

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION TO LUKE 2

Ver. 1. *And it came to pass in those days*, etc.] When John the Baptist was born, and Christ was conceived, and his mother pregnant with him, and the time of his birth drew on. The Ethiopic version reads, “in that day”; as if it was the same day in which John was circumcised, and Zacharias delivered the above song of praise: that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus; second emperor of Rome; the name Caesar was common to all the emperors, as Pharaoh to the Egyptians, and afterwards Ptolemy. His name Augustus, was not his original surname, but Thurinus; and was given him, after he became Caesar, to express his grandeur, majesty, and reverence; and that by the advice of Munatius Plancus, when others would have had him called Romulus, as if he was the founder of the city of Rome ^{f96}: by him a decree was made and published,

that all the world should be taxed; or “registered”, or “enrolled”; for this was not levying a tax, or imposing tribute upon them, but a taking an account of the names of persons, and of their estates; and which might be, in order to lay a tax upon them, as afterwards was: for the payment of a tax, there was no need of the appearance of women and children; and so the Arabic version renders it, “that the names the whole habitable world might be described, or written down”: such an enrolment had been determined on by Augustus, when at Tarracon in Spain, twenty seven years before; but he was diverted from it by some disturbances in the empire, so that it was deferred to this time, in which there was a remarkable interposition of divine providence; for had this enrolment been made then, in all likelihood it had not been done now, and Joseph and Mary would not have had occasion to have come to Bethlehem: but so it must be; and thus were things ordered by an infinite, and all wise providence to effect it: nor did this enrolment reach to all the parts of the known world, but only to the Roman empire; which, because it was so very large as it was, and in the boasting language of the Romans was so called, as, Ptolemy Evergetes ^{f97} calls his kingdom, **κοσμος**, “the world”. Though some think only the land of Judea is meant, which is called the earth, in (☞ Luke 21:26) and “all the

world”, in (^{<4112>}Acts 11:28) but the other sense seems more agreeable; and so the Syriac version renders it, “that all the people of his empire might be enrolled”: and the Persic version, “that they should enrol all the subjects of his kingdom”; and is justified by the use of the phrase for the Roman empire, in several passages of Scripture, (^{<6008>}Romans 1:8 10:18 ^{<6180>}Revelation 3:10 13:3). Now at the time of this enrolment, and under this august emperor, and when the whole world was in a profound peace, was the Messiah born, the King of kings, and the only potentate; the Shiloh, the peaceable and prosperous, the Prince of Peace, and Lord of life and glory; and that, in order to redeem men from that worse subjection and bondage they were in to sin, Satan, the law, and death, than they were to the Roman emperor. The Jews say ^{f98}, the son of David shall not come, until the kingdom (of Edom, or Rome, as some copies read, in others it is erased) shall be extended over all Israel, nine months, according to (^{<3183>}Micah 5:3). The gloss on it is, that is, “all the world”, in which the Israelites are scattered.

Ver. 2. *And this taxing was first made*, etc.] Or “this was the first enrolment, or taxing” in the Jewish nation; for there was another afterwards, when Judas the Galilean arose, and drew many after him, (^{<4158>}Acts 5:38).

When Cyrenius was governor of Syria; or “of Cyrenius” “governor of Syria”; that is, it was the first that he was, concerned in; who not now, but afterwards was governor of Syria; and because he had been so before Luke wrote this history, and this being a title of honour, and what might distinguish him from others of that name, it is given him; for as Tertullian says ^{f99}, Sentius Saturninus was now governor of Syria, when Cyrenius was sent into Judea, to make this register, or taxing; and which is manifestly distinguished from that, which was made during his being governor of Syria, when Archelaus was banished from Judea, ten or eleven years after Herod's death; which Josephus ^{f100} gives an account of, and Luke refers to, in (^{<4157>}Acts 5:37). Moreover, the words will bear to be rendered thus, “and this tax, or enrolment, was made before Cyrenius was governor of Syria”; **πρωτη**, being used for **προτερα**, as in (^{<4015>}John 1:15,30). This Cyrenius is the same whom the Romans call Quirinius, and Quirinus; a governor of Syria had great power in Judea, to which it was annexed, when Cyrenius was governor there. It is reported of R. Gamaliel, that he went to take a licence, **ayrwsb ^wmghm**, “from a governor of Syria” ^{f101}; i.e. to intercalate

the year: and Syria was in many things like to the land of Judea, particularly as to tithes, and the keeping of the seventh year^{f102}.

Ver. 3. *And all went to be taxed*, etc.] Throughout Judea, Galilee, and Syria; men, women, and children;

every one into his own city; where he was born, and had any estate, and to which he belonged.

Ver. 4. *And Joseph also went up from Galilee*, etc.] Where he now lived, and worked at the trade of a carpenter; having for some reasons, and by one providence or another, removed hither from his native place:

out of the city of Nazareth; which was in Galilee, where he and Mary lived; and where he had espoused her, and she had conceived of the Holy Ghost:

into Judea; which lay higher than Galilee, and therefore he is said to go up to it:

unto the city of David; not what was built by him, but where he was born and lived; (see ¹⁹⁷²1 Samuel 17:12).

which is called Bethlehem: the place where, according to (³¹⁰²Micah 5:2) the Messiah was to be born, and was born; and which signifies “the house of bread”: a very fit place for Christ, the bread which came down from heaven, and gives life to the world, to appear first in. This place was, as a Jewish chronologer says^{f103}, a “parsa” and half, or six miles from Jerusalem; though another of their writers, an historian and traveller^{f104}, says, it was two “parsas”, or eight miles; but Justin Martyr^{f105} says, it was but thirty five furlongs distant from it, which is not five miles; hither Joseph came from Galilee,

because he was of the house and lineage of David; he was of his family, and lineally descended from him, though he was so poor and mean; and this is the reason of his coming to Bethlehem, David's city.

Ver. 5. *To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife*, etc.] Whom also he had married, though he had not known her in a carnal way; she came along with him to be taxed and enrolled also, because she was of the same family of David, and belonged to the same city:

being great with child; very near her time, and yet, though in such circumstances, was obliged by this edict, to come to Bethlehem; and the

providence in it was, that she might give birth there, and so the prophecy in (^{<38B>}Micah 5:2) have its accomplishment: this was an instance, and an example, of obedience to civil magistrates.

Ver. 6. *And so it was, that while they were there*, etc.] At Bethlehem, waiting to be called and enrolled in their turn;

the days were accomplished that she should be delivered; her reckoning was up, the nine months of her going with child were ended, and her full time to bring forth was come.

Ver. 7. *And she brought forth her firstborn son*, etc.] At Bethlehem, as was predicted; and the Jews themselves own, that the Messiah is already born, and born at Bethlehem. They have a tradition, that an Arabian should say to a Jew ^{f106}

“Lo! the king Messiah is born; he said to him, what is his name? Menachem: he asked him, what is his father's name? he replied to him, Hezekiah; he said unto him, from whence is he? he answered, from the palace of the king of Bethlehem.”

Which is elsewhere ^{f107} reported, with some little variation; the Arabian said to the Jew,

“the Redeemer of the Jews is born; he said unto him, what is his name? he replied, Menachem is his name: and what is his father's name? he answered, Hezekiah: he said unto him, and where do they dwell? he replied, in Birath Arba, in Bethlehem.”

And the Jewish chronologer affirms ^{f108}, that

“Jesus the Nazarene, was born at Bethlehem Judah, a “parsa” and a half from Jerusalem.”

And even the author of the blasphemous book of the life of Christ owns ^{f109}, that

“Bethlehem Judah was the place of his nativity.”

Jesus is called Mary's firstborn, because she had none before him; though she might not have any after him; for the first that opened the matrix, was called the firstborn, though none followed after, and was holy to the Lord, (^{<38B>}Exodus 13:2). Christ, as to his human nature; was Mary's firstborn; and as to his divine nature, God's firstborn:

and wrapped him in swaddling clothes; which shows, that he was in all things made like unto us, sin only excepted. This is one of the first things done to a new born infant, after that it is washed, and its navel cut; (see ^{<3104>}Ezekiel 16:4) and which Mary did herself, having neither midwife nor nurse with her; from whence it has been concluded, that the birth of Jesus was easy, and that she brought him forth without pain, and not in that sorrow women usually do;

and laid him in a manger. The Persic version serves for a comment; “she put him into the middle of the manger, in the place in which they gave food to beasts; because in the place whither they came, they had no cradle”: this shows the meanness of our Lord's birth, and into what a low estate he came; and that now, as afterwards, though Lord of all, yet had not where to lay his head in a proper place; and expresses his amazing grace, in that he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor: and the reason of his being here laid was,

because there was no room for them in the inn. It seems that Joseph had no house of his own to go into, nor any relation and friend to receive him: and it may be, both his own father and Mary's father were dead, and therefore were obliged to put up at an inn; and in this there was no room for them, because of the multitude that were come thither to be enrolled: and this shows their poverty and meanness, and the little account that was made of them; for had they been rich, and made any considerable figure, they would have been regarded, and room made for them; especially since Mary was in the circumstances she was; and it was brutish in them to turn them into a stable, when such was her case.

Ver. 8. *And there were in the same country shepherds,* etc.] For Bethlehem was a place of pasture: near to Ephrata, the same with Bethlehem, were the fields of the wood, (^{<4326>}Psalm 132:6) and the tower of Edar or the tower of the flock, (^{<0132>}Genesis 35:21, ^{<3048>}Micah 4:8) and here David kept his father's sheep, (^{<0975>}1 Samuel 17:15) so that we need not wonder to hear of shepherds here,

abiding in the field, watching over their flock by night: from whence it appears, that Christ was born in the night; and the ^{f110}Jews say, that the future redemption shall be in the night; and Jerom says ^{f111}, it is a tradition of the Jews, that Christ will come in the middle of the night, as was the passover in Egypt: it is not likely that he was born, as is commonly received, at the latter end of December, in the depth of winter; since at this

time, shepherds were out in the fields, where they lodged all night, watching their flocks: they were diligent men, that looked well to their flocks, and watched them by night, as well as by day, to preserve them from beasts of prey; they were, as it is in the Greek text, “keeping the watches of the night over their flock.” The night was divided into four watches, the even, midnight, cock crowing, and morning; and these kept them, as the Arabic version adds, alternately, some kept the flock one watch, and some another, while the rest slept in the tent, or tower, that was built in the fields for that purpose. There were two sorts of cattle with the Jews; there was one sort which they called **twyrbdm**, “the cattle of the wilderness”, that lay in the fields; and another sort which they called **twtyyb**, “the cattle of the house”, that were brought up at home: concerning both which, they have this rule ^{f112};

“they do not water nor slay the cattle of the wilderness, but they water and slay the cattle of the house: these are the cattle of the house, that lie in the city; the cattle of the wilderness, are they that lie in the pastures.”

