

CHAPTER 23

INTRODUCTION TO MATTHEW 23

Ver. 1. *Then spake Jesus to the multitude*, etc.] To the common people that were about him in the temple; the high priests and elders, Scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees, having left him, being all nonplussed and silenced by him: and now, lest on the one hand, the people seeing the ignorance and errors of these men detected by Christ, should be tempted to conclude there was nothing in religion, and to neglect the word and worship of God, on account of the concern these men had in it; and on the other hand, because of their great authority and influence, being in Moses's chair, lest the people should be led into bad principles and practices by them, he directs them in what they should observe them, and in what not: that they were not altogether to be rejected, nor in everything to be attended to; and warns them against their ostentation, pride, hypocrisy, covetousness, and cruelty; and, at the same time, removes an objection against himself, proving that he was no enemy to Moses, and the law, rightly explained and practised:

and to his disciples; not only the twelve, but to all that believed in him, and were followers of him.

Ver. 2. *Saying, the Scribes and Pharisees*, etc.] The Persic version adds, the priests: but Christ does not here speak of the sanhedrim, or grand council of the nation, and of their legislative power; but of those that were the teachers of the people, and the interpreters of the law; and of those, who, though they corrupted the word with their glosses and traditions, yet retained some truth, and at least came nearer truth, than the Sadducees; who therefore are omitted, and only Scribes and Pharisees mentioned, who gave the literal and traditional sense of the Scriptures; of whom he says, they

sit in Moses's seat: not that they were his successors in his office as a legislator and mediator; though the Persic version reads it, "sit in the place and chair of Moses"; but they read his law, and explained it to the people: this post and place, as yet, they kept in the office they were, and were to

continue; and the people were to regard them so far as they spoke consistent with the law, until it had its full accomplishment in Christ. The allusion is not to the chairs in which the sanhedrim sat in trying and determining causes, but to those in which the doctors sat when they expounded the law; for though they stood up when they read the law, or the prophets, they sat down when they preached out of them: this custom of the synagogue was observed by our Lord; (see ^{<BIB>}Luke 4:16,20).

Ver. 3. *All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe*, etc.] This must be restrained to things that were agreeable to the chair of Moses, in which they sat, to the law of Moses, which they read and explained, to other parts of Scripture and truth in general; for otherwise many of their glosses and traditions were repugnant to the law, and ought not to be observed, as appears from (^{<BIB>}Matthew 5:1-48, 15:6). The word “observe”, in this clause, is omitted by the Vulgate Latin, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions, and in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel; and Beza says, it is wanting in one ancient copy, but is in others; and is retained in the Syriac and Persic versions

that observe and do; hearken to what they say, give diligent heed unto it, take notice of it, and act according to it:

but do not ye after their works; let their doctrine be the rule of your lives, so far as it agrees with the law of Moses; but let not their actions be drawn into an example by you; conform to their instructions, but do not imitate their practices:

for they say, and do not; they talk of good works, but do none; they bid others do them, but do not practise them themselves; they very strictly and severely enjoin them on others, but are very careless themselves to observe them; and of this the Jews are so conscious, that they suggest the same doctrine ^{f1222}.

“The daughter of Ahar (a wicked man) came before Rabbi; she said to him, Rabbi, supply me with the necessaries of life: he replied to her, daughter, who art thou? she answered him, the daughter of Ahar: he said to her, is there any of his seed in the world? for lo! it is written, (^{<BIB>}Job 18:19). “He shall neither have son, nor nephew, among his people, nor any remaining, in his dwellings”: she replied to him, *wyç[m rwkzt l aw wtrwtl rwkz*, “remember his law, or doctrine, but do not remember his works.” — Says R. Jochanan, what is that which is written, (^{<BIB>}Malachi 2:7). “For the priest’s

lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.” If the doctor is like to an angel, or messenger of the Lord of hosts, they should seek the law at his mouth; and if not, they should not seek the law at his mouth. Says Resh Lekish, R. Meir found and explained that Scripture, (¹²¹⁷Proverbs 22:17). “Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart to my knowledge”: to their knowledge it is not said, but to my knowledge. R. Chanina says, hence, (⁹⁵⁰Psalms 45:10). “Hearken, O daughter! and consider, incline thine ear, forget thine own people, and thy father’s house”: on which the gloss is, forget their works, and do not learn them: he that knows how to take care not to learn their works, may learn the law from their mouths.”

— And a little after,

“the disciples of the wise men are like to a nut; as a nut, though it is defiled with mire and filth, yet that which is within it is not to be rejected; so a scholar, or a disciple of a wise man, though he act wickedly, his law, or doctrine, is not to be despised.”

Good doctrine is not the worse for being taught by bad men; nor are good works to be slighted and neglected, because they are not done by all that teach them; but it must be owned that examples are very useful and forcible, and practice greatly recommends doctrine; and it is to be wished, that they both always went together.

