

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION TO MATTHEW 5

Ver. 1. *And seeing the multitudes*, etc.] The great concourse of people that followed him from the places before mentioned,

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

and when he was set: not for rest, but in order to teach; for sitting was the posture of masters, or teachers, (see ^{<Q13>}Matthew 13:2) (^{<Q13>}Luke 4:20 5:3 ^{<B3D>}John 8:2). The form in which the master and his disciples sat is thus described by Maimonides ^{f241}.

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

With respect to this latter custom, the Talmudists say ^{f242}, that

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

His disciples came unto him; not only the twelve, but the company, or multitude, of his disciples, (^{<Q167>}Luke 6:17) which he made in the several places, where he had been preaching; for the number of his disciples was larger than John’s.

Ver. 2. *And he opened his mouth*, etc.] He spoke with a clear and strong voice, that all the people might hear him; and with great freedom, utterance, and cheerfulness, and things of the greatest moment and importance;

and taught them; not his disciples only, but the whole multitude, who heard him with astonishment; (see ⁴⁰⁷⁸Matthew 7:28,29). Some things in the following discourse are directed to the disciples in particular, and others regard the multitude in general.

Ver. 3. *Blessed are the poor in spirit*, etc.] Not the poor in purse, or who are so with respect to things temporal: for though God has chosen and called many, who are in such a condition of life, yet not all; the kingdom of heaven cannot be said to belong to them all, or only; but such as are poor in a spiritual sense. All mankind are spiritually poor; they have nothing to eat that is fit and proper; nor any clothes to wear, but rags; nor are they able to purchase either; they have no money to buy with; they are in debt, owe ten thousand talents, and have nothing to pay; and in such a condition, that they are not able to help themselves. The greater part of mankind are insensible of this their condition; but think themselves rich, and increased with goods: there are some who are sensible of it, who see their poverty and want, freely acknowledge it, bewail it, and mourn over it; are humbled for it, and are broken under a sense of it; entertain low and mean thoughts of themselves; seek after the true riches, both of grace and glory; and frankly acknowledge, that all they have, or hope to have, is owing to the free grace of God. Now these are the persons intended in this place; who are not only “poor”, but are poor “in spirit”; in their own spirits, in their own sense, apprehension, and judgment: and may even be called “beggars”, as the word may be rendered; for being sensible of their poverty, they place themselves at the door of mercy, and knock there; their language is, “God be merciful”; their posture is standing, watching, and waiting, at wisdom’s gates, and at the posts of her door; they are importunate, will have no denial, yet receive the least favour with thankfulness. Now these are pronounced “blessed”, for this reason,

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven; not only the Gospel, and the ministration of it, which belongs to them. “The poor have the Gospel preached”: it not only reaches their ears, but their hearts; it enters into them, is applied unto them, they receive and embrace it with the utmost joy and gladness; but eternal glory, this is prepared for them, and given to

them; they are born heirs of it, have a right unto it, are making meet for it, and shall enjoy it.

Ver. 4. *Blessed are they that mourn*, etc.] For sin, for their own sins; the sin of their nature, indwelling sin, which is always working in them, and is a continual grief of mind to them; the unbelief of their hearts, notwithstanding the many instances, declarations, promises, and discoveries of grace made unto them; their daily infirmities, and many sins of life, because they are committed against a God of love, grace, and mercy, grieve the Spirit, and dishonour the Gospel of Christ: who mourn also for the sins of others, for the sins of the world, the profaneness and wickedness that abound in it; and more especially for the sins of professors, by reason of which, the name of God, and ways of Christ, are evil spoken of: who likewise mourn under afflictions, spiritual ones, temptations, desertions, and declensions; temporal ones, their own, which they receive, either more immediately from the hand of God, or from men; such as they endure for the sake of Christ, and the profession of his Gospel; and who sympathize with others in their afflictions. These, how sorrowful and distressed soever they may appear, are blessed

for they shall be comforted: here in this life, by the God of all comfort, by Christ the comforter; by the Spirit of God, whose work and office it is to comfort; by the Scriptures of truth, which are written for their consolation; by the promises of the Gospel, through which the heirs of promise have strong consolation; by the ordinances of it, which are breasts of consolation; and by the ministers of the word, who have a commission from the Lord to speak comfortably to them; and then are they comforted, when they have the discoveries of the love of God, manifestations of pardoning grace, through the blood of Christ, and enjoy the divine presence: and they shall be comforted hereafter; when freed from all the troubles of this life, they shall be blessed with uninterrupted communion with Father, Son, and Spirit, and with the happy society of angels and glorified saints. (²⁹³⁰Isaiah 61:1-3) seems to be referred to, both in this, and in the preceding verse.

Ver. 5. *Blessed are the meek*, etc.] Who are not easily provoked to anger; who patiently bear, and put up with injuries and affronts; carry themselves courteously, and affably to all; have the meanest thoughts of themselves, and the best of others; do not envy the gifts and graces of other men; are willing to be instructed and admonished, by the meanest of the saints;

quietly submit to the will of God, in adverse dispensations of providence; and ascribe all they have, and are, to the grace of God. Meekness, or humility, is very valuable and commendable. The Jews, though a proud, haughty, and wrathful people, cannot but speak in its praise:

“Wisdom, fear, and meekness, say ^{f243} they, are of high esteem; but hwn[, “meekness”, is greater than them all.”

They had two very considerable doctors in the time of Christ, Hillell and Shammai; the one was of a meek, the other of an angry disposition: hence, say they ^{f244} ,

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

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

they shall inherit the earth; not the land of Canaan, though that may be alluded to; nor this world, at least in its present situation; for this is not the saints’ rest and inheritance: but rather, the “new earth”, which will be after this is burnt up; in which only such persons as are here described shall dwell; and who shall inherit it, by virtue of their being heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; whose is the earth, and the fulness thereof. Though some think heaven is here designed, and is so called, partly for the sake of variety of expression, from (^{<418B>} Matthew 5:3) and partly in allusion to the land of Canaan, a type of it; and may be called an earth, or country, that is an heavenly one, in opposition to this earthly one; as the heavenly Jerusalem is opposed to the earthly one, and which will be a glorious inheritance. The passage, referred to is (^{<437I>} Psalm 37:11).

Ver. 6. *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst*, etc.] Not after the riches, honours, and pleasures of this world, but

after righteousness; by which is meant, not justice and equity, as persons oppressed and injured; nor a moral, legal righteousness, which the generality of the Jewish nation were eagerly pursuing; but the justifying righteousness of Christ, which is imputed by God the Father, and received by faith. To “hunger and thirst” after this, supposes a want of righteousness, which is the case of all men; a sense of want of it, which is only perceived by persons spiritually enlightened; a discovery of the righteousness of Christ to them, which is made in the Gospel, and by the Spirit of God; a value for it, and a preference of it to all other righteousness; and an earnest desire after it, to be possessed of it, and found in it; and that nothing can be more grateful than that, because of its perfection, purity, suitableness, and use: happy souls are these,

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

Ver. 7. *Blessed are the merciful*, etc.] Who show mercy to the bodies of men, to those that are poor, indigent, and miserable, in their outward circumstances; by both sympathizing with them, and distributing unto them; not only making use of expressions of pity and concern; but communicating with readiness and cheerfulness, with affection and tenderness, and with a view to the glory of God: who also show mercy to the souls of men, by instructing such as are ignorant, giving them good counsel and advice: reproofing them for sin, praying for them, forgiving injuries done by them, and by comforting those that are cast down. To show mercy is very delightful to, and desirable by God; it is what he requires, and is one of the weightier matters of the law; it is very ornamental to a child of God, and what makes him more like to his heavenly Father. The happiness of such persons is this, that

they shall obtain mercy; from man, whenever they are attended with any uncomfortable circumstances of life; *wyl [^ymj r m mj r m l k*, “whoever is merciful”, men show mercy to him ^{f245}: and from God, through Christ;

which is free, sovereign, abundant, and eternal. Men are said to obtain this, when they are regenerated, and called by grace; and when they have a discovery, and an application, of the forgiveness of their sins: but here, it seems to design those supplies of grace and mercy, which merciful persons may expect to find and obtain, at the throne of grace, to help them in time of need; and who shall not only obtain mercy of God in this life, but in the world to come, in the great day of the Lord; for which the Apostle prayed for Onesiphorus, (^{scribes}2 Timothy 1:18).

Ver. 8. *Blessed are the pure in heart*, etc.] Not in the head; for men may have pure notions and impure hearts; not in the hand, or action, or in outward conversation only; so the Pharisees were outwardly righteous before men, but inwardly full of impurity; but “in heart”. The heart of man is naturally unclean; nor is it in the power of man to make it clean, or to be pure from his sin; nor is any man in this life, in such sense, so pure in heart, as to be entirely free from sin. This is only true of Christ, angels, and glorified saints: but such may be said to be so, who, though they have sin dwelling in them, are justified from all sin, by the righteousness of Christ, and are “clean through the word”, or sentence of justification pronounced upon them, on the account of that righteousness; whose iniquities are all of them forgiven, and whose hearts are sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, which cleanses from all sin; and who have the grace of God wrought in their hearts, which, though as yet imperfect, it is entirely pure; there is not the least spot or stain of sin in it: and such souls as they are in love with, so they most earnestly desire after more purity of heart, lip, life, and conversation. And happy they are,

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

Ver. 9. *Blessed are the peace makers*, etc.] Not between God and man, for no man can make his own peace with God; nor can any mere creature,

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

“These are the things, (say they ^{f246}),) the fruit of which a man enjoys in this world, and his lot or portion remains for him in the world to come; honouring father and mother, liberality, **wrybj l µda `yb µwl ç tabhw**, “and making peace between a man and his neighbour.””

This, they say ^{f247}, Aaron was much disposed to.

“Moses used to say, let justice break through the mountain; but Aaron loved peace, and pursued it, and made peace between a man and his neighbour, as is said, (³⁰¹⁶Malachi 2:6.)”

Hence that saying of Hillel ^{f248},

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

Now of such persons it is said, that

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

Ver. 10. *Blessed are they which are persecuted*, etc.] Not for any crimes they have done, for unrighteousness and iniquity, as murderers, thieves, and evildoers, but

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

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven: the same blessedness is predicated of these as of the poor in spirit, ver. 3.

Ver. 11. *Blessed are ye when men shall revile you*, etc.] These words are particularly directed to the disciples of Christ, and are designed to inform them, that they should not be exempted from reproach and persecution, and to animate and fortify them against it; and are prophetic of what they, and the first Christians particularly, were to endure for Christ’s sake. Men should “revile” them, speak very reproachfully of them, brand them with infamy, and load them with disgrace; and

persecute you from place to place, by ill usage of all sorts;

and shall say all manner of evil against you: the worst things they could think of and invent, and all of them; such as that they were seditious persons, enemies to the commonwealth, and the public good, guilty of sacrilege, incest, and murder but what would serve to relieve them under these heavy charges is, that they were “falsely” laid; there was not a word of truth in them; wherefore their own hearts would not reproach them; but

all were the malicious lies of men, invented on purpose to bring them and Christianity into disgrace: and that they were brought against “them for Christ’s sake”, for his name’s sake, for the sake of his Gospel and interest: the treatment they meet with is on his account, and the same that he himself met with; the like reproaches fell on him, which will be all wiped off from him and them another day; when they will appear to be the blessed persons, and their revilers and persecutors the unhappy ones. The Jews have some sayings not unlike these, and which may serve to illustrate them:

“aj al aht al w aj wl aht, “be thou cursed”, or bearing curses, but do not curse^{f249}. The gloss upon it is, it is better to be one of them that are cursed, than to be of them that curse; for, at the end, the curse causeless returns to him that curseth.”

Again^{f250},

“for ever let a man be of them that are persecuted, and not of them that persecute; of them that suffer injury, and not of them that do it.”

Once more^{f251},

“they that suffer injury, and do it not; who hear reproach, and do not return it; who act from love, and rejoice in chastisements, of them the Scripture says, “let them that love him”, etc. (~~QUES~~ Judges 5:31).”

Ver. 12. *Rejoice and be exceeding glad*, etc.] Because of the honour put upon them, the glory they bring to Christ and his cause, by cheerfully suffering for it; and because of the glory and happiness that shall follow upon their sufferings:

for great is your reward in heaven; not of debt, but of grace; for there is no proportion or comparison between what the saints suffer for Christ, and the glory that shall be revealed in them by him; not in earth, but in heaven. Saints must not expect their reward here, but hereafter, when God himself will be their reward; he will be all in all; Christ and all his glory, glory and all the riches of it will be the reward of the inheritance, and which must needs be a “great” one. And the more to animate them to suffer with joyfulness, and to support them under all their reproaches and persecutions, it is added;

for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you; as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zechariah, and others; which shows, that what should befall them was no new and strange thing, but what had been the lot of the most eminent servants of God in former ages.

Ver. 13. *Ye are the salt of the earth,* etc.] This is to be understood of the disciples and apostles of Christ; who might be compared to “salt”, because of the savoury doctrines they preached; as all such are, which are agreeable to the Scriptures, and are of the evangelic kind, which are full of Christ, serve to exalt him, and to magnify the grace of God; and are suitable to the experiences of the saints, and are according to godliness, and tend to promote it: also because of their savoury lives and conversations; whereby they recommended, and gave sanction to the doctrines they preached, were examples to the saints, and checks upon wicked men. These were the salt “of the earth”; that is, of the inhabitants of the earth, not of the land of Judea only, where they first lived and preached, but of the whole world, into which they were afterwards sent to preach the Gospel.

But if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? The “savour” here supposed that it may be lost, cannot mean the savour of grace, or true grace itself, which cannot be lost, being an incorruptible seed; but either gifts qualifying men for the ministry, which may cease; or the savoury doctrines of the Gospel, which may be departed from; or a seeming savoury conversation, which may be neglected; or that seeming savour, zeal, and affection, with which the Gospel is preached, which may be dropped: and particular respect seems to be had to Judas, whom Christ had chosen to the apostleship, and was a devil; and who he knew would lose his usefulness and place, and become an unprofitable wretch, and at last be rejected of God and men; and this case is proposed to them all, in order to engage them to take heed to themselves, their doctrine and ministry. Moreover, this is but a supposition;

if the salt, etc. and proves no matter of fact; and the Jews have a saying ^{f252}, that all that season lose their savour “*hm[j hgypm hnya j l mw*, but salt does not lose its savour”. Should it do so,

it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot. Salt is good for nothing, but to make things savoury, and preserve from putrefaction; and when it has lost its savour, it is of no use, neither to men nor beasts, as some things are when corrupted; nor is it of

any use to the land, or dunghill, for it makes barren, and not fruitful: so ministers of the word, when they have dropped the savoury doctrines of the Gospel, or have quitted their former seeming savoury and exemplary conversations; as their usefulness is gone, so, generally speaking, it is never retrieved; they are cast out of the churches of Christ, and are treated with contempt by everyone.

Ver. 14. *Ye are the light of the world*, etc.] What the luminaries, the sun and moon, are in the heavens, with respect to corporal light, that the apostles were in the world with regard to spiritual light; carrying and spreading the light of the Gospel not only in Judea, but all over the world, which was in great darkness of ignorance and error; and through a divine blessing attending their ministry, many were turned from the darkness of Judaism and Gentilism, of sin and infidelity, to the marvellous light of divine grace. The Jews were wont to say, that of the Israelites in general, and particularly of their sanhedrim, and of their learned doctors, what Christ more truly applies here to his apostles; they observe ^{f253}, that

“on the fourth day it was said, “let there be light”: which was done with respect to the Israelites, because they are they $\mu\lambda\ w\ [l\ \mu\gamma\gamma\alpha\mu$, “which give light to the world”, as it is written, (^{2MIB}Daniel 12:3)”

And in another place ^{f254}, say they,

“how beautiful are the great ones of the congregation, and the wise men, who sit in the sanhedrim! for they are they $\text{am}\ell\ [l\ \grave{\gamma}\text{r}\text{h}\text{m}$, “that enlighten the world”, the people of the house of Israel.”

So. R. Meir, R. Akiba his disciple, and R. Judah the prince, are each of them called ^{f255} $\mu\lambda\ w\ [h\ \text{r}\text{w}\text{a}$, “the light of the world”; as R. Jochanan ben Zaccai is by his disciples, $\mu\lambda\ w\ [r\text{n}$, “the lamp of the world” ^{f256}; and it was usual for the head of a school, or of an university to be styled ^{f257} $\text{am}\ell\ [d\ \text{a}\text{r}\text{w}\text{h}\text{n}$, “the light of the world”; but this title much better agrees and suits with the persons Christ gives it to, who, no question, had a view to those exalted characters the Jews gave to their celebrated Rabbins. A city that *is set on an hill cannot be hid*; alluding either to Nazareth, where he was educated, and had lately preached, which was built on an hill, from the

brow of which the inhabitants sought to have cast him headlong, (⁴⁰⁷³Luke 4:29) or to Capernaum, which, on account of its height, is said to be

exalted unto heaven, (⁴¹¹³Matthew 11:23) or to the city of Jerusalem, which was situated on a very considerable eminence. The land of Israel, the Jews say ^{f258}, was higher than all other lands; and the temple at Jerusalem was higher than any other part of the land of Israel. And as a city cannot be hid which is built on a high place, so neither could, nor ought the doctrines which the apostles were commissioned to preach, be hid, or concealed from men: they were not to shun to declare the whole counsel of God, nor study to avoid the reproaches and persecutions of men; for they were to be “made a spectacle”; to be set as in a public theatre, to be seen by “the world, angels, and men”.

Ver. 15. *Neither do men light a candle*, etc.] Which may be read impersonally, “a candle is not lighted”: and by it may be meant the Gospel, and gifts qualifying men to preach it; which, like a candle, was lighted in the evening of the Jewish dispensation, though not confined to the land of Judea; but has shone throughout the world, being as a candle to be removed, and has been removed from place to place: wherever it is set, it gives light, more or less, and dispels darkness; it is useful both to work by and walk with; it does not always burn alike clearly, it needs looking after; it has its thieves, as candles sometimes have; and will give the greatest light towards the close of the world, as they usually do, when ready to go out. Now when a candle is lighted by men, they do not

put it under a bushel, or anything which may hide and cover it, and so hinder its light and usefulness. The Greek word **μοδιος**, rendered a “bushel”, answers to the Hebrew **has**, “seah”, which is the very word used in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel; and this was a dry measure that held about a gallon and a half; and accordingly is rendered here by the Syriac **atas**. The design of the expression is, that Christ has lighted the candle of the everlasting Gospel, and given gifts to men for the ministration of it, not to be concealed and neglected, or to be used as the servant did his lord’s money, wrap it up in a napkin, and hide it in the earth. Ministers are not, through slothfulness, to neglect the gift that is in them; nor, through fear, to hide their talents, or keep back any part of the Gospel, or cover anything out of sight, which may be profitable to souls: “but” men, when they light a candle, put it

on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are in the house; as on the candlestick in the temple, a type of the church; where Christ has set the light of the Gospel, where it is held forth particularly by the ministers of the word, to illuminate the whole house and family of God; by the light of which poor sinners, the lost pieces of silver, are looked up; straggling souls are brought home; hypocrites and formalists are detected; and saints are enlightened, directed, and comforted. Much such a proverbial saying is used by the Jews ^{f259}:

“do not leave a vessel of balsam in a dunghill, but move it from its place, that its smell may spread, and men may receive profit from it.”

Ver. 16. *Let your light so shine before men*, etc.] Here Christ applies the foregoing simile to his disciples, and more fully opens the meaning and design of it. His sense is this; that the light of the Gospel, which he had communicated to them, the spiritual knowledge of the mysteries of grace, which he had favoured them with, were to be openly declared, and made manifest before men. Light was not given merely for their own private use, but for the public good of mankind; and therefore, as they were placed as lights in the world, they were to hold forth, in the most open and conspicuous manner, the word of light and life:

that they may see your good works: meaning their zeal and fervency; their plainness and openness; their sincerity, faithfulness, and integrity; their courage and intrepidity; their diligence, industry, and indefatigableness in preaching the Gospel; their strict regard to truth, the honour of Christ, and the good of souls; as also their very great care and concern to recommend the doctrines of grace, by their example in their lives and conversations:

and glorify your Father which is in heaven; that is, that when the ministration of the Gospel has been blessed, for the illumination of the minds of men, to a thorough conviction of their state; and for their regeneration, conversion, sanctification, and comfort; they may give praise to God, and bless his name for qualifying and sending such Gospel ministers to show unto them the way of salvation; and that the word has been made useful to them for communicating spiritual light, life, joy, and comfort, $\mu\upsilon\mu\zeta\beta\zeta$ $\omega\eta\upsilon\beta\alpha$, “Our and your Father which is in heaven”, is a name, appellation, or periphrasis of God, frequently used by Jewish writers ^{f260}; and is often expressed by Christ in these his sermons on the mount.

Ver. 17. *Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets,* etc.] From verse 3 to the 10th inclusive, our Lord seems chiefly to respect the whole body of his true disciples and followers; from thence, to the 16th inclusive, he addresses the disciples, whom he had called to be ministers of the word; and in this “verse”, to the end of his discourse, he applies himself to the whole multitude in general; many of whom might be ready to imagine, that by the light of the Gospel, he was giving his disciples instructions to spread in the world, he was going to set aside, as useless, the law of Moses, or the prophets, the interpreters of it, and commentators upon it. Christ knew the thoughts of their hearts, that they had taken up such prejudices in their minds against him; wherefore he says, “think not”; he was sensible what objections they were forming, and what an improvement they would make of them against his being the Messiah, and therefore prevents them, saying,

I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. By “the law” is meant the moral law, as appears from the whole discourse following: this he came not to “destroy”, or loose men’s obligations to, as a rule of walk and conversation, but “to fulfil” it; which he did doctrinally, by setting it forth fully, and giving the true sense and meaning of it; and practically, by yielding perfect obedience to all its commands, whereby he became “the end”, the fulfilling end of it. By “the prophets” are meant the writings of the prophets, in which they illustrated and explained the law of Moses; urged the duties of it; encouraged men thereunto by promises; and directed the people to the Messiah, and to an expectation of the blessings of grace by him: all which explanations, promises, and prophecies, were so far from being made void by Christ, that they receive their full accomplishment in him. The Jews ^{f261} pretend that these words of Christ are contrary to the religion and faith of his followers, who assert, that the law of Moses is abolished; which is easily refuted, by observing the exact agreement between Christ and the Apostle Paul, (~~HEB~~ Romans 3:31 10:4) and whenever he, or any other of the apostles, speaks of the abrogation of the law, it is to be understood of the ceremonial law, which in course ceased by being fulfilled; or if of the moral law, not of the matter, but of the ministry of it. This passage of Christ is cited in the Talmud ^{f262}, after this manner:

“it is written in it, i.e. in the Gospel, “I Aven”, neither to diminish from the law of Moses am I come, “but”, or “nor” (for in the

Amsterdam edition they have inserted **al w** between two hooks), to add to the law of Moses **am I come.**”

Which, with their last correction, though not a just citation, yet tolerably well expresses the sense; but a most blasphemous character is affixed to Christ, when they call him “Aven”; which signifies “iniquity” itself, and seems to be a wilful corruption of the word “Amen”, which begins the next “verse”.

Ver. 18. *For verily I say unto you*, etc.] Or “I Amen say unto you”, which is one of the names of Christ; (see ^{f264} Revelation 3:14) or the word “Amen” is only used by Christ as an asseveration of what he was about to say; and which, for greater confirmation, is usually doubled in the Evangelist John, “Amen, Amen”, or “verily, verily”. The word is used by the Jews ^{f263} for an oath; they swore by it; and it is a rule with them, that whoever answers “Amen” after an oath, it is all one as if he had pronounced the oath itself. The thing so strongly affirmed in this solemn manner is,

till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. The **ιωτα** “or jot”, in the Greek language, answers to “jod” in the Hebrew, the least of all the letters in the alphabet; hence a little city is called by this name, and this reason is given for it, ^{f264} **twytwab hnj q dwyc**, “because that jot is the least among letters”. We read also of Rabbi Jod ^{f265}, perhaps so called because **~j q hyh**, he was little, as the author of Juchasin observes ^{f266}. This shows in what language the law was written; not in the Samaritan language, for the jot in that is a large letter, but in the Hebrew, in which it is very small; and particularly is written in a very diminutive character, in (^{f268} Deuteronomy 32:18) “by one tittle” some think is meant one of those ducts, dashes, or corners of letters, which distinguish one letter from another, that are much alike; others have thought that one of the pricks or vowel points is intended; others, one of those little strokes in the tops of letters, which the Jews call ^{f267} “crowns” and “spikes”, is here meant, in which they imagined great mysteries were contained; and there were some persons among them, who made it their business to search into the meaning of every letter, and of everyone of these little horns, or pricks, that were upon the top of them. So says R. Meir ^{f268},

“in the time of the prophets there were such who very diligently searched every letter in the law, and explained every letter by itself; and do not wonder at this that they should expound every letter by itself, for they commented **twaw twa l k l ç twq wq l k l [**, upon everyone of the tops of each letter.”

Such an expounder was Akiba ben Joseph ^{f269}. To which custom Christ is here supposed to have respect: however, certain it is that he speaks very much in the language, and agreeably to the mind of the Jewish doctors; and some things in their writings will serve to illustrate this passage,

“If, (say they ^{f270}), all the nations of the world were gathered together, “to root one word out of the law”, they could not do it; which you may learn from Solomon, who sought to root “one letter out of the law”, the letter “jod”, in (^{f271}Deuteronomy 17:16,17) but the holy blessed God said, Solomon shall cease, and an hundred such as he (in the Talmud ^{f271} it is a thousand such as he) **µl w[l hl yj b hnya Æmm dwyw**, “but, jod shall not cease from thee (the law) for ever”.”

And elsewhere the same expression is used ^{f272}, and it is added,

“**l j bm ynya Æmm hxwqw**, “but a tittle from thee shall not perish.”

The design of Christ, in conformity to the language of the Jews, is to declare, that no part of the law, not one of the least commandments in it, as he explains himself in the next verse, should be unaccomplished; but all should be fulfilled before “heaven and earth pass” away, as they will, with a great noise and fervent heat, as to their present form and condition; or sooner shall they pass away, than the least part of the law shall: which expresses the perpetuity of the law, and the impossibility of its passing away, and the superior excellency of it to the heavens and the earth. It is a saying of one of the Jewish doctors ^{f273}, that

“the whole world is not equal even to one word out of the law,”

in which it is said, there is not one letter deficient or superfluous.

Ver. 19. *Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments*, etc.] Which are to be understood not of the beatitudes in the preceding verses, for these were not delivered by Christ under the form of commandments; nor of any of the peculiar commands of Christ under

the Gospel dispensation; but of the precepts of the law, of which some were comparatively lesser than others; and might be said to be broke, loosed, or dissolved, as the word here used signifies, when men acted contrary to them.

And shall teach men so; not only teach them by their example to break the commandments, but by express orders: for however gross and absurd this may seem to be, that there should be any such teachers, and they should have any hearers, yet such there were among the Jews; and our Lord here manifestly strikes at them: for notwithstanding the great and excellent things they say of the law, yet they tell us, that the doctors of the sanhedrim had power to root anything out of the law; to loose or make void any of its commands, for a time, excepting in the case of idolatry; and so might any true prophet, or wise man; which they pretend is sometimes necessary for the glory of God, and the good of men; and they are to be heard and obeyed, when they say, transgress anyone of all the commands which are in the law ^{f274}. Maimonides says ^{f275}, that the sanhedrim had power, when it was convenient, for the time present, to make void an affirmative command, and to transgress a negative one, in order to return many to their religion; or to deliver many of the Israelites from stumbling at other things, they may do whatsoever the present time makes necessary: for so, adds he, the former wise men say, a man may profane one sabbath, in order to keep many sabbaths. And elsewhere ^{f276} he affirms,

“if a prophet, whom we know to be a prophet, should order us `twxm l km tj a l [rwb[`l , “to transgress anyone of the commands”, which are mentioned in the law, or many commands, whether light or heavy, for a time, we are ordered to hearken to him; and so we learn from the former wise men, by tradition, that in everything a prophet shall say to thee `hrwt yrbd l [rwb[`, “transgress the words of the law”, as Elias on Mount Carmel, hear him, except in the case of idolatry.”

And another of their writers says ^{f277},

“it is lawful sometimes to make void the law, and to do that which appears to be forbidden.”

Nay, they even ^{f278} say, that if a Gentile should bid an Israelite transgress anyone of the commands mentioned in the law, excepting idolatry, adultery, and murder, he may transgress with impunity, provided it is done

privately. You see what reason Christ had to express himself in the manner he does, and that with resentment, saying,

he shall be called, or *be the least in the kingdom of heaven*; meaning either the church of God, where he shall have neither a name, nor place; he shall not be in the least esteemed, but shall be cast out as a worthless man; or the ultimate state of happiness and glory, in the other world, where he shall not enter, as is said in the next verse; but, on the other hand,

whosoever shall do and teach; whose doctrine and conversation, principles and practices agree together; who both teach obedience to the law, and perform it themselves: where again he glances at the masters in Israel, and tacitly reproves them who said, but did not; taught the people what they themselves did not practise; and so were unworthy of the honour, which he that both teaches and does shall have: for

the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven; he shall be highly esteemed of in the church here, and be honoured hereafter in the world to come. The Jews have a saying somewhat like this;

“he that lessens himself for the words of the law in this world, **ל ודג**
הֲגָ[ן], “he shall become great” in the world to come ^{f279},”

or days of the Messiah.

Ver. 20. *For I say unto you*, etc.] These words are directed, not to the true disciples of Christ in general, or to his apostles in particular, but to the whole multitude of the people; who had in great esteem and admiration the Scribes and Pharisees, for their seeming righteousness and holiness; concerning which Christ says,

that except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. He mentions the Scribes, because they were the more learned part of the people, who were employed in writing out, and expounding the law; and the Pharisees, because they were the strictest sect among the Jews for outward religion and righteousness; and yet, it seems, their righteousness was very defective; it lay only in an external observance of the law; did not arise from a purified heart, or the principles of grace; nor was it performed sincerely, and with a view to the glory of God; but for their own applause, and in order to obtain eternal life: besides, they neglected the weightier matters of the law, and contented themselves with the lesser ones; and as

they were deficient in their practice, so they were very lax in their doctrines, as appears from the foregoing verse. Wherefore Christ informs his hearers, that they must have a better righteousness than these men had, if ever they expected to enter into the kingdom of heaven. There will be no admission into heaven without a righteousness: it was the loss of righteousness which removed Adam out of his earthly paradise; and it is not agreeable to the justice of God, to admit man into his heavenly paradise without one; yea, it is contrary to his nature, and would be destructive to the comfort of saints, to receive an unrighteous person into his kingdom and glory. A “pharisaical” righteousness will never bring a person thither; nor will any righteousness of man’s, be it what it will, because the best is imperfect; it must be a righteousness exceeding that of the Scribes and Pharisees; and such is the righteousness of the saints: indeed their inherent righteousness, or the sanctification of the Spirit, is preferable to any righteousness of a natural man; it exceeds it in its author, nature, effects, and usefulness; yea, even works of righteousness done by believers are greatly preferable to any done by such men as are here mentioned: but, above all, the righteousness of Christ, which is imputed to them, and received by faith, is infinitely more excellent in its author, perfection, purity, and use; and which is their only right and title to eternal glory; and without which no man will be admitted into that glorious state.

Ver. 21. *Ye have heard*, etc.] That is, from the Scriptures being read to them, and the explanations of the ancients, which were called *at[mç*, “hearing”, being read in the schools, and heard by the scholars ^{f280}; so that to “hear”, was along with the recital of the text, to receive by tradition, the sense the elders had given of it: of this kind is the instance produced by Christ. Thus Onkelos, and Jonathan ben Uzziel, render the phrase, “him shall ye hear”, in (^{f281}Deuteronomy 18:15) by *yl bqt hynm*, “from him shall ye receive”; so those phrases ^{f281}, *h[wmçh ypm wdml*, “they learn from hearing”, or by report from others; and *h[wmçh ypm wrma* “they speak from hearing”, or from what they have heard, are often used for receiving and reporting things as they have them by tradition. That “it was said”, or “it hath been said”; this is also a Talmudic form of expression; often is this phrase to be met with in the Talmud, *rmatya*, “it has been said” ^{f282}; that is, by the ancient doctors, as here, “by them of old time”, or “to the ancients”, *µynwmdql* so in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel; not to the Israelites in the time of Moses, but to the ancestors of the Jews, since the

times of Ezra; by the elders, who were contemporary with them; and who by their false glosses corrupted the law, when they recited any part of it to the people; or “by the ancients”, the ancient doctors and commentators, which preceded the times of Christ, whom the Jews often call *wynwmdq*, “our ancients”^{f283}. Now, upon that law, “thou shalt not kill”, they put this gloss, or added this by way of interpretation,

and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment; which they understood only of actual murder, either committed in their own persons, or by the means of others. Their rules for the judgment of such persons were these;

“everyone that kills his neighbour with his hand; as if he strikes him with a sword, or with a stone that kills him; or strangles him till he die; or burns him in fire; seeing he kills him in any manner, in his own person, lo! such an one must be put to death *yd tybb*, “by the house of judgment”, or the sanhedrim^{f284}.”

Not that which consisted of three persons only, but either that which consisted of twenty three, or the supreme one, which was made up of seventy one; which two last had only power of judging capital offences. Again,

“if a man hires a murderer to kill his neighbour, or sends his servants, and they kill him, or binds him, and leaves him before a lion, or the like, and the beast kills him, everyone of these is a shedder of blood; and the sin of slaughter is in his hand; and he is guilty of death by the hand of heaven, i.e. God; but he is not to be put to death by the house of judgment, or the sanhedrim^{f285}.”

A little after, it is said, “their judgment” is delivered to heaven, i.e. to God; and this seems to be the sense of the word “judgment” here, namely, the judgment of God, or death by the hand of God; since it is manifestly distinguished from the council, or sanhedrim, in the next “verse”. The phrase,

in danger of judgment, is the same with^{f286} *yd byyj*, “guilty of judgment”, or deserves condemnation.

Ver. 22. *But I say unto you*, etc.] This is a Rabbinical way of speaking, used when a question is determined, and a false notion is refuted; it is a

magisterial form of expression, and well suits with Christ, the great teacher and master in Israel; who spake as one having authority, opposing himself, not to the law of “Moses, thou shalt not kill”; but to the false gloss the ancient doctors had put upon it, with which their later ones agreed. You say, that if one man kills another himself, he is to be put to death by the sanhedrim; and if he does it by proxy, he is to be left to the judgment of God, so wholly restraining the law to actual murder; but I affirm, that

whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of judgment. By “brother” is meant, not in a religious sense, one that is of the same faith, or in the same church state; nor, in a strict natural sense, one that is so in the bonds of consanguinity; but in a large sense, any man, of whatsoever country or nation: for we are to be angry with no man; that is, as is rightly added,

without a cause: for otherwise there is an anger which is not sinful, is in God, in Christ, in the holy angels; and is commendable in the people of God, when it arises from a true zeal for religion, the glory of God, and the interest of Christ; and is kindled against sin, their own, or others, all manner of vice, false doctrine, and false worship: but it is causeless anger which is here condemned by Christ, as a breach of the law, “thou shalt not kill”; and such persons are

in danger of judgment; not of any of the courts of judicature among the Jews, as the sanhedrim of three, or of twenty three, or of seventy one, which took no notice of anger, as a passion in the mind, only of facts committed; but of the judgment of God, as in the preceding “verse”, it being distinguished from the sanhedrim, or council, in the next clause.

And whosoever shall say to his brother Raca, shall be in danger of the council, or “sanhedrim”. The word Raca is expressive of indignation and contempt; it was used as a term of reproach. Some derive it from **qqr** to “spit upon”; as if the person that used it thought the man he spoke to deserved to be spit upon, and treated in the most contemptuous manner: but rather the word signifies “empty” and “vain”, and denotes a worthless, empty headed man; a man of no brains; a foolish, witless, fellow: so it is often used in Jewish writings. Take a few instances, as follow:

“a certain person said to R. Jochanan^{f287}, Rabbi, expound, for it becomes thee to expound; for as thou hast said, so have I seen: he

replied to him, *aqyr* Reka, if thou hadst not seen, thou wouldst not have believed.”

Again ^{f288}, it happened to R. Simeon ben Eliezer of Migdal Edar, who went from the house of Rabbi; and he met with a certain man very much deformed; he says unto him, *hqyr* Reka, how many are the deformed sons of “Abraham our father?” Many more instances might be given ^{f289}. Now I do not find that the use of this reproachful word was cognizable by the Jewish sanhedrim, or great council; nor is it our Lord’s meaning that it was, only that it ought to have been taken notice of in a proper manner, as well as actual murder. He adds,

but whosoever shall say thou fool, shall be danger of hell fire. The word “fool” does not signify a man of weak parts, one that is very ignorant in things natural; this the word *Raca* imports; but a wicked reprobate man; in which sense Solomon often uses the word. The Persic version renders it here “wicked”. There is a manifest gradation in the text from causeless anger in the breast, or reproachful words; and from thence to a censorious judging of a man’s spiritual and eternal estate, which is what is here condemned. “Thou fool”, is, thou wicked man, thou ungodly wretch, thou graceless creature, whose portion will be eternal damnation. Calling a man by such names was not allowed of by the Jews themselves, whose rules are:

“he that calls his neighbour a servant, let him be excommunicated; a bastard, let him be beaten with forty stripes; [*qr*, “a wicked man”, let him descend with him into his life or livelihood ^{f290}.”

The gloss upon it is,

“as if he should say, to this the sanhedrim is not obliged, but it is lawful to hate him, yea to lessen his sustenance, and exercise his trade,”

which was done to bring him to poverty and distress. So, it seems, the sanhedrim were not obliged to take notice of him. Again, they say,

“it is forbidden a man to call his neighbour by a name of reproach ^{f291} everyone that calls his neighbour [*qr*, “a wicked man”, shall be brought down to hell;”

which is pretty much what Christ here says,

shall be in danger of hell fire; or deserving of hell fire; or liable to, and in danger of punishment, even “unto hell fire”. An expression much like this may be observed in Jarchi, on (^{f292}Isaiah 24:23) where he speaks of some persons $\mu nhgl \ \mu nhg \ ybyywj \ m$, “who are guilty”, deserving, or in danger of “hell unto hell”. The word $\gamma \epsilon \epsilon \nu \nu \alpha$, here used, and which is often used in the New Testament for “hell”, is but the Hebrew $\mu nh \ ayg$, “Ge-Hinnom”, the valley of Hinnom, where the children were caused to pass through the fire to Moloch. This place, the Jewish writers ^{f292} say,

“Was a place well known, near to Jerusalem, a valley, whose fire was never quenched; and in which they burned the bones of anything that was unclean, and dead carcasses, and other pollutions.”

Hence the word came to be used among them, as might be shown in innumerable instances, to express the place and state of the damned; and very fitly describes it.

Ver. 23. *Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar*, etc.] The Jews obliged such who had done any damage to their neighbours, by stealing from them, to make satisfaction before they brought their offering; concerning which they say ^{f293},

“he that brings what he has stolen, before he brings his trespass offering, is right; he that brings his trespass offering, before he brings that which he has stolen, is not right.”

Again ^{f294},

“they do not bring the trespass offering before the sum of what is stolen is returned, either to the owners, or to the priests.”

Some have thought Christ refers to this; only what they restrained to pecuniary damages, he extends to all sorts of offences. But not a trespass offering, but a freewill offering, seems to be designed by “the gift”: which, when a man either intended to bring, or was going to bring, or had already brought, as a voluntary sacrifice to be offered unto God; and it came into his mind, that he had offended any man by showing any undue passion, or by any reproachful words, then he was to do what is advised in the following verse: “and there”, whilst going, or when at the altar,

rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee: hath anything to charge thee with; any just ground of complaint against thee; if thou hast done him any injury, or given him any offence: particularly, if he had at any time said Raca to him, or called him “fool” for those words have reference to what goes before, and are a corollary, or conclusion from them, as appears from the causal particle “therefore”.

Ver. 24. *Leave there thy gift before the altar*, etc.] This might easily be done, and the business soon dispatched, at some seasons; particularly, at their public feasts, as the passover, pentecost, and feast of tabernacles, when all the Israelites were together:

and go thy way; make what haste thou canst,

first be reconciled to thy brother: use all means to reconcile him; acknowledge the offence; ask his pardon; assure him that thou wishest well to him, and not ill;

and then come and offer thy gift, by putting it on the altar, before which it was left. This shows, that acts of love and friendship are preferable to sacrifices; and that sacrifices offered up in wrath, and whilst unreconciled to others, are unacceptable to God, and of no avail: and so much the Jews themselves seem to acknowledge; when they say ^{f295}:

“that transgressions, which are between a man and God, the day of atonement expiates; the transgressions which are between a man and his neighbour, the day of atonement does not expiate, **wrybj ta hxryç d[**, “until he hath reconciled his neighbour.””

Which is enlarged upon, and explained by Maimonides ^{f296}, after this manner:

“the day of atonement does not expiate any transgressions, but those that are between a man and God, as when one eats anything that is forbidden, and lies with anything that is forbidden, or the like; but transgressions which are between a man and his neighbour, as he that hurts his neighbour, or curses his neighbour, or steals from him, and the like, are never forgiven, until he has given his neighbour what he owed him, and has “reconciled” him; yea, though he has returned to him the money he owed him, he ought to “reconcile” him, and desire him to forgive him; yea, even though “he has only provoked him by words”, (which is the very case in

the text before us,) **wsyypl Ayrx**, “he ought to reconcile him”, and to meet him until he forgives him: if his neighbour will not forgive, he must bring with him three of his friends, and meet him, and entreat him; and if he will not be reconciled by them, he must bring them a second, and a third time.”

So that he was to use all means to obtain a reconciliation.

Ver. 25. *Agree with thine adversary quickly*, etc.] These words are not to be understood in an allegorical sense, as if “the adversary” was the justice of God, demanding payment of debts; “the way”, this present life; “the judge”, God himself; “the officer”, the devil; “the prison”, the pit of hell; and “the uttermost farthing”, the least sin, which will never be remitted without satisfaction: but the design of them is to prevent lawsuits about debts, which may be in dispute; it being much better for debtor and creditor, especially the former, to compose such differences among themselves, than to litigate the matter in a court of judicature. By “the adversary” is meant not an enemy, one that bears hatred and ill will, but a brother that has ought against a man; a creditor, who demands and insists upon payment of what is owing to him; and for this purpose has taken methods towards bringing the debtor before a proper magistrate, in order to oblige him to payment: wherefore it is better for him to make up and agree the matter directly, as soon as possible,

whilst thou art in the way with him; that is, whilst the creditor and debtor are going together to some inferior magistrate, or lesser court, as the sanhedrim, which consisted of three persons only, before whom such causes might be tried: for **hçwl çb twnwmm ynyd**, pecuniary causes, or causes relating to money matters, were tried “by the bench of three”^{f297}; and the selfsame advice is given in the Talmud^{f298}, as here, where it seems to be a common proverb; for it is said,

“there are men that say, or men usually say, [**mtçya Aëbbd**
I [**bl Aëj rwa bga**, “whilst thou art in the way with thine
adversary, be obedient”.”

Lest at any time the adversary should deliver thee to the judge, a superior magistrate in a higher court; for if the creditor would, he could oblige the debtor to go with him to the supreme court of judicature, and try the cause there; for so say the Jewish^{f299}; canons:

“if the creditor says we will go to the great sanhedrim, they compel the debtor, and he goes up with them, as it is said, “the borrower is servant to the lender”,”

where it might go harder with the poor debtor; and therefore it was advisable to prevent it by an agreement, lest

the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.

“It was an affirmative command in the law, says Maimonides, to appoint “judges” and “officers” in every country and province, as it is said, (^{<1618>}Deuteronomy 16:18). **μϣ ρωϚ**, “judges” they are the judges that are fixed in the sanhedrim, and such that engage in law suits come before them: **μϣ ϣϣ**, “officers”; these are the masters of the rod and scourge, i.e. who beat and scourge delinquents; and these stand before the judges — and all they do, is by the order of the judges.”

Now it is one of these that is meant by “the officer”; in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel, he is called **ϣ ϣϣ**; who, when he had authority from the judge, could cast into prison, and that for debt; of which we have no account in the law of Moses.

Ver. 26. *Verily, I say unto thee*, etc.] This may be depended upon, you may assure yourself of it, that

thou shalt by no means come out thence, from prison,

till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing, or “last farthing”; or as the Ethiopic version reads it, “till thou hast exactly paid all”; which seems to express the inexorableness of the creditor, and the impossibility of the debtor’s release.

Ver. 27. *Ye have heard that it was said*, etc.] These forms of speech, as well as what follows,

by them of old time, have been explained, in ver. 21. The law here mentioned,

thou shalt not commit adultery, is recorded in (^{<2014>}Exodus 20:14) and the meaning of our Lord is, not that the then present Jews had heard that such a law had been delivered “to the ancients”, their fathers, at Mount Sinai; for that they could read in their Bibles: but they had received it by

tradition, that the sense of it, which had been given to their ancestors, by the ancient doctors of the church, was, that this law is to be taken strictly, as it lies, and only regards the sin of uncleanness in married persons; or, what was strictly adultery, and that actual; so that it had no respect to fornication, or unchaste thoughts, words, or actions, but that single act only.

Ver. 28. *But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman,* etc.] Many and severe are the prohibitions of the Jews, concerning looking upon a woman, which they aggravate as a very great sin: they say ^{f300}, it is not lawful to look upon a beautiful woman, though unmarried; nor upon another man's wife, though deformed; nor upon a woman's coloured garments: they forbid ^{f301} looking on a woman's little finger, and say ^{f302}, that he that tells money to a woman, out of his hand into her's, that he may look upon her, though he is possessed of the law and good works, even as Moses, he shall not escape the damnation of hell: they affirm ^{f303}, that he that looks upon a woman's heel, his children shall not be virtuous; and that a man may not go after a woman in the way, no, not after his wife: should he meet her on a bridge, he must take her to the side of him; and whoever goes through a river after a woman, shall have no part in the world to come: nay, they forbid ^{f305} a man looking on the beauty of his own wife. Now these things were said by them, chiefly to cover themselves, and because they would be thought to be very chaste; when they were, as Christ calls them, an "adulterous generation" in a literal sense: they usually did what our Lord observes, "strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel". We read in the Talmud ^{f306}, of *hj wç dysj*, a "foolish saint" and it is asked, who is he? and it is answered, one that sees a woman drowning in a river, and says it is not lawful for me *hb yl wkt syal*, "to look" upon her, and deliver her. It was not any looking upon a woman, that is forbid by Christ as criminal; but so to look, as "to lust after her"; for such an one

hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. But these men, who forbade external looking upon a woman, generally speaking, had no notion of heart sins; and which was the prevailing opinion of the Pharisees, in Christ's time.

"A good thought, they ^{f307} allow, is reckoned as if done; as it is said, (³¹⁸⁶Malachi 3:16). Upon which it is asked, what is the meaning of that, and "that thought" upon "his name?" Says R. Ase, if a man thinks to do a good work, and is hindered, and does it not, the

Scripture reckons it to him, as if he did it; but an evil thought, the holy blessed God does not account of it as if done, as is said, (~~f308~~ Psalm 66:18).”

Upon which words, a noted commentator ^{f308} of their’s has this remark:

“Though I regard iniquity in my heart to do it, even in thought, yea, against God himself, as if I had expressed it with my lips, he does not hear it; that is, ^{w[yl bçj al} , “he does not reckon it to me for sin”; because the holy blessed God does not account an evil thought for an action, to them that are in the faith of God, or of the true religion.”

For it seems, this is only true of the Israelites; it is just the reverse with the Gentiles, in whom God does not reckon of a good thought, as if it was done, but does of an evil one, as if it was in act ^{f309}. It must be owned, that this is not the sense of them all; for some of them have gone so far as to say ^{f310}, that

“the thoughts of sin are greater, or harder, than sin itself:”

by which they mean, that it is more difficult to subdue sinful lusts, than to refrain from the act of sin itself; and particularly, some of them say things which agree with, and come very near to what our Lord here says; as when they affirm ^{f311}, that

“everyone that looks upon a woman ^{hnwwkb}, with intention, it is all one as if he lay with her.”

And that ^{Pawn arqn wyny[b Pawn}, “he that committeth adultery with his eyes, is called an adulterer” ^{f312}. Yea, they also observe ^{f313}, that a woman may commit adultery in her heart, as well as a man; but the Pharisees of Christ’s time were of another mind.

Ver. 29. *And if thy right eye offend thee*, etc.] Or “cause thee to offend”, to stumble, and fall into sin. Our Lord has no regard here to near and dear relations seeking to alienate us from God and Christ, and hinder us in the pursuit of divine things; whose solicitations are to be rejected with the utmost indignation, and they themselves to be parted with, and forsaken, rather than complied with; which is the sense some give of the words: for both in this, and the following verse, respect is had only to the law of adultery; and to such members of the body, which often are the means of

leading persons on to the breach of it; particularly the eye and hand. The eye is often the instrument of ensnaring the heart this way: hence the Jews have a ^{f314} saying,

“whoever looks upon women, at the end comes into the hands of transgression.”

Mention is only made of the right eye; not but that the left may be an occasion of sinning, as well as the right; but that being most dear and valuable, is instanced in, and ordered to be parted with:

pluck it out, and cast it from thee: which is not to be understood literally; for no man is obliged to mutilate any part of his body, to prevent sin, or on account of the commission of it; this is no where required, and if done, would be sinful, as in the case of Origen: but figuratively; and the sense is, that persons should make a covenant with their eyes, as Job did; and turn them away from beholding such objects, which may tend to excite impure thoughts and desires; deny themselves the gratification of the sense of seeing, or feeding the eyes with such sights, as are graceful to the flesh; and with indignation and contempt, reject, and avoid all opportunities and occasions of sinning; which the eye may be the instrument of, and lead unto:

for it is profitable for thee, that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. This is still a continuation of the figure here used; and the meaning is, that it will turn to better account, to lose all the carnal pleasures of the eye, or all those pleasing sights, which are grateful to a carnal heart, than, by enjoying them, to expose the whole man, body and soul, to everlasting destruction, in the fire of hell.

Ver. 30. *And if thy right hand offend thee*, etc.] Or “cause thee to offend”; that is, is the means of ensnaring thine heart; and of drawing thee into either mental, or actual adultery; for, as before, all unchaste looks, so here, all unchaste touches, embraces, etc. are condemned. As adultery may be committed in the heart, and by the eye, so with the hand:

“says R. Eliezer ^{f315} what is the meaning of that Scripture, “your hands are full of blood”, (²⁰¹⁵ Isaiah 1:15)? It is replied, **dyb** **μypanmh wl a**, “these are they, that commit adultery with the hand”. It is a tradition of the house of R. Ishmael, that the sense of that command, “thou shalt not commit adultery”, is, there shall be

none that commits adultery in thee, whether “with the hand”, or “with the foot”.”

Like orders are given as before,

cut it off, and cast it from thee; as a man would choose to do, or have it done for him, when such a part of the body is mortified, and endangers all the rest. The Jews enjoined cutting off of the hand, on several accounts; if in a morning, before a man had washed his hands, he put his hand to his eye, nose, mouth, ear, etc. **Ḥqyt**, it was to be “cut off”^{f316}; particularly, the handling of the “membrum virile”, was punishable with cutting off of the hand.

“Says R.^{f317} Tarphon, if the hand is moved to the privy parts, **wdy Ḥqt**, “let his hand be cut off to his navel”.”

That is, that it may reach no further; for below that part of the body the hand might not be put^{f318}; lest unclean thoughts, and desires, should be excited. In the above^{f319} place it is added,

“what if a thorn should be in his belly, must he not take it away? It is replied, no: it is further asked, must not his belly be ripped up then? It is answered, it is better that his belly be ripped up, **tj ç rabl dry l aw**, “than that he should go down to the pit of corruption.””

A way of speaking, much like what our Lord here uses; and to the above orders and canons, he may be very well thought to allude: but he is not to be understood literally, as enjoining the cutting off of the right hand, as they did; but of men’s refraining from all such impure practices, either with themselves, or women, which are of a defiling nature; and endanger the salvation of them, body and soul; the same reason is given as before.

Ver. 31. *It hath been said*, etc.] It is not added here, as in the former instances, “by them of old time”; nor prefaced with these words, “ye have heard”; because the case of divorce was not any law of Moses, or of God by him; but only a permission, because of the hardness of the hearts of the Jews: and as to the controversy, about the causes of divorce, this was not debated by them of old time, but was a new thing, just started in the time of Christ; and was a controversy then agitating, between the schools of

Hillell and Shammai: the one allowing it upon any frivolous cause; the other, only on account of adultery.

Whosoever shall put away his wife, dissolve the marriage bond, dismiss her from his bed, and send her from his house, (see ^{f320}Deuteronomy 24:1,2) “let him give her a writing of divorcement”, *t tyrk rps*, “a bill of divorcement”, or “a book of cutting off”. For though a wife was obtained by several ways, there was but one way of dismissing her, as the Jews observe ^{f320}, and that was, by giving her a bill. The form of a writing of divorcement, as given by Maimonides ^{f321}, is as follows:

“On such a day of the week, in such a month, of such a year, either from the creation, or the epocha of contracts, according to the usual way of computation, which we observe in such a place; I such an one, the son of such an one, of such a place; or if I have any other name, or surname, or my parents, or my place, or the place of my parents; by my own will, without any force, I put away, dismiss, and divorce thee. Thee, I say, who art such an one, the daughter of such an one, of such a place; or if thou hast any other name, or surname, or thy parents, or thy place, or the place of thy parents; who wast my wife heretofore, but now I put thee away, dismiss and divorce thee; so that thou art in thine own hand, and hast power over thyself, to go, and marry any other man, whom thou pleasest; and let no man hinder thee in my name, from this day forward and for ever; and lo! thou art free to any man: and let this be unto thee, from me, a bill of divorce, an instrument of dismission, and a letter of forsaking, according to the law of Moses and Israel.” “Such an one, the son of such an one, witness. Such an one, the son of such an one, witness.”

Would you choose to have one of these bills, filled up in proper form, take it in manner ^{f322} following.

“On the fourth day of the week, on the eleventh day of the month Cisleu, in the year five thousand four hundred and fifty four, from the creation of the world; according to the computation which we follow here, in the city of Amsterdam, which is called Amstelredam; situated by the sea side, called Taya, and by the river Amstel; I Abraham, the son of Benjamin, surnamed Wolphius, the priest; and at this time dwelling in the city of Amsterdam, which is called Amstelredam, which is situated by the sea side, called Taya, and by

the river Amstel; or if I have any other name, or surname, or my parents, or my place, or the place of my parents; by my own free will, without any compulsion, I put away, dismiss, and divorce thee, my wife Rebecca, the daughter of Jonas the Levite; who at this time abides in the city of Amsterdam, called Amstelredam, situated by the sea side, called Taya, and by the river Amstel; or if thou hast any other name, or surname, or thy parents, or thy place, or the place of thy parents, who wast heretofore my wife; but now I put thee away, dismiss, and divorce thee; so that thou art in thine own hands, and hast power over thyself, to go and marry any other man, whom thou pleasest: and let no man hinder thee in my name, from this day forward, and for ever; and lo! thou art free to any man. Let this be to thee, from me, a bill of divorce, an instrument of dismissal, and a letter of forsaking, according to the law of Moses and Israel.” “Sealtiel, the son of Paltiel, witness. Calonymus, the son of Gabriel, witness.”

This bill being written in twelve lines, neither more nor less, and being sealed by the husband, and signed by the witnesses, was delivered, either by him, or by a messenger, or deputy of his or hers, into her hand, lap, or bosom, in the presence of two persons; after which, she might, if she would, enrol it in the public records, and marry whom she pleased.

Ver. 32. *But I say unto you; that whosoever shall put away his wife,* etc.] Christ does not infringe, or revoke the original grant, or permission of divorce; only frees it from the false interpretations, and ill use, the Pharisees made of it; and restores the ancient sense of it, in which only it was to be understood: for a divorce was allowable in no case,

saving for the cause of fornication; which must not be taken strictly for what is called fornication, but as including adultery, incest, or any unlawful copulation; and is opposed to the sense and practices of the Pharisees, who were on the side of Hillell: who admitted of divorce, upon the most foolish and frivolous pretences whatever; when Shammai and his followers insisted on it, that a man ought only to put away his wife for uncleanness; in which they agreed with Christ. For so it is written ^{f323},

“The house of Shammai say, a man may not put away his wife, unless he finds some uncleanness in her, according to (^{f324}Deuteronomy 24:1) The house of Hillell say, if she should spoil his food, (that is, as Jarchi and Bartenora explain it, burns it either

at the fire, or with salt, i.e. over roasts or over salts it,) who appeal also to (^{f340}Deuteronomy 24:1). R. Akiba says, if he finds another more beautiful than her, as it is said, (^{f340}Deuteronomy 24:1) “and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes.””

The commentators ^{f324} on this passage say that the determination of the matter is, according to the school of Millell; so that, according to them, a woman might be put away for a very trivial thing: some difference is made by some of the Jewish doctors, between a first and second wife; the first wife, they say ^{f325}, might not be put away, but for adultery; but the second might be put away, if her husband hated her; or she was of ill behaviour, and impudent, and not modest, as the daughters of Israel. Now our Lord says, without any exception, that a man ought not to put away his wife, whether first or second, for any other reason than uncleanness; and that whoever does, upon any other account,

causeth her to commit adultery; that is, as much as in him lies: should she commit it, he is the cause of it, by exposing her, through a rejection of her, to the sinful embraces of others; and, indeed, should she marry another man, whilst he is alive, which her divorce allows her to do, she must be guilty of adultery; since she is his proper wife, the bond of marriage not being dissolved by such a divorce: and

whosoever shall marry her that is divorced, committeth adultery; because the divorced woman he marries, and takes to his bed; is legally the wife of another man; and it may be added, from (^{f399}Matthew 19:9) that her husband, who has put her away, upon any other account than fornication, should he marry another woman, would be guilty of the same crime.

Ver. 33. *Again, ye have heard that it hath been said*, etc.] Besides what has been observed, in ver. 21 and 27 you know it has also been said,

by, or to them of old time, what is written in (^{f392}Leviticus 19:12). “And ye shall not swear by my name falsely”; which seems to be referred to, when it is said, “thou shalt not forswear thyself”: and is the law forbidding perjury, or false swearing; and was what the Jews were chiefly, if not only concerned about; little regarding the vanity, only the truth of an oath: for they took swearing vainly, to be the same as swearing falsely; wherefore so long as what they swore was truth, they were not careful whether it was of any importance or not: moreover, these men sinned, in that they swore by the creatures, which they thought they might do, and not sin; and when

they had so done, were not under obligation to perform; because they made no use of the name of God, to whom only vows and oaths were to be performed, “but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths”, (^{<081E>}Numbers 30:2) which they understood of vows only made to the Lord, and not to others; and of oaths, when in his name, and not by others; which they did do, and yet thought themselves not obliged by them.

Ver. 34. *But I say unto you, swear not at all*, etc.] Which must not be understood in the strictest sense, as though it was not lawful to take an oath upon any occasion, in an affair of moment, in a solemn serious manner, and in the name of God; which may be safely done: but of rash swearing, about trivial matters, and by the creatures; as appears by what follows,

neither by heaven; which is directly contrary to the Jewish canons ^{f326}, which say,

“they that swear **μυμϙב**, “by heaven”, and by earth, are free.”

Upon the words in (^{<211E>}Song of Solomon 2:7), “I adjure you”, etc. it is asked ^{f327},

“by what does she adjure them? R. Eliezer says, by the heavens, and by the earth; by the hosts, the host above, and the host below.”

So Philo the Jew says ^{f328} that the most high and ancient cause need not to be immediately mentioned in swearing; but the “earth”, the sun, the stars, **ουρανου**, “heaven”, and the whole world. So R. Aben Ezra, and R. David Kimchi, explain (^{<304E>}Amos 4:2). “The Lord God hath sworn by his holiness”; that is, say they, **μυμϙב**, “by heaven”: which may be thought to justify them, in this form of swearing; though they did not look upon it as a binding oath, and therefore if broken they were not criminal ^{f329}.

“He that swears **μυμϙב** by heaven, and by the earth, and by the sun, and the like; though his intention is nothing less than to him that created them, this is no oath.”

The reason why it is forbidden by Christ to swear by heaven, is,

for it is God’s throne; referring to (^{<230E>}Isaiah 66:1) where he sits, the glory of his majesty shines forth, and is itself glorious and excellent, and not to be mentioned in a vain way; and especially, for the reason Christ elsewhere

gives, (^{f322}Matthew 23:22) that “he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon”; so that they doubly sinned, first, by openly swearing by that which is God’s creature; and then, by tacitly bringing God into their rash and vain oaths.

Ver. 35. *Nor by the earth, for it is his footstool*, etc.] That the Jews were wont to swear by the earth, is clear from the above mentioned instances; and is condemned by Christ for this reason, because the earth is God’s “footstool”, referring, as before, to (^{f311}Isaiah 66:1) on which he treads; and where he also manifests forth his glory, and is a considerable part of the work of his hands.

Neither by Jerusalem, which the Jews used to swear by: such forms of vows as these are to be met with in their writings ^{f330};

“as the altar, as the temple, $\mu\lambda \zeta\omega\rho\gamma\kappa$, “as Jerusalem”;

that is, by Jerusalem, I vow I will do this, or the other thing.

“R. Judah says, he that says Jerusalem (i.e. as Bartenora observes ^{f331}, without the note of comparison, as) says nothing.”

In the Gemara ^{f332} it is,

“he that says as Jerusalem, does not say anything, till he has made his vow concerning a thing, which is offered up in Jerusalem.”

Dr. Lightfoot ^{f333} has produced forms of vowing and swearing, which have not occurred to me.

“Jerusalem; $\mu\lambda \zeta\omega\rho\gamma\lambda$, “for”, or “unto Jerusalem”, which exactly answers to $\epsilon\iota\varsigma \text{Ιεροσολυμα}$, here; and “by Jerusalem”;

The reason given for prohibiting this kind of oath, is;

for it is the city of the great king: not of David, but of the King of kings, the Lord of hosts; who had his residence, and his worship, here; (see ^{f312}Psalms 48:2).

Ver. 36. *Neither shalt thou swear by thy head*, etc.] This also was a common form of swearing among the Jews: take a few instances.

“If anyone is bound to his friend by an oath, and says to him, vow unto me *Æḡar yyj b*, “by the life of thy head”; R. Meir says ^{f334}, he may retract it; but the wise men say, he cannot.”

Again ^{f335}, a certain Rabbi said to Elijah,

“I heard “Bath Kol” (or the voice from heaven) mourning like a dove, and saying, woe to my children; for, because of their sins, I have destroyed my house, and have burnt my temple, and have carried them captive among the nations: and he (Elijah) said unto him *Æḡar yyj w Æyyj*, “by thy life, and by the life of thy head”, not this time only it says so, but it says so three times every day.”

Once more ^{f336}, says R. Simeon ben Antipatras, to R. Joshua,

“I have heard from the mouth of the wise men, that he that vows in the law, and transgresses, is to be beaten with forty stripes: he replies, blessed art thou of God, that thou hast so done, *Æḡar yyj w Æyyj*, “by thy life, and by the life of thy head”, he that is used to do so is to be beaten.”

This form of swearing is condemned, for this reason,

because thou canst not make one hair white or black: which shows, that a man’s head, nor, indeed, one hair of his head, is in his own power, and therefore he ought not to swear by it; as he ought not to swear by heaven, or earth, or Jerusalem, because these were in the possession of God. Some copies read, “canst not make one white hair black”.

Ver. 37. *But let your communication be yea, yea*, etc.] That is, let your speech, in your common conversation, and daily business of life, when ye answer to anything in the affirmative, be “yea”; and when ye answer to anything in the negative, “nay”: and for the stronger asseveration of the matter, when it is necessary, double these words; but let no oaths be joined unto them: this is enough; a righteous man’s yea, is yea, and his no, is no; his word is sufficient. Hence it appears, that our Lord is here speaking of rash swearing, and such as was used in common conversation, and is justly condemned by him. The Jews have no reason to reject this advice of Christ, who often use and recommend the same modes of expression. They endeavour to raise the esteem of their doctors and wise men, by saying, that their words, both in doctrines and dealings with men, are “yea, yea”

^{f337}. One of their ^{f338} commentators on the word “saying”, in, (^{<0201>}Exodus 20:1) makes this observation;

“hence we learn, that they used to answer, **wal wal l [w ^h ^h l [** “concerning yea, yea, and concerning nay, nay”.”

This way of speaking, they looked upon equivalent to an oath; yea, they affirm it was one.

“Says R. Eliezer ^{f339}, **h [wbç ^h h [wbç wal** , “nay is an oath; yea is an oath”, absolutely; “nay” is an oath, as it is written, (^{<001>}Genesis 9:11) and (^{<250>}Isaiah 54:9). But that “yea” is an oath, how does it appear? It is concluded from hence, that “nay” is an oath; saith Rabba, there are that say “nay, nay”, twice; and there are that say “yea, yea”, twice; as it is written, (^{<001>}Genesis 9:11) and from hence, that “nay” is twice, “yea” is also twice said.”

The gloss upon it is,

“he that says either “nay, nay”, twice, or “yea, yea”, twice; lo! it is **rj am h [wbçk** “as an after oath”, which confirms his words.”

For whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil: that is, whatever exceeds this way of speaking and conversation, in the common affairs of life, is either from the devil, who is the evil one, by way of eminency; or from the evil heart of man, from the pride, malice, envy, etc. that are in it.

Ver. 38. *Ye have heard that it hath been said*, etc.] That is, to, or by them of old time, as is expressed in some of the foregoing instances,

an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, (^{<0214>}Exodus 21:24). This is “lex talionis”, the “law of retaliation”; which, whether it is to be understood literally, or not, is a matter of question. The Baithuseans, or Sadducees, among the Jews, took it in a literal sense, and so does Josephus, who says ^{f340}, he that shall blind, i.e. put out a man’s eyes, shall suffer the like. But the Jewish doctors generally understood it of paying a price equivalent to the damage done, except in case of life. R. Sol. Jarchi ^{f341} explains the law thus:

“He that puts out his neighbour’s eye, must give him **wny [ymd**, “the price of his eye”, according to the price of a servant sold in the

market; and so the same of them all; for, not taking away of the member is strictly meant.”

And, says Maimonides ^{f342},

“if a man cuts off his neighbour’s hand, or foot, he is to be considered as if he was a servant sold in a market; what he was worth then, and what he is worth now; and he must pay the diminution which is made of his price; as it is said, “eye for eye”. From tradition it is learned, that this for, spoken of, is to be understood of paying money; this is what is said in the law, “as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again”. Not that he is to be hurt, as he has hurt his neighbour; but inasmuch as he deserves to want a member, or to be hurt as he has done; therefore he ought to pay the damage.”

And Josephus himself ^{f343} says, that he must be deprived of that, which he has deprived another of, except he that has his eye put out is willing to receive money; and which, he observes, the law allows of. The controversy about the sense of this law may be seen in a few words, as managed between R. Sandish Hagson, and Ben Zeta ^{f344}.

“Says R. Sandish, we cannot explain this verse according to its literal sense; for if a man should smite the eye of his neighbour, and the third part of the light of his eye should depart, how will he order it, to strike such a stroke, as that, without adding or lessening? perhaps he will put out the whole light of his eye. And it is yet more difficult with respect to burning, wound, and stripe; for should they be in a dangerous place the man might die but that is intolerable. Ben Zeta answers him, is it not written, in another place, “as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again?” To which Hagson replies, **b**, “in”, is instead of **l** [, “upon”, or against; and lo! the sense is, so shall the punishment be upon him. Ben Zeta answers him again, as he does, so shall it be done to him. Hagson replies, behold Samson said, “as they have done to me, so will I do to them”; but Samson did not take their wives, and give them to others, he only rendered to them their reward: but Ben Zeta replies, if a poor man should smite, what must be his punishment? Hagson answers him, if a blind man should put out the eye of one that sees, what shall be done to him? as for

the poor man, he may become rich, and pay, but the blind man can never pay.”

Now our Lord here, does not find fault with the law of retaliation, as delivered by Moses, but with the false gloss of the Scribes and Pharisees; who, as they interpreted it of pecuniary mulcts, as a compensation for the loss of a member, which sometimes exceeded all just and due bounds; so they applied it to private revenge, and in favour of it: whereas this law did not allow of a retaliation to be made, by private persons, at their pleasure, but by the civil magistrate only.

Ver. 39. *But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil*, etc.] This is not to be understood of any sort of evil, not of the evil of sin, of bad actions, and false doctrines, which are to be opposed; nor of the evil one, Satan, who is to be resisted; but of an evil man, an injurious one, who has done us an injury. We must not render evil for evil, or repay him in the same way; (see ^{f346}James 5:6). Not but that a man may lawfully defend himself, and endeavour to secure himself from injuries; and may appear to the civil magistrate for redress of grievances; but he is not to make use of private revenge. As if a man should pluck out one of his eyes, he must not in revenge pluck out one of his; or should he strike out one of his teeth, he must not use him in the same manner; but patiently bear the affront, or seek for satisfaction in another way.

But whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also: which is to be understood comparatively, rather than seek revenge, and is directly contrary to the Jewish canons, which require, in such a case, a pecuniary fine ^{f345}.

“He that strikes his neighbour (which Maimonides explains, he that strikes his neighbour with his hand shut, about the neck) he shall give him a “sela”, or “shekel”: R. Judah says, in the name of R. Jose the Galilean, one pound: if he smite him (i.e. as Maimonides says, if he smite him with his double fist upon the face; or, as Bartenora, with the palm of his hand, *yyj l* , “on the cheek”, which is a greater reproach) he shall give him two hundred “zuzim”; and if he does it with the back of his hand, four hundred “zuzim”.”

R. Isaac Sangari ^{f346} manifestly refers to this passage of Christ’s, when he says to the king he is conversing with,

“I perceive that thou up braidest us with poverty and want; but in them the great men of other nations glory: for they do not glory but in him, who said, “Whosoever smiteth thee thy right cheek, turn to him the left; and whosoever taketh away thy coat, give him thy cloak”.”

Ver. 40. *And if any man will sue thee at the law*, etc.] Or “will contend with thee”, or as the Syriac renders it, $\text{\AA m}[\text{ }^{\wedge}\text{wdnd}$, “will strive”, or “litigate with thee”; not contest the matter, or try the cause in an open court of judicature, a sense our version inclines to; but will wrangle and quarrel in a private way, in order to

take away thy coat, by force and violence,

let him have thy cloak also; do not forbid, or hinder him from taking it; (see ^{f347}Luke 6:29). The “coat”, is the same with tyl j , “the upper garment”: and what we render a “cloak”, answers to qwl j , “the inward garment”; by which words Sangari expresses the passage in the place before cited: and the sense is, if a wrangling, quarrelsome man, insists upon having thy coat, or upper garment, let him take the next; and rather suffer thyself to be stripped naked than engage in a litigious broil with him. This also is contrary to the above canon of the Jews ^{f347}, which says;

“If a man should pull another by his ear, or pluck off his hair, or spit, and his spittle should come to him, wnmm wtyl j ryb[h or “should take his coat from him”, or uncover a woman’s head in the street, he shall pay four hundred “zuzim”, and all this is according to his dignity; says R. Akiba; even the poor in Israel, they consider them as if they were noblemen, who are fallen from their estates, for they are the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

Ver. 41. *And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile*, etc.] The word $\alpha\gamma\gamma\alpha\rho\epsilon\nu\sigma\epsilon\iota$, rendered “compel”, is generally said to be of Persic original; the “Angari”, among the Persians, were the king’s messengers, or those who rode post, and were maintained at the king’s expenses; and had power to take horses, and other carriages, and even men, into their service, by force, when they had occasion for them: hence the word is used to force, or compel persons to do this or the other thing; the word ayrgna is often to be met with in the Jewish writings, and is in them expounded to be ^{f348}, the taking of anything for the service of the king. David de Pomis renders it

by **l w** [, “a yoke”^{f349}; meaning, any servile work, which such, who were pressed into the king’s service, were obliged unto. And ^{f350} **ayrgna hç** [is used to compel persons to go along with others, to do any service; in which sense it is here used: and Christ advises, rather than to contend and quarrel with such a person, that obliges to go with him a mile, to

go with him twain: his meaning is, not to dispute such a matter, though it may be somewhat laborious and disagreeable, but comply, for the sake of peace. The Jews^{f351}, in their blasphemous book of the birth of Christ, own that he gave advice in such words as these, when they introduce Peter thus speaking of him.

“He, that is, Jesus, hath warned and commanded you to do no more evil to a Jew; but if a Jew should say to a Nazarene, go with me one mile, he shall go with him two miles; and if a Jew shall smite him on the left cheek, he shall turn to him also the right.”

Can a Jew find fault with this advice?

Ver. 42. *Give to him that asketh thee*, etc.] To every man, (~~4150~~ Luke 6:30) whether Jew or Gentile; friend or foe; believer or unbeliever; a good, or a bad man; worthy or unworthy; deserving or not, that asketh alms, whether food or money; give it freely, readily, cheerfully, according to your abilities, and as the necessity of the object requires: for such rules are always supposed, and to be observed; and though all are to be relieved, yet the circumstances of persons, and their relation to men, are to be considered, and special regard is to be had to the household of faith.

And from him that would borrow of thee, turn not away; refuse him not, turn not away from him with a frown, or without speaking to him, or with a denial; look upon him with a pleasant countenance, cheerfully lend him what he wants, whether he be a Jew, from whom it was not lawful to take usury, or a stranger, from whom it, was lawful to take it, yet take it not; lend him freely, “hoping for nothing again”, (~~4165~~ Luke 6:35) which must not be understood of not hoping for the money lent, for then it would be giving, and not lending; but of not hoping for any reward for lending it: and indeed the money itself is not to be hoped for again, when the circumstances of the borrower are such, that he is not able to make a return.

Ver. 43. *Ye have heard that it hath been said*, etc.] By, or to them of old time. This law has been delivered to them,

thou shalt love thy neighbour, with this appendage to it, or false gloss upon it,

and hate thine enemy; for the first of these only is the law of Moses, (^(~~CHRIS~~) Leviticus 19:18), the other is the addition, or wrong interpretation of the Scribes and Pharisees: wherefore the Jew ^{f352} has no reason to charge Christ, or the Evangelist, with a false testimony, as he does, because the latter is no where written in the law, nor in the prophets: nor does Christ say it is; he only observes, that it had been traditionally handed down to them from the ancients, by the masters of the traditions of the elders, that the law of loving the neighbour was so to be understood as to allow, and even enjoin, hatred of enemies: in proof of which, take the following instances ^{f353}.

“When one man sins against another, he may not hate him in his heart, and be silent, as is said of the wicked; Absalom spoke not with Amnon: but it is commanded to make it known to him, and to say to him, why hast thou done to me so and so? As it is said, “rebuking, thou shalt rebuke thy neighbour”; and if he returns, and desires him to pardon him, he shall not be implacable and cruel; but if he reproves him many times, and he does not receive his reproof, nor turn from his sin, then *wtwançl rtwm*, “it is lawful to hate him”.”

Again, they say ^{f354},

“Every disciple of a wise man, *çj nk rj wnw μqwn wnyaç*, “who does not revenge, and keep as a serpent”; that is, as the gloss explains it, “enmity in his heart”, as a serpent, is no disciple of a wise man.”

And so Maimonides ^{f355}, one of their better sort of writers, says;

“A disciple of a wise man, or a scholar, whom a man despises and reproaches publicly, it is forbidden him to forgive him, because of his honour; and if he forgives him, he is to be punished, for this is a contempt of the law; but “he must revenge, and keep the thing as a serpent”, until the other asks pardon of him, and then he may forgive him.”

Thus they bred their scholars in hatred and malice against their enemies. This arises from a mistaken sense of the word “neighbour”, which they understood only of a friend; and concluded, that if a friend was to be loved, an enemy was to be hated; not the Gentiles only, but anyone, among themselves, which could come under that name.

Ver. 44. *But I say unto you, love your enemies*, etc.] That is, as the Apostle Paul may be thought to interpret the words of Christ, (^{<6120>}Romans 12:20). “If thine enemy hunger, feed him: if he thirst, give him drink”: unless our Lord should be supposed rather to regard the internal affection of the mind; since outward expressions of love, by words and works, are urged in the following exhortations: the actions of a man may be hated, and just indignation be expressed against them, and yet his person be loved, tenderness be used to him, and pity shown him: all men, even enemies, are to be loved with a natural love, as men; though they cannot be loved with a spiritual affection, as brethren in Christ: and in natural affection there are degrees, according to the relation and circumstances that persons stand in to one another.

Bless them that curse you: when wicked men curse you, as Shimei cursed David, do not “render evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing”; give good words, use kind language, mild and soft expressions; such as may either win upon them, or put them to shame and silence: “bless, and curse not”; the latter belongs to them, the former to you; “let them curse, but bless thou”: curses better fit their mouths, and blessings thine. Blessing here, does not signify praising them, for that would be sinful, which is sometimes the sense of the word; nor wishing, or praying for a blessing on them, which is right and good; but this is mentioned afterwards, as distinct from blessing; wherefore, it is better to understand it of a sweet and engaging address unto, and behaviour and conduct towards such, whose mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.

Do good to them that hate you; such as hate you in their hearts, and discover their hatred by their actions; do not make returns in the same way, but on the contrary, do them all the good you can; perform all the kind offices that lie in your power; let them partake of your bounty and liberality; if poor, feed, clothe, and supply them, as you are able, with the necessaries of life; and give them wholesome advice for the good of their souls: by “so doing”, you will “heap coals of fire on their heads”; of

enemies, make them friends; engage their affections to you, and you may be happy instruments in doing them good, both in soul and body:

and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you. What Christ here commands and advises to, he himself did; for as he hung upon the cross, he prayed for his crucifiers, who were then using him in the most spiteful, as well as cruel manner; saying, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”: and in this he has left us an example, that we should tread in his steps; and here in he was quickly followed by his holy martyr Stephen; who, whilst he was being stoned, prayed for his persecutors and murderers, saying, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge”. This breathes out the true spirit of Christianity, and is peculiar to it. The whole of this is directly opposite to the tenets of the Jews, particularly the Scribes and Pharisees; who allowed of revenge, and keeping anger against any person that had done them an injury, as has been observed: and which were also the sentiments of the Karaites, or Scripturarians, another sect among them who kept to the letter of the Scriptures, and rejected the traditions of the elders, which the Pharisees held: but in this they agreed with them,

“that it was right to do good to their friends, and to forgive them that asked pardon of them; but to such men who rendered evil, and did not return to do well, that they might receive forgiveness, **µhm rwj nl w µwqnl rwsa wnya**, “it is not forbidden to revenge, and to keep anger against them”^{f356}.”

It is indeed said^{f357} of their former holy men, **µydysj**, “Hasideans”, which some have thought to be the same with the “Essenes”, and a sort of Christians; however, were a better sort of Jews; that these

“heard their reproach, but did not return it; and not only so, but they pardoned him that reproached them, and forgave him.”

And it is reported of these men, that they used to pray to God to pardon and forgive all that disturbed them. But the Pharisees, whom Christ had to do with, and against whom he inveighs, were men of another complexion.

Ver. 45. *That ye may be the children of your father*, etc.] Not that any became the children of God, by doing things in imitation of him: for as in nature no man becomes the son of another by imitating him, or by doing the things he does but either by birth, or by adoption; so in grace no man

becomes a child of God by the works he does, as a follower of God, but by adopting grace; and which is discovered in regeneration. Christ's meaning is, that they might appear, and be known to be the children of God, by doing those things in which they resemble their heavenly Father; and which are agreeable to his nature and conduct; as the tree is known by its fruit, and the cause by its effect: for where adoption and regenerating grace take place, the fruit of good works is brought forth to the glory of God. Some copies, instead of **υιοι**, "children", read **ομοιοι** "like": and accordingly, the Persic version renders it thus, "that ye may be like your Father, which is heaven". Our Lord seems to have respect to the Jews, often having in their mouths this expression, **μυμϙβ wnyba**, "our Father which is in heaven"; and to their frequent boasting that they were the children of God; and therefore he would have them make this manifest by their being like him, or acting in imitation of him;

for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil, and on the good. Christ instances in one of the greatest blessings in nature, the sun, so useful to the earth, and so beneficial to mankind for light and heat; which he calls "his sun": his own, and not another's; which he has made, and maintains, orders to run its race, and commands it to rise morning by morning, and that upon good and bad men; one, as well as another; all equally share in, and partake of its benign influences, and enjoy the comfortable effects and blessings of it:

and sendeth rain on the just and unjust; that is, on the fields of persons of such different characters, even both the early and the latter rain; which makes the earth fruitful, crowns it with goodness, and causes it to bring forth bread to the eater, and seed to the sower. This is one of the most considerable blessings of life; the gift of it is God's sole prerogative; it is peculiar to him; it is what none of the vanities of the Gentiles can give; and yet is bestowed by him on the most worthless and undeserving. This flows from that perfection of God, which the Cabbalists ^{f358} call

"chesed, mercy", or benignity, to which it is essential to give largely to all, both "to the just and unjust".

The Jews have a saying ^{f359}, that

"greater is the day of rain, than the resurrection of the dead; for the resurrection of the dead is for the just; but rain is **μy[ϙr]l ^yb** **μyqdxl ^yb**, "both for the just, and for the wicked":

a way of speaking much like this here. They also used to praise God for rain, on this consideration, because it was given to unworthy persons.

“^{f360} R. Jose Bar Jacob went to visit R. Joden of Magdala; whilst he was there, rain descended, and he heard his voice, saying, thousands of thousands, and millions of millions are bound to praise thy name, O our king, for every drop thou causest to descend upon us, **μybyyj l hbwj l mwg taç**, “because thou renderest good to the wicked”.”

Now our Lord instances in things which could not be denied, and they themselves allowed; and makes use of their own words, to engage them to imitate God, whom they call their Father, by doing good to their enemies, and them that hated them, as well as to their friends and neighbours: yet sometimes they could scarcely allow, that the Gentiles had the same share in this divine favour with themselves; for they say ^{f361}, that

“God works by way of miracle, that rain should not be wanting in his land, although it is wanting in the countries of the Heathen; as he says, (^{r850} Job 5:10) “who giveth rain on the earth”, which is the land of Israel; for on that **rj m br**, “a great rain” descends, and “sendeth waters”, **μyj [m**, “few (which is added to the text) upon the fields”; which relates to what is without the land, whereupon it does not descend, but the substance of the land of Israel; therefore he saith, the Lord will open to thee his good treasure, and not to others.”

Ver. 46. *For if ye love them which love you*, etc.] That is, if ye only love such that love you; for that such who love should be loved again, is both natural and just: our Lord’s meaning is not, that ye ought not to love them that love you, but that these should not be the only objects of your love; for should this be the case,

what reward have ye? or “shall ye have?” Do you deserve any thanks for your love now? none at all, it is what you are obliged to by your friend’s love to you. Do you expect any hereafter with God? if you do, you will be mistaken; you have your reward with men, who have loved you as much as you have done them, and therefore none can be due to you, either from God or men: besides,

do not even the publicans the same? men of the worst characters, and who were most hateful to the Jews, upon many accounts; partly because of their business, which was to collect the Roman tax, and carry it to the proper officers appointed to receive it, and of whom they sometimes farmed it. Now the Roman yoke was very grievous to the Jews, who boasted of their being a free people; nor did they willingly pay their tribute money; and some of them would refuse to do it, under a pretence of religion; wherefore those publicans, or tax gatherers, which were oftentimes men of their own nation, as appears from the instances of Levi and Zacchaeus, were very odious to them; because they looked upon them as joining with the Romans, in oppressing them, and abridging them in their liberty: and partly because of their character and conduct, being men of great improbity, rapine, and covetousness: hence, as in the New Testament, they are frequently joined with “sinners”, as being notorious ones themselves; so in the Talmudic writings, with thieves ^{f362}, and are reckoned as thieves, with murderers, and robbers ^{f363}; they were not allowed as witnesses ^{f364} in any of their courts of judicature; nor were they to be kept company ^{f365} with in private houses. Now our Lord instances in these men who were the most profligate part of the nation, and had in greatest contempt by the rest; and yet these, by the very dictates of nature, loved such as loved them: wherefore it must be shameful and scandalous in the Pharisees, and others, who pretended to great sanctity and religion, to do no more than these persons did.

Ver. 47. *And if you salute your brethren only*, etc.] This does not mean salutation by embraces or kisses, but by words, asking of each other’s welfare, and wishing prosperity and happiness to one another.

“The manner of salutation among the wise men was this ^{f366}; he that salutes says, a good day to my lord; and he replies, saying, a good, and long day to my lord: always he that replies doubles the salutation.”

The persons they usually gave their salutations to were those of their own nation, their countrymen, relations, and friends; and who are here designed by “brethren”; meaning, not brethren in the strict sense, but any kindred, acquaintance, or any of their own nation. Some copies read it “friends”, who, generally speaking, only partook of such favours.

“A man, (says Maimonides ^{f367}), might not salute his master, nor return a salutation to him in the manner they gave a salutation $\mu\gamma[\rho\iota]$, to “friends”: and they return it to one another.”

They were not very free in saluting any persons, as strangers and Gentiles: such advice as this is indeed given $\mu\delta\alpha\ \iota\ \kappa\ \mu\omega\iota\ \zeta\beta\ \mu\gamma\delta\alpha\mu\ \gamma\omega\eta$ ^{f368}, “prevent every man with a salutation”, or be first in saluting every man; upon which passage their commentators ^{f369} say, even a Gentile in the streets. Accordingly, it is elsewhere ^{f370} observed, that

“R. Abai used to say, let a man be always cunning with fear, for “a soft answer turns away wrath”; and multiply salutation with his brethren, and with his relations, and with every man, even with a stranger in the streets.”

But this proceeded not from any cordial hearty respect, but out of policy, and from fear; and in order to maintain peace; and for selfish ends, and with sinister views: otherwise their salutations were confined to their brethren and kinsfolk after the flesh. Now, this being the case, says Christ,

what do ye more than others? do not even publicans so? Or, as some copies read it, Gentiles or Heathens; and accordingly the Ethiopic version, and the Vulgate Latin so render it: the Arabic renders it “idolaters”. Now, what great matter was this to salute their brethren and their friends, when even the very Heathens, who had nothing but the light of nature to guide them, did the same?

Ver. 48. *Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father,* etc.] This perfection is to be restrained to the subject Christ is upon, love to men, and not to be referred to any, or every other thing; wherefore, in (⁴¹⁶Luke 6:36) it is, “be ye merciful, as your Father also is merciful”; and regards not a perfection of degree in that, but objects and quality: that is to say, not that men may, or can, or ought to be as perfect in love, as to the degree of it, as God is; that is impossible: the “as” here, is not a note of equality, but of likeness: such, who profess God to be their Father, ought to imitate him, particularly in their love to men, which ought to be extended to the same objects, as the divine goodness is; that, as he shows regard in a providential way to all men, good and bad, just and unjust, and his tender mercies are over all his works; so ought they to love all men with a natural affection, and hate no man, no, not their enemies: for he that loves only his friends, and not his enemies, loves imperfectly; he does not take in the whole compass of

objects his love is to extend unto; and as God loves sincerely, and without dissimulation, so should they. To be “perfect”, is to be sincere and upright: in this sense is the word often used, and answers to the Hebrew word **μymt**, which signifies the same: (see ⁴⁵⁸³Deuteronomy 18:13) which is the passage Christ seems to refer to here; and the sense is, be ye sincere and upright in your love to all men, as your heavenly Father is hearty and sincere in his affections to them.