On which, one of their commentators ^{f113} observes,

“these lie in the pastures, which are in the villages, all the days of cold and heat, and do not go into the cities, until the rains descend.”

The first rain is in the month Marchesvan, which answers to the latter part of our October, and the former part of November; and of this sort, seem to be the flocks those shepherds were keeping by night, the time not being yet come, of their being brought into the city: from whence it appears, that Christ must be born before the middle of October, since the first rain was not yet come; concerning this, the Gemara ^{f114} is more large;

“the Rabbins teach, that these are they of the wilderness, or fields, and these are they of the house; they of the field are they that go out on the passover, and feed in the pastures, and come in at the first rain; and these are they of the house, all that go out and feed without the border, and come and lie within the border (fixed for a sabbath day's journey): Rabbi says, those, and those are of the house; but these are they that are of the field, all they that go out and feed in the pastures, and do not come in to remain, neither in the days of the sun, nor in the days of the rains.”

To the shepherds, the first notice of Christ's birth was given; not to the princes and chief priests, and learned men at Jerusalem, but to weak, mean, and illiterate men; whom God is pleased to choose and call, and reveal his secrets to; when he hides them from the wise and prudent, to their confusion, and the glory of his grace: and this was a presage of what the kingdom of Christ would be, and by, and to whom, the Gospel would be preached.

Ver. 9. *And lo, the angel of the Lord,* etc.] It may be Gabriel, who had brought the tidings of the conception of the Messiah to the virgin, and now the birth of him to the shepherds:

came upon them; on a sudden, unexpectedly, at once, and stood by them, as some versions read; or rather, stood over them, over their heads, just above them; so that he was easily and perfectly seen by them;

and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; or a very glorious and extraordinary light shone with surprising lustre and brightness all around them; by which light, they could discern the illustrious form of the angel that was over them:

and they were sore afraid; at the sight of such a personage, and at such unusual light and glory about them: they were not used to such appearances, and were awed with the majesty of God, of which these were symbols, and were conscious to themselves of their own sinfulness and frailty.

Ver. 10. *And the angel said unto them; fear not,* etc.] For he was not a messenger of bad, but of good tidings:

for behold, I bring you good tidings; tidings, that were both wonderful and amazing, and therefore a “behold” is prefixed to them, as well as to excite to attention; and which were good news, and glad tidings, for such the birth of Christ of a virgin is: in which the good will and amazing love of God to man are displayed, and the promises, and prophecies relating to him fulfilled; and the work of man's salvation, his peace, pardon, righteousness, etc. about to be accomplished, and so matter

of great joy: not carnal, but spiritual; not feigned, but real; not temporary, but lasting; even such as cannot be taken away, nor intermeddled with; and not small, but great, even joy unspeakable, and full of glory:

which shall be to all people; not to every individual of mankind; not to Herod and his courtiers, who were troubled at it; nor to the greater part of the Jewish nation, who when he came to them, received him not, but rejected him as the Messiah; particularly not to the chief priests, Scribes, and Pharisees, who when they saw him, said, this is the heir, let's kill him, and seize on the inheritance; but to all that were waiting for him, and were looking for redemption in Israel; to all sensible sinners who rejoice at his birth, and in his salvation; (see ^{<2308>}Isaiah 9:3,6) to all the chosen people of God, whether Jews or Gentiles, whom God has taken to be his covenant people, and has given to his Son, as such, to redeem and save; to these the incarnation of Christ, with all the benefits resulting from it, is the cause of great joy, when they are made a willing people in the day of Christ's power.

Ver. 11. *For unto you is born this day*, etc.] Day is here put for a natural day, consisting both of night and day; for it was night when Christ was born, and the angels brought the tidings of it to the shepherds. The particular day, and it may be, month and year, in which Christ was born, cannot be certainly known; but this we may be sure of, it was in the fulness of time, and at the exact, season fixed upon between God and Christ in the council and covenant of peace; and that he was born, not unto, or for the good of angels; for the good angels stand in no need of his incarnation, sufferings, and death, having never fell; and as for the evil angels, a Saviour was never designed and provided for them; nor did Christ take on him their nature, nor suffer in their stead: wherefore the angel does not say, “unto us”, but “unto you”, unto you men; for he means not merely, and only the shepherds, or the Jews only, but the Gentiles also; all the children, all the spiritual seed of Abraham, all elect men; for their sakes, and on their account, and for their good, he assumed human nature; see (^{<2306>}Isaiah 9:6 ^{<3024>}Hebrews 2:14,16)

in the city of David; that is, Bethlehem, as in (^{<4004>}Luke 2:4) where the Messiah was to be born, as being, according to the flesh, of the seed of David, his son and offspring; as he is, according to his divine nature, his Lord and root. The characters of this new born child follow, and which prove the tidings of his birth to be good, and matter of joy:

a Saviour; whom God had provided and appointed from all eternity; and had been long promised and much expected as such in time, even from the beginning of the world; and is a great one, being God as well as man, and so able to work out a great salvation for great sinners, which he has done;

and he is as willing to save as he is able, and is a complete Saviour, and an only, and an everlasting one: hence his name is called Jesus, because he saves from sin, from Satan, from the law, from the world, from death, and hell, and wrath to come, and from every enemy.

Which is Christ the Lord; the Messiah spoken of by the prophets; the anointed of the Lord, with the Holy Ghost without measure, to be a prophet, priest, and king in his church; and who is the true Jehovah, the Lord our righteousness, the Lord of all creatures, the Lord of angels, good and bad, the Lord of all men, as Creator, the Prince of the kings of the earth, the Lord of lords, and King of kings; and who is particularly the Lord of saints by his Father's gift, his own purchase, the espousal of them to himself, and by the power of his grace upon them: and the birth of such a person must needs be joyful, and is to be accounted good news, and glad tidings.

Ver. 12. *And this shall be a sign unto you,* etc.] When they should come to Bethlehem, and to the inn where Joseph and Mary were:

ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger; for though there might be many other children, in the inn, yet none else in swaddling clothes, at least lying in a manger: this sign would distinguish the new born Saviour from all others; had not the angel given them this direction, they would never have thought to have looked for, and found: him in such a place: and moreover, it might have been a stumbling to them, and an objection with them against his being Christ, the Lord, had they not been told beforehand where he was; but by this means this objection was prevented, and this stumbling block was removed out of the way, and they were prepared to see him, embrace, and believe in him, in this mean condition.

Ver. 13. *And suddenly there was with the angel,* etc.] That brought the tidings of Christ's birth to the shepherds: a multitude of the heavenly host: who being caused to fly swiftly, were at once with him, by his side, and about him; and which was a further confirmation of the truth of his message to them: these were angels who were called an host, or army, the militia of heaven, the ministers of God, that wait upon him, and do his pleasure; and are sent forth to minister to his people, and encamp about them, preserve, and defend them; (see ^{OLD}Genesis 32:1,2) These are styled an heavenly host, because they dwell in heaven; and to distinguish them from hosts and armies on earth; and said to be

a multitude, for the angels are innumerable; there are thousands, ten thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand of them: it may be rendered “the multitude”, and may intend the whole company of angels, who were all of them together to sing the praises of God, and glorify him at the birth of the incarnate Saviour, as well as to adore him; since it is said, “when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, and let all the angels of God worship him”, (^{<3006>}Hebrews 1:6), and these were

praising God; on account of the birth of Christ, and the redemption that was to be obtained by him, for elect men; which shows their friendly disposition to them, and how much they rejoice at their spiritual and eternal welfare; (see ^{<2150>}Luke 15:10); And thus, as at the laying of the foundation of the earth, these “morning stars sang together, and all these sons of God shouted for joy”, (^{<1887>}Job 38:7) they did the same when the foundation of man's salvation was laid in the incarnation of the Son of God;

and saying, as follows.

Ver. 14. *Glory to God in the highest*, etc.] Which with the following words, are not to be considered as a wish, that so it might be, but as an affirmation, that so it was; for the glory of God is great in the salvation, peace, and reconciliation of his people by Jesus Christ, even the glory of all his perfections; of his wisdom and prudence in forming such a scheme; of his love, grace, and mercy, the glory of which is his main view, and is hereby answered; and of his holiness, which is hereby honoured; and of his justice, which is fully satisfied; and of his power in the accomplishment of it; and of his truth and faithfulness in fulfilling his covenant and oath, and all the promises and prophecies relating to it. Great glory from hence arises to God; who is in the highest heavens, and is given him by angels and saints that dwell there, and that in the highest strains; and by saints on earth too in, their measure, and as they are able: the ground and foundation of which is what follows:

and on earth peace: by which is meant, not external peace, though, at this time there was peace on earth all the world over; nor internal peace, as distinguished from that eternal peace which the saints enjoy in heaven; nor even peace made by Christ; for this, as yet, was not done on earth, but was to be made by the blood of his cross: rather Christ himself is here intended, who is called “the man, the peace” (^{<3165>}Micah 5:5) and “our peace”, (^{<4124>}Ephesians 2:14) and was now on earth, being just born, in order to make peace with God, and reconciliation for the sins of the people: and he

is so called, because he is the author of peace between Jew and Gentile, which were at enmity with each other; by abrogating the ceremonial law, the cause of that enmity; by sending the Gospel to them, and converting some of each; and by granting the like privileges to them both; (see ~~4024~~ Ephesians 2:14-20) and because he is the author of peace between God and elect sinners, who, through the fall, are at enmity against, God, and enemies in their minds by wicked works unto him; nor can they make their peace with God; they know not the way of it; nor are they disposed to it; nor can they approach to God to treat with him about terms of peace; nor can they do those things that will make their peace with God, as satisfying his justice, and fulfilling his law: Christ only is their peace maker; he only is fit for it, being God and man in one person, and so a daysman that can lay his hands on both, and has a concern in each, in things pertaining to God, and to make reconciliation for the sins of the people: he only is able to do it, and he has done it by the blood of his cross; and a very excellent peace it is he has made: it is made upon the most honourable terms, to the satisfaction of justice, and the magnifying of the law of God; and is therefore a lasting one, and attended with many blessings, such as freedom of access to God, and a right to all the privileges of his house; and the news of it are glad tidings of good things: and those angels that first brought the tidings of it, may be truly called, as some of the angels are by the Jews ^{f115}, **אַלְפֵי שָׁלוֹם** “angels of peace”. Moreover, Christ may be said to be “peace”, because he is the donor of all true solid peace and real prosperity, both external, which his people have in the world, and with each other; and internal, which they have in their own breasts, through believing in him, and attending on his ordinances; and eternal, which they shall have for ever with him in the world to come. And now Christ being the peace on earth, is owing to

