed statement of the LORD JESUS, concerning the safety of the elect. No signs nor wonders shall deceive *them*, our God saith; that is, shall deceive them to their injury, so as to hurt them really so in the present life, (see Romans viii. 28.) much less for the life to come, by any falling away. They may, and they will be frequently made the dupes of artifice, and the laughing stock of the world, and the drunkards' song. But this is no injury. And as they were chosen in CHRIST without respect to any thing of merit in themselves, before the world began; so are they secured in CHRIST to grace and glory. But let them remember, and remember it with all thankfulness, that all their safety here, and happiness hereafter, is not the result of their faith in CHRIST; but the sole purpose of their being elected in CHRIST. And the very reason wherefore they are kept in safety is, because they are chosen in CHRIST: so that their faith, and love, and joy in the LORD, are the *effects* of their election, and not the *cause*. Oh! the preciousness of this truth, and the security of God's people! Read that sweet scripture, Isaiah liv. 14 to the end.

25 Behold, I have told you before.

26 Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold he is in the desert; go not forth; behold, *he is* in the secret chambers; believe *it* not.

27 For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

28 For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

I pause at this verse, respecting the carcase, and the gathering together of the eagles, to correct any error which might arise, as if it implied, that where CHRIST and his Gospel are, believers will flock. No doubt to CHRIST the gathering of the people shall be. But the term carcase, would but ill suit with the person and glory of CHRIST. I rather conceive that by carcase, is meant the slaughtered state of the Jews; and that the Roman soldiers, whose ensign was that of an eagle, would be assembled to their destruction.

29 ¶ Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heaven shall be shaken:

30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of

man in heaven : and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

32 Now learn a parable of the fig tree : When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh :

33 So likewise ye, when he shall see all these things, know that it is near, *even* at the doors.

34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

35 Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

The darkening of the sun and moon, and falling of the stars, are certainly meant in a figurative way ; and were intended to imply, that on the dispersion of the Jews, those awful events should follow which the Prophet foretold, when *the LORD would cause the sun to go down at noon*. See the whole prophecy, Amos viii. 3 to the end. Neither when the LORD speaks of the Son of Man coming to judgment, could be meant, that *immediately* after the destruction of Jerusalem, would be the day of final judgment ; but rather the judgment on the Jews, for rejecting the LORD of life and glory, and the sending of his Angels with the great sound of a trumpet, and gathering his elect, implies, his ministers going forth to preach the Gospel, which with the effect, is spoken of both by the Prophet and the Apostle. Isaiah xxvii. 13. Rev. xiv. 6. And the limitation of those events, to the then generation, in which CHRIST predicted them, is a plain proof to what they referred. For it was not full forty years after, when Jerusalem was destroyed ; so that consequently many lived to see the accomplishment.

36 But of that day and hour knoweth no *man*, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

I desire to look at this verse singly, from the abuses made of it by the enemies to the GODHEAD of CHRIST. Had the Sceptic limited the sense of it, as it is evidently intended, to *the day of Jerusalem's destruction*, and not referred it to what it never was intended to have regard, to *the second coming of CHRIST* ; he would have seen that the GODHEAD of CHRIST was neither honored nor dishonored in the business. As the GOD-MAN CHRIST JESUS, all judgment is committed to CHRIST, on purpose that *all men should honor the SON even as they honor the*

FATHER. And he who alone is to be the judge of quick and dead, must know both the time and all the process connected with it. But on the occasion of Jerusalem's visitation, to which this verse refers, though CHRIST had so fully foretold the whole events which should take place, he doth not say the *year* was not known, for he himself had declared that that generation should not pass away till all were fulfilled; but our LORD's expressions are of that *day* and *hour*. And all consciousness of time was lost when the calamities took place on that devoted city.

37 But as the days of Noe *were*, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,

39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

40 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

41 Two women *shall* be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

42 Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

43 But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

45 Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?

46 Blessed *is* that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

47 Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.

48 But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming;

49 And shall begin to smite *his* fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken;

50 The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for *him*, and in an hour that he is not aware of,

51 And shall cut him asunder, and appoint *him* his portion with the hypocrites, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

All that is here contained, though full of the highest instruction, yet, being so very plain and evident, will not require any comment more than its own beautiful order and simplicity. The readiness and watchfulness our LORD commanded in the prospect of the impending judgments he foretold, may by the same unanswerable reasoning be applied to the LORD's second coming to judgment, and to every man's departure out of life. For what, in fact, is the day of judgment to the whole world, but the day of death to every individual. Hence the only readiness is, being one with CHRIST, in an union with his person, regenerated by his spirit, washed in his blood, clothed in his righteousness, and habitually ready in the lively exercise of faith and hope, for the expectation of his coming; that when his LORD shall call, at midnight, or cock-crowing, or in the morning, he may arise at the joyful call, and mount up and meet the LORD in the air, and so for ever be with the LORD. Oh! the blessedness of that servant, *whom his LORD when he cometh shall find so doing!*

REFLECTIONS.

BLESSED LORD JESUS! be thou everlastingly loved and adored, in that thou camest forth from the bosom of the FATHER, to make known the sacred purposes of his holy will and which were all purposed in CHRIST JESUS before the world began. And blessed be thy name for that love and grace in thine heart, in having taught thy people their safety amidst all the judgments going on in the world; and amidst all the deceptions of devils and men lying in wait to deceive. Yes! yes! thou dearest LORD, in this blessed Chapter we learn, that it is impossible so to deceive thine elect, or that any real injury can follow. Oh! LORD! give thy people grace to trace their mercies to the fountain head; and to know that their safety as well as their happiness, ariseth from their being chosen in thee, and not from any thing in themselves. And my soul, in a day like the present, let no reports of false christs, or false prophets at all move thee. JESUS will keep; JESUS will preserve; JESUS will secure his own. And the day is hastening, when *he will come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.* In that all-decisive hour, LORD grant that I may be found in thee, waiting thy approach, and *not be ashamed before thee at thy coming!* Amen.

CHAP. XXV.

CONTENTS.

In this Chapter we have the Parable of the Ten Virgins, and of the Talents; together with an account of the proceedings of the last day.

THEN shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

2 And five of them were wise, and five *were* foolish.

3 They that *were* foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:

4 But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

5 While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

6 And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.

7 Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

8 And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.

9 But the wise answered, saying, *Not so*; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut.

11 Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

12 But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

13 Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

By the kingdom of heaven, is not meant heaven itself, for there are no foolish virgins there, such as this Parable describes; but it is by way of comparison, to which the kingdom of grace in this life is said to resemble. The LORD describes *ten* virgins; *five* of whom were

wise and *five* foolish. Not that the number *ten* hath any particular allusion; neither because they are divided into equal parts is it meant to say, that the number of the happy and of the miserable will be equal. But that the Parable our LORD hath judged proper to set forth under these images, may be the better understood. By the wise, are meant the wise unto salvation. And by the foolish those among the unawakened, careless, and christless professors, who are so foolish as to seek the gain of the world, rather than their own souls.

Now those virgins are alike described as going forth to meet the bridegroom. CHRIST is the bridegroom of his spouse the Church. By their going forth with their lamps, means going forth under a profession of CHRIST's religion. They that were foolish, took their lamps, that is, they had a mere profession, but no oil with them; they had none of the unction of GOD the HOLY GHOST upon them; were ignorant of their own lost estate before GOD, and though professing CHRIST, knew nothing of his saving power in their hearts. Whereas the wise, having been made wise unto salvation, had learnt their need of CHRIST, and were earnest to seek him.

While the bridegroom tarried, that is, while waiting in ordinances they all slumbered and slept. The Church describes herself in this frame; *I sleep, but my heart waketh*. Song v. 2. The slumbering of the LORD's people is not the sleep of death, but a deadness, of which GOD's people find but too much cause to complain. But the foolish virgins were never awakened, from being *dead in trespasses and sins*. The consequence of CHRIST's coming, must be supposed, as the Parable goes on to describe, as different as their different states unavoidably could not but produce. The *foolish* virgins, destitute of all vital godliness, unawakened, unregenerated, unacquainted with the plague of their own heart, and ignorant of the person, work, and glory of CHRIST; in all his saving offices, characters, and relations; and having nothing but a lamp of profession, were found in utter darkness, at the LORD's approach. While on the contrary, the wise virgins being furnished with the oil of grace, under the teaching of GOD the HOLY GHOST, and brought into an union with CHRIST, and communion in all that belonged to CHRIST, in regenerating, converting, justifying, and sanctifying mercy; thus prepared by the LORD, for the knowledge and enjoyment of the LORD; arise with holy joy, at the bridegroom's coming, and *enter with him into the marriage and the door is shut*.

The cry of the foolish virgins for admission, represents the state of all those who have no part nor lot in the matter. The LORD hath elsewhere described them, as well as in this parable, as those he knows not, that is, he knows them not, in any way of union or communion with him. And therefore he closeth the Parable with a recommendation to his redeemed, to be always on the watch-tower, unconscious at what day or hour, the LORD will come to take his redeemed home, that they may be found distinguished from those foolish virgins, void of all vital godliness.

14 ¶ *For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.*

15 And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one ; to every man according to his several ability ; and straightway took his journey.

16 Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made *them* other five talents.

17 And likewise he that *had received* two, he also gained other two.

18 But he that had received one went, and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

19 After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

20 And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliverdest unto me five talents : behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.

21 His lord said unto him, Well done, *thou* good and faithful servant ; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things : enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

22 He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliverdst unto me two talents : behold, I have gained two other talents beside them.

23 His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant ; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things : enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

24 Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed :

25 And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth : lo, *there* thou hast *that is* thine.

26 His lord answered and said unto him, *Thou* wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I

reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed :

27 Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and *then* at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.

28 Take therefore the talent from him, and give *it* unto him which hath ten talents.

29 For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.

30 And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The LORD illustrates the same doctrine, as before, under another beautiful parable of a bountiful LORD, which is JESUS himself, committing different talents to his servants, and in the close, taking account of their improvement, or misimprovement, of the things committed to their charge. Two servants, to whom great charges were entrusted, are represented as making good use of their time and talents, and in the end receiving the approbation of their LORD. One, and to whom less was committed, is shewn to have proved unprofitable, and is condemned to utter darkness; and the talent entrusted to this man is said to be taken from him, and given to the servant which had most improved in his LORD's stewardship.

The obvious sense of this, as well as the former parable, renders all observations upon them unnecessary. I would only, therefore, beg it may be properly understood, that the rewards given to the faithful servant, must not be considered in a light contrary to the whole tenor of the gospel, as if any man merited divine favour. We must not strain the sense to this extent. *When we have done all, we are still unprofitable servants.* The grace of God cannot be made debtor to the services of man. The LORD is not moved to bestow his blessings on account of any supposed good in his creatures, neither is he restrained by our ill. *The gifts and callings of God are without repentance.* But the whole is with an eye to CHRIST. The talents here spoken of, given to the two former servants, were evidently the *gifts of grace*, and consequently the LORD's, and no merit in the receivers. Both the original stock and increase were the LORD's. LORD! (saith the Prophet,) *thou hast wrought all our works in us.* Isaiah xxvi. 12. But the One Talent the unprofitable servant received, could be only the *gift of nature*, for grace is that *good part* which cannot be taken away; whereas every thing in nature may, and at death must, and will. And the taking this talent from the slothful and unworthy, and giving it to the diligent, means to say, that the souls of the redeemed, who, through grace, abound in *spiritual* things, shall also, if needful, be blessed in the sanctified use of *temporal* things. *All are*

yours, (saith the Apostle,) whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are CHRIST's, and CHRIST is GOD's. 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23, 24.

31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory :

32 And before him shall be gathered all nations : and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats :

33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world :

35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me in :

36 Naked, and ye clothed me : I was sick, and ye visited me : I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred and fed *thee*? or thirsty, gave *thee* drink?

38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took *thee* in? or naked, and clothed *thee*?

39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me.

41 Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.

42 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink.

43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in :

naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did *it* not to one of the least of these, ye did *it* not to me.

46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

Here we enter on that part of our LORD's sublime discourse, on the events of the last day, and in which the SON of GOD hath been pleased to deliver himself on the momentous subject without a parable. And most magnificent and solemn is the description. And when to this be added the consideration, that every son and daughter of ADAM must be present, to receive the things done in the body, whether good or bad, the subject becomes infinitely interesting indeed. There can need no comment however. Every verse is plain. Every thing described impossible to be misunderstood. And when GOD the HOLY GHOST accompanieth the reading, or the hearing of it, with his grace, it cannot fail of its impression in the heart.

I would only beg to observe upon it, that what is here represented concerning the proceedings of the last day, refer chiefly, if not altogether, to the Church of the LORD JESUS, and not to the world at large. All nations, indeed, are to be gathered before CHRIST, but then what is described relates to the Church of CHRIST, as a Church professing CHRIST under the double character of the sheep and goats; that is, the elect of GOD, and the non-elect. So that what JESUS saith to each, is wholly spoken under these different views of character. And in confirmation of this grand and momentous truth, it should be observed, that the sheep on the King's right hand, are called upon, as the blessed of the FATHER, to come and inherit the kingdom *prepared for them from the foundation of the world*. And although, in infinite condescension and mercy, the King goes on to speak of the exercise of those graces he had given them, in acts of mercy shewn by them to his poor people, which are his representatives; yet these things were all subsequent to what was determined upon *before the foundation of the world*. A kingdom prepared from all eternity; and the persons for whom it was prepared, being known and appointed, their possession of it could not depend upon any of their after-actions in time. This would have been to have put the *effect* for the *cause*, and to invert the very order of things in the divine counsel. It is, indeed, very blessed to see, that the LORD, who is himself the sole cause, appointed also the effect. But plainly, the whole is the result of free sovereign grace, and not an atom of merit in man, contributing, in the least degree, to the accomplishment.

Reader! pause over the subject, and ponder well the blessed contents! For what can be so truly blessed, as the contemplation of the provision the LORD made for his people, not only before they were born, but before the foundations of the earth were laid. I know that some dear children of GOD, yea, perhaps I might have said, by far the greater part of his children, on whom a work of grace is wrought, are looking more to the effect wrought in them, than the Almighty work wrought for them. But this should not be the case. Time will come, yea many a time circumstances do come, when redeemed souls lose sight of what is called their evidences; and where is their comfort then? Whereas, if we were always looking to the LORD JESUS, and JEHOVAH's covenant promises in him, and considered the security of this kingdom, which cannot be moved, and which hath been prepared for the Church and every member of CHRIST's body, from the foundation of the world; these are the LORD's evidences, in which we should find an everlasting source for joy. For so the promise runs. *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace*, (or as the margin of the Bible very properly renders it, *peace, peace*; that is, peace for ever, peace upon peace, uninterrupted, and without end,) *whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.* Isaiah xxvi. 3. LORD! I would say for myself, and every regenerated child of GOD! grant to us such blessed stayings upon thee, and arising wholly of what thou hast done, as the *sole cause*; and not in any thing which thy grace enables thy redeemed to perform, for all these can be but *the effect*. Oh! the unspeakable felicity of a kingdom not founded in time, but in eternity: not the result of man's merit, but GOD's gift; not depending upon creature attainments, but Creator faithfulness; and founded in the everlasting love of GOD the FATHER, the infinite merits, bloodsheddings, and righteousness, of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and the Almighty grace and efficient ministry of GOD the HOLY GHOST. And oh! how sweet are the words of the LORD JESUS, both here and elsewhere, while expressing the rich mercies thus prepared for his redeemed, before the foundation of the world, when he saith: *Fear not little flock, for it is your heavenly Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.* Luke xii. 32.

I hope the Reader will not be liable to any mistake, from the statement I have ventured to give, in pointing out the *cause* from the *effect*. Neither will he, I trust, be led to conceive, that I place no stress upon the *effects* of vital godliness, because I place so much upon the grand *cause* of all. This would be to pervert what I have intended. The LORD JESUS himself, is pleased to notice in his people the smallest exercise of those graces he hath given them; and he tells us, that he regards the cup of cold water, when we have nothing warmer to give, if given in the name of a disciple. Well therefore may we regard them also. And as CHRIST *personal* is no more upon earth to be ministered unto, as he was in the days of his flesh, Luke viii. 3. it is blessed when we feel a love to JESUS, to minister to any of his poor people, who are members of his *mystical* body. But still I must contend for the LORD's glory, as the sole cause of all. The foundation of a kingdom, and prepared from everlasting, is wholly in himself: and both the persons for whom this kingdom is prepared, and the graces wrought in them, as testimonies to the same, all ori-

ginate from the electing, redeeming, regenerating grace of God, in CHRIST JESUS.

I detain the Reader a moment longer to remark, that from the answer, and given with such seeming astonishment by the redeemed, (called righteous, in the LORD's righteousness,) to the gracious words of the king: LORD *when saw we thee an hungred and fed thee, &c.* it appears that they had no consciousness of the oneness between CHRIST and his people, in a manner equal to what it really is. And perhaps no man alive, is, or can be able to conceive the intimate nearness between them. If we were, every child of GOD, would be more alive than he is, even upon motives of selfishness to minister to one another. One of the fathers of the Church (*Cyprian*) used to say, that this passage had never been understood; and the redeemed are all of them represented as saying as much, when thus expressing their astonishment!

I do not think it necessary to enlarge, on the awful part of the representation given in this Chapter, of the condemnation of the unregenerate. That the sentence uttered by the king, *depart ye cursed; is* spoken to such as were nominal Christians, is I think, too evident to be doubted, in that JESUS saith, *I was an hungered and ye gave me no meat*: which plainly proves that they dwelt among the LORD's people, but had neither faith nor love for him, nor compassion for his members as such. In short the characters are contrasted. The righteous were righteous in CHRIST's righteousness; and through grace had been savingly called, regenerated, justified, and sanctified; and had been deeply humbled under a sense of their own utterly lost estate, and had sought salvation only in CHRIST. The goats on the left hand, had neither felt a sense of sin, nor a desire of salvation; they are supposed to have heard of CHRIST, but valued him not; priding themselves in their own good works, or hoping that these would recommend them to JESUS, and what was wanting, if there were any deficiency, he might make up. So that their unhumbled hearts had never known any thing of their own corruption; their acts of charity, if any, had never been given with an eye to CHRIST: they had lived and died, as they were born, and knew not the LORD. It is of such CHRIST speaks, when he saith, *and these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.*

REFLECTIONS.

LET both Writer and Reader, ponder well the weighty contents of this Chapter, before they close the book, looking up to the great Author of his holy word, to commission it to their hearts, and to make it a savour of life unto life, that the name of JESUS, may be *as ointment poureth forth!*

And oh! for grace, to be as the wise virgins, not going forth with the lamp of a mere profession; which from not being fed, nor kept alive by the LORD, cannot but go out in the midnight-hour. Neither may my soul be as the unprofitable servant, whose end could be no other but to be cast into outer darkness, *where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth!* Oh! precious LORD JESUS! what a relief is it to my soul that when thou shalt come in thy glory, and all thy holy angels with thee, thy redeemed shall be set on thy right hand; and

their introduction into everlasting happiness, will then be proclaimed before a congregated world, to be the result of thy grace, not their merit. Yes! thou glorious Head of thy Church and people, it will be then seen that thou art the sole *cause* of all their salvation and joy, their everlasting portion and happiness, in time and to all eternity. LORD! grant in my heart all the blessed *effects* of thy love, that I may love thee and thy members, as streams from the fountain of thy love, and manifest whose I am and whom I serve, in the gospel of God's dear Son: and seeing that all thy redeemed have received *a kingdom which cannot be moved, we may have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear!*

C H A P. XXVI.

CONTENTS.

We here enter upon the concluding scenes of CHRIST's life. The Rulers conspire against JESUS. He celebrates his Passover. Judas betrayeth him; Peter denieth him; and all the disciples forsake him and flee.

AND it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples,

2 Ye know that after two days is *the feast* of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.

I beg the Reader to attend very minutely, to the circumstances with which *Matthew*, the first Evangelist, in point of order, introduceth the subject of our LORD's sufferings. He saith, *When Jesus had finished all these sayings*. Perhaps he alluded to the finishing of his office in teaching. For as CHRIST in his character of Mediator, had *three* offices, prophet, priest, and king, he was uniformly carrying on one or other of these all the way through, during the whole of his ministry. He had therefore finished his teachings, as the *Prophet* of his people; and now he is about to enter more fully on his *Priestly* office, where he would be both the altar, sacrifice, and sacrificer. And when this was also finished, he would in a more open manner, than he had hitherto done, display his *Kingly* power in his ascension to glory, where the exercise of his sovereignty was to be shewn forth, in ruling his Church, until he had accomplished the destruction of his enemies, and brought home his redeemed to everlasting happiness.

As the interesting subject in the concluding scenes of our LORD's life, form so momentous a part in CHRIST's history, and as it is most essential to every child of God, to have the clearest apprehension of it, I hope I may be indulged in this "Poor Man's Commentary," to dwell upon each particular, with that attention it deserves; looking up to God the HOLY GHOST, to be the teacher both of Writer and Reader. And yet at the same time, that I may not swell the pages beyond their proper limits, I shall adopt a method, which I hope will answer this purpose very fully. I mean, that as the *four* Evangelists have re-

corded those solemn transactions, which took place, at the death of CHRIST, it will not be necessary to repeat my observations in the same way and manner upon every one; but connect the whole as one history; and so divide the subject, that what I omit in my comment on one part, may be introduced into the other. This will prevent tediousness to the Reader, and yet allow of enlargement upon the whole, so as under the LORD's blessing, to make the subject compleat.

I beg the Reader to observe, how CHRIST opens the subject himself, and immediately directs the minds of his disciples to it, in calling their attention to the Jewish Passover. This was the first public service in the appointment of the LORD, when the Church was first formed, in the memorable night of the people being delivered from Egyptian bondage. See Exod. xii. throughout. Now as GOD the HOLY GHOST himself, by his servant Paul, explained this service in express terms of application to the LORD JESUS, when the Apostle said CHRIST *our Passover is sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the feast.* I Cor. v. 7, 8. We cannot hesitate a moment in concluding that the first institution of this service in the old Church, together with every sacrifice which followed under the law, had no other object in view than to hold forth CHRIST. To him, every one of them pointed. In him, the whole was compleated. He, and he alone, became the sum and substance of all; and all, as the HOLY GHOST, by the same Apostle elsewhere saith in his writings, *were a shadow of things to come, but the body is of CHRIST.* Coloss. ii. 17. Heb. x. 1.

When the Reader therefore hath diligently read over the interesting account given by all the Evangelists concerning the Passover, and compared it with what is said concerning it at the first institution; I would beg his closest attention to the whole subject, in the great points of doctrine connected with it, and which will minister under the LORD's teaching, to the proper apprehension of those grand features of character, in the person of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. See Mark xiv. 1. Luke xxii. 1, &c. John xiii. 1. Compared with Exod. xii. throughout.

And here the first and most prominent feature of character in the LORD JESUS as our Passover, must be to consider him as our great head, and representative of his Church and people. CHRIST, becoming our Passover, and dying for his redeemed in time, pre-supposes an engagement for this purpose in eternity. And hence we find, he is called *the lamb slain from the foundation of the world.* Rev. xiii. 8. And to this amount the scriptures speak, when continually and in every part, informing the Church of the everlasting covenant made between the persons of the GODHEAD, before all worlds. By virtue of which, CHRIST, at the call of GOD the FATHER, as covenanted for in the great purposes of redemption, stood up the glorious head, representative, and high-priest of his people; taking their names and their nature; undertaking for them to fulfill all righteousness, and offering his soul an offering for sin. On the part of JEHOVAH, it was agreed, that the whole persons of the GODHEAD would carry CHRIST, in his human nature, through the wonderful undertaking; and when accomplished, the glorious deliverer should see his seed with all the blessed effects of his salvation, and have a Church to serve him, where his praise should be sung, and his name adored, as long as the sun and moon should endure, from one generation to another. And,

finally, bring home his chosen, to everlasting glory; when sin, Satan, death, and hell, should be brought under his feet. I stay not to quote at large the whole body of scripture, which, with one full voice come forth to confirm the great truth. I rather refer the Reader to look over those portions in his Bible for himself, which I have here referred to, and when he hath done, I will request him to follow me through those interesting records of our LORD's concluding scenes of his ministry and life, whose beauties will therefrom, I am persuaded, appear in their more plain and striking colors. Isaiah xlii. 1—8. Prov. viii. 22—31. Isaiah xlix. 1—9. Psm. xl. 1—7. compared with Heb. x. 1—22. John x. 18. On the part of JEHOVAH's covenant, see Psm. lxxxix. 2, 3, 4, 19—37. Isaiah xi. 1—9. John 3—34 to the end. Psm. cx. Isaiah liii. 10. Philip. ii. 6—12. Heb. xii. 2, &c. Rev. vii. 9 to the end.

3 Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas,

4 And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill *him*.

5 But they said, Not on the feast *day*, lest there be an uproar among the people.

From what hath been observed before, in the introduction of this subject, in holding forth CHRIST, as the representative of his Church and people, we shall now enter upon it with a clearer apprehension, in beholding the chief priests here forming their council for killing Jesus. And although they had no consciousness, what instruments they were in the LORD's hand, for the accomplishing the sacred purposes of his will; yet they were (as *Peter* told some of them, after his soul was enlightened by the coming of the HOLY GHOST, on the day of Pentecost,) by wicked hands, doing all that they did, *by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*. Acts ii. 23. See also to this purport, Acts iv. 27, 28. Acts xiii. 27, 28.

Reader! it is very blessed to behold CHRIST thus representing his redeemed as their head and husband; and the Chief Priests and Scribes, thus becoming God's instruments, for the purpose of bringing CHRIST into the very situation, where our sins must have brought us, but for his interposition. His being made both *sin* and a *curse* for us, became the only possible means, whereby we might be redeemed from both for ever. We shall have the clearest views of these grand points, as we prosecute the subject, if so be, the LORD the HOLY GHOST be our teacher! Matchless instructor! vouchsafe this blessing!

6 Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper,

7 There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat *at meat*.

8 But when his disciples saw *it*, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose *is* this waste?

9 For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.

10 When Jesus understood *it*, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me.

11 For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always.

12 For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did *it* for my burial.

13 Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, *there* shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.

Some have thought, that this woman, is the same that is spoken of in Luke vii. 37. And others have thought, that it was *Mary*, the sister of *Lazarus*. John xii. 3. But I am too intent at present, to make any enquiry here, who it was: it is the person of *JESUS*, who alone demands our attention, while following him in those solemn moments. Reader! mark what your Redeemer saith; the pouring this ointment on his body, was in token of his *burial*. Yes! it was to this death of *JESUS*, every thing referred. The moment the *SON* of *GOD* became incarnate, and openly came forward as the Head and Surety of his Church, the curse pronounced on man's fall, seized on him as the Sponsor.

Reader! I hope you have not forgotten the awful contents of it. The ground was first *cursed* for man's sake. The nature of man was doomed to sorrow and labor, in consequence thereof. *In sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life*. And death, was to close the scene. *Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return*. Gen. iii. 17, 18, 19. Hence therefore, the whole of this awful sentence attached itself to *CHRIST*, when he freely offered himself the redeemer of his Church and people. And what I beg the Reader particularly to notice, and indeed, to us so highly concerned in the blessedness of redemption by *CHRIST*, becomes more important than any other view of the subject, is, that the curse in all its aggravated circumstances lighting upon *CHRIST*, was wholly, in that he stood forth at the call of his *FATHER*, as our surety. The *SON* of *GOD* taking our nature, would not have subjected him to this curse, had he not volunteered to be our surety. Great indeed was the grace, in the *SON* of *GOD* to become man. But this might have been done, and the same infinitely glorious person he would have been, as he now is, had he never undertaken our redemption. But when he stood up at the call of *GOD* our surety, *he* became responsible, while *we* who were the principals in the debt were made free; *CHRIST* our surety took the whole upon himself, and the *LORD* laid on him *the iniquity of us all*. Isaiah liii. 6.

14 ¶ Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests,

15 And said *unto them*, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.

16 And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.

17 ¶ Now the first *day* of the *feast* of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover?

18 And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples.

19 And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover.

20 Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve.

21 And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.

22 And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?

23 And he answered and said, He that dippeth *his* hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.

24 The Son of man goeth, as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.

25 Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.

26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

27 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;

28 For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

29 But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

30 And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

I reserve the view which this scripture opens of the traitor *Judas*, to the account given of it by *John*, where it is somewhat more enlarged upon. See *John* xiii. 18.

31 Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night : for it is written I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.

32 But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.

33 Peter answered and said unto him, Though all *men* shall be offended because of thee, *yet* will I never be offended.

34 Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

35 Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.

We shall very easily conceive, how likely it was, for the whole body of disciples to be offended, or as the original word is, *scandalized*, at the humiliation of CHRIST, if we all along keep in remembrance, that notwithstanding all the miracles CHRIST had wrought, and the discourses he had delivered to them; not one of them before the descent of the HOLY GHOST, had any apprehension of any kingdom of Jesus, but an earthly kingdom. Even after he arose from the dead, they still harped upon the subject, LORD ! *wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?* meaning the overthrowing the Roman power, under whom Israel was then in tribute. Acts i. 6. And though every one of them (for Judas was now gone) as well as *Peter*, felt a confidence of attachment to CHRIST; yet certain it is, that when CHRIST was apprehended as he was soon after this by the Roman soldiers, all would have readily denied him, as *Peter* did, had the temptation been the

same; neither but from CHRIST's intercession for them could they have stood in faith, for for the moment they all forsook him and fled.

36 ¶ Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.

37 And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy.

38 Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.

39 And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou *wilt*.

40 And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?

41 Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak.

42 He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.

43 And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy.

44 And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

45 Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take *your* rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

46 Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.

We have here CHRIST's entrance upon his sufferings, in the garden *Gethsemane*. The whole life of JESUS had been a life of sorrow, for of him, and him only, by way of emphasis, can it be said, that he was *a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*. But here he is entering

more especially upon the great work of sorrow, for which he became the surety of his people. And here it is therefore, that we need most eminently the teaching of God the HOLY GHOST. I am aware how very little a way our discoveries carry us, when following the steps of JESUS by faith, into the garden of *Gethsemane*. If *Peter, James, and John*, whom CHRIST took with him there, fell under such a drowsiness as is described, how shall we hope to watch the footsteps of JESUS to any great discoveries of such an awful scene? Nevertheless, looking up for the teachings and leadings of the HOLY GHOST, I would beg the Reader to accompany me, in following by faith, the LORD JESUS to *Gethsemane's* garden, in this dark and gloomy hour; and may the LORD be our teacher in beholding the glory of CHRIST, even in the depth of his soul travail, when he drank the cup of trembling to the dregs, that we might drink the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the LORD.

And here Reader, carrying on the same important idea with us all along, that in all CHRIST did, and all he suffered, he acted as the surety and representative of his people, let us first consider the suitability of the place.

It was a garden, in which JESUS entered, to commence the first onset of suffering, when about to accomplish salvation by the sacrifice of himself. And it should be remembered, that it was in a garden where the devil first triumphed over our nature in the fall of man. Here therefore, CHRIST enters for our recovery. There was indeed this difference in the two places. Before the fall, this garden was an earthly Paradise. But now, it is the gloomy *Gethsemane*, close to the foul brook *Cedron*, into which all the filth of the sacrifices poured their contents. It was the very place adjoining to that memorable spot which good king Josiah polluted, by burning the vessels here, which had been used in idolatrous worship. 2 Kings xxiii. 4, 5, 6. The Jews called it the valley of the children of *Hinnom* or *Topheth*, which was the only word they had for hell, after the Babylonish captivity. *Scheol* had been heretofore used for hell. Job xi. 8. This was the awful spot where CHRIST in our nature entered when he went over the brook *Cedron*. Now as Satan had conquered the first Adam in the garden, and in him, made captive the whole race, and consequently in it the whole Church; CHRIST shall there also, as his Church's representative, begin to give the first deadly blow to sin and Satan. And although from hence *he shall be taken* (as the Prophet said) *from prison and from judgment; be cut off out of the land of the living, and for the transgression of his people be stricken*; yet here shall the first overthrow to the kingdom of Satan be accomplished, and the victory of CHRIST, in a wonderful way be displayed. Isaiah liii. 8.

As we prosecute this awful business, every step we take seems to be more solemn and striking. The Evangelists who have described the state of JESUS, have each of them used different words, by way of expressing the feelings of JESUS. As if neither could find any language which fully came up to what those feelings really were. *Matthew* saith, that the LORD expressed himself as being *in soul exceeding sorrowful, even unto death*. *Mark's* words are, that JESUS *began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy*. Mark xiv. 33. And it must be allowed by those who are at all acquainted with the original scriptures, the words in *Mark*, which our translators have rendered, *sore amazed*,

imply such an affright to the mind as when we say it makes the very hair stand on an end, and induceth a trembling and horror of the whole frame. *Luke*, still varying from both, but yet, if possible, in stronger terms than either, represents CHRIST in an *agony* or *combat*; though there was none near him until an Angel was sent from heaven to strengthen him. The sweat which forced itself through the pores of his sacred body, was as it were, *great drops of blood falling down to the ground*. *Luke* xxii. 43, 44. And this was at a time, when in the night, and in the open air, and when we are told that the servants of the High Priest in common-hall, had found it so piercingly cold, as had compelled them to make *a fire to warm themselves*. *John* xviii. 18. Pause Reader! Before we go further, let us humbly look up and enquire into the cause! Here is no account of any pains of body the Redeemer had yet entered upon! The horrors of crucifixion though in view, were not felt. Here was no person near CHRIST. JESUS was surrounded by no man. For though he had taken with him into the garden, *Peter* and the two sons of *Zebedee*; and though he had entreated them to watch with him, and pray that they might not enter into temptation; yet they were not near him! for we are told, that *they were withdrawn from him about a stone's cast*. Who withdrew them? What were they withdrawn for? Is it not plain, as JESUS said, that *this was the enemy's hour and power of darkness*? See *Luke* xxii. 41—45—53. and the Conimentary upon the passage.

And what was the cause for which this Lamb of God was thus exercised? He who was *holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens*! *Heb.* vii. 26. What can more decidedly confirm the scriptures of truth, than that as his Church's surety and representative, he *who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*. *2 Cor.* v. 21. He (as the Apostle saith) *hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us*. *Gal* iii. 13. Here was the cause. It pleased JEHOVAH to *put him to grief*. The FATHER's hand was in the work. And hence the holy sufferer expressed himself in such strong words. *Save me, O God! for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire where there is no standing. I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me, &c.* *Psm.* lxi. 1, 2, 3. See also *Psm.* xxii. throughout. *Psm.* xxxviii. throughout.

Oh! ye my poor fellow sinners who never yet felt sin; behold the exceeding sinfulness in the soul travail of CHRIST JESUS! Behold! (he saith) *is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by: behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger*. *Lament.* i. 12. LORD! let the contemplation fire my soul with love! They say, if in common life we bring the murderer of a dead man before the body, wonderful effects will follow; yea, that blood will flow afresh from the murdered, as if the unconscious body had sight of the murderer. Whether it be so or not; oh! for grace, dear JESUS, as my sins have induced thine agony and death, to delight to come before thee. And oh! let thy fresh flowing blood cleanse me, and cause my heart to bleed afresh, in the conciousness that by sin I have crucified my LORD!

47 ¶ And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude

with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people.

48 Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast.

49 And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, Master; and kissed him.

50 And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.

51 And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out *his* hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear.

52 Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

53 Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?

54 But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?

55 In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me.

56 But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.

We now arrive to that part in this momentous transaction, as is connected with the voluntary surrender of JESUS. The great feature in redemption, to give efficacy and merit to it, is the freeness of CHRIST in the work. On this JESUS had particularly dwelt, when he said: *Therefore doth my FATHER love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my FATHER.* John x. 17, 18. But I postpone the observations on this grand feature of CHRIST, to the review of the subject, in the Gospel of John. See John xviii. 4. for there we meet with it more strikingly.

57 And they that had laid hold on Jesus led *him* away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.

Every verse in the concluding scene of CHRIST's life is momentous. But the limits of this "Poor Man's Commentary," will not admit of our enlarging on the subject, as might be wished. Nevertheless, the apprehension of CHRIST, and the leading him away, are too important as points, in the wonderful subject, to be hastily passed by. He, who at a word of his mouth, smote to the ground the band of armed men which came to take him, (John xviii. 6.) cannot be supposed to have been bound and led away, but for the answering some important purpose. It may well merit therefore our attention.

In entering into a proper apprehension of this subject, always preserving in view and never losing sight of the voluntary sufferings of JESUS; let us first attend to what is said of CHRIST, under the spirit of prophecy. JESUS complains, of *the bulls of Basan compassing him around; and the dogs and assembly of wicked men inclosing him; by* which we plainly understand, that JESUS, as the *hind of the morning* was to be hunted, until he was *brought into the dust of death*. Psalm xxii. title of the Psalm, and 12—15 verses. Now the *binding* of CHRIST, was a part of the service of the sacrifice. Isaac his type was bound and put upon the altar. Gen. xxii. 9. And hence, all the sacrifices under the Jewish law were *bound* at the horns of the altar. Psm. cxviii. 27. But these things were all figurative of the sins and iniquities of his people *binding* CHRIST. For as chains and fetters *tye down the body*: so sin and iniquity bend down the soul. Here CHRIST cries out, *Innumerable evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities have taken hold of me, so that I am not able to look up: they are more than the hairs of my head; my heart hath failed me*. Psm. xl. 12. These are very precious views of CHRIST, when *restoring that he took not away*. Psm. lxi. 4. So that the *binding* of CHRIST, became a necessary part to set forth the *binding* of all the sins of his people on CHRIST, when JEHOVAH laid on him *the iniquity of us all*. And it is a very very precious thought, to the soul of every truly regenerated believer, that all the sins of his redeemed, without the omission of a single infirmity or sin; in thought, or word, or deed, were *laid upon* CHRIST, as the sacrifice was used to be *bound* on the altar. Hence, the High Priest, under the Jewish dispensation, was commanded to be thus particular, on the great day of atonement. *And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgression in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat: and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man* (a man of opportunity, as the margin hath it, and as CHRIST was) *into the wilderness*, as CHRIST was led away when bound. Levit. xvi. 21.

Reader! do not overlook this grand feature in the person, office, and character of CHRIST. When CHRIST was bound and led away, he then fulfilled all that this type and shadow represented of him; and the whole, and not a single sin, either of omission or commission, belonging to his redeemed was left out.

58 But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants to see the end.

59 Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death;

60 But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, *yet* found they none. At the last came two false witnesses,

61 And said, This *fellow* said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.

62 And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what *is it which* these witness against thee?

63 But Jesus held his peace, and the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.

64 Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless, I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

65 Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy: what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now, Ye have heard his blasphemy.

66 What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death.

67 Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote *him* with the palms of their hands,

68 Saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?

The HOLY GHOST, as if to stamp an everlasting reproach upon *Caiaphas*, hath pointed him out as awfully engaged in the office of High Priest, the year of CHRIST's crucifixion. JESUS was led away to *Annas*, then to *Caiaphas*. And *Caiaphas* was he that gave counsel

to the Jews, that it was expedient that *one man should die for the people*. John xviii. 14. Right or wrong, this wretch determined the death of CHRIST. And the renting his cloaths in a seemingly holy indignation; was only covering over the malignity of his heart, by the horror he wished to express of blasphemy. But let not the Reader overlook the prophecies of this great transaction. Now was that scripture fulfilled, which JESUS spake by the spirit of prophecy, a thousand years before. *The assembly of the wicked have inclosed me*. Psm. xxii. 16. The LORD CHRIST answering to the adjuration of the High Priest is most blessed, and especially under the character of the SON of man!

69 Now Peter sat without in the palace; and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee.

70 But he denied before *them* all, saying, I know not what thou sayest.

71 And when he was gone out into the porch, another *maid* saw him, and said unto them that were there, This *fellow* was also with Jesus of Nazareth.

72 And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man.

73 And after a while came unto *him* they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art *one* of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee.

74 Then began he to curse and to swear, *saying*, I know not the man, and immediately the cock crew.

75 And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out and wept bitterly.

Luke, hath related the denial of *Peter* in yet some more remarkable circumstances than either of the other Evangelists. I therefore shall postpone the interesting consideration of *Peter's* fall, and his recovery by grace, until we come to Luke's Gospel. See Luke xxii. 54, &c.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! in looking back upon the many wonderful events related in this Chapter, let us admire as well we may, the boundless love of the LORD JESUS, in the tender institution of his holy supper. For as the type and shadow of the Jewish Passover, was now for ever to

cease, when He the true Christian Passover to which that service ministered, was sacrificed for us; it was an act of the highest love and mercy, in our dear Redeemer, to set up this precious ordinance in his Church, as a standing memorial of his death, until his coming again. And surely JESUS hath endeared it and recommended it by every affecting circumstance, when we consider the *time* when he instituted it; the *manner* in which he observed it himself, and commanded its *perpetual* observance by his people: with all the blessed effects he hath promised in it, from his gracious presence, in those holy seasons of communion: and the sure mercies, which shall accompany the faithful use of it. Oh! for grace, frequently thus to *set forth the LORD's death till he come!*

And oh! thou dearest Redeemer! grant both the Writer and Reader the blessed unction of thine HOLY SPIRIT, as often as we follow thy steps by faith, to the garden of Gethsemane. Here may we oft resort in spirit, as JESUS in the days of his flesh oft resorted with his disciples.

And LORD grant, that we enter into thy retirings, and by watchfulness and prayer, go over in review again and again, the soul-agonies and soul-travails of JESUS: taking interest in all that we behold, of his sorrows for us and our salvation. Oh! for grace thus to read and thus to meditate on the person, work, offices, characters, and relations of the LORD JESUS CHRIST! To behold him, and to know him, who was made *sin for us who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of GOD in him.*

CHAP. XXVII.

CONTENTS.

The Chapter opens with the relation of hurrying away the LORD JESUS to Pilate; from thence to Herod. CHRIST is examined; Barabbas, a robber and murderer, is preferred before him. He is led away to be crucified. The awful signs attending his death. He is laid in the Sepulchre.

WHEN the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death:

2 And when they had bound him, they led *him* away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.

It should seem pretty evident, that so intent were the Chief Priests and Elders, headed by *Annas* and *Caiaphas*, to destroy CHRIST, that they sat up all night in council: for *Luke* saith, *that as soon as it was day*, they were again assembled for this purpose. *Luke* xxii. 66. I interrupt the history for a moment, to remind the Reader, what a sweet observation the LORD JESUS made upon this eagerness of his enemies to kill him, when in answer to what Pilate said of his authority: *speakest thou not to me, said the poor proud worm, knowest*

thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? JESUS answered: thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above. John xix. 10, 11. Oh! how truly blessed is it always to keep in view JEHOVAH's hand, and ordination in the wonders of redemption! Blessedly also to this purport, is the word of the LORD's servants after attending to those of the Master. For in that prayer offered up by the whole college of Apostles, soon after the day of Pentecost, and which was answered by the LORD, in the place being shaken where they were assembled; we find those words, in making application of the second Psalm: Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered against the LORD and against his CHRIST. For of a truth against thy holy child JESUS both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together. But then it is added; For to do whatsoever thy hand, and thy counsel determined before to be done. Acts iv. 25—28.

3 ¶ Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,

4 Saying, I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What *is that* to us? see thou *to that*.

5 And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

6 And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood.

7 And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in.

8 Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day.

9 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value;

10 And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.

The awful termination of the life of the traitor, is very properly introduced here, as if to shew, that before the dreadful deed which was

to follow his perfidy, in the death of his Master, had taken place; his own death, and that of the most horrible kind, in self-murder, at which, universally considered, nature, uninfluenced by the devil, must always shrink, should be accomplished. And as if abhorred, both of God and man; when having hanged himself, his very body shall have another mark of infamy, and his bowels shall gush out. Acts i. 18. I refer the Reader to the "Poor Man's Concordance," respecting the field bought with the traitor's money. See *Aceldama*. And the *repenting himself*; as it was very properly named, is proper to notice, for there was no act of God's grace in it but simply an horror of soul, in the consciousness of the dreadful deed he had committed; an agony of mind, which from the fearful expectation of misery for ever, compelled him to leap at once into hell, unable to bear the stings of a conscience worse than hell itself? The mistake as some have supposed, in applying to the Prophet *Jeremiah* what was delivered by *Zechariah* concerning the thirty pieces of silver, is easily rectified, by only supposing, what is most likely to have been the case, that *Zechariah's* prophecy on this subject, was gathered from some sermon of *Jeremiah*; or that, as hath been said, the four last Chapters of *Zechariah* had been written before *Jeremiah*. But in either case it doth not lessen the authority of the words themselves, or make the least alteration in their importance.

11 And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest.

12 And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing.

13 Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?

14 And he answered him to never a word; in-somuch that the governor marvelled greatly.

15 Now at *that* feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner whom they would.

16 And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas.

17 Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?

18 For he knew that for envy they had delivered him.

19 When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man : for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.

20 But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.

21 The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you ? They said Barabbas.

22 Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ ? *They* all say unto him, Let him be crucified.

23 And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done ? but they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified.

24 When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but *that* rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed *his* hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person : see ye *to it*.

25 Then answered all the people, and said, His blood *be* on us, and on our children.

26 Then released he Barabbas unto them, and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered *him* to be crucified.

We here enter upon the wonderful scene of CHRIST'S trial. And here stands the LORD of life and glory, the judge both of quick and dead, before the unjust judge Pilate, *to witness a good confession*. 1 Timothy vi. 13. Every incident is of the highest moment to be regarded, and may the LORD, the HOLY GHOST, open to both Writer and Reader, the marvellous things which the Evangelist hath here recorded.

The court before which JESUS had stood the night before, was, or should have been, the *Sanhedrim*, that is, Seventy Elders of Israel ; men in whom the spirit of God was, for so was the original appointment of this court. See Numb. xi. 16, 17. But in the time when JESUS stood before it, it appears that this court, was composed of Scribes and Pharisees, whom our LORD (who knew the heart of men) declared to be hypocrites. At the head of this council now presided

as High Priest, *Caiaphas*. A man who had so little of the fear of God before his eyes, that in order to curry favor with the *Romans*, to whom *Judæa* was at this time under tribute, he very freely gave counsel, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people: lest the *Romans* should come and take away both the place and nation. So that this time-serving man, made no scruple to say, that the life of any individual was of no consequence, if by the sacrifice, the peace of the *Romans* could be obtained! And though we perfectly well know, that it was GOD the HOLY GHOST prompted this High Priest, as High Priest, to utter these words in a way of prophecy, and in a very different sense from what the unfeeling speaker meant (and a most blessed prophecy it became, for the joy and comfort of the Church in all ages); yet they serve to shew at once the awfulness of his character. See John xi. 47—53. compared with Gen. xlix. 10.

But the power of the *Sanhedrim* was now, and for a considerable time before had been, abridged, (*Josephus*, the Jewish historian, saith, that *Herod* in the beginning of his reign had taken it away,) they were obliged to have recourse to the judgment seat of *Pilate*, for sentence of death upon the LORD JESUS; for as they told *Pilate*, *it was not lawful for them to put any man to death*. John xviii. 31. *Pilate's* conscience, as we perceive in the account here given by the Evangelist, was dreadfully alarmed, at this business. His wife also sent to tell him of her alarms. *Luke* in his relation of this history saith, that, in order to get rid of it, he sent CHRIST to *Herod*. Luke xxiii. 6, 7. And when the LORD was brought back to him again, *Pilate* tried and tampered with the Chief Priests and Elders all he could, to gain their favor, and yet be spared from the murder of CHRIST. And when nothing would do, but he must consent to the deed; with all the marks of horror, unable to conceal what passed within, he took water to wash his hands, as if to shew that he bore no part in the cruel transaction: and in the very moment he passed sentence of death on JESUS, proclaimed his innocence. Was there ever an instance in history of such conduct?

It is time, however, to leave the unjust judge, and the awful *Sanhedrim* to themselves. Our meditation should be wholly directed to the LORD, in those solemn seasons here recorded. For in the history of JESUS, in every minute transaction of his life and death, for the salvation of his people, there is enough to employ our thoughts until we behold him coming in the clouds to judgment. Rev. i. 7. But there is one thought which ariseth out of what is here said by the people, and which is so intimately connected with the view of JESUS, that I would beg the Reader's patience, while I detain him for offering it. When *Pilate* said, *I am innocent of the blood of this just person, see ye to it: Then answered all the people and said: His blood be upon us and on our children*. They said it, no doubt, in a way of defiance: but like the speech of *Caiaphas*, which the LORD over-ruled to a very different purpose; did not the LORD, here also, answer it in mercy? Are we not told that after the descent of the HOLY GHOST, on the day of *Pentecost*, when *Peter* charged the men of *Israel* with having by wicked hands, crucified and slain him, whom GOD had made both LORD and CHRIST; they were pricked in the heart, and said unto *Peter* and unto the rest of the Apostles: *men and brethren what shall we do?* And do we not read, that a saving work of grace immediately

passed upon some of them. And was not then the blood of CHRIST, though in a very different sense from what they meant, truly upon them? Yea, was not the very first prayer of JESUS on the cross to this purpose, when he said, *Father! forgive them, for they know not what they do?* And thus between the intercession of CHRIST, and the gifts of God the HOLY GHOST, there is a beautiful and gracious correspondence. Reader! do not overlook these things. Even the Jerusalem sinners, who embued their hands in the blood of CHRIST are made partakers in the blessedness of salvation in his blood. What a thought to encourage every poor conscious sinner. See those scriptures: John vi. 37—64. Acts ii. 22 to the end.

But while we look at the bright side of this cloud, it is proper to meditate a moment on the reverse. Is not the Jewish nation even at this hour, as a nation reeking under the awful imprecation: *His blood be on us and on our children?* LORD I would say! Look upon thine antient people the Jews, and in mercy hasten that long promised day, when the *Deliverer shall arise out of Zion to turn away ungodliness from Jacob.* Romans xi. 26.

We ought not to overlook the patience and silence of JESUS, under the various provocations shewn to his sacred person, during the process of this part of the trial we have read. In the after circumstances of the LORD's sufferings, to which these were but the prelude, much shall we have to observe on this account, but for the present, it should not be passed by unnoticed, how the Lamb of God stood surrounded by those wolves of the night, waiting to suck his blood; and yet stood silent and answered nothing. It was predicted of him, that *he was oppressed and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth: he was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.* And what a correspondence between the prediction and the event? Isaiah liii. 7.

But let us prosecute the solemn account. The cloud becomes more and more gloomy. When *Pilate* had scourged JESUS, he delivered him to be crucified.

27 Then the soldiers of the governor took JESUS into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers.

28 And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe.

29 And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, king of the Jews!

30 And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.

31 ¶ And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.

The indignities and cruelties shewn the person of our LORD, as the prelude to his crucifixion, formed no small part in the portion of sorrow; and we are too much interested in the whole, to pass the smallest circumstance by. For besides attending to those things in the bodily and soul anguish of the LORD JESUS; our own personal interest in them demands our attention.

Pilate, before he delivered the sacred person of JESUS to the Roman soldiers, scourged JESUS himself, or caused him to be scourged. And after this, as John relates, the soldiers scourged him, as was the custom of the *Romans*. John xix. 3. But after this scourging, they stripped him of his raiment, and put on him a scarlet robe; thus adding mockery to pain. And had the crown they put upon his head, been merely designed for laughter, they would not have chosen thorns, which, when driven into his flesh, must have occasioned exquisite suffering. Their spitting on him was intended to manifest the highest indignation and contempt. Among the Jews it was the greatest indignity imaginable. If a father spit in his daughter's face, so filthy was she considered thereby, that like the leper, the law enjoined the being shut out of the camp seven days. Numb. xii. 14.

Reader! let us for a moment pause over this awful scene, and behold the expediency and needs be of the whole. The Prophet had said, that it is *with his stripes we are healed*. Isaiah liii. 5. And hence JESUS must be scourged. The LORD himself had said by the spirit of prophecy, that he *gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair*: and that he *hid not his face from shame and spitting*. Isaiah l. 6. And here we behold the accomplishment most completely. I pray the Reader to attend to what the LORD JESUS said by the spirit of prophecy concerning those things, and mark the sorrow of his soul. Psm. xxii. and lxix.

32 And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross.

33 And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, A place of a skull,

34 They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted *thereof*, he would not drink.

35 And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.

36 And sitting down they watched him there;

37 And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

38 Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.

39 And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads.

40 And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest *it* in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.

41 Likewise also the chief priests mocking *him*, with the scribes and elders, said,

42 He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.

43 He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God.

44 The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.

45 Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.

46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

47 Some of them that stood there, when they heard *that*, said, This *man* calleth for Elias.

48 And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled *it* with vinegar, and put *it* on a reed, and gave him to drink.

49 The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him.

Let us follow JESUS to the cross; and as JESUS *suffered without the gate, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood; let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.* Heb. xiii. 12, 13. The first circumstance which strikes us in the hurrying away the LORD of Life and Glory to his execution, is the taking hold of a man of *Cyrene*, which they found in the way, whom they compelled to bear his cross. *John* saith, that JESUS bearing his cross went forth. *John* xix. 17. And *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*, observe, that this man of *Cyrene*, *Simon* by name, they compelled to bear it.

And both accounts no doubt are correct. For JESUS fainting beneath the cross, as probably he might, could go no further: and therefore this stranger is compelled to the office. There was no mercy intended to JESUS by this act; for had he died before they arrived at Calvary, as through suffering they feared he might, their triumph in his crucifixion would have been lost.

The views of the cross, in every direction and in every way, are too many to compress within a little compass: and as all the Evangelists call us to take our stand at the foot of the cross, and there *behold the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world*; we shall, again and again, find occasion to meditate upon the endless subject. I shall for the present, therefore, request the Reader to take into his observation some of the first and most obvious sights which present themselves to our mediation of CHRIST crucified, which, while to the Jews it is *a stumbling block*, and to the Gentiles foolishness; it is to them which are called both Jews and Greeks, CHRIST the power of God, and the wisdom of God. 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

And, *First*: it is very plain that the death of the cross was a *shameful* death. The malefactors were naked, who suffered this death. None but slaves could suffer it. No Roman was allowed by the laws to fall under it, be his crime what it might. Hence Paul speaking of it saith, *He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*. Philip. ii. 8. But as Adam had made himself naked by sin, so CHRIST, in removing the curse, condescends to this shame, and to do away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Heb. ix. 26.

Secondly. The place where this was done, at *Golgotha*, a place of the unburied skulls of criminals. As if to intimate the very remains of those who died, or rather were put to death, in a spot of such infamy, their carcases might be exposed as dung upon the earth, abhorred both of God and men. Hence the Prophet speaking of one cursed of God, said concerning him, that they should not lament for him, saying, *Ah! Lord: or ah! his glory: but he should be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem*. Jerem. xxiii. 18, 19. When JESUS therefore came to redeem from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; he put himself in every situation into which our nature must everlastingly have fallen, but for his interposition: and as the law declared every one cursed which hanged on a tree, JESUS will take that curse to redeem his people from it. But as the prophecies concerning CHRIST declared by a strange and seeming contradiction, that though he was *cut off out of the land of the living* as a malefactor, and for the *transgression of the people should be stricken*; yet at the same time he should make *his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death*: the LORD over-ruled those wonderful contrarieties, that though CHRIST was crucified at *Golgotha*, he should be buried in a garden, yea, and in a new sepulchre, wherein *never man had lain*. See Gal. iii. 13. Isaiah liii. 8, 9. Luke xxiii. 50—53. See *Golgotha*, Poor Man's Concordance.

Thirdly. The infamy attending the crucifixion of CHRIST was increased, in that he was crucified between two thieves; yea, he himself, put in the middle of them, as if the most worthless of the three: thus fulfilling the prophecy of *being numbered with the transgressors*. Isaiah liii. 12. All that took place in the great events of CHRIST's death, was to fulfil the types and prophecies of him; and therefore

this among the many, became most important to be attended to ; and yet, but for the LORD's watching over it, nothing seemed more unlikely to have been accomplished.

Fourthly. The death of the cross was of all deaths the most painful. It was slow and lingering, violent and universally excruciating to the whole body. In the method used, the victim was placed upon the cross while on the ground, and the hands and feet stretched out as far as they might be made to extend, and nailed through the nervous parts to the timber. Then the cross with the wretched victim fastened to it, was raised up in an erect posture, and fixed into a hole prepared for the foot of it in the earth, which of consequence by the sudden jirk given to it could not fail to occasion the most dreadful pains. In this posture the unhappy sufferer remained suspended, the arms keeping up the whole weight of the body, until relieved by death. Sometimes, as in the case of the two thieves crucified with CHRIST, whether to aggravate their sufferings, or to put them the sooner out of misery, the soldiers brake their bones with blows. But the earlier death of JESUS prevented this last act of the Roman soldiers, we are told ; for *they brake not his legs : but one of them with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.* Hereby leading to a double prophecy : *a bone of him shall not be broken.* And again another scripture saith : *they shall look on him whom they pierced.* Exod. xii. 46. Zech. xii. 10. John xix. 33—37.

And here let us pause over the solemn subject ; and again look up by faith, and *behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world !* Methinks we may, as we look up and behold that wondrous sight, contemplate JESUS as thus with arms extended, inviting his redeemed to come to him, as his arms are stretched forth to embrace them. And while his arms are thus open to receive, his feet are waiting for their coming. And with his head reclining, he looks down with his eyes of love, as welcoming their approach. And Reader ! what a thought is it for every true believer in CHRIST to cherish, and never to lose sight of : JESUS in all this, hung on the cross not as a private person, but as the public head of his body the Church. For as certain as that you and I, were both in the loins of Adam, when he transgressed in the garden, and were alike implicated in his guilt and punishment ; so equally are all the seed of CHRIST crucified with CHRIST, and interested in his salvation. For so the charter both of justice and of grace runs : *In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory.* Isaiah xlv. 25. For the further contemplation of the many wonderful events connected with the subject of CHRIST crucified, I refer the Reader to the other Evangelists. Mark xv. Luke xxiii. John xix.

50 Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

51 And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom ; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent ;

52 And the graves were opened ; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,

53 And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

54 Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the son of God.

55 And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him :

There is somewhat very striking in this loud voice of Jesus. Not like one exhausted ; not as one dispirited ; but as a conqueror in the field of battle, retreating with his spoils. Jesus cried aloud, that all on earth, and all in heaven, and all in hell, might hear. *It is finished.* What is finished ? Redemption-work is finished. And from that moment the empire of sin, death, hell, and the grave, were vanquished. The most glorious views of that life and immortality, which CHRIST first brought to light by his gospel, were seen from the hill of Calvary, brighter than *Moses* saw on the heights of *Pisgah*, of the promised land. And that song was sung in heaven, which the beloved Apostle heard in vision : *thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.* Rev. v. 9.

The prodigies which attended this hour were all as if CHRIST had said, Ye are my witnesses. Significantly was the veil of the temple rent in twain, from the top to the bottom ; for the LORD JESUS had now opened a new and living way to the heaven of heavens, by his blood. Heb. ix. 6—12. Heb. x. 19—25. The earthquake and the rending of the rocks, were celebrations also of the glorious event. And the yawning of graves, and the coming forth from their tombs, the bodies of the saints, were no less memorable : what wonders were included in the redemption, by the death of CHRIST ! Neither was the conviction of the *Centurion* less splendid. Compelled by what he saw and felt, he acknowledged the GODHEAD of CHRIST. And compelled shall be the confession of all who deny that glorious truth now, in the day of grace, when the tremendous earthquakes and cataracts shall force the same from their pale and convulsed lips, in the great day of wrath.

56 Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.

57 When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus's disciple :

58 He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered.

59 And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth.

60 And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.

61 And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.

The conduct and intention of those godly women; and of Joseph of Arimathea, the honorable counsellor, in embalming the body of CHRIST, will be noticed when we come to this part of the history, as related by the other Evangelists. See Mark xv. 43.

62 Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate,

63 Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again.

64 Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first.

65 Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch, go your way, make *it* as sure as ye can.

66 So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.

As *Matthew* is the only Evangelist, which hath noticed this conversation which took place between Pilate and the Chief Priests and Pharisees; it will be proper to propose the observations which I beg to offer upon it here. And I venture to persuade myself, that if the several circumstances, connected with the relation, are duly attended to, this plan proposed by the confederacy, of securing the body of CHRIST, tended to confirm the very truth, they meant to bring into question; and is in itself, if there were no other, a most decided testimony, in proof to the reality of the resurrection of JESUS.

For, *first*: by their application to Pilate for a watch, to guard the body of CHRIST, they prove that JESUS was truly dead, and laid in this new sepulchre. This is of no small consequence, in aid to all the other evidences we have of CHRIST's death and burial. And, *secondly*; they no less prove, by what passed, as related in the following Chapter, that the body of JESUS did not remain in the sepulchre, notwithstanding a guard of soldiers were purposely placed there to

secure it. See Matt. xxviii. 11, 12, 13, 14. Here is a precious testimony, and from the mouth of CHRIST's enemies also, in confirmation of the resurrection which followed. And with respect to the story of the disciples taking away the body, it is in itself too childish and ridiculous to deserve even the relation of it. That a few poor timid disciples, who during their LORD's trial, and before any danger to themselves had even appeared, had all forsook Jesus and fled, should project such a scheme, as to come by surprize on a guard of *Roman* soldiers, who were placed at the sepulchre for no purpose but to watch the body of JESUS; and whose military discipline was the strictest in the world; and should actually take away the body, is one of the most extravagant suppositions, which ever entered the human mind. And to heighten the representation still more, it is added, that this was done while the soldiers were asleep. Soldiers and centinels asleep! And so it seems, that the evidence these soldiers gave of this transaction, of what had happened, was while they were asleep. A new way of giving testimony! Moreover, it is time to enquire, what possible motive these poor fishermen of Galilee could have to take away a dead body? Nothing can be more plain and evident than that the disciples of JESUS, at the time this transaction of CHRIST's death took place, knew not any more than their enemies, what the resurrection from the dead should mean. They had no other notions of CHRIST, notwithstanding all that JESUS had said to them, than that of a temporal prince; and when by his death, the hopes they had conceived of this kingdom were over, they would in a few days have returned to their former occupation again. In fact they did so. Besides, where could they have put the body? Was it stolen, and yet intended to be concealed? And if so what could be then accomplished by it? And can it be supposed for a moment, that when the soldiers all of them awaked from their sleep and found the body gone, and taken away by disciples; would the *Roman* soldiers, aided by the whole Jewish *Sanhedrim*, have suffered this handful of poor fishermen of *Galilee* to have remained a single hour, without giving up their plunder, and bringing them to immediate punishment.

I have not dwelt so circumstantially on this subject from any apprehension of its necessity, for my Reader's confirmation of *the faith once delivered to the saints*; but for the preciousness of any thing, and every thing connected with the resurrection of JESUS. Oh! the blessedness of knowing, and from divine teaching too; the certainty of that glorious truth, *CHRIST is risen from the dead*. And oh! when the conviction of that glorious truth is secured in the soul, by a testimony founded in the faithfulness of *JEHOVAH*; then in CHRIST's resurrection, the sure resurrection of his redeemed is included. *Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power.* Rev. xx. 6.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! if there be an interesting moment in the life of JESUS while upon earth, to call forth the tenderest sympathy of his redeemed, in one instance more than another, surely it is here. Who indeed can, dry eyed, or without a weeping heart, follow the Re-

deemer from the hall of Pilate, to the Mount of Calvary, and behold the Lamb of God in those unequalled hours of suffering, offering his soul an offering for sin? Yea, who that from being enabled by the teaching of God the HOLY GHOST, to enter into the suitable apprehension of the mysterious subject, and stands convinced, that all which Jesus suffered, was the sinner's due, and must have been his sufferings to all eternity but for Jesus's interposition, can, unmoved, behold such scenes of sorrow? Reader! let you and I behold the Lamb of God, in this light! Let us listen to the declaration of JEHOVAH on this point, and while we look up at the cross of CHRIST, behold what but for his sufferings must have been our own; and then we shall rightly prize the voice of God, when he saith, speaking of CHRIST; *He was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he stricken!*

Under these impressions, let us behold the LORD JESUS, the sinner's surety, 'aken from prison and from judgment.' I see him bearing my sins, and my curse due to them; and hurried away to execution. An armed band seizing upon him; he is bound hand and foot as the sacrifice to the altar. The Scribes and Pharisees, like the bulls of Bashan, beset him around. He is made naked to his shame, publicly scourged, and his body torn with thorns, until the blood streamed in every direction. While the shouts of the unfeeling rabble, and the blows of the cruel soldiers, worry the Lamb of God to death. His cries on the cross loudly manifest what were the feelings of his soul; and above all, the frowns of Heaven when he hung upon the accursed tree, made the cup of trembling bitter indeed. Who that hears the words of JESUS, can enter into their full extent of sorrow. *Reproach hath broken my heart: I am full of heaviness. I looked for some to take pity, but there was none: and for comforters, but I found none!*

And must all this have been my case, had not Jesus been my surety? Yes! all, and every portion of it, and that for ever. For if the holy, and harmless, and undefiled Lamb of God, was made both sin and a curse for his people; certainly but for his taking both upon him, the sinner of every description must have borne the whole for himself. And when at death, the unregenerated sinner had received the awful sentence and is hurried away to punishment, that curse will light upon him, and remain upon him undone away to all eternity. Oh! the unspeakable felicity of being found in CHRIST, and having him as our surety, both now, in this day of grace, and thereafter in the day of judgment. Reader! may the LORD give us the faith of thus looking to the cross of CHRIST, and there behold JESUS as our surety! *Surely shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come, and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed.*

CHAP. XXVIII.

CONTENTS.

In this close of the Gospel according to Matthew, we have the wonderful Relation of CHRIST's Resurrection. The LORD's several Appearances to the Women and his Disciples: CHRIST's Commission to his Disciples, to preach his Gospel and baptize.

IN the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week, came Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, to see the sepulchre.

2 And behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the LORD descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.

3 His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:

4 And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead *men*.

5 And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.

6 He is not here: for he is risen, as he said, Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

7 And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and behold, he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, lo, I have told you.

8 And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word.

It is truly blessed to see, how every thing tended in proof to bring forward to the Church the evidences of our Lord's resurrection. The Prophets with one voice had predicted the event, which, until then, had never been heard of: and now the Evangelists come forward to attest the wonderful accomplishment. *Isaiah* had spoken of it. *Isaiah* xxvi. 19. *Ezekiel* had delivered by command a vision of it. *Ezek.* xxxvii. And *Jonah*, the Lord himself declared to be a type of it. *Matt.* xii. 38—40. And behold how minute the circumstances are to the confirmation of it. The morning was ushered in with the most portentous signs of it. While the godly women came at the dawn of day to visit the sepulchre, with the intention, as was the then custom, to embalm the body of our Lord: behold there was a great earthquake. An Angel from heaven came and rolled away the great stone from the door of the sepulchre. Reader! it must be the work of God, not simply to roll away, but to take out the stony heart from sinners, and to give an heart of flesh. And this God hath promised, and God doth perform, in the whole of his redeemed family. *Ezek.* xxxvi. 26. Let us pause over this account. Behold as an Angel from above came down to celebrate the triumph of the Lord Jesus, in our nature

over death and the grave; so the dead from beneath came up to hail the glorious event, and both met together! Oh! the triumphs of the resurrection! No wonder the Roman soldiers became as dead men. And no wonder the lovers of JESUS should rejoice who came to seek CHRIST. Reader! do not fail to observe, how very different the same things operate upon different minds. While the graceless tremble, the gracious will rejoice.

9 ¶ And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail, and they came, and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.

10 Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go, tell my brethren, that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

Oh! what a joyful meeting was here. And is it not so frequently in life? Doth not Jesus meet and bless his people, even when at times he is least expected? Oh! did I but always keep in remembrance how near Jesus is, and looking on; what blessed enjoyments I should have which are now overlooked and forgotten, by my poor forgetful heart.

I must not omit calling the Reader's attention, to that gracious trait of character in our LORD, when sending the women to his disciples that they might inform them of the great event; he calls them *brethren*. One of the sacred Writers saith, that JESUS is not *ashamed to call them brethren*. Heb. ii. 11. And what endears it more particularly at this time was, that now he was about to enter into his glory. So that, if a child of God, any poor afflicted one of the LORD's family was tempted by the enemy, or by the corruptions and unbelief of his own heart, to question whether any change towards his people here below, had taken place in the heart of JESUS, after he arose from the dead; this silenceth at once every fear. For the very first message he sent to his disciples after his resurrection was, *Go, tell my brethren*. And, to manifest the nearness and dearness of affection, into which JESUS had brought his whole Church, both to himself and Father, he said to Mary; *Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your father; and to my God and your God*. John xx. 17. Oh! what a lovely view of our all-lovely and all-loving JESUS!

11 Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done.

12 And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers,

13 Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him *away* while we slept.

14 And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you.

15 So they took the money, and did as they were taught; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

I refer the Reader to what was observed in the preceding Chapter, on the subject of those verses. See 62 to the end.

16 ¶ Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.

17 And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.

The only circumstance here of note to be attended to is, what is said that *some doubted*. What some? We read of no more but the *eleven* disciples being present, and how many can be supposed to be included in the phrase of *some* doubting? And what is to be understood by the *doubting* of any? Not surely that CHRIST was risen from the dead. For this interview at the mountain JESUS had appointed them, must have been some days after the day of our LORD's resurrection: during which time they had all seen CHRIST and all had had testimonies upon testimonies of the certainty of it. The unbelief of *Thomas* had been removed before this, and which was eight days, or rather the eighth day, from the day of CHRIST's resurrection. John xx. 26. The *doubting* here spoken of, therefore can mean no more; than that notwithstanding this meeting in *Galilee* was by the LORD's own appointment, (see Mark xiv. 28. and Mark xvi. 7.) and the whole *eleven* had seen CHRIST before (John xx. 26.); yet, now again, some of them for the moment doubted the reality of what they saw, overcome with holy joy and surprize, and supposing, as upon the former occasion, that *they had seen a spirit when they cried out for fear*, Luke xxiv. 37. This must be the meaning of the phrase. They beheld the LORD JESUS with the rest; and they had before received ample proof of his resurrection from the dead; but when JESUS appeared and the greater part immediately worshipped him with divine adoration, some were so struck with consternation as to appear like men in a state of suspense.

18 And Jesus came, and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

19 ¶ Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;

20 Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am

with you alway *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

How truly gracious were the actions and words of JESUS, both to the strong and weak in faith, to confirm the one, and to remove all fears from the other! *All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.* All power, as the supreme, universal, and eternal monarch of heaven and of earth. And this JESUS, as the SON of GOD, from his own essential nature and GODHEAD, possessed in common with the FATHER and HOLY GHOST from all eternity. But the power JESUS speaks of in this place, as *given unto him*, is as Mediator, GOD-Man, the Head of his body the Church: that *he should give*, as he elsewhere said, *eternal life to as many as were given him.* John xvii. 2.

And hence he now issues his commission as the glorious Head of his body the Church, and bids them go forth to teach and baptize. And, as if to impress his whole Church, with the glorious truth that salvation is the joint gift, and flowing from the joint love and mercy, of the three Almighty persons in the GODHEAD, which are one; JESUS enjoins the baptism of his people in their joint name, and as dedicated to their joint service, love, adoration, and praise. *And lo!* saith JESUS, as finally closing his commission with an assurance of his unceasing and everlasting presence; *lo! I am with you alway even unto the end of the world.* Which is not meant to say that the LORD's presence was to be with the disciples of JESUS merely to the end of their ministry, or their successors in his service; but for ever in the eternal world; here in grace and hereafter in glory. His perpetual presence securing their persons, defending their cause, rendering the whole of their labors effectual here upon earth, in bringing home his Church and people, and accomplishing the whole purposes of his salvation, in all the individual instances of it, for whom the whole was ordained in the ancient settlements of eternity, and bringing them all safe home to the everlasting abodes of glory.

And by way of seal to the truth, one of the names of CHRIST is added, Amen. *All the promises in him are yea, and in him Amen. He is the Amen: the faithful and true witness.* And this is the security. *That he who blesseth himself in the earth, shall bless himself in the Amen; the GOD of truth, and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the Amen, the GOD of truth.* See 2 Corinth. i. 20. Rev. iii. 14. Isaiah lxxv. 16. See Poor Man's Concordance, *Amen.* •

Reader! the LORD give to you and to me grace, to mark CHRIST's name on this precious Gospel. And may the LORD himself write his Amen on our hearts. Isaiah li. 6. Rev. iii. 12, 13.

REFLECTIONS.

OH! for grace to receive and believe the record GOD hath given of his dear SON. Surely, the LORD hath furnished for his people, every evidence that GOD can give or man receive, to the truth of the resurrection of JESUS. By signs in heaven from above; and wonders in the earth beneath, was my LORD's triumph over death, hell, and the grave manifested. Every witness calls upon me, like the Angels to the women at the sepulchre; *Come! see the place where the LORD*

lay. Yes! I would answer. My soul desires to take the wing of faith, and light down at the memorable sepulchre, and see the sacred spot! Yes! I would flee there, but not stay there, but hasten to look upwards after a risen and ascended SAVIOR! Yea! I would seek grace to pursue my researches after JESUS, until I beheld him in that bosom of JEHOVAH, where he hath lain from all eternity!

And now my honored LORD! my soul would lay low at thy footstool, and hail thee LORD of heaven and earth! Glorious, gracious, Almighty Head of thy Church and People! It is for thee to send forth thy servants, to call *thy sons from far and thy daughters from the ends of the earth!* Thy kingdom of grace shall be established until thou hast brought home all thy ransomed to thy kingdom of glory. Not one shall be left behind: but shall be brought under the baptisms of thy SPIRIT to the joint praise and honor of the holy Three in One, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST. LORD! hasten thy gracious purposes; and confirm the sacred promises of thy will.

Farewel *Matthew*, faithful recorder of my LORD's history! Thanks to GOD the HOLY GHOST, for thy services in his Church in those written memorials of the conception, incarnation, birth, baptism, fastings, temptations, ministry, miracles, parables, prophecies, agonies, conflicts, sufferings, death, resurrection, and return to glory, of our LORD JESUS CHRIST! Blessed be my GOD and SAVIOR, in calling thee from the receipt of custom to be an Evangelist! Oh! may the ministry of thy word be made blessed to my soul, and to the souls of thousands. And then as thou broughtest home the LORD JESUS to thine house, and then madest him a feast with publicans and sinners; so ere long JESUS will take thee and me, and all his redeemed home, to *the marriage supper of the Lamb in heaven*; and feast our ravished souls, with the enjoyment of himself; and in him and through him, the whole persons of the GODHEAD in one unceasing banquet of holy joy for evermore. Amen and Amen.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

ST. MARK.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MARK.

WE would enter upon this blessed Gospel, written by *Mark*, as we did that of *Matthew*, both, evidently, having been indicated by the Spirit of the living GOD, and with the same earnest waitings upon GOD the HOLY GHOST, to make it blessed, both to the Writer and to the Reader of this *Poor Man's Commentary*. And when we call to mind what are the blessed contents of it, every feeling of the soul