

CHAPTER 18

INTRODUCTION TO MATTHEW 18

Ver. 1. *At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus*, etc.] When the receivers of the half shekel had spoke to Peter about his master's paying it, and Christ and he had conversed about it, by whose orders he had taken up a fish out of the sea, and from it a piece of money, which he had paid for them both; just at this time came the other eleven disciples to the house where Christ and Peter were: saying,

who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? Mark says, that the disciples disputed this point in the way; and that when they came to Jesus, he put the question to them, what they had been disputing about: and Luke takes no notice of any question put by one or another; but observes, that Christ perceiving the thoughts of their hearts, in order to rebuke, and convince them, took the method hereafter mentioned. All which is reconcilable, and of a piece: the sum is this; that as they were in the way to Capernaum they fell upon this question, which, being known to Christ, the omniscient God; when they came to Capernaum, and to the house where he was, and knowing that the same thought was in them, he asked them what they had been talking of by the way; upon which they were silent; but calling them nearer to him, and they finding that the matter was known, took courage to put the question to him, and desired to have his sense of it. The Vulgate Latin reads, "who dost thou think"; and the Arabic version, "who in thy opinion", etc. The occasion of this could not be the respect shown to Peter, in paying the half shekel for him; for this conversation was begun in the way, and before this was done, or, at least, before they knew it: rather it might be occasioned by his promise of giving the keys of the kingdom of heaven to him; or by his taking him, and James, and John, so lately to the mountain with him, where he was transfigured before them; though it seems best to ascribe it to the mention Christ had made of his resurrection from the dead: for as Dr. Lightfoot, Hammond, and others, have observed, something of this kind generally followed any account Christ gave of his death and resurrection, as (~~408E~~ Mark 9:31,34 ~~410E~~ Matthew 20:19,20 ~~422E~~ Luke 22:24) and this thought of an earthly kingdom still continued,

when they saw him risen, (^{400b}Acts 1:6) for they had been taught, that the resurrection, and the kingdom of the Messiah, would be at the same time ^{f985}. And, by the kingdom of heaven, they meant, not the kingdom of glory in another world, but the kingdom of the Messiah in this; and which they looked upon to be a temporal one, though they call it the kingdom of heaven; not only because Christ often used this phrase, but because the times of the Messiah, and his reign, were frequently so called by the Jews; *See Gill* “^{400b}Matthew 3:2”. Now, what they wanted to be satisfied in was, who should be advanced to the post highest in that kingdom next to the Messiah; and, as they doubted not but it would fall on one of them, to have the most honourable post, and the place of the greatest trust, they were desirous of knowing who it should be.

Ver. 2. *And Jesus called a little child unto him*, etc.] One, very likely, that was in the house, and might belong to the master of it, and which was big enough to come to him at his call. Some have thought that this was Ignatius the martyr, but without any foundation. His own words, in his epistle to the church at Smyrna ^{f986}, can give no countenance to it; where he says, “for I also know, that after his resurrection he was in the flesh, and I believe that he is.” The Latin version indeed renders it thus; “for I also saw him in the flesh after the resurrection, and believe that he exists.” But it does not follow from hence that he must be this child, but rather the contrary; since it cannot be thought, that a child so young as this, in half a year after, had it seen Christ, when risen from the dead, could have took so much notice of him, as this version represents Ignatius to do; but it matters not who it was; Christ designed, by this emblem, to give them his sense of the question, and convey some proper instruction to the minds of his disciples:

and set him in the midst of them; that everyone might see him; and upon the very sight of him, had he said no more to them, they might easily have perceived what was his opinion; that he that was but a child, the most humble, and least in his own eyes, would be the greatest: but besides setting the child in such a situation, he pointed to him, saying what follows.

Ver. 3. *And said, verily I say unto you*, etc.] You may take it for a certain truth, and what may be depended upon, that

except ye be converted or turned; from that gross notion of a temporal kingdom, and of enjoying great grandeur, and outward felicity in this world; and from all your vain views of honour, wealth, and riches,

and become as little children: the Arabic renders it, “as this child”; that is, unless ye learn to entertain an humble, and modest opinion of yourselves, are not envious at one another, and drop all contentions about primacy and pre-eminence, and all your ambitious views of one being greater than another, in a vainly expected temporal kingdom; things which are not to be found in little children, though not free from sin in other respects,

ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven: ye shall be so far from being one greater than another in it, that you shall not enter into it at all; meaning his visible, spiritual kingdom, which should take place, and appear after his resurrection, upon his ascension to heaven, and pouring forth of the Spirit: and it is to be observed, that the apostles carried these carnal views, contentions, and sentiments, till that time, and then were turned from them, and dropped them; for, upon the extraordinary effusion of the Holy Spirit, they were cleared of these worldly principles, and understood the spiritual nature of Christ’s kingdom; which they then entered into, and took their place in, and filled it up with great success, without envying one another; having received the same commission from their Lord, and Master: so that these words are a sort of prophecy of what should be, as well as designed as a rebuke to them for their present ambition and contentions.

Ver. 4. *Whosoever therefore shall humble himself*, etc.] Whoever shall entertain mean thoughts of himself, and prefer others to himself, shall behave in a modest humble manner, not affecting dominion over others, or treating his brethren and Christians in a haughty and supercilious manner, with scorn and contempt; but condescend to those of the lowest state, and place himself in the lowest form, conversing with his friends freely and familiarly, without distinction,

as this little child; or any other of the like age; for there is no reason to suppose, that there was anything peculiar in this child, which was not in another, it being common to children to behave towards one another, as on a level; not to envy one another, or to set up one above another, or be vainly elated with the distinctions of birth and fortune.

The same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven; in the Gospel church state; which was verified in the Apostle Paul, though not one of the twelve: nor are these words limited to them; at least, this passage may be illustrated in his case: he thought himself to be the chief of sinners, and less than the least of all saints, and unworthy to be called an apostle; yet had the largest measures of grace, the greatest gifts and abilities; and was honoured with

the greatest usefulness and success in the preaching of the Gospel to the conversion of sinners, and planting of churches; labouring more abundantly than they all.

Ver. 5. *And whoso shall receive one such little child*, etc.] Which is to be understood, not literally but metaphorically; meaning not such an one in age, but one, as the Syriac renders it, *and ayl j Aya*, “that is as this child”: like unto it for modesty and humility; one, that is as that, free from pride, ambition, and envy. Christ’s sense is, that whoever receives his disciples, that are meek and lowly, into their houses, or into their hearts and affections; that receives their ministry and message, embraces the Gospel preached by them with readiness and cheerfulness, with faith and love,

in my name; on his account, because they are his disciples, believe in him, preach his Gospel, and, as being sent by, and representing him,

receiveth me: it is so taken by Christ, as if he was personally present, and personally received, and had all the favours shown to his, done to himself in person; yea, such receive Christ in the ministry of the word, he being the sum and substance of it. This is said to encourage modesty and humility; and intimates, that proud and haughty persons will not be received as the disciples and followers of the meek and lowly Jesus; and to encourage persons to receive such that are modest and humble, since the respect shown to them, is all one as if shown to him.

Ver. 6. *But whoso shall offend one of these little ones*, etc.] Not in age, but are little and mean in their own eyes, and contemptible in the esteem of the world; though otherwise men of great grace, gifts, and usefulness; who may be said to be offended, when they are not received; their persons despised, their ministry rejected, and they reproached and persecuted; and everything done to them to discourage, and cause them to stumble and fall, to drop their profession of Christ, to quit his service, and desert his cause: and that such persons are designed, appears by the following descriptive character of them,

which believe in me; which cannot be said of infants, or little ones in age, and who also are not capable of offence; but must be understood of adult persons, of such who by faith look unto, lay hold on, and receive the Lord Jesus Christ, as their Saviour and Redeemer, and who make a profession of their faith in him; and chiefly of such who preach the doctrine of faith, who

having believed, therefore speak; and who are generally the butt of the contempt, reproach, and persecution of men.

It were better for him, that a mill stone be hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. The word translated “depth”, is sometimes used for the Sea itself, (²⁵¹⁰Isaiah 51:10) and signifies the middle, or deeper path, and answers to the Hebrew phrase, “the heart of the sea”; *abr amyd swgl yp*, used by the Targum, in (⁹⁴⁸Psalm 46:3) and by Jonathan ben Uzziel, in (²¹⁷⁸Exodus 15:8). Jerom thinks, that this was a sort of punishment in use among the Jews, that is here referred to; but this does not appear. The four capital punishments inflicted by them were stoning, burning, slaying with the sword, and strangling^{f987}: they had indeed other sorts of punishment, which they borrowed from other nations; and so they might this, either from the Romans, or Greeks, or their neighbours the Syrians. The mill stone, in the original, is called *μυλος ονικος*, which may be rendered “the ass mill stone”, being either the nether mill stone, as some think, which was called “the ass”, because, like an ass, it bears the chief of the weight and burden; or else respects such mill stones as were turned about by an ass, in distinction from those that were turned by the hand; for that it was usual with the Jews to make use of asses in grinding, as well as other nations, is certain: hence we read^{f988} of *ayj yr armj* “the ass of mills”, that were employed in grinding in the mills, and of one that turned his mill with wild asses^{f989}: but it is further to be observed, that mention is made^{f990} of *dy l ç μyj r l ç rwmj*, “the ass of an handmill”: which the commentators say^{f991}, was a beam on which an handmill was fixed, and was called “the ass.” Now, I should rather think that this is meant than the other. It does not seem likely that a nether mill stone, or one that required an ass to turn it, should be tied to a man’s neck, in order to drown him, when cast into the sea; for our Lord must be thought to refer to a practice somewhere in use: but rather, that such a beam, or log, of an handmill, so called, were wont to be put about the necks of malefactors, in drowning them. Our Lord’s sense is, that it was much better for a man to endure the severest temporal punishment, rather than by offending, and evil treating any of his disciples, expose himself to everlasting destruction. The phrase of having a mill stone about the neck, I find, is sometimes used to denote anything very troublesome and burdensome^{f992}.

“The tradition is, a man that marries a wife, and after that learns the law, R. Jochanan says, *wrawxb muj yr*, “though a mill stone is about his neck”, yet he must study in the law: that is, though his worldly circumstances are narrow, and his wife and family are as burdensome as if he had a mill stone about his neck, he must continue his studies.”

Ver. 7. *Woe unto the world because of offences!* etc.] By which are meant, not sins, as sometimes, but rather temptations to sin; and so the Ethiopic version renders this word by “temptation” in every clause, as the Arabic does in the next; and may design all the contempt and reproach cast upon the doctrines, ordinances, and people of Christ, and all those afflictions, distresses, and persecutions exercised on them, on purpose to cause them to stumble and fall; to tempt them to deny the truth, drop their profession of religion, and relinquish the service of Christ; things which are displeasing to God, discouraging to his people, and often attended with bad consequences to formal professors; and bring down the judgments of God upon the men of the world; who sooner or later will vindicate his own cause, avenge his own elect, and render tribulation to them that trouble them.

For it must needs be that offences come; considering the implacable malice of Satan, his unwearied and indefatigable pains, the malignity of the men of the world, their aversion and enmity to the Gospel of Christ, and all good men; it cannot be thought, God suffering such things for the trial of such as are truly gracious, and for the discovery of hypocrites, and for the manifestation of his grace, power, and faithfulness in the preservation of his dear children, that it should be otherwise, but that such offences should be:

but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh; for though God, for wise ends and reasons, as above, voluntarily permits such things to be in the world; and though they do not succeed, as to cause the true followers of Christ so to stumble and fall, as to perish, yet this does not excuse their sin and wickedness, in doing all that in them lay to effect it. For though God will, and does overrule all their base designs against his ministers, church, and people, for his glory, and their good, this is no thanks to them; and as it does not in the least extenuate their crime, it will not abate the severity of their punishment.

Ver. 8, 9. *Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot*, etc.] The same words are repeated here on occasion of offences, as are spoken by Christ, (^{<40B>}Matthew 5:29,30) on account of unchaste looks, desires and lusts: giving offence to Christ's disciples, or endeavouring, by any means whatever, to cause them to stumble and fall, is equally gratifying the flesh, and no more to be indulged, than the other, on pain of eternal damnation. *See Gill* "^{<40B>}Matthew 5:29" *See Gill* "^{<40B>}Matthew 5:30"

Ver. 10. *Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones*, etc.] That is, one of those little ones that believed in Christ; for he is not speaking of infants in age, but of those who might be compared to such, for their humility and modesty; who were little in their own eyes, and mean and despicable in the eyes of the world, as well as appeared but little in the eyes of their fellow disciples and brethren; for our Lord returns and addresses himself to his disciples, who had been contending among themselves who should be greatest in the kingdom of heaven; and so were striving to lessen one another, each looking upon himself as the greater, and every other as little. Wherefore Christ cautions them against such a spirit, and bids them beware of despising their fellow disciples, as little, and below them; especially since so much notice and care were taken of them, both in heaven, and in earth:

for I say unto you, that in heaven: the phrase, "in heaven", is omitted in the Syriac and Persic versions, perhaps because it might be looked upon as unnecessary, since it afterwards appears; but is very proper, or pertinent, whether it be considered as descriptive of the angels, who have their habitation there, in distinction from the evil angels, who are cast down from thence; or as pointing out the place where the angels behold the face of God, and who are styled "their angels"; the angels of the little ones, that believe in Christ, who are ministering spirits unto them, the guardians of them, who encamp about them, and do many good offices for them. Some have thought from hence, that every good man has his peculiar angel that waits upon him, and cares for him; but this does not necessarily follow from, these words, only that they all have an interest in angels, and in their good services. This seems indeed to have been a notion that prevailed among the Jews, not only that there were angels which presided over particular nations, but who also had the care of particular persons; so they speak of an angel that was particularly appointed for Abraham^{f993}. Nor will they allow, that one angel does two messages, nor two angels one^{f994}

message: but that everyone has his particular place, person, and work; of whom it is further said, that they

do always behold the face of my father which is in heaven: which is not so much to be understood of their intellectual knowledge, and apprehension of the divine being, of their beholding the glory of his nature, and essence, and of their contemplating and applauding his perfections; as of their ministering before him, waiting, as servants, upon him, watching to receive his orders, and ready to obey his commands. And our Lord's argument is, that if such excellent creatures as the angels in heaven, who are continually favoured with being in the presence of Christ's heavenly father, honoured with so high a station, as always to stand before him, as ministers of his; if these are the guardians of these little ones, if they are committed to their care, and they have the oversight of them, then they ought not to be despised: and besides, since the angels that have the care of them are so near the throne, it should deter everyone from having their charge in contempt, or doing any injury to them; since they are capable of lodging accusations and complaints against them; and, when leave is given, have power of executing the sorest judgments upon men. This description of angels agrees with what the Jews say of them, especially of the chief of them. Michael, they say^{f995}, is the first and principal of the chief princes, *Æl mh ynp yawr* "that behold the face of the king"; that is, the King of kings, the Lord of hosts. Suriel, which, with them, is another name of an angel, is called^{f996}, *μυνφh ρϙ*, "the prince of faces", who is always in the presence of God; and, as the gloss says, is "an angel that is counted worthy to come before the king."

Ver. 11. *For the Son of man is come to seek that which was lost.*] This is another, and stronger reason, why these little ones should not be despised; because Christ, who is here meant by the Son of man, came into this world to save these persons; who were lost in Adam, and had destroyed themselves by their transgressions, and carries great force in it: for if God had so great a regard to these little ones, as to send his Son to obtain eternal salvation for them, when they were in a miserable and perishing condition; and Christ had so much love for them, as to come into this world, and endure the sorrows, sufferings, and death itself for them, who were not only little, but lost; and that to obtain righteousness and life for them, and save them with an everlasting salvation; then they must, and ought to be, far above the contempt of all mortals; and the utmost care

should be taken not to despise, grieve, offend, and injure them in any form or shape whatever; (see ^{<6445>}Romans 14:15 ^{<4811>}1 Corinthians 8:11). Beza observes, that this whole verse is left out in some Greek copies, but it stands in others, and in all the Oriental versions, and in Munster's Hebrew Gospel; nor can it be omitted; the following parable, which is an exemplification of it, requires it.

Ver. 12. *How think ye*, etc.] Or, as the Arabic, "what do you think?" what is your opinion of this matter? what is your sense of it? how does it appear to you? It is a Talmudic way of speaking, the same with [^]yrwbs ^μta hm "what do you think?" what is your judgment? So the Rabbins, after they have discussed a point among themselves, ask ^{f997}, [^]l arybs yam, "what is our opinion?" or what do we think upon the whole? Christ here appeals to his disciples, makes them judges themselves in this matter, and illustrates it by a familiar instance of a man's seeking and finding his lost sheep, and rejoicing at it.

If a man have an hundred sheep; who is the proprietor of them; not the hireling, who has them under his care, and whose the sheep are not; but the owner of them, to whom they belong, and who must be thought to be most concerned for anyone of them that should go astray: a hundred sheep seem to be the number of a flock; at least flocks of sheep used to be divided into hundreds. In a Maronite's will, a field is thus bequeathed ^{f998};

"the north part of it to such an one, and with it [^]ax ham, "a hundred sheep", and a hundred vessels; and the south part of it to such an one, and with it [^]ax ham, "a hundred sheep", and a hundred vessels; and he died, and the wise men confirmed his words, or his will."

Such a supposition, or putting such a case as this, is very proper and pertinent.

And one of them be gone astray; which sheep are very prone to; (see ^{<13976>}Psalm 119:176 ^{<2316>}Isaiah 53:6);

doth he not leave the ninety and nine, which are not gone astray, in the place where they are; it is usual so to do:

and goeth into the mountains; alluding to the mountains of Israel, where were pastures for sheep, (^{<25413>}Ezekiel 34:13,14) and whither sheep are apt

to wander, and go from mountain to mountain, (²⁵¹⁶Jeremiah 50:6), and therefore these were proper places to go after them, and seek for them in: but the Vulgate Latin version joins the words “in” or “on the mountains”, to the preceding clause, and reads,

doth he not leave the ninety and nine in the mountains; and so read all the Oriental versions, Syriac, Arabic, Ethiopic, and Persic; and in the same manner Theophylact;

and seeketh that which is gone astray? This is usual with men: no man that has a flock of sheep, and though but one strays from it, but takes this method. This parable now may be considered, either as an illustration of the Son of man’s coming into this world, to seek, and to save his lost sheep, mentioned in the preceding verse; even the lost sheep of the house of Israel, the little ones that believed in him, who were despised by the Jews. And then by the “ninety and nine”, we are not to understand the angels; who never went astray, never sinned, but kept their first estate, whom Christ left in the highest heavens, on the holy mountains of eternity, when he became incarnate, and came down on earth to redeem mankind: for these never go by the name of sheep; nor are they of the same nature and kind with the one that strays, and is sought out; nor is their number, with respect to men, as ninety nine to one; at least it cannot be ascertained; nor were they left by Christ, when he came on earth; for a multitude descended at his birth, and sung glory to God. Nor are the saints in heaven intended, whose state is safe; since it cannot be said of them, as in the following verse, that they went not astray; for they went astray like lost sheep, as others, and were looked up, sought out, and saved by Christ as others; but rather, by them, are meant the body of the Jewish nation, the far greater part of them, the Scribes and Pharisees, who rejected the Messiah, and despised those that believed in him: these were in sheep’s clothing, of the flock of the house of Israel, of the Jewish fold; and with respect to the remnant among them, according to the election of grace, were as ninety nine to one: these were left by Christ, and taken no notice of by him, in comparison of the little ones, the lost sheep of the house of Israel he came to save: these he left on the mountains, on the barren pastures of Mount Sinai, feeding on their own works and services; or rather, he went into the mountains, or came leaping and skipping over them, (²¹¹⁸Song of Solomon 2:8), encountering with, and surmounting all difficulties that lay in the way of the salvation of his people; such as appearing in the likeness of sinful flesh, bearing, and carrying the griefs and sorrows of his people, obeying

the law, satisfying justice, bearing their sins, and undergoing an accursed death, in order to obtain the salvation of his chosen ones, designed by the one sheep “that was gone astray”; who strayed from God, from his law, the rule of their walk, out of his way, into the ways of sin, which are of their own choosing and approving: or, the intention of this parable is, to set forth the great regard God has to persons ever so mean, that believe in Christ, whom he would not have stumbled and offended, and takes special care of them, that they shall not perish; even as the proprietor of a flock of sheep is more concerned for one straying one, than for the other ninety nine that remain.

Ver. 13. *And if so be that he find it*, etc.] Which is a casual and uncertain thing with the shepherd, but not so with Christ, who certainly finds all those he goes after, and seeks: for,

verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep; at the finding of it, whose loss greatly affected him,

than of the ninety and nine which went not astray; who seemed not to go astray, were outwardly righteous before men, and, in their own opinion, being the same with the ninety and nine just persons who needed no repentance in their own apprehension, (~~☞~~ Luke 15:7). This same parable is related in (~~☞~~ Luke 15:3,4,5,6), and it being there more largely expressed, and along with other parables of the same kind, I shall refer the more particular consideration of it to that place; only observe, that it seems to me that this parable was twice delivered by our Lord, and that on two different occasions; once, as here, in his discourse on offences, and upon mention of his coming into this world to save lost sinners; at another time, as there, upon the Pharisees murmuring at his receiving sinners, and eating with them.

Ver. 14. *Even so it is not the will of your father which is in heaven*, etc.] This is the accommodation, or application of the parable of the lost sheep to the present purpose, and is the top of the climax or gradation here made use of. First, Christ observes, in order to deter any from despising and offending any of his disciples, even the meanest, that they have angels to be their guardians, who are continually in the presence of God; and next, that he himself in human nature came to be the author of salvation to these persons; and then rises up to the sovereign will of his Father, and their’s, the source and security of their everlasting happiness; which will is, not

that one of these little ones, that believe in Christ,

should perish. It is his will of command that no stumbling block should be laid in their way to cause them to stumble and fall, to the grieving of their souls, the wounding of their consciences, and the perishing, or loss of their peace and comfort; and it is his unalterable will of purpose, or his unchangeable decree, that not one of them, even the meanest, shall perish eternally: in pursuance of which will, he has chosen them in his Son, he has put them into his hands, and secured them in his covenant; and having redeemed them by Christ, and called them by grace, he keeps them by his power, through faith unto salvation. Nor shall anyone of them finally and totally fall away and perish, through the power of their own corruptions, the temptations of Satan, the reproaches and persecutions of men, the frowns or flatteries of the world, or through the errors and heresies of false teachers, or any other way. It is to be observed, that when our Lord, in (⁴¹⁸⁰Matthew 18:10), is speaking of the happiness of the angels, and the honour done to the little ones by having such guardians; then the more to aggrandize this matter, he represents those as in the presence of his “Father which is in heaven”; but here, when he would express the wonderful love and grace of God, in the resolutions of his heart, and purposes of his will, to save them, then it is “your Father which is in heaven”; and this, the rather to engage them to the belief of it, since they stood in such a near relation to him, as children to a father: and therefore must be infinitely more concerned for their welfare, than a proprietor of sheep can be, for one that is lost. The Arabic and Ethiopic versions indeed read, “my father”, but without any authority; for the phraseology, “the will before your Father”, as in the original text, *See Gill* “⁴¹²⁵Matthew 11:26”

Ver. 15. *Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee*, etc.] This is said to show, that as on the one hand, if any of those that believe in Christ, should commit a trespass against his fellow Christian, his sin is not to be connived at, for fear of offending him; for what Christ has before said, is not to be taken in such sense, as to prevent private reproof, or public censures, when there is occasion for them; so on the other hand, he is not to be despised and ill used, and treated in the same injurious manner; but gentle reproofs are to be made use of, for his good. This is spoken not to the apostles as such, but as believers in Christ; and concerns everyone that stands in the relation of a brother, or church member to each other, and only such; for they that are without, do not fall under their notice, nor are they obliged to take, nor can they take altogether, the same methods with

them. This rule respects sins committed by one brother against another, either in word or deed; or such as are of a private nature, and which one only, or at least but few, are acquainted with: in such cases the advice is,

go and tell him his fault between thee, and him alone; do not wait for his coming to thee, as being the aggressor, to acknowledge his fault, testify his repentance, express his sorrow for his sin, and ask pardon: but go to him, and freely and faithfully lay his sin before him; but do not aggravate it, and reproach him with it, and bear hard on him for it, but gently rebuke and reprove him: let this be done in the most private manner; let none be present, nor any know of it, even the most intimate friend and acquaintance:

if he shall hear thee; patiently, take your reproof kindly, acknowledge his offence, declare his hearty sorrow for it, and desire it might be overlooked, and reconciliation made:

thou hast gained thy brother; recovered him from the error of his ways, restored him to his duty, and secured his friendship, and interest in his favour; nor should any mention be made of this ever after, either to him, or any other, or to the church.

Ver. 16. *But if he will not hear thee*, etc.]. But will either deny the fact, or extenuate and excuse it, or defend it, or at least is obstinate and incorrigible, shows no signs of repentance, but is angry, gives hard words, and ill language:

then take with thee one or two more; members of the church, and perhaps of weight, reputation, and character, who either know some thing of the matter, and so can confirm, by their testimony, what has been alleged, in order to bring the person to conviction and acknowledgment; or if they do not, and which seems rather to be the sense, they may, by hearing what is said on both sides, judge where the truth lies, and join with the offended person in the admonition, that it may fall with the greater weight, and become more effectual:

that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established, referring to (⁴⁵¹⁹¹⁵Deuteronomy 19:15). So that should the matter be brought before the whole church, these witnesses would be able to testify the truth of the case, and report the steps that had been taken, and what effect they had had; so that things being thus prepared, the case would appear plain and easy, and without difficulty. The whole of this is very agreeable to the

rules and customs of the Jews, and is founded on the law, in (~~(8897)~~ Leviticus 19:17), upon which they form rules very much like to these. They represent God himself taking such a method as this, with the sons of men ^{f999}:

“When the holy blessed God reprove a man, he reprove him in love, privately: if he receives it, it is well; if not, he reprove him among his friends: if he receives it, it is well; if not he reprove him openly before the eyes of all; if he receives it is well; if not, he leaves him, and reprove him no more.”

And this is an instruction to men, how they should reprove their friends. They say ^{f1000}, “he that sees anything in his friend that is not becoming, he ought to reprove him.” And which is elsewhere more ^{f1001} largely expressed:

“he that seeth his friend walking in a way that is not good, he is bound to reprove him, even a disciple his master; and this he shall do for his good, and in order to bring him to the life of the world to come, or eternal life; and “if he takes it of him, it is well”: but if not, he must reprove again, “a second and a third time”; and so he must reprove him many times, if, or until he hears him.”

And this they require to be done, in the most private manner:

“reproof out of love (they ^{f1002} say) is secret from the children of men; whoever reprove his friend in love, seeks to secrete his words from the sons of men, that he may not expose him thereby to shame and reproach.”

That is, as the gloss ^{f1003} on it observes,

“he seeks to reprove him in secret, so that he may not be put to shame before many.”

If this way does not succeed, they allow of a public reproof, for so it is said ^{f1004};

“thou mayest not reprove him with hard words, till his countenance changes; for whoever causes the face of his friend to turn pale publicly, has no portion in the world to come; but thou mayest reprove in the words of heaven, or God; and if he does not return privately, thou mayest make him ashamed publicly, and expose his

sin before him; and reproach and curse him, until he returns to do well; so did all the prophets to Israel.”

They plead also for a second reproof, from the text in (^{f1005}Leviticus 19:17)

From whence does it appear, that he that sees anything in his friend unbecoming, ought to reprove him? As it is said, “thou shalt in any wise rebuke”, etc. if he reproves him, **l bq al w**, “and he does not receive it”, (he does not take it kindly, or, as here, he does not hear him,) from whence is it manifest, that he must return and reprove him (or repeat the reproof)? from what is said, *reproving thou shall reprove.*”

The whole of this is very fully expressed in a few words, by one ^{f1006} of their best writers, and in great agreement with these rules of Christ:

“He that sees his friend sinning, or going in a way not good, he is commanded to cause him to return to that which is good; and to let him know, that he sins against himself by his evil works; as it is said, “thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour”: he that reproveth his friend, whether for things between him and himself, or whether for things between him and God, “ought to reprove him”, **wmx[^ybl wnyb**, “between him and himself”; and should speak to him mildly, and in tender language; and let him know that he does not speak to, him, but for his good, and to bring him to everlasting life; “and if he receives it of him, it is well, and if not, he must reprove him”, **tyçyl çw hyynç μ[p** “a second and a third time”; and so a man must continually reprove, until the sinner strikes him and says”, I will not hear.””

Buxtorf has produced a passage out of one of their writers ^{f1007}, in the very language in which Christ here delivers himself:

“The wise man says, if thy friend does thee an injury, reprove him between him and thee alone: if he hears thee, thou hast already gained; if he does not hear thee, speak to him before one or two, who may hear the matter, and if he will not hear reckon him a “worthless friend”.”

One would almost be ready to think, that this writer should mean Christ by the wise man, were it not for the implacable enmity he bears unto him.

The above author has cited also the following passage out of the same ^{f1008} writer, pertinent to the present purpose:

“A friend that declares to thee thy faults, “between him and thee”, whenever he meets thee, is better to thee than a friend, that whenever he meets thee, gives thee a golden penny.”

Ver. 17. *And if he shall neglect to hear them*, etc.] The one or two, in conjunction with the offended person that shall hear the ease, and admonish and reprove; if he takes no notice of what they say to him, but remains stiff and impenitent, tell it unto the church: which some understand, of the **μybr**, or “multitude”, before whom it was lawful to reprove, after such private methods had been taken: others, the political magistrates, or sanhedrim; who took cognizance of cases between one person and other, either by themselves, or messengers; and gave admonitions and reproofs, as to parents, when they did not provide for their families ^{f1009}, and to wives that were perverse, and provoked their husbands ^{f1010}, etc. others, of the presbyters and governors of the Christian church; others, of the church itself, and so the Ethiopic version renders it, “the house of Christians”; to which it is objected, that as yet a Christian church was not formed: but what were the twelve apostles of the Lamb? They were the great congregation and church, in the midst of which Christ sung praise to his Father: and since the whole of this advice, and these excellent rules are given to them, and they are spoken of in the next verse, as having the power of binding and loosing, they may well be thought to be meant here; and that the design of Christ is, to instruct them how to behave, in case of offence to one another; that the reproof should be first private, and if it did not succeed, to be made before one or two more; and if that did not do, the whole body was to be acquainted with it; and which rules hold good, and are to be observed by all Christian men and churches, in all ages: though no doubt but allusion is made to the Jewish customs, in rebuking before the multitude, or carrying of a private case, after all other means used were ineffectual, to the sanhedrim.

But if he neglect to hear the church: the advice they should give unto him, the reproof they should think proper for him, or the censure they should pass upon him,

let him be unto thee as an heathen man, and a publican. This is not a form of excommunication to be used among Christians, nor was there ever any

such form among the Jews; nor could Heathens or publicans, especially such publicans as were Gentiles, be excommunicated, when they never were of the Jewish church.

“A religious person indeed, that becomes a collector of taxes, they first said, is to be driven from the society; but they afterwards said, all the time that he is a tax gatherer, they drive him from the society; but when he goes out of his office, lo! he is as a religious person ^{f1011}.”

But one that never was of a religious society, could not be driven out of it. And besides, this is given, not as a rule to the church, but as advice to the offended person, how to behave towards the offender: after he has come under the cognizance, reproof, and censure of the church, he is to look upon him as the Jews did one that disregarded both private reproof by a man’s self, and that which was in the presence of one or two more, **twj p rbj**, “a worthless friend”, or neighbour; as a Gentile, with whom the Jews had neither religious nor civil conversation; and a “publican”, or as Munster’s Hebrew Gospel reads it, **hrb[l [b** “a notorious sinner”, as a publican was accounted: hence such are often joined together, and with whom the Jews might not eat, nor keep any friendly and familiar acquaintance: and so such that have been privately admonished and publicly rebuked, without success, their company is to be shunned, and intimate friendship with them to be avoided.

Ver. 18. *Verily I say unto you*, etc.] To them all, what he had said before to Peter; *See Gill* “^{<4069>}*Matthew 16:19*”: what is said here, refers to things and not persons, as there also.

Ver. 19. *Again, I say unto you*, etc.] As the words in the former verse seem to regard the whole body of the disciples, whose decisions in cases brought before them, declaring them just or unjust, are determinate and unalterable; these seem to respect the one or two, that should join the offended person in the reproof of the offender, and are spoken for their encouragement; who might think proper either to premise, or follow their engaging in such a work with prayer:

that if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching anything that they shall ask; both in the case before mentioned, and in any other thing: whether it be for themselves or others; to assist them in the ministry of the word, and give success to it, for the conversion of sinners; and in the

performance of any miracle, for the confirmation of the Gospel; in the administration of ordinances, for the comfort of saints; and in laying on of censures, for the reclaiming of backsliders; or be it what it will that may be done, consistent with the glory of God, the purposes of his mind, and the declarations of his will, and the good of men, provided they agree in their requests; though they are here on earth, and at such a distance from heaven, from whence their help and assistance come:

it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven; with whom nothing is impossible; and who, as he regards the effectual fervent prayer of any righteous man, so more, of two agreed together in anyone thing; and still more, of a church and community of saints in their united requests: a great encouragement this to social prayer, though ever so few are engaged in it.

Ver. 20. *For where two or three are gathered together*, etc.] This seems to be said in opposition to a Jewish notion, that a number less than ten, is not a congregation ^{f1012}; whereas, though the number is ever so few that are met together to pray to God; or to hear his word, attend on his ordinances, or do the business of his house, or transact any affair that is for the glory of God, and the good of souls, in my name, says Christ; that is, by his authority, depending on his assistance, calling upon his name, and making use of it, and seeking the glory of it:

there am I in the midst of them; presiding over them, ruling in their hearts, directing their counsels, assisting them in all they are concerned, confirming what they do, and giving a blessing and success to all they are engaged in. The Jews, though they say there is no congregation less than ten, yet own that the divine presence may be with a lesser number, even as small an one as here mentioned ^{f1013}.

“Ten that sit and study in the law, the Shechaniah dwells among them, as it is said, (~~3831~~ Psalm 82:1). From whence does this appear, if but five? from (~~3006~~ Amos 9:6), from whence, if but three? from (~~3831~~ Psalm 82:1), from whence, if but two? from (~~3016~~ Malachi 3:16), from whence, if but one? from (~~0204~~ Exodus 20:24).”

And again ^{f1014},

“two that sit together, and the words of the law are between them, the Shechaniah dwells among them, according to (~~3016~~ Malachi 3:16), from whence does it appear, that if but one sits and studies in

the law, the holy blessed God hath fixed a reward for him? from (~~<2183>~~Lamentations 3:28).”

Ver. 21. *Then came Peter unto him*, etc.] Having heard and observed the rules Christ gave concerning offences and brotherly reproofs, he drew near to Christ, and put this question to him:

and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? He instances in a brother, because it was such an one Christ had been speaking of; he makes no doubt of its being his duty to forgive him upon his repentance, and acknowledgment, but wanted to be reformed, how often this was to be done, and asks, whether

until seven times? Which was, as he might think, a large number; and especially, since it was double the number of times, that the Jewish doctors set for forgiveness: for thus they say ^{f1015},

“A man that commits a sin, the “first” time they pardon him; the “second” time they pardon him; the “third” time they pardon him: the “fourth” time they do not pardon, according to (~~<3106>~~Amos 2:6, ~~<3329>~~Job 33:29).”

Again,

“he that says I have sinned, and I repent, they forgive him “unto three times”, and no more ^{f1016}.”

Ver. 22. *Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee*, etc.] Which is as if he had said, observe what I am about to say, I do not agree to what thou sayest to fix the number, “until seven times only”, but

until seventy times seven; a certain number for an uncertain, (see ~~<0024>~~Genesis 4:24). Christ’s meaning is, that a man should be all the days, and every day of his life, forgiving those that sin against him, as often as they repent and acknowledge their fault; and that no time is to be set for the exercise of the grace of forgiveness; but as often as there are objects and occasions, though ever so many and frequent, it should be used; and which he illustrates by the following parable.

Ver. 23. *Therefore is the kingdom of heaven*, etc.] The Gospel church state, or the church of Christ under the Gospel dispensation, and the methods of God’s dealings in it;

likened unto a certain king: or “a man”, “a king”, pointing either to Christ, the king Messiah, who is King of kings, and Lord of lords, the King of saints and churches; who, as God, has a natural kingdom of providence, and as man and Mediator, a kingdom of grace; and will have a more visibly glorious one, both in this world and in the other; or rather, the Father of Christ, as appears from the application of the parable, in (⁴⁰⁸⁵Matthew 18:35), who is the living God, and everlasting King: whose is the kingdom of nature, grace, and glory:

which would take account of his servants; not all mankind, though these are all in a sense his servants, and accountable to him; nor only ministers of the Gospel, who are so in an eminent and peculiar sense, and must give an account to God of their time and talents, and souls committed to them; but all that bear the Christian name, that are professors of religion, that are either really or nominally the subjects and servants of God. These, it is sometimes the will and pleasure of God, to “take account of”: not of their persons, or number, but of their conduct and behaviour; which, as it will be more fully done at death, or at judgment, so sometimes is taken in this life: God sometimes calls, and brings, professors of religion to an account, and reckons with them by afflictive dispensations of providence; when he puts them upon reflecting how they have spent their time, made use of their talents and gifts, and have behaved in their families, and in the world, and church; or by dealing roundly with men’s consciences, awakening and convincing them of their sins, of omission and commission, which seems to be intended here.

Ver. 24. *And when he had begun to reckon*, etc.] To open the book of conscience, and to bring to account by some awakening providence, and strong conviction: one was brought unto him; whether he would or no, through the force of an awakened conscience, under guilt and terror;

which owed him ten thousand talents; which must be understood, either of gold, or silver: a talent of silver contained 3,000 shekels, as appears from (⁴⁰⁸⁵Exodus 38:25,26), and was in value of our money 375l. but a talent of gold was equal to 4,500l. of our ^{f1017} money. According to Dr. Prideaux ^{f1018}, a talent of silver was 450l. and a talent of gold, the proportion of gold to silver being reckoned as sixteen to one, was 7,200l. and according to Bishop Cumberland, a talent of silver was 353l. 11s. 10d. ob. and a talent of gold of the same weight, was 5,075l. 15s. 7d. ob. The whole, according to Dr. Hammond, was a thousand eight hundred seventy five thousand

pounds, reckoning them silver talents; but if talents of gold are meant, what an immense sum must ten thousand of them be! According to some, seventy two millions sterling. The design of the phrase, is to set forth the exceeding greatness of the debt. Munster's Hebrew Gospel reads it, "ten thousand manehs", or pounds; and so the Persic version: now the value of a maneh of gold, was 75l. and of silver, 7l 10s. ^{f1019} take the sum in the least quantity and value, it was exceeding large. The Arabic version renders it a "sum of talents", without mentioning the number, and may mean an innumerable one. Mention is made of such a number of talents of silver, in (^{<TARG>}Esther 3:9), which Aben Ezra says is defective, and signifies ten thousand thousand talents. The "second" Targum on the place says, that the sum of six hundred thousand zuzim, drachms, or pence (i.e. Roman ones) is ten thousand talents of silver. These "ten thousand talents" intend sins, which are called debts, in Scripture; not that they are properly so, or owing to God, for then it would be right to pay them, but because they bind over to punishment. All men owe a debt of thankfulness to God, for their beings, the preservation of them, and all the mercies of life; and a debt of obedience to the whole law, in failure of which, they are obliged to punishment: hence every sin becomes a debt, and these are numerous; indwelling sin, and the lusts thereof, are innumerable; as are actual sins and transgressions, they are more than the hairs of a man's head, and are fitly expressed, both for the weight and quantity of them, by "ten thousand talents". In this light they appear to the conscience of an awakened sinner, who sees that he has been doing nothing but sin, all the days of his life; and that he has been continually breaking the law, one precept or another of it, in thought, word, or deed: which violations of the law, even in word and deed, are risen up to so great a sum, that he is not able to give it to any nearness, and with any exactness; he cannot understand all his errors, nor express the full number of them, or declare all their aggravated circumstances; besides the swarms of corruption of internal lusts and sins, which he observes dwelling in his heart, and are as innumerable as the motes and atoms in a sunbeam. The sins of God's people, which have been all made to meet upon Christ, have been laid upon him by his Father's imputation of them to him, with his own consent, are represented in this manner; (see ^{<19012>}Psalm 40:12). And indeed, if the debts of one of them amount to ten thousand talents, what must the sum of all be, put together! and how great must be the strength and power of Christ, to bear the weight of these sins, and not be broken or discouraged, and fail, as he did not! and what a rich virtue and efficacy must there be in his blood, to pay off all

these debts, and make satisfaction for them, which could never have been done, if he had not done it! for, it is impossible that a person in such circumstances as here described, should ever be able to recover himself, or pay his debts, as follows.

Ver. 25. *But forasmuch as he had not to pay,* etc.] Every sinner is insolvent; sinful man has run out the whole stock of nature, and is become a bankrupt, and has nothing to offer by way of composition; nor has he any righteousness to answer for him, nor any works of righteousness which deserve that name: and if he had, these are nothing in point of payment: for a debt of sin cannot be discharged by a debt of obedience; since God has a prior right to the latter; and in paying it, a man does but what is his duty. Sin being committed against an infinite God, contracts the nature of an infinite debt, which cannot be paid off by a finite creature. Christ only was able to pay this debt, and he has done it for his people; and without an interest in his blood, righteousness, and satisfaction, every debtor is liable to be cast, and will be cast into the prison of hell, there to lie till the uttermost farthing of the ten thousand talents is paid, which will be to all eternity. We see what a sad condition sin has brought men into; it has stripped them of their estates and possessions; it has reduced them to want and beggary; it exposes them to a prison; to the just resentments of their creditor; to the wrath of God, and the curses of the law; and what little reason there is to think, yea, how impossible it is, that a man should be able to merit anything at the hands of God, to whom he is so greatly indebted: he must first pay his debts, which is a thing impracticable, before he can pretend to do anything deserving the notice of God; and even was he set free, and clear of all his debts, and entered upon a new life of obedience, and this strictly attended to, without contracting any debts for the future, yet all this would be but what is due to God, and could merit nothing of him; (see ^{<0710>}Luke 17:10 ^{<0135>}Romans 11:35). We see also from hence, how much the saints are obliged to Christ Jesus, and how thankful they should be to him, who became a surety for such insolvent creatures; has paid all their debts for them, and procured for them every blessing of grace they stand in need of: but think, O sinner, what thou wilt be able to say and do, when God comes to reckon with thee, and thou hast nothing to pay, nor any to pay for thee, or be thy surety; a prison must be thy portion ever.

His Lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had; according to the Jewish laws, in such a case: of a man's being sold, or selling himself when poor, (see ^{<0254>}Leviticus 25:47), for the law in

(^{<122B>}Exodus 22:3), referred to by some as an instance of this, respects the selling of a man for theft, and not for debt. Of the selling of a man's wife for the payment of his debts, I do not remember to have read any law concerning it, or instances of it; but of children being taken for bondmen by the creditor, for their father's debts, mention is made, (^{<124B>}2 Kings 4:1). These children, by the Jewish writers ^{f1020}, are said to be the children of Obadiah, who contracted the debt to feed the prophets in a cave, when they were persecuted by Jezebel; and the creditor, according to them, was Jehoram, the son of Ahab, who lent him money on usury for this purpose, in his father's time; and now Obadiah being dead, he takes his children for the debt, and makes them bondmen; see also (^{<36B>}Nehemiah 5:5). There seems to be an allusion to this practice, in (^{<281B>}Isaiah 50:1), and it was not only the custom of the Jews to come upon children for the debts of parents, but of other nations: with the Athenians, if a father could not pay his debts, the son was obliged to pay, and in the mean while to be kept in bonds till he did ^{f1021}: and as Grotius, in (^{<124B>}2 Kings 4:1) proves from Plutarch and Dionysius Halicarnassensis, children were sold by the creditors of their parents, as in Asia, at Athens, and at Rome. Now this expresses the state of bondage, sin, as a debt, brings men into; they become slaves to their own lusts, vassals of Satan, and in bondage to the law; and also the ruin and destruction it exposes them to; as, the curse and condemnation of the law, the wrath of God, eternal death, even the destruction of body and soul in hell:

and payment to be made by punishment, which will always be making, and never finished. This order of the king was not intended to be executed, as the sequel shows; but declares the will of God, that the sad and woeful condition of man should be set before him by the ministers of the word; signifying what his state is, how deserving of vengeance, and what must be his portion, if grace prevent not: the view of which is to vindicate the rights of law and justice, to express the sinner's deserts, and move him to apply to the Lord for grace and mercy, which effect it had.

Ver. 26. *The servant therefore fell down*, etc.] At his feet, upon his knees, or on his face, to the ground; not being able to stand before him, or look him in the face, and much less to answer the demands of his law and justice; but owned the debt, and his present inability to pay,

and worshipped him: the Vulgate Latin reads it, "prayed", or entreated him,

saying, Lord have patience with me; give me but time, spare me a little longer, send me not to prison, and I will pay thee all: a very weak and foolish promise, but what is usual for men in such circumstances to make. Thus men, under guilt, and dreadful apprehensions of wrath and ruin, frequently promise, that if their lives are but spared, what they will do for God, and in a religious way; and very foolishly and ignorantly imagine, that by their humiliation and tears, their prayers and other services by their good lives and conversations, for the future, they shall be able to make compensation to God for all the iniquities they have been guilty of: which shows them to be exceeding ignorant of the nature of sin, which is committed against an infinite being, and therefore reconciliation for it cannot be made by finite creature; as also of the nature of their duties and services, which, when performed, in ever so good a manner, can never make satisfaction for past offences, these being duties they are obliged to perform; and would have been equally obliged thereunto if they had never offended; and likewise betrays great vanity, pride, boasting, and conceit of themselves, and abilities, as that they shall be able, in a little time to pay all, when they have nothing at all to pay with: and was patience to be exercised towards them ever so long, they would still be in the same condition, and in no better capacity to make payment; but, on the contrary, would still run a larger score, and be more and more in debt. Indeed, the patience and longsuffering of God to his people is salvation; not that by giving them time, and bearing with them, they discharge their debts, and work out their salvation; but waiting upon them to be gracious to them, he brings them to repentance, to a sense of themselves and sins, and to an acknowledgment of them, and leads them, by faith, to his Son for righteousness, forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life; but as for others, his patience towards them, and forbearance of them, issue in their everlasting destruction, which, by their iniquities, they are fitted for.

Ver. 27. *Then the Lord of that servant was moved with compassion,* etc.] Or had compassion on him, showed pity to him, and extended mercy towards him; not that he was moved hereunto by any actions of his, as his prostrating himself before him, and his worshipping him, nor by his cries and entreaties, nor by his promises, which were not at all to be depended on, but by his own goodness, and will; for not to anything that this man said, or did, nor to any deserts of his, but to the pure mercy, and free grace of God, is to be ascribed what is after related:

and loosed him; from obligation to punishment, and from a spirit of bondage, through the guilt of sin, and work of the law upon his conscience:

and forgave him the debt; the whole debt of ten thousand talents: for when God forgives sin, he forgives all sin, original and actual, secret and open, sins of omission and commission, of heart, lip, and life, of thought, word, and deed, past, present, and to come; and that freely, according to his abundant mercy, and the riches of his grace; without any regard to any merits, motives and conditions in the creature; though not without respect to the satisfaction of Christ, which no ways detracts from the grace and mercy of God, since this is owing to his gracious provision and acceptance. It was grace in God that provided, sent, and parted with his Son to be the propitiatory sacrifice for sin, and accepted the satisfaction when made, in the room, and stead of sinners: it was grace in Christ to become a surety for them, to assume their nature, to shed his precious blood, and give himself an offering, and a sacrifice for them; and it is distinguishing grace that this satisfaction should be provided, made, and accepted, not for angels, but for men; and though it is at the expense of Christ's blood and life that this satisfaction is made, and remission of sins obtained, yet the whole is entirely free to those who are partakers of it; they have it without money; and without price. So, that though the satisfaction of Christ is not expressly mentioned in this parable, and forgiveness of sin, which lies in a non-remembrance, and non-imputation of it, in a covering, and blotting it out, and in remitting the obligation to punishment for it, is ascribed to the compassion and mercy of God, yet it is implied; since these two involve each other: the special mercy of God, in the forgiveness of sins, streams only through the blood, righteousness, and sacrifice of Christ; and the sacrifice and satisfaction of Christ largely display the grace and mercy of God.

Ver. 28. *But the same servant went out*, etc.] From his Lord's palace and presence, immediately, directly, after he had got his pardon and liberty:

and found one of his fellow servants; a fellow creature and Christian; not only one of the same nature and species; but of the same profession of religion, and in the service of the same kind and generous master:

which owed an hundred pence; which, if understood of Roman pence, each penny being seven pence halfpenny of our money, amounted to no more than three pounds and half-a-crown; a small sum, in comparison of the ten thousand talents which had been just now forgiven him: for so sins

committed against men, against fellow creatures, or fellow Christians; are but small, when compared with those which are committed against God. All which circumstances, as that it was immediately after he had been forgiven himself; that it was a fellow servant he found: and the sum he owed him so inconsiderable, greatly aggravate his inhuman carriage, next related:

and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, pay me that thou owest; he laid hold on him in a violent manner, and used him with great inhumanity: he took him by the collar, and shook him, and griped him so hard about the neck, that he almost throttled, and strangled, or choked him, as the word signifies, and is so rendered in most versions. It answers to the Hebrew word **qnh**, which is used by the Jews^{f1022} in the same sense:

“**qynj h**, he that throttles anyone (who is indebted to him) in the streets, and his friend comes up and says, let him go, and I will pay thee, he is free, etc.”

This man insisted on payment of the whole debt; which expresses the rigour and severity used by some professors of religion to their fellow Christians; who, having offended them, in ever so small a matter, will not put up with the affront, nor forgive the injury, without having the most ample satisfaction, and avenging themselves upon them to the uttermost.

Ver. 29. *And his fellow servant fell down at his feet,* etc.] In the most humble and submissive manner, just as he himself had done a little before at the feet of his Lord:

and besought him, saying, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all; using the very same words, in which he had expressed himself to his Lord, and had succeeded.

Ver. 30. *And he would not,* etc.] Have patience with him, give him time for payment, and forbear severity at present, as he requested:

but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt; had him before a proper officer, and proved his debt, and got him sent to jail, there to lie till the whole debt was paid; which, as it discovered ill nature, severe usage, so, great ignorance and stupidity; for a prison will pay no debt: which sets forth the rigorous proceedings of some church members against their brethren, that have displeased them; who immediately bring the matter before the church, and will not be easy unless some censure is laid upon

them, or they are cast out, until full satisfaction is given them, whereby oftentimes an useful member of a church is lost.

Ver. 31. *So when his fellow servants saw what was done*, etc.] What hard usage, and ill treatment, their fellow servant met with; the Syriac reads, “their fellow servants”, being the fellow servants both of the creditor and the debtor:

they were very sorry; they were greatly grieved and troubled at the cruelty of the one, and the unhappiness of the other; being more tenderhearted, and of a more forgiving spirit than he:

and came and told unto their Lord all that was done; to their fellow servant, by one that had so lately received such favours from him: this may be expressive of the concern of some members of churches at such conduct: who, though they may not have strength and number sufficient to oppose such measures, yet being secretly grieved at such cruel methods, go to the throne of grace, and spread the case before the Lord, tell him all that is done by way of complaint; which, is no impeachment of his omniscience, only shows their trouble for such malpractices, and the sense they have, by whom only such grievances can be redressed.

Ver. 32. *Then his Lord, after that he had called him*, etc.] Or ordered him to be called, and brought before him,

said unto him, O thou wicked servant! Munster’s Hebrew Gospel reads, “thou servant of Belial”; thou cruel and hard hearted man to thy fellow servant, and ungrateful creature to me, on whom my goodness to thee has not made any impression, nor taken any effect:

I forgave thee all that debt: all that vast debt of ten thousand talents, and that freely:

because thou desiredst me: not to forgive the debt, but to have patience, and give time, and therefore unasked forgave the whole sum, every farthing of it; which was such an instance of pure goodness, as was enough to have wrought upon an heart of stone, and engaged the most tender concern and pity for a fellow creature, as well as filled with thankfulness to the kind benefactor. The favour so lately bestowed on him is justly observed as an aggravation of his wickedness.

Ver. 33. *Shouldest not thou also have had compassion.* etc.] It is but reasonable, what ought to be, and may be expected, that such who have received mercy, should show mercy; and as the Lord had compassion on this man, and had forgiven him such an immense sum, and saved him, his wife and children, from being sold for bondslaves, the least he could have done after this, would have been to have followed such an example, and have had mercy, as his Lord says to him,

on thy fellow servant; between whom, and him, there was not so great a distance, as between him, and his Lord; and the sum so small that was owing to him, as not to be mentioned with his:

even as, I had pity on thee; such an instance of pity and compassion did not only set him an example, worthy of his imitation, but laid him under an obligation to have acted such a part.

Ver. 34. *And his Lord was wrath,* etc.] Very angry, greatly incensed, and justly provoked at such inhuman treatment:

and delivered him to the tormentors, or jail keepers. The Ethiopic version renders it, “to them that judge”, or the judges; Munster’s Hebrew Gospel, “to the punishers”, or such that inflicted punishment according to the decree of the judge: from both, the sense may be, that he was delivered over to proper judges of his case, to be treated as the nature of it required, to be cast into prison, and there endure all the severities of law and justice:

till he should pay all that was due unto him; which being so vast a sum, and he but a servant, could never be done: but inasmuch as this man was fully and freely pardoned before, how comes it to pass, that full payment of debt is yet insisted on? It is certain, that sin, once pardoned by God, he never punishes for it; for pardon with him is of all sin; he forgives all trespasses, though ever so many, and remits the whole debt, be it ever so large; which act of his grace will never be revoked: it is one of his gifts which are without repentance; it proceeds upon, and comes through a plenary satisfaction for sin made by his own Son, and therefore it would be unjust to punish for it: by this act, sin is covered out of sight; it is blotted out, and entirely done away, and that for ever. Hence some think this man had only the offer of a pardon, and not that itself; but it is not an offer of pardon, that Christ, by his blood, has procured, and is exalted to give, but that itself; and this man had his debt, his whole debt forgiven him: others think, that this was a church forgiveness, who looked upon him, judged

him, and received him as one forgiven; but for his cruel usage of a fellow member, delivered him to the tormentors, passed censures on him, and excommunicated him, till he should give full satisfaction, which is more likely: others, this forgiveness was only in his own apprehensions: he presumed, and hoped he was forgiven, when he was not; but then his crime could not have been so aggravated as is: rather, this forgiveness is to be understood of averting calamities and judgments, likely to fall for his iniquities, which is sometimes the sense of this phrase: (see ~~1~~ 1 Kings 8:34,36,39) and so his being delivered to the tormentors may mean, his being distressed with an accusing guilty conscience, an harassing, vexing devil, many misfortunes of life, and temporal calamities. Though after all, this is not strictly to be applied to any particular case or person, but the scope of the parable is to be attended to; which is to enforce mutual forgiveness among men, from having received full and free pardon at the hands of God; and that without the former, there is little reason to expect the latter, as appears from what follows.

Ver. 35. *So likewise shall my heavenly Father*, etc.] This is the accommodation and application of the parable, and opens the design and intent of it; showing that God, who is Christ's Father, that is in heaven, will act in like manner towards all such persons, who are cruel and hard hearted to their brethren, and are of merciless and unforgiving spirits; for so it is said,

he will do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses. The phrase, "their trespasses", is omitted by the Vulgate Latin, the Arabic, and the Ethiopic versions, but is in all the Greek copies; and designs not pecuniary debts, though these are to be forgiven, and not rigorously exacted in some cases, and circumstances; but all injuries by word or deed, all offences, though ever so justly taken, or unjustly given; these should be forgiven fully, freely, and from the heart, forgetting, as well as forgiving, not upbraiding with them, or with former offences, and aggravating them; and should also pray to God that he would forgive also. It is certainly the will of God, that we should forgive one another all trespasses and offences. The examples of God and Christ should lead and engage unto it; the pardon of sin received by ourselves from the hands of God strongly enforces it; the peace and comfort of communion in public ordinances require it; the reverse is contrary to the spirit and character of Christians, is very displeasing to our heavenly Father, greatly unlike to Christ, and grieving to the Spirit of God.