good will towards men; that is, to the free favour, good will, and pleasure of God towards chosen men in Christ Jesus: that Christ was on earth as the peacemaker, or giver, was owing to God's good will; not to angels, for good angels needed him not as such; and the angels that sinned were not spared, nor was a Saviour provided for them; but to men, and not to all men; for though all men share in the providential goodness of God, yet not in his special good will, free grace, and favour: but to elect men, to whom a child was born, and a Son given, even the Prince of Peace: it was from God's good will to these persons, whom he loved with an everlasting love in Christ, laid up goodness for them in him, blessed them with all spiritual

blessings in him, and made a covenant with him for them; that he provided and appointed his son to be the Saviour and peace maker; that he sent him into this world to be the propitiation for sin; and that he spared him not, but delivered him up into the hands of men, justice, and death, in order to make peace for them. The Vulgate Latin version, and some copies, as the Alexandrian, and Beza's most ancient one, read, "peace on earth to men of good will"; and which must be understood, not of men that have a good will of themselves, for there are no such men: no man has a will to that which is good, till God works in him both to will, and to do of his, good pleasure; wherefore peace, reconciliation, and salvation, are not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy: but of such who are the objects of God's good will, and pleasure, whom he loves, because he will love, and has mercy and compassion on them, and is gracious to them, because he will be so; and therefore chooses, redeems, and regenerates them of his own will, and because it seems good in his sight. The Syriac and Persic versions read, "good hope to men"; as there is a foundation laid in Christ the peace, of a good hope of reconciliation, righteousness, pardon, life, and salvation for sinful men. The Arabic version renders it, "cheerfulness in men"; as there is a great deal of reason for it, on account of the birth of the Saviour and peace maker, the salvation that comes by him to men, and the glory brought thereby to God.

Ver. 15. *And it came to pass, as the angels,* etc.] The Persic version reads in the singular number, "the angel: were gone away from them into heaven", from whence they came, and which was the place of their abode and residence; and therefore they are called the angels of heaven, where they always behold the face of God, hearken to the voice of his commandment, and go and come at his orders; and these having finished their embassy, delivered their message to the shepherds, and done all the work they came about,

departed from them: and, as the Ethiopic version adds, "and ascended up into heaven"; and as soon as they were gone, immediately,

the shepherds said one to another, let us now go even to Bethlehem the place where the angel said the Saviour was born,

and see this thing which hath come to pass, which the Lord hath made known to us: from whence it appears, that it was not from diffidence of the matter, as questioning the truth of what the angel said, that they moved one another to go to Bethlehem; for they firmly believed the thing was

come to pass, which the angel had told them of, and that what he said was from the Lord; nor did they act any criminal part, or indulge a vain curiosity, in going to Bethlehem to see what was done; for it seems to be the will of God that they should go, and for which they had a direction from the angel, and a sign given them by which they might know the new born Saviour from any other infant, (<AMP>Luke 2:12) and which would also be a further confirmation of their faith, and by which they would be qualified not only as ear, but as eyewitnesses of the truth of this fact, to report it with greater certainty.

Ver. 16. *And they came with haste*, etc.] In the night, leaving their flocks, to see their incarnate Lord, as Zacchaeus hastened down from the tree to receive the Saviour. The wonderfulness of the vision, the importance of the thing related, the eagerness of their spirits to see the thing that was told them, put them on making quick dispatch, and hastening to the city with all speed:

and found Mary and Joseph; as they had been directed by the angel, in the city of Bethlehem, in an inn there, and in a stable in the inn:

and the babe lying in a manger: where Mary had put it as soon as born, and had wrapped it in swaddling clothes; because there was no room in the inn, and as the angel had told them they should find it, (<AMP>Luke 2:12)

Ver. 17. *And when they had seen it*, etc.] Or “him”, as the Arabic version reads, the child Jesus, or “them”, Joseph, Mary, and the child; or this whole affair, as had been related to them:

they made known abroad; not only in the inn, and among all the people there but throughout the city of Bethlehem,

the saying which was told them concerning this child: both what the angel had told them concerning his birth, and what he was, and where he lay; and what Mary had told them concerning the notice she had from an angel of the conception of him, and the manner of it, and of what he should be; and likewise what Joseph had told them, how an angel had appeared to him, and had acquainted him, after the conception of him, that it was of the Holy Ghost; and was bid to call his name Jesus: as Mary also was, because he was to be the Saviour of his people from their sins: for, no doubt, but they had a conversation with Joseph and Mary about him; and as they could not fail of relating to them, what they had seen and heard that night in the fields, it is reasonable to suppose, that Joseph and Mary would give

them some account of the above things; which all make up the saying, or report, they spread abroad: the Persic version reads, “what they had heard of the angel”; but there is no reason to confine it to that.

Ver. 18. *And all they that heard it*, etc.] What the shepherds related of what they had heard from the angel, and from Joseph and Mary, and what they had seen themselves;

wondered at those things that were told them by the shepherds: for though they expected the Messiah, and that he would be born at Bethlehem, yet they did not imagine that he would be born of such mean parents, and appear in such mean circumstances, and in so contemptible a place; and that shepherds, and not the princes of Israel, should have the first notice of it; and yet the account which these shepherd, who were plain hearted men, and could never be thought to invent such a story, and spread it, and impose on men, without any interest in it, was very surprising; so that they knew not what to say to it, neither to deny, nor believe it; accordingly, the Persic version renders the whole thus, “and whoever heard, wondering, stuck at it”; hesitated about it, and yet astonished at the particulars of it; just as Christ's hearers were in (~~and~~ Luke 4:22) who wondered at his ministry, and the manner of it, and yet objected the meanness of his parentage and education.

Ver. 19. *But Mary kept all these things*, etc.] Which the shepherds had related to her:

and pondered [them] in her heart; or compared them in her mind, with what had been said to herself by the angel, and also by her husband, as well as what was said by Elisabeth at the time she made her a visit; but she said nothing of them to others, lest she should be thought an enthusiast, or a vain boaster; and therefore left things, till time should make a discovery of them in a proper way, and in the best season.

Ver. 20. *And the shepherds returned*, etc.] From Bethlehem, to the fields, and to their flock there;

glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard; from Joseph and Mary:

and seen; as the babe lying in the manger:

as it was told unto them; by the angel: they glorified God on account of the birth of the Messiah; and praised him, wondering at his grace, and the high honour put upon them, that they should be acquainted with it; and that there was such an exact agreement between the things they had seen, and the angel's account of them.

Ver. 21. *And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child*, etc.] According to the original institution of circumcision, (^{<0172>}Genesis 17:12) and which was strictly observed by religious persons, as by the parents of our Lord here, and by those of John the Baptist, (^{<0159>}Luke 1:59) Hence the Apostle Paul reckons this among his privileges, that he could have boasted of as well as other Jews, (see Gill on ^{<0185>}Philippians 3:5"). But it may be asked, why was Christ circumcised, since he had no impurity of nature, which circumcision supposed; nor needed any circumcision of the heart, which that was a symbol of? To which it may be replied, though he needed it not himself, it was the duty of his parents to do it, since all the male seed of Abraham were obliged it, and that law, or ordinance, was now in force; and besides, it was necessary that he might appear in the likeness of sinful flesh, who was to bear, and atone for the sins of his people; as also, that it might be manifest that he assumed true and real flesh, and was a partaker of the same flesh and blood with us; and that he was a son of Abraham, and of his seed, as it promised he should; and that he was made under the law, and came to fulfil it, and was obliged to it, as every one that is circumcised is; as well as to show a regard to all divine, positive institutions that are in being, and to set an example, that we should tread in his steps; and likewise to cut off all excuse from the Jews, that they might not have this to say, that he was an uncircumcised person, and so not a son of Abraham, nor the Messiah.

His name was called Jesus, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb, (^{<0131>}Luke 1:31) It appears from hence, and from the instance of John the Baptist, that at circumcision it was usual to give names to children; (see Gill on ^{<0157>}Luke 1:57"). The Jews observe ^{f116} that

“six persons were called by their names before they were born: and these are Isaac, Ishmael, Moses, Solomon, Josiah, and the King Messiah:”

the latter they prove from (^{<0217>}Psalms 72:17) which they render, “before the sun his name was Yinnon”, or the son: that is, the Son of God.

Ver. 22. *And when the days of purification*, etc.] Of the Virgin Mary, the mother of our Lord; though most copies read, “of their purification”; and so read the Syriac, Persic, and Ethiopic versions, including both Mary and Jesus: and now, though Mary was not polluted by the conception, bearing, and bringing forth of Jesus, that holy thing born of her; yet inasmuch as she was in the account of the law clean; and though Jesus had no impurity in his nature, yet seeing he was made sin for his people, both came under this law of purification, which was for the sake of the son or daughter, as well as for the mother; though our reading, and which is according to the Complutensian edition, best agrees with the Hebrew phrase, **hrj j ymy**, the days of her purifying or purification, in (^{<OR14>}Leviticus 12:4,6)

according to the law of Moses, in (^{<OR14>}Leviticus 12:1-8).

were accomplished; which for a son were forty days: the seven first days after she gave birth she was unclean; and then she continued three and thirty days in the blood of her purifying, which made forty; (see ^{<OR14>}Leviticus 12:2,4) but though the time of her purifying was upon the fortieth day, yet it was not till the day following that she came to the temple with her offering: for so runs the Jewish canon ^{f117};

“a new mother does not bring her offering on the fortieth day for a male, nor on the eightieth day for a female, but after her sun is set: and she brings her offering on the morrow, which is the forty first for a male, and the eighty first for a female: and this is the day of which it is said, (^{<OR16>}Leviticus 12:6) and “when the days of her purifying are fulfilled for a son, or for a daughter, she shall bring”, etc.”

And this was the time when they, Joseph and Mary, brought him, the child Jesus, to Jerusalem, and to the temple there, to present him to the Lord, to the priest his representative; and which was done in the eastern gate, called the gate of Nicanor: ^{f118} for here,

“they made women, suspected of adultery, to drink, and purified new mothers, and cleansed the lepers.”

And here Mary appeared with her firstborn son, the true Messiah; and this was the first time of his coming into his temple, as was foretold, (^{<OR16>}Malachi 3:1)

Ver. 23. *As it is written in the law of the Lord,* etc.] In (^{<OR2>}Exodus 13:2 ^{<OR3>}Numbers 3:13)

every male that openeth the womb, shall be called holy to the Lord; that is, devoted and consecrated to him, and so to be redeemed. The reason of this law was this, when God smote all the firstborn of Egypt, he saved the firstborn of Israel; and therefore claimed a right to them, and obliged their parents, excepting the Levites, to redeem them at the price of five shekels, which were about twelve shillings and six pence of our money, and which was given to the Levites: (see ^{<OR2>}Exodus 13:12-15 ^{<OR2>}Numbers 3:12,13,46,47) (^{<OR5>}Numbers 18:15,16) And this law our Lord came under as Mary's firstborn, and as one holy to the Lord; and such a sum of money was now paid for his redemption, who was the great Redeemer of his people: he being made under the law, and in all things subject to it, that he might redeem them from the bondage, curse, and condemnation of it. Now as the tribe of Levi was excepted from this law, it is a clear case, that Mary, though allied to Elisabeth, was not of the tribe of Levi, otherwise her firstborn would not have been subject to it ^{f119}.

“An Israelite that comes from a priestess, or from a she Levite, is free, (i.e. from the redemption of the firstborn;) for the thing does not depend on the father, but on the mother, as it is said, that openeth the womb in Israel.”

Ver. 24. *And to offer a sacrifice,* etc.] That is, when the time of purification came, the parents of our Lord brought him from Bethlehem to Jerusalem, to present him in the temple to the Lord as his, and to redeem him; and not only so, but to offer the sacrifice required of child-bed women:

according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, (^{<OR8>}Leviticus 12:8)

a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons: if the person was able, she was to bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering; and a young pigeon, or a turtle dove, for a sin offering; but in case of poverty, then the above sufficed, and one of them was for a burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering; which shows not only that the virgin offered for herself a sin offering, being ceremonially unclean, but also her mean estate and poverty, in that she offered the offering of the poorer sort; (see ^{<OR6>}Leviticus 12:6,8).

Ver. 25. *And behold there was a man in Jerusalem*, etc.] Not in Nazareth, or Bethlehem, but in Jerusalem, the metropolis of the nation: one that lived there, was an inhabitant of that city, and a person of fame and note. So Joseph ben Jochanan is called ^{f120} *מל צורג צא* a man of Jerusalem, an inhabitant of that place:

whose name was Simeon; not Simeon, *qydxh* “the just”, the last of the men of the great synagogue, of whom the Jews often make mention ^{f121}; though this Simeon bears the same character, yet could not be he; because he was not only an high priest, which, if this man had been, would doubtless have been mentioned; but also lived some years before this time. Many have thought, that this was Rabban Simeon, the son of Hillel, who was president of the sanhedrim forty years; and in which office this his son succeeded him; and which Simeon was the father of Gamaliel, the master of the Apostle Paul, of whom the Jewish chronologer thus writes ^{f122}:

“Rabban Simeon, the son of Hillel the old, received from his father, and was appointed president after his father; but the time of the beginning of his presidentship I do not find in any authors:”

and a little after,

“Rabban Simeon, the son of Hillel, is the first that is called by the name of Rabban.”

There are some things which seem to agree with, and favour this thought; for certain it is, that Christ was born in his time, whilst he was living: so the above writer says ^{f123}, after he had observed, that

“Jesus of Nazareth was born at Bethlehem Judah, a parsa and a half from Jerusalem, in the year 3761 of the creation, and in the 42nd year of Caesar Augustus; that, according to this computation, his birth was in the days of Rabban Simeon, the son of Hillel.”

And it is worthy of notice also, what another genealogical writer of theirs says ^{f124}, that

“Rabban Simeon, the son of old Hillel, the prince, or president of Israel, as his father was, as it is in Sabbat, c. 1. is not “mentioned in the Misna.””

Which looks as if he was not a favourer of the traditions of the elders, nor in great esteem with the Jews, that they ascribe none of them to him; yea, it

may be observed, that he is entirely left out in the account of the succession of the fathers of tradition, in the tract called Pirke Abot; which is somewhat extraordinary, when he was the son of one, and the father of another of so much note among them. One would be tempted to think, that such a neglect of him, should spring from ill will to him, on account of his professing Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah. But there are other things which do not so well accord, as that this Simeon lived some years after the birth of Christ; whereas our Simeon seems to be in the decline of life, and just ready to depart: as also, that he was prince of Israel, or president of the sanhedrim, after this; which it is not likely he should, after such a confession of Jesus being the Messiah: likewise, seeing that his son Gamaliel was brought up a Pharisee: to which last Dr. Lightfoot replies, that holy fathers have some times wicked children; and that it was thirty years from Simeon's acknowledging Christ, to Gamaliel's education of Paul, or little less; and so much time might wear out the notice of his father's action, if he had taken any notice of it, especially his father dying shortly after he had made so glorious a confession; but his last observation is an objection to him. Upon the whole, it must be left uncertain and undetermined who he was:

and the same man was just and devout; he was a holy good man in his life and conversation; he was one that feared God, and avoided evil; he was righteous before men, and devout towards God, and exercised a conscience void, of offence to both:

waiting for the consolation of Israel; that is, the Messiah; for this was one of his names with the Jews, who sometimes style him, $\mu\text{j nm}$, “the comforter”: for so they report^{f125} that

“there are some that say his name is Menachen the comforter; as it is said, “because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me”. (~~2016~~Lamentations 1:16)”

And again^{f126}, It is observed, that

“the name of the Messiah is Menachem, the comforter; and Menachem, by “gematry”, or numerically, is the same with Tzemach, the branch, (~~3088~~Zechariah 3:8).”

And so they often call him by the name of the “consolation”: $hmj gb$ *hara*, which Dr. Lightfoot renders, “so let me see the consolation”, but

should be rendered, “may I never see the consolation”, was a common form of swearing among them; and used much by R. Simeon ben Shetach, who lived before the times of Christ, of which there are several instances ^{f127}:

“says R. Juda ben Tabai, **hmj nb hara** “may I never see the consolation”, if I have not slain a false witness. Says R. Simeon ben Shetach, to him, “may I never see the consolation”, if thou hast not shed innocent blood.”

The gloss ^{f128} on it is,

“it is a light word, (the form) of an oath, in short language; as if it was said, may I never see the consolations of Zion, if he has not done this.”

Again ^{f129},

“says R. Simeon Ben Shetach, **hmj nb hara** “may I never see the consolation”, if I did not see one run after his companion, into a desolate place, etc.”

Now they might easily collect this name of the Messiah, from several passages of Scripture, which speak of God's comforting his people, at the time of redemption by the Messiah; and particularly, from its being part of his work and office, to comfort them that mourn, for which he was anointed by the Spirit of the Lord, (^{<260>}Isaiah 61:1-3). And when he is called here, “the consolation of Israel”, it is not to be understood of the whole Jewish nation; for he was so far from being a comfort to them, as such, that through their corruption and wickedness, he came not to send peace, but a sword; and to set at variance the nearest relations and friends among themselves; and through their unbelief and rejection of him, wrath came upon them to the uttermost: but of the true and spiritual Israel of God, whom he has chosen, redeemed, and calls, whether of Jews or Gentiles; his own special and peculiar people, the heirs of promise; and who are often mourners in Zion, and being frequently disconsolate on account of sin, the temptations of Satan, and the hidings of God's face, stand in need of consolation from him: and in him there is what is always matter and ground of consolation; as in his person, he being the mighty God, and so able to save to the uttermost; in his blood, which speaks peace and pardon, and cleanses from all sin; in his righteousness, which is pure

and perfect, and justifies from all iniquity, in his sacrifice, which expiates all the transgressions of his people; in his fulness, which is sufficient to supply all their wants; and in his power, by which he is able to keep them from falling, and to present them faultless before God. And he does often comfort them by his Spirit, by his word, and ordinances, by the promises of his Gospel, by the discoveries of pardoning grace, through his blood, and by his gracious presence: nor are his consolations small, but large and abundant, strong, solid, and everlasting. Now for the Messiah under this character, Simeon was waiting, hoping in a little time to see him; since he knew, both by the prophecies of the Old Testament, particularly by Daniel's weeks, and, by divine revelation, that the time was just at hand for his coming;

and the Holy Ghost was upon him; not in a common and ordinary way, as he is upon all that are called by grace, as a Spirit of regeneration and sanctification: and as he was upon many others, who at this time were waiting and looking for the Messiah, as well as he; but in an extraordinary way, as a spirit of prophecy: for though prophecy had ceased among the Jews, from the times of Malachi, yet upon the conception and birth of Christ, it now returned; as to Zacharias, Elisabeth, and the virgin Mary, and here to Simeon, as is clear from what follows.

Ver. 26. *And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost,* etc.] Not in a dream, as the wise men were warned, nor by an angel, as Joseph, nor by a voice from heaven, which the Jews call “Bath Kol”, but by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, enlightening his understanding, and impressing on his mind:

that he should not see death; an Hebraism, see it in (^{<B98>}Psalm 89:48) the same with the phrase, “to taste death”, elsewhere used; and the sense is, as the Ethiopic version renders it, “that he should not die”; or as the Persic version, “that his death should not be”; as yet: he should live some time longer; nor should that messenger be sent to remove him, though a man in years, out of time into eternity,

before he had seen the Lord's Christ: with his bodily eyes: for he had seen him with an eye of faith already, and in the promise, as Abraham had; and in the types and sacrifices of the law, as the rest of believers under the Old Testament. The Messiah is called the Lord's Christ, referring to (^{<B12>}Psalm 2:2) because he was anointed by Jehovah, the Father, and with Jehovah, the Spirit; with the Holy Ghost, the oil of gladness, to be prophet, priest,

and king, in the Lord's house. So the Messiah is by the Targumist called, the Messiah of Jehovah, or Jehovah's Messiah; that is as here, the Lord's Christ: thus in the Targum on (^{<2302>}Isaiah 4:2) it is said.

“in that time, *yjd aj yçm*, “Jehovah's Messiah”, shall be for joy and for glory.”

And on (^{<2305>}Isaiah 28:5) the paraphrase is,

“at that time, *yjd aj yçm*, “the Messiah of the Lord” of hosts shall be for a crown of joy, and for a diadem of praise to the rest of his people.”

Compare these paraphrases with what is said of Christ, in (^{<4123>}Luke 2:32). “The glory of thy people Israel”; Simeon's language exactly agrees with the Targumist. The Persic version adds, “and with this hope he passed his time, or age, and became very old and decrepit.”

Ver. 27. *And he came by the Spirit into the temple*, etc.] By the same Spirit of God, that revealed the above to him. The Ethiopic version renders it, “the Spirit brought him into the temple”: but Simeon was not brought thither, as this version seems to suggest, in such manner as Ezekiel was brought by the Spirit to Jerusalem. (^{<2303>}*Ezekiel 8:3* or as Christ was brought by Satan to the holy city and set upon the pinnacle of the temple; but the Spirit of God, who knows and searches all things, even the deep things of God, and could testify beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow, knew the exact time when Jesus would be brought into the temple; and suggested to Simeon, and moved upon him, and influenced and directed him, to go thither at that very time. The Persic version renders the whole verse thus, “when he heard that they brought Christ into the temple, that they might fulfil the law, Simeon went in”; which version spoils the glory of the text, making Simeon's coming into the temple, to be upon a report heard, and not the motion of the Holy Ghost.

And when the parents brought in the child Jesus; when Joseph and Mary brought Christ into the temple. The Vulgate Latin, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions read, “his parents”, Mary was his real parent, Joseph is called so, as he is his father in (^{<4124>}Luke 2:48) because he was supposed, and generally thought to be so, (^{<4123>}Luke 3:23).

To do for him after the custom of the law; as was used to be done in such a case, according to the appointment of the law: or as the Syriac version

renders it, “as is commanded in the law”; namely, to present him to the Lord, and to pay the redemption money for him.

Ver. 28. *Then took he him up in his arms*, etc.] That same Spirit that had revealed unto him that he should not die till he saw the Messiah with his bodily eyes; and who by a secret impulse had moved him to go to the temple just at this time made known unto him that that child which Joseph and Mary then brought into the temple to present to the Lord, was the Messiah; wherefore, in a rapture of joy, he took him out of their arms into his own, embracing him with all affection and respect imaginable: though, some think he was a priest, and it being his office to present the firstborn to the Lord, he took him in his arms, and did it; but the former account seems more agreeable:

and blessed God; praised him, and gave glory to him, for his great goodness, in sending the promised Messiah, and long wished for Saviour; for his grace and favour, in indulging him with a sight of him; and for his truth and faithfulness in making good his promise to him:

and said; as follows.

Ver. 29. *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant*, etc.] He acknowledges him as his Lord, and to have a despotic power over him with respect to life and death; and himself as his servant, which he was, both by creation and grace: and though it expresses humiliation, and a sense of distance and unworthiness, yet to be a servant of the most high God, is a very high and honourable character: what he requests of the Lord is that he might

depart in peace; signifying his hearty desire to die, and with what cheerfulness he should meet death, having obtained all that he could wish for and desire, in seeing and embracing the Saviour: he expresses his death, by a departure out of the world, as in (^{<B30>}John 13:1) (^{<S02>}Philippians 1:21) agreeably to the way of speaking of it among the Jews. (See Gill on ^{<S02>}Philippians 1:21”) and by a word, which signifies a loosing of bonds; death being a dissolving the bond of union, between soul and body, and a deliverance, as from prison and bondage; the body being, as it were, a prison to the soul in the present state of things: and he also intimates, that whereas, though he had the strongest assurances of the Messiah's coming, and of his coming before his death, by the revelation of the Holy Ghost, and so most firmly believed it, without fluctuation, and hesitation of mind; yet as hope deferred makes the heart sick, he was anxious and restless in

his desire, till it was accomplished; but now being come, he could take his leave of the world, and his entrance into eternity, with the greatest calmness and tranquillity of mind, having nothing to disturb him, nor more to desire: he adds,

according to thy word; for he seems to have understood by the revelation made to him, that as he should not die before he saw the Messiah, so, when he had seen him, that he should immediately, or in a very short time after, be removed by death; and which he greatly desired, and in which, he sinned not, because his request was according to the word of God: whereas often, desires of death are not only without the word of God, and due resignation to his will, and any regard to his glory, but to be rid of some trouble, or gratify some lust, as pride, revenge, etc.

Ver. 30. *For mine eyes have seen thy salvation*, etc.] The Messiah, who is often so called; (see ^{<04918>}Genesis 49:18 ^{<23016>}Isaiah 49:6 52:10). He goes by the name of “salvation”, because the salvation of God's elect is put into his hands, and he has undertaken it; and because he is the author of it, he has fulfilled his engagements, and has accomplished what he promised to do; and because salvation is in him, it is to be had in him; and in him the true Israel of God are saved, with an everlasting salvation: and he is called “God's salvation” because he is a Saviour of his choosing, calling, and constituting; whom he promised under the Old Testament dispensation and in the fulness of time sent; and who now appeared in human nature, and whom good old Simeon now saw, with his bodily eyes; a sight which many kings and prophets had desired, but were not favoured with; and also with the eyes of his understanding, with the spiritual eye of faith, as his Saviour and Redeemer; for without this, the former would not have been sufficient to have given such peace and tranquillity of mind, in a departure out of this world: for many saw him in the days of his flesh, who never saw his glory, as the Son of God, and Saviour of sinners; but such a sight those have, who have their understandings enlightened, and Christ, as God's salvation, set before them: they see him in the glory of his person, the fulness of his grace, the suitableness and excellency of his righteousness, the efficacy of his blood, and the perfection of his sacrifice; and as an able, willing, complete, and only Saviour: and such a sight of him, puts them out of conceit with themselves, and their own works of righteousness, as saviours; makes the creature, and all it has and does, look mean and empty; fills the soul with love to Christ, and a high esteem of him, and with joy unspeakable, and full of glory; it transforms a soul, and makes it like to

Christ; gives it inexpressible pleasure and satisfaction; and makes it desirous, as it did this good man, to depart and be with Christ, which is far better than to live in this (in some sense) state of absence from him.

Ver. 31. *Which thou hast prepared*, etc.] In his eternal purposes and decrees, having chosen and foreordained Christ, and appointed him to be his salvation, to the ends of the earth; in his counsel and covenant of grace wherein it was agreed, determined, and concluded on, that he should be the Saviour of his people; and in the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament, and in all the types, shadows, and sacrifices, of that dispensation; in which he was exhibited, and held forth as the Saviour to the saints and believers of those times; and now had sent him in human nature, to work out that salvation he had chosen and called him to, and he had undertook:

before the face of all people; meaning not the congregation of Israel, that looked for redemption in Jerusalem, and who were now together with Simeon and Anna, when the child Jesus was presented in the temple; nor the body of the Jewish nation only, to whom he was made manifest, had they not wilfully shut their eyes, by John's ministry and baptism; and more so, by the miracles, wonders, and signs, which God did by Christ, in the midst of them; but both Jews and Gentiles: for, as he was provided and sent as a Saviour, and a great one, he was to be lifted up on the cross, as the serpent was lifted up by Moses, in the wilderness, to draw all his elect to him, of every nation; and to be set up as an ensign to the people, in the public ministry of the word; to be the object of faith and hope, to look unto, for life and salvation.

Ver. 32. *A light to lighten the Gentiles*, etc.] Or for the revelation of the Gentiles; to reveal the love, grace, and mercy of God, an everlasting righteousness, and the way of life and salvation to them. Reference seems to be had to (²³⁰⁶Isaiah 42:6 49:6). "Light", is one of the names of the Messiah in the Old Testament, as in (¹⁹⁸⁸Psalms 43:3) (²⁰²²Daniel 2:22), which passages are by the Jews ^{f130} themselves interpreted of Christ; and is a name often used of him in the New Testament: it is true of him as God, he is light itself, and in him is no darkness at all; and as the Creator of mankind, he is that light which lightens every man with the light of nature and reason; and as the Messiah, he is come a light into the world: the light of the Gospel, in the clear shine of it, is from him; the light of grace in his people, who were in darkness itself, he is the author and donor of; as he is

also of the light of glory and happiness, in the world to come: and particularly, the Gentiles enjoy this benefit of light by him; who were, and as this supposes they were, in darkness, as they had been some hundreds of years before the Messiah's coming: they were in the dark about the being and perfections of God, about the unity of God, and the Trinity of persons in the Godhead, and about God in Christ; about his worship, the rule and nature of it; and the manner of atonement, and reconciliation for sin; the person, righteousness, and sacrifice of Christ; the Spirit of God, and his operations on the souls of men; the Scriptures of truth, and both law and Gospel; the resurrection of the dead, and a future state: now, though Christ in his personal ministry, was sent only to the Jews, yet after his resurrection, he gave his disciples a commission to go into all the world, to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, in order to turn them from darkness to light; and hereby multitudes were called out of darkness into marvellous light: and this Simeon had knowledge of, and a few more besides him; otherwise, the generality of the Jewish nation were of opinion, that when the Messiah came, the nations of the world would receive no benefit by him, no light, nor comfort, nor peace, or prosperity: but all the reverse would befall them, as darkness, calamity, and misery: and so they express themselves in a certain place; ^{f131} the Israelites look, or wait for

“redemption; for the day of the Lord shall be “light to them”; but; the nations, why do they wait for him? for he shall be “to them darkness, and not light”.”

But the contrary, Simeon, under divine inspiration, declares, and, blessed be God, it has proved true: he adds,

and the glory of thy people Israel; which is true of Israel in a literal sense, inasmuch as the Messiah was born of the Jews, and among them; and was first sent and came to them, and lived and dwelled with them; taught in their streets, and wrought his miracles in the midst of them; though this was an aggravation of their ingratitude and unbelief, in rejecting him: the Gospel was first preached to them, even after the commission was enlarged to carry it among the Gentiles; and many of them were converted, and the first Gospel church was planted among them; and an additional glory was made to them, by the calling of the Gentiles, and joining them to them, through the ministry of the apostles, who were all Jews; who went forth from Zion, and carried the word of the Lord from Jerusalem, to the several parts of the world: and this also is more especially true, of the mystical, or

spiritual Israel of God, whose glory Christ is; being made of God unto them, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; they having such an head, husband, Saviour, and Redeemer, as he; and they being clothed with his righteousness, and washed in his blood, sanctified by his grace, and made meet for eternal glory; to which they have a right and claim, through the grace of God, and merits of Christ; and therefore glory not in themselves, but in Christ, who is their all in all.

Ver. 33. *And Joseph and his mother*, etc.] The Vulgate Latin reads, “and his father and mother”. The Ethiopic version retains both his name and his relation, and reads, “and Joseph his father, and his mother”; but all the ancient copies read only “Joseph”, without the addition, his father; and so the Syriac, Arabic, and Persic versions: they

marvelled at those things which were spoken of him; the child Jesus: not that those things which Simeon said, were new and strange to them; for they not only knew that the same things were predicted of the Messiah, but they had heard and known, and believed the same concerning this child; but they wondered, that a stranger to them and the child, coming into the temple at this instant, should have such a revelation made to him, and be able to say the things he did. Moreover, there is no need to confine this passage to what were said by Simeon, but it may reach to, and include every thing; that as yet had been spoken concerning Jesus; either before, or since his birth; as by the angel to them both, to the one before his conception, to the other after; and by Zacharias and Elisabeth, and by the angel to the shepherds, who had reported the same to Joseph and Mary, and now by Simeon; and they were astonished, at the exact agreement there was between them.

Ver. 34. *And Simeon blessed them*, etc.] Pronounced them blessed persons, on account of their relation to Christ as man; and more especially, because of their interest in him, as the, Saviour and Redeemer of them; and wished them all happiness and prosperity inward and outward, temporal, spiritual, and eternal; and so the Arabic version renders it, confining it to Joseph and Mary; “and Simeon blessed them both”; though this blessing of his may take in also the young child Jesus; whom he might pronounce blessed, as Elizabeth before had done, (~~and~~ Luke 1:42) since he was the promised seed, in whom all nations of the earth should be blessed; and to whom, and to whose undertakings, interest, and kingdom, he might wish all prosperous success. The Persic version reads, “old Simeon: and said

unto Mary his mother”: he directed his discourse to her, because she was the only real parent of this child he had in his arms, and had said so much of, and was about to say more; and because part of what follows, personally concerned her:

behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel. The word “child”, is not in the original text; where it is only, “this is set, etc.” Simeon seeming to be, as it were, at a loss, what name to call this great and illustrious person by, and therefore it is left to be supplied. The Persic version supplies it thus, behold, “this Holy One is set, etc.” The sense is, that this child, who is the stone of Israel, is set, or put, or lies, both as a stone of stumbling, and rock of offence, for many of the Jews to stumble at, and fail and perish; and as a precious corner and foundation stone, for the erection and elevation of others of them, to the highest honour and dignity, that shall believe on him: for these words are not to be understood of the same, but of different persons among the Jews; though it may be true, that some, who first stumbled at him, might be raised up again, and brought to believe in him; and that many, who for his sake, and the Gospel, fell under great disgrace and reproach, and into great afflictions and persecutions, were raised up to the enjoyment of great comfort and honour: but they are not the same persons that Christ is set for the fall of, that he is set for the rising of; nor the same he is set for the rising of, he is set for the fall of; the one designs the elect of God among the Jews, who became true believers in Christ; and the other, the reprobate, who died in impenitence and unbelief: the words, so far as they concern Christ, “being set for the fall of many of the Jews”; have a manifest reference to (~~2084~~ Isaiah 8:14,15) where the Messiah is spoken of as a stone, and as a stone of stumbling, and rock of offence; at which, many of the Jews should stumble, and fail, and be broken. And so the text is applied in the Talmud ^{f132}, where it is said, that

“the son of David will not come, until both houses of the fathers, fail out of Israel; and they are these, the head of the captivity in Babylon, and the prince in the land of Israel; as it is said, (~~2084~~ Isaiah 8:14) “he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and rock of offence”, to both the houses of Israel.”

Accordingly the Jews did stumble at his birth, parentage, and education; at the meanness of his person, and the obscurity of his kingdom; at the company he kept, and the audience that attended him; at his doctrine and

miracles, and at his sufferings and death: they fell, through their unbelief and rejection of him, as the Messiah; and not only from their outward privileges, civil, and religious; the Gospel was taken away from them, the national covenant between God and them was broken, and they ceased to be his people, their temple and city were destroyed, and wrath came upon their nation to the uttermost; but they also fell into everlasting perdition, dying in their sins, through their disbelief of Jesus as the Messiah: this indeed was not the case of all of them; there was a seed, a remnant, according to the election of grace but it was the case of many, and of the far greater part but then this same stone that was laid in Zion, was also

set for the rising again of many of them; meaning not for their resurrection in a literal sense, though this is a truth: for as all God's elect, whether Jews or Gentiles, rose in him representatively, when he rose from the dead; so many of them rose personally after his resurrection, and all of them, at the last day, will rise again, in consequence of their union to him: and indeed, all the wicked will be raised again, by virtue of his power; but not this, but their resurrection in a spiritual sense, is here meant; and it supposes the persons raised to have been in a low estate, as all God's elect by nature are: they are in a hopeless and helpless condition in themselves: they are in a state of thralldom and bondage, to sin, Satan, and the law; they are filled with diseases, nauseous, mortal, and incurable; they are clothed in rags, and are beggars on the dunghill; they are deep in debt, and have nothing to pay; and are dead in trespasses and sins. Christ is now provided and appointed, for the raising them up out of their low estate, and he does do it; he is the resurrection and the life unto them; he raises from the death of sin, to a life of grace and holiness from him, to a life of faith on him, and communion with him here, and to eternal life hereafter: he pays all their debts clothes them with his righteousness, heals all their diseases, redeems them from the slavery of sin, the captivity of Satan, and the bondage and curse of the law; brings them into a hopeful and comfortable condition; raises them to the possession of a large estate, an eternal inheritance; and gives them both a right unto it, and ineptness for it; sets them among princes, makes them kings, places them on a throne of glory, yea, on his own throne, and sets a crown of righteousness, life, and glory, on their heads; and will cause them to reign with him, first on earth, for a thousand years, and then in heaven to all eternity: and this was to be the case of many in Israel, though not of all; for all did not obey the Gospel, some did, three thousand under one sermon; and more will in the latter day, when all

Israel shall be saved. This privilege of rising again, in this sense, by Christ, though it is here spoken of with respect to many of the Jews, yet not to the exclusion of the Gentiles; for this honour have all the saints, be they of what nation they will. Now when Christ is said to be “set” for these different things, the meaning is, that he was foreappointed, preordained, and set forth in God's counsel, purposes, and decrees, as a stone at which some should stumble, through their own wickedness and unbelief, and fall and perish, and be eternally lost; and as a foundation stone for others, to build their faith and hope upon, which should be given them, and so rise up to everlasting life; and that he was set forth in the prophecies of the Old Testament, as in that here referred to, for the same ends; and that he was now exhibited in human nature with the same views, and should be held forth in the everlasting Gospel, for the like purposes; and which eventually is the savour of life unto life to some, and the savour of death unto death to others: to all this, a behold is prefixed, as expressing what is wonderful and surprising, and not to be accounted for, but to be resolved into the secret and sovereign will of God: it is added, that he is also set

for a sign which shall be spoken against: referring to (^{<21818>}Isaiah 8:18). Christ is the sign of God's everlasting love to his people, the great proof, evidence, and demonstration of it; and in this respect, is spoken against by many: and he is set up in the Gospel, as an ensign of the people to look at, and gather to, for comfort, peace, righteousness, salvation, and eternal life; but is by many contradicted, opposed, and treated with contempt and abhorrence; so that he appears rather to be set as a mark and butt to shoot at: he was spoken against by the Scribes and Pharisees, and the greater part of the people of the Jews, and contradicted, as the Messiah, because of his mean appearance among them; his proper deity was denied, his divine sonship was gainsayed; he was contemned in all his offices, kingly, priestly, and prophetic; his works of mercy, both to the bodies and souls of men, his miracles, and the whole series of his life and actions, were traduced as sinful and criminal: this was the contradiction of sinners against himself, which he endured, (^{<8123>}Hebrews 12:3) and for which he was set and appointed; and still the contradiction continues, and will, as long as the Gospel is preached.

Ver. 35. *Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,* etc.]

Meaning either the sword, “or spear of scandal”, as the Arabic version renders it; so the calumny, and reproach of the tongues of men, is compared to a sharp sword, (^{<4574>}Psalms 57:4) and such the virgin might

meet with on account of her conception in art unmarried state, which might greatly wound her soul; or else the sorrows she met with on account of her son: as he was a man of sorrows, so was she a woman of sorrows, from his cradle to his cross; and his sorrows, like so many darts, or javelins, rebounded from him to her, and pierced her soul through; as when Herod sought his life, (^{<4123>}Matthew 2:13,14) when she had lost him for a whole day, (^{<4128>}Luke 2:48) and when he was frequently exposed to danger among the spiteful and malicious Jews; but never more than when she stood at his cross, and saw him, in his agonies, extended on the tree, bleeding, gasping, and dying, (^{<4325>}John 19:25). Some think this refers to martyrdom, which she was to suffer by the sword, of which the Scripture is silent, Epiphanius, an ancient writer, seems to hint at it ^{f133}.

That the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed; that is, all this offence was to be taken at Christ, and he to be spoken against; and all these afflictions, reproaches, and persecutions, he and his were to endure for this end; that the secret thoughts of men might be discovered, and they be known to be what they were, whether hypocrites, or good men, foes or friends of Christ: so on the one hand, what were the Scribes and Pharisees, who talked of a Messiah, and pretended to righteousness and holiness, and yet when the Messiah came, rejected him, and so all such who followed Christ with worldly views, and expected a temporal kingdom, but left him when they found it otherwise, and Judas, one of his disciples; and, on the other hand, who were sincere and hearty? as the rest of his disciples, Joseph of Arimathea, and others, who abode by him, notwithstanding the cross; and the same use have all persecutions, errors, and heresies, the opposition and contradiction of men in every shape now, and the same end is answered; wicked men, and hypocrites, are known to be what they are; and good men are made manifest; and what each think of Christ and his Gospel, is discovered hereby; (see ^{<4119>}1 Corinthians 11:19).

Ver. 36. *And there was one Anna*, etc.] The name is the same with Hannah: so Hannah, the mother of Samuel, is by the Septuagint called Anna, in (^{<4102>}1 Samuel 1:2,5,9,15,19,22,25) and it signifies “grace”; or “gracious”: and as was her name, so was she, a gracious woman; One that had the grace of God herself, and was a publisher of the glad tidings of grace and redemption by Christ, to others; and she was

a prophetess: for though prophecy had ceased among the Jews for some hundreds of years, it now revived upon the coming of the Messiah; and

though instances of women prophets were rare, yet some there were, both before, and after the coming of Christ; as Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, Deborah, the wife of Lapidoth, and Huldah, the wife of Shallum; and this Anna, at the time of Christ's birth, and afterwards four daughters of Philip the Evangelist, who were virgins. This woman was

the daughter of Phanuel; it is the same name with Penuel; and which, by the Septuagint, in (^{<B304>}1 Chronicles 4:4 8:25) is called Phanuel, as here. This man might be a person of some note, or he may be mentioned for the sake of his name, which signifies the face of God, and is the name Jacob gave to a certain place where he had seen God face to face, (^{<O323>}Genesis 32:30,31). And now Phanuel's daughter both saw and gave the light of the knowledge of God, in the face of Jesus Christ, and now beheld his face in the flesh, who is God over all, blessed for ever.

Of the tribe of Aser; the same with Asher; for so Asher is called, as here, by the Septuagint, in (^{<O313>}Genesis 30:13 49:20) and elsewhere: and though this tribe was carried captive with the rest of the ten tribes; yet there were some of the ten tribes that returned along with Judah and Benjamin, and were dispersed among them. This tribe had its seat in Galilee; so that though the Jews denied that any prophet came from thence, yet it seems a prophethess did.

She was of a great age: the phrase is the same with that in (^{<O307>}Luke 1:7) there rendered, "stricken in years"; (See Gill on "^{<O307>}Luke 1:7"). Her age will appear to be great, if it be observed, that she was seven years a married woman, and fourscore and four years a widow, which make ninety one; and if she was married at twelve years and a half, at which time the Jews ^{f134} reckoned females marriageable, she must be an hundred and three years old; and perhaps her age might be eight or ten years more:

and had lived with her husband seven years from her virginity: this is mentioned to observe her chastity, that she was in her virginity, or a chaste virgin, when she became a wife; such an one as the high priest was obliged to have, (^{<O213>}Leviticus 21:13) and that the tokens of her virginity were brought, which the Jewish laws obliged to, (^{<O215>}Deuteronomy 22:15,17,20) and that she lived honestly, and honourably, with her husband, during the term of her marriage state.

Ver. 37. *And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years*, etc.] Which is not the date of her whole age, as some have thought, but of her

widowhood state, as distinct from her marriage state, and the time of her virginity. And this sense all the versions favour.

Which departed not from the temple that is, she was constant in her devotion there, at the time of divine service, whether by night or day; not that she was in it, for she had been out of it now; otherwise it could not with propriety be said of her, that

she coming in that instant, as in the next verse; but that she always was there when there was any worship performed, in which women might be concerned, and which is pointed out in the next clause:

but served God with fastings and prayers, night and day: she attended to the usual fasts of twice a week, and to such as were enjoined the whole congregation, and to the several set times of prayer, and to every act of devotion, private or public, by night or day. In (~~Exo~~Exodus 38:8) we read of women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: both the Targums of Onkelos and Ben Uzziel render it, “who came to pray”; and the Septuagint version, “that fasted”: Anna did both.

Ver. 38. *And she coming in that instant*, etc.] That the parents of Christ brought him into the temple; just as Simeon was embracing him in his arms, and blessing God for him, and saying the things concerning him he had done; and who also came at that juncture, as he did, under the impulse, and by the direction of the Spirit of God;

gave thanks likewise unto the Lord: praised him, as he had done, that he had sent the promised, and long looked for Messiah and Saviour; and that she had lived to see his blessed face, and this happy day; and that she should be directed to come in at this instant, and be favoured with this singular mercy of seeing the new born Saviour, and his honoured parents:

and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem; this she either did at this time; they in Jerusalem that looked, and diligently waited for, and earnestly desired the Messiah, and spiritual redemption and salvation by him, being now assembled together in the temple; or afterwards, as she had opportunity of conversing with them, when she acquainted them with what she had heard and seen. By “the redemption” they were looking for, is meant, the Redeemer; as by salvation, the Saviour, in (~~Luk~~Luke 2:30). Some versions, as the Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic read, “the redemption of Jerusalem”; not literally, but spiritually, understood, even the redemption of the church of Christ, which is often so

called: and others, as the Persic version, “the redemption of Israel”; that is, of spiritual Israel: some read “in Israel”; so one copy of Stephens's.

Ver. 39. *And when they had performed all things*, etc.] Relating to the purification of Mary, and the presentation and redemption of her firstborn, and the sacrifices and ceremonies belonging thereunto:

according to the law of the Lord; which that directed to, and enjoined:

they returned into Galilee: not that they came from thence to Jerusalem, but from Bethlehem, where Mary gave birth, and her time for purification was now just expired: nor did they go now directly to Galilee; or, if they did, they soon came back again to Bethlehem, since here the wise men found them two years after; when by a divine warning, they went into Egypt, where they remained till Herod's death, and after came into the land of Israel, into the parts of Galilee, and dwelt at Nazareth; for which reason it is here called their own city;

to their own city Nazareth: Bethlehem was their native city, the place of their birth, at least of their family; and Nazareth was the city of their habitation.

Ver. 40. *And the child grew*, etc.] In body, in strength, and in stature; which shows that it was a true body Christ assumed, and like ours, which did not come to its maturity at once, but by degrees:

and waxed strong in spirit, or in his soul; for as he had a true body, he had also a reasonable soul; the faculties of which were far from being weak, they were exceeding strong, and appeared stronger and stronger every day; his understanding was clear, his judgment solid, and his memory strong and retentive, his will, and the desires of it, were to that which is good, and his affections cleaved unto it. The Persic and Ethiopic versions read, “was strengthened in”, or “by the Holy Spirit”; with the grace and gifts of it; but the former sense is best.

Filled with wisdom; and knowledge as man; for this is to be understood, not of his essential wisdom as God, nor of those treasures of wisdom and knowledge, which were hid in him as mediator, to be dispensed to his church; but of his created and natural wisdom, as man; in which he increased gradually, as his body grew, and the faculties of his soul opened under the influences of his deity, and the power of his Spirit;

and the grace of God was upon him; which designs not the fulness of grace that was in him, as mediator, for the supply of his people: but either that internal grace which was bestowed on his human nature, even the various graces of the Spirit of God, and which flowed from the grace of union of the two natures in him; or rather the love and favour of God, which in various instances was in a very singular manner manifested to him.

Ver. 41. *Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year*, etc.] Joseph was obliged to go three times a year, as were all the males in Israel, at the feasts of the passover, pentecost, and tabernacles, (^{f134}Deuteronomy 16:16). The first of these is expressed here, at the feast of the passover; but the women were not obliged to go up: for so it is said by the Jews ^{f135}, תּוֹרַת מִצְוֵת לְצִדְקָה שֶׁל פֶּסַח, “the passover of women is voluntary”, or in their own power; they might go up to the feast, or not, as they pleased. It is indeed said of Hillell, who was now alive, that he obliged the women to the first, but not to a second passover: to which the Karaites object; the account they give is as follows ^{f136};

“truly the women were obliged, by the school of Hillell, to the offering of the passover; but if they were hindered from the first passover, the second was in their power; that is, the thing depended upon their will and pleasure, whether they would offer or not, which may be justly wondered at; for why should they be obliged to the, first, and not the second? for behold, as to the obligation of the passover, there is no difference between the first passover, and the second, The sum of the matter is, our wise men, on whom be peace, have determined and say, that there is no obligation but to males, who are arrived to maturity.”

So that this was a voluntary thing in Mary; which discovers her piety and religion, and her great regard to the ordinances and appointments of God.

Ver. 42. *And when he was twelve years old*, etc.] Not that he was now, חֲנֻכָּה רַב, “a son of the commandment”, ^{f137} to use the Jewish phrase; or now came under the yoke of the law; or was obliged to the duties of adult church membership, as is asserted by some; nor particularly to go to Jerusalem to make his appearance at the feast of the passover, or any other feast: for according to the maxims of the Jews, persons were not obliged to the duties of the law, or subject to the penalties of it in case of non-performance, until they were, a female, at the age of twelve years, and one

day, and a male, at the age of thirteen years, and one day; but then they used to train up their children, and inure them to religious exercises before: as for instance, though they were not obliged to fast on the day of atonement, until they were at the age before mentioned; yet, they used them to it two or three year's before, as they were able to endure it: a son of nine, or ten years old, they train him up by hours; they make him fast so many hours; and one of eleven, or “twelve years old”, they make him fast a whole day: but then this was not law, but custom; and which they observed, that they might be used to the commandments^{f138}, and be expert in them, and ready to perform them when required. It is said,^{f139} that

“there was a good custom in Jerusalem to make their little sons and daughters fast on a fast day; the son of a year, till the very day he is “twelve years old”, when he fasts the whole day; and after that they carry him, and bring him before every ancient man, that he may bless him, and confirm him, and pray over him, that he may be worthy in the law, and in good works; and: every one that is greater than he in the city, he stands up from his place, and goes before him, and bows to him, to pray for him: and this is to learn him, that they are beautiful, and their works beautiful and acceptable to God; and they did not use to leave their little children behind them, but brought them to the synagogues, *twxmb μrzi ydk*, “that they might be ready in the commandments”.”

That they might be inured to them, and expert in them, when they were under obligation to them; for they were not properly under the law, until they were arrived to the age above mentioned; nor were they reckoned adult church members till then, nor then neither, unless worthy persons: for so it is said^{f140},

“he that is worthy, at thirteen years of age, is called *ykl ʿb*, “a son of the congregation of Israel”.”

that is, a member of the church. When therefore Joseph and Mary took Jesus along with them, at this age,

when they went up to Jerusalem, after the custom of the feast of the passover, it shows their religious regard to him; and may be an instruction to parents, to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, after their example.

Ver. 43. *And when they had fulfilled the days*, etc.] The seven days of the fear of unleavened bread, for so many days that feast was observed; and though it was not absolutely necessary, and obligatory upon them to stay all that time at Jerusalem, yet Mary and Joseph seem so to have done, as did the more religious and devout persons:

as they returned; at the time when they were going from Jerusalem home again:

the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; being desirous of hearing the discourses of the doctors about the sense of the Scriptures, the meaning of the laws, and the traditions of the elders, and of conversing with them:

and Joseph, and his mother, knew not of it; of his intention to tarry longer, nor of his design in so doing; he did not ask leave of them, since his stay was about an affair of his heavenly Father's; and therefore this action of Christ is not to be drawn into an example, or precedent for children, to act without consulting, or asking leave of their parents. They had no notion at all of his staying behind them, nor any suspicion of it; nor did they miss him for a considerable time; which might be owing to the large numbers that went in company together, so that they could not tell but that he was in the crowd, though they did not see him; or to the men and women travelling in separate companies, as is thought; so that Joseph might think he was with Mary, and Mary might conclude he was with Joseph, till they came to the end of their first day's journey, when they came together, and then missed him.

Ver. 44. *But they supposing him to have been in the company*, etc.] That travelled together into the same parts, having been, as they, at Jerusalem to keep the feast:

went a day's journey; either before they missed him; or if they missed him sooner, yet they went on inquiring for him in the company, until they were come a day's journey before they thought, or, at least, determined on going back to Jerusalem. The bounds of a day's journey from Jerusalem are said to be ^{f141} Elath on the south, and Akrabba on the north; elsewhere ^{f142} it is, Elathon the north, and Akrabbaon the south, Lud, or Lydda, on the west, and Jordan on the east; wherefore, as Galilee lay north of Jerusalem, the bound of this day's journey must be, according to the Misna, Akrabba, and, according to the Talmud, Elath. Nazareth was three days journey from Jerusalem ^{f143}: according to the Jewish writers ^{f144}, a day's journey was ten

“parsas”, or large miles, Which were forty lesser miles; and which, they say, is a middling man's walk, on a middling day, as in the months of Tisri, or Nisan, when days and nights were alike: and it was in the latter of those months, on the twenty second day of it, that Joseph and Mary set out on their journey; (see ⁴¹²⁸Exodus 12:18) but it cannot be thought that women and children should be able to travel so many miles a day, and therefore this day's journey, very likely, was shorter:

and they sought him among their kinsfolks and acquaintance; when they came to the end of their day's journey, where they took up their lodging for that night: and as the company was large, they doubtless lay at different houses; wherefore they inquired in every house, where their relations and acquaintance lay, after their child Jesus, where they might most reasonably expect he would be: and so, in a spiritual sense, when souls have lost sight of Christ, of whom should they inquire concerning him? and where should they expect to hear of him, but among their spiritual kindred and friends, and who also are related to Christ? (see ⁴²⁸⁹Song of Solomon 5:9).

Ver. 45. *And when they found him not*, etc.] In the company that came from Jerusalem with them, nor among any of their relations and friends, with whom they supposed he was:

they turned back again to Jerusalem, that is, the next morning, for it can hardly be thought they would set out that night, after they had travelled all day, without taking some repose:

seeking him; at Jerusalem, in the streets and broad places of it; a figure of the church and ordinances, where souls look for, and inquire after their beloved, when they have lost him, (⁴³⁸¹Song of Solomon 3:1-3).

Ver. 46. *And it came to pass, that after three days*, etc.] From their first setting out from Jerusalem, when Jesus tarried behind; or on the third day, which may be reckoned thus; the first day was spent in journeying, and the second in coming back the same journey, and the third day they sought all Jerusalem for him, when

they found him in the temple; his Father's house, the house of God, a figure of a Gospel church, where the word and ordinances are duly administered, and where Christ is to be found. What part of the temple Christ was in, is not easy to say; it was not in the holy of holies, for none but the high priest went into that, and that only on the day of atonement; nor in the court of the priests, for he was not among them, but the doctors; nor in the court of

the Israelites, where the common people worshipped: it may be best judged of, by observing where their several consistories, or courts of judicature were ^{f145}; the grand sanhedrim sat in the sanctuary, in the room Gazith; the lesser sanhedrim, which consisted of twenty three persons, and the bench of three; the one sat in the gate of the court (of the Israelites); and the other in the gate of the mountain of the house (or court of the Gentiles); it seems most likely, that he was in the room Gazith, where the grand sanhedrim sat; for here was the largest number of doctors; and it was the more amazing to his parents, to find him here; unless it should be rather thought, that he was in the synagogue in the temple, for such an one there ^{f146} was there; where, after service was over, he might be admitted to a conversation with the learned doctors that belonged to it: it follows,

sitting in the midst of the doctors: the principal doctors in being at this time, were Hillell and Shammai, the one the president, and the other vice president of the council; and Rabban Simeon, the son of Hillell, who succeeded him in his office; and R. Judah, and R. Joshua, the sons of Bethira; Jonathan ben Uzziel, the author of the Chaldee paraphrase; and R. Jochanan ben Zaccai. The sanhedrim sat in a semicircular form, like the half of a round corn floor; so that they could see one another, and the prince, and the father of the court, could see them all; and before them sat three rows of the disciples of the wise men, or scholars; and in each row there were three and twenty men: the first row was next to the sanhedrim, and the second row below that, and the third row below that; and in every row they sat according to their superiority in wisdom ^{f147}: on a seat, in one of these rows, I think, Christ sat among the scholars; and this may be called sitting among the doctors, because these seats were just before them, and were in a semicircular form; at least he might be here at first; when upon the questions he put, and the answers he made, he was taken particular notice of by the doctors, who might call him up, and place him between them; for this, in some cases, was done to scholars. Thus, it is said ^{f148},

“if one of the disciples, or scholars, say, I have something to say in favour of him, (one that is on his trial,) they bring him up, and “cause him to sit in the midst of them”; and he does not go down from thence all the whole day.”

Both hearing them: their debates and decisions about points in the law of Moses:

and asking them questions; upon those points. Had this been a “Midrash”, or school, there would be no difficulty of producing instances of putting questions to the doctors there; but there was no such place in the temple, or synagogue, where teachers were interrogated by their hearers; for which reason I think the passages, produced by Dr. Lightfoot, are not so pertinent, since they refer to such a place: it is very likely, since there were such a number of scholars admitted to sit before the sanhedrim to hear their controversies, and determinations, and were allowed, in some cases, to speak; so they might be suffered to put questions, in order to gain knowledge.

Ver. 47. *And all that heard him were astonished*, etc.] All in the sanhedrim, both the doctors, and their disciples, were amazed,

at his understanding; in the knowledge of the law, and of the Scriptures:

and his answers; which he returned to the questions the doctor's put to him, which were made with so much wisdom and judgment, that it was surprising in one of his years.

Ver. 48. *And when they saw him they were amazed*, etc.] That is, when Joseph and Mary saw him amidst the doctors, they were astonished that he was admitted among them, and had in such esteem by them:

and his mother said unto him; she being his own, and only parent, and not Joseph; and therefore he said nothing, but left it to her; who upon sight of him, at least as soon as she had a proper opportunity after he had left the doctors, began to chide, or rather to expostulate with him after this manner:

son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? which was said with great tenderness of affection, and in much mildness; and may be a pattern to parents, who should not provoke their children to anger, but deal gently and tenderly with them:

behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing; with great grief, anxiety, and solicitude, fearing lest some evil had befallen him. Mary calls Joseph his father, though she knew he was not, in a proper sense; but because he was supposed to be so, and was his father by the law of marriage; and especially, she might call him so because of his paternal care of him in his education, and bringing him up: for it is a maxim with the Jews^{f149}, that

“not he that begets, but he that brings up, is the father.”

Ver. 49. *And he said unto them, how is it that ye sought me?* etc.] That is, with so much uneasiness and distress of mind, not trusting in the power and providence of God, to take care of him; and in other places, besides the temple, where they had been inquiring for him:

wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? or “in my Father's house”, as the Syriac and Persic versions render it; where, as soon as you missed me, you might, at once, have concluded I was, and not have put yourselves to so much trouble and pains in seeking for me. Christ seems to tax them with ignorance, or, at least, forgetfulness of his having a Father in heaven, whose business he came to do on earth; and which they should have thought in their own minds he was now about, and so have made themselves easy. The business that Christ came about was to preach the Gospel, and which he afterwards performed with great clearness and fulness, with much power, majesty, and authority, with great constancy and diligence, with much concern for the souls of men, and with great awfulness; and in which he took great delight, though he went through many dangers and risks of life; as also to work miracles in proof of his deity and Messiahship, and for the good of the bodies of men, and in which he was very assiduous, going about every where doing good this way: but the main, and principal part of his business was, to work out salvation for his people, by fulfilling the law, making reconciliation and atonement for their sins, and obtaining eternal redemption: this was a business which neither angels nor men could do; was very toilsome and laborious, and yet he delighted in it; nor did he desist from it until it was accomplished: and this is called his Father's business, because he contrived and assigned it to him; he called him to it, and sent him to perform; he enjoined it to him as man and mediator, and the glory of his perfections was concerned in it, and secured by it: and it was a business that Christ must be about, be concerned in, and perform, because he engaged to do it from all eternity; and because it was the will of his Father, which must be done, and was necessary in order to show himself dutiful and obedient; and because it was foretold in prophecy again and again and promised that it should be done; and because it could not be done by another. Now our Lord's conversing with the doctors, and which was a branch of his prophetic office, and was, no doubt, with a view to the good of the souls of men, and nothing less than miraculous, was a show, a prelude of, and a sort of an entrance upon the business he came about.

Ver. 50. *And they understood not the saying,* etc.] What he meant by his Father's house, or his Father's business, and the necessity of his being there, and about that:

which he spake unto them; at that time, and as above related.

Ver. 51. *And he went down with them,* etc.] From the temple, and from Jerusalem, which were on high ground:

and came to Nazareth; where he, and his parents, had lived ever since their return from Egypt:

and was subject unto them; for though he thought fit to let them know, or, at least, put them in mind, that he had a Father in heaven, whose business he came about, and must do, and therefore did not judge it necessary to ask their leave to stay at Jerusalem on that account; yet, as man, and willing to set an example of filial subjection to parents, he went along with them, and showed all dutiful respect unto them, yielding a ready and cheerful obedience to their commands, living with them, and working under them, and for them: and so he continued till he was about thirty years of age:

but his mother kept all these sayings, or things; for this relates not only to the words of Christ, but to the whole history of his staying behind them at Jerusalem, of his sitting among the doctors, hearing them, and asking them questions, to the astonishment of all. These things she treasured up, and preserved,

in her heart; that is, in her memory; so the word is used in Jewish writings. It is reported of R. Meir^{f150}, that

“he went to intercalate the year in Asia, and there was no Megilla (the book of Esther) there, and he wrote it, *wbl m*, “out of his heart”, (i.e. out of his memory,) and read it.”

Ver. 52. *And Jesus increased in wisdom,* etc.] As man; for neither his divine wisdom, nor the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in him, as mediator, could admit of any increase; but as he grew in body, the faculties of his soul opened, and received gradually large measures of wisdom and knowledge, in things natural and spiritual, through the in dwelling of his divine nature in him, and the Holy Spirit that was, without measure, on him:

and stature: the word signifies age also; and so the Vulgate Latin has rendered it: but that is not the meaning of it here, since it would have been entirely unnecessary to have observed, that he increased in age, which must be unavoidable: but the sense is, that as he increased in the wisdom and knowledge of his human soul, so he likewise increased in the stature of his body: and in favour with God and man: he appeared by the grace that was in him, and the gifts bestowed on him, to be high in the love and favour of God; and had a large share in the esteem and affections of all good men, who had the honour and happiness of knowing him, and of being acquainted with him.