Ver. 4. *For they bind heavy burdens*, etc.] Meaning not the rites and ceremonies of the law of Moses, circumcision, and other rituals, which obliged to the keeping of the whole law, which was a yoke men were not able to bear; but the traditions of the elders, which the Scribes and Pharisees were very tenacious of, and very severely enjoined the observance of, and are called their “heavy” things ^{f1223}.

“It is a tradition of R. Ishmael, there are in the words of the law, that, which is bound or forbidden, and that which is loose or free; and there are in them light things, and there are in them heavy things; but the words of the Scribes, ^{h yrwj l wk}, “all of them are heavy”.”

And a little after,

“the words of the elders, ܡܝܪܡܝܝܢ , “are heavier” than the words of the prophets.”

Hence frequent mention is made of

“the light things of the school of Shammai, ܝܪܡܝܝܢ ܡܡܘܢ, “and of the heavy things of the school of Hillel”^{f1224},

two famous doctors, heads of two universities, in being in Christ’s time: these are also called, ܠܘܥܘܪܦܐ ܛܘܟܡܐ, “the blows, or wounds of the Pharisees”^{f1225}; not as Bartenora explains them, the wounds they gave themselves, to show their humility; or which they received, by beating their heads against the wall, walking with their eyes shut, that they might not look upon women, under a pretence of great chastity; but, as Maimonides says, these are their additions and heavy things, which they add to the law. Now the binding of these heavy things, means the imposing them on men, obliging them to observe them very strictly, under great penalties, should they omit them. The allusion is, to those frequent sayings in use among them, such a thing is “bound”, and such a thing is loosed; such a “Rabbi binds”, and such an one looses; that is, forbids, or allows of such and such things; (see Gill on “ⲙⲁⲧⲏⲥ Matthew 16:19”).

and grievous to be borne. This clause is left out in the Syriac, Arabic, Persic, and Ethiopic versions; but is in all the Greek copies, and serves to illustrate and aggravate the burdensome rites and institutions of these people: and

lay them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers: the sense is, not that they were so rigid and hardhearted, that they would not move a finger to remove these burdens from the shoulders of men, or ease them in the least degree, or dispense with their performance of them in the least measure, upon any consideration, though this also was true in many respects; but that they were so slothful and indolent themselves, that though they strictly enjoined the observance of their numerous and unwritten traditions on the people, yet in many cases, where they could without public notice, they neglected them themselves, or at least, made them lighter and easier to them, as in their fastings, etc. In the Misna^{f1226}, mention is made of “a crafty wicked man”, along with a woman Pharisee, and the blows of the Pharisees before spoken of; and in the Gemara^{f1227}, is explained by R. Hona, of one,

“that makes things “light” for himself, and makes them “heavy” for others.”

Such crafty wicked men were Scribes and Pharisees; though R. Meir pretended that he made things “light” to others and “heavy” to himself ^{f1228}.

Ver. 5. *But all their works they do for to be seen of men*, etc.] All their prayers, alms deeds, and fastings, were all done in a public manner, that men might behold them, and they might have applause and glory from them: they sought neither the glory of God, nor the good of their fellow creatures, nor any spiritual advantage and pleasure to themselves, in their performances; they neither attended to moral duties, nor ceremonious rites, nor the traditions of their fathers, any further than they could be seen by men in them, and keep up their credit and esteem among them. Hence,

they make broad their phylacteries: these were four sections of the law, wrote on parchments, folded up in the skin of a clean beast, and tied to the head and hand. The four sections were these following, viz. the “first”, was (^{<0131>}Exodus 13:2-11) the “second”, was (^{<0131>}Exodus 13:11-17) the “third”, was (^{<0104>}Deuteronomy 6:4-10) the “fourth”, was (^{<0113>}Deuteronomy 11:13-22). Those that were for the head, were written and rolled up separately, and put in four distinct places, in one skin, which was fastened with strings to the crown of the head, towards the face, about the place where the hair ends, and where an infant’s brain is tender; and they took care to place them in the middle, that so they might be between the eyes. Those that were for the hand, were written in four columns, on one parchment, which being rolled up, was fastened to the inside of the left arm, where it is fleshy, between the shoulder and the elbow, that so it might be over against the heart ^{f1229}. These, they imagined, were commanded them by God, in (^{<0136>}Exodus 13:16, ^{<0108>}Deuteronomy 6:8) whereas the sense of these passages only is, that the goodness of God in delivering them out of Egypt, and the words of the law, should be continually before them, in their minds and memories, as if they had tokens on their hands, and frontlets between their eyes; but they understood them literally, and observed them in the above manner. These the Jews call “Tephillin”, because they use them in time of prayer, and look upon them as useful, to put them in mind of that duty: they are here called “phylacteries”, because they thought they kept them in the fear of God, preserved in them the memory of the law, and them from sin; yea, from evil spirits, and diseases of the body. They imagined there was a great deal of holiness in, and valued themselves much

upon the use of them ^{f1230}; and the Pharisees, because they would be thought to be more holy and religious, and more observant of the law than others, wore these things broader than the rest of the people;

and enlarge the borders of their garments. These were the fringes which they put upon the borders of their garments, and on them a ribbon of blue, to put them in mind of the commandments, to obey them, (⁽⁻⁰⁴⁵⁸⁾Numbers 15:38, ⁽⁻⁶²¹²⁾Deuteronomy 22:12). The observance of this law is of so much consequence with the Jews, that they make all the commandments to depend on it ^{f1231}; and say, that it is equal to them all, and that he that is guilty of the breach of it, is worthy of death ^{f1232}: they ascribe the like virtue to these fringes, as to their phylacteries, and think themselves much the better for the wearing them; and the Pharisees, because they would appear with a greater air of sanctity and devotion than others, made their's larger. We ^{f1233} read of one Ben Tzitzith Hacceseth, a man of this complexion, who was so called, because his Tzitzith, or fringes, were drawn upon, a pillow; and there are some that say, that the pillow was bore between the great men of Rome: it was drawn after him, not upon the ground, but upon a cloth or tapestry, and the train supported by noblemen, as is pretended. This was one of those, that enlarged the Tzitzith, or fringes, beyond the ordinary size; hence Mark calls it, "long clothing."

Ver. 6. *And love the uppermost rooms at feasts,* etc.] Or the first and chief places to sit, or lie down on, at ordinary meals, and especially at large entertainments, where the great ones sat, as in (⁽⁻⁰⁰⁹²⁾1 Samuel 9:22) where Jarchi on the place observes, that by the manner of their sitting, it was known who was the greatest; and this the Scribes and Pharisees affected. With the Romans, the most honourable place was at the upper end of the table: some think it was more honourable to sit in the middle, but the master of the feast sat at the lower end; and to senior men, and who were venerable with age, or excelled in prudence and authority, the first sitting down, and the more honourable place, were given; and when the table was taken away, they used to rise first ^{f1234}: the middle place was the more honourable with the Numidians ^{f1235}, and so it seems to be with the Romans ^{f1236}, and also with the Jews; and this the Scribes and Pharisees loved, desired, sought for, and were pleased if they had not it. It is said ^{f1237} of Simeon ben Shetach, a noted Pharisee, about, or rather before the time of Christ, that having fled upon a certain account from king Jannai, he sent for him, and when he came,

“he sat himself between the king and the queen: the king said to him, why dost thou mock me? he replied to him, I do not mock thee, thou hast riches and I have learning, as it is written, “Wisdom is a defence, and money is a defence”, (²⁰⁷²Ecclesiastes 7:12). He said to him, but why dost thou “sit between the king and queen?” He replied, in the book of Ben Sira, it is written, “Exalt her and she shall promote thee, and cause thee to sit among princes.” He ordered to give him a cup, that he might ask a blessing; he took the cup and said, blessed be the food that Jannai and his friends eat.”

Thus on account of their wisdom and learning, they thought they had a right to take the upper hand of kings themselves:

and the chief seats in the synagogues; for these were different; the seats of the senior men were turned towards the people, and the backs of them were towards the ark or chest, in which the holy books were put; and these seem to be what the Scribes and Pharisees coveted, that they might be in the full view of the people. And so says Maimonides ^{f1238}, “How do the people sit in the synagogues?”

“The elders sit, i.e. first, and their faces are towards the people, and their backs are to the temple, or holy place; and all the people sit in rows, and the faces of one row are to the backs of the row that is before them; so that the faces of all the people are to the holy place, and to the elders, and to the ark.”

Ver. 7. *And greetings in the markets*, etc.] They used to stroll about the markets, being public places, where there was a great concourse of people, on purpose to be taken notice of before multitudes, with singular marks of respect; as stretching out the hand, uncovering the head, and bowing the knee:

and to be called of men Rabbi, Rabbi; because of their great authority, and largeness of their knowledge: the repetition of the word Rabbi, is not made in the Vulgate Latin, nor in the Syriac, Arabic, Persic, and Ethiopic versions, nor in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel, but is in all the Greek copies, and very justly; since it was usual in the salutations of them, to double the word. It is reported ^{f1239} of R. Eleazar ben Simeon, of Migdal Gedur, that having reproached a deformed man he met in the road; when he came to the city where the man lived,

“the citizens came out to meet him, and said to him, peace be upon thee, **yrwm yrwm ybr ybr**, “Rabbi, Rabbi, Master, Master”; he (Eleazar) said to them, who do you call “Rabbi, Rabbi?” They replied to him, he who followed thee: he said unto them, if this be a Rabbi, let there not be many such in Israel.”

The Jews pretend, that king Jehoshaphat used to salute the doctors with these titles; though they forget that they were not in use in his time, as will be hereafter observed: they say ^{f1240},

“whenever he saw a disciple of the wise men, he rose from his throne, and embraced and kissed him, and called him, **yrm yrm ybr ybr yba yba**, “Father, Father, Rabbi, Rabbi, Master, Master”.”

Where you have the three different words used by our Lord in this and the following verses, by which these men loved to be called, and he inveighed against; nay, they not only suggest, that kings gave them these honourable titles, and they expected them from them, but even they liked to be called kings themselves. It is said ^{f1241} of R. Hona arid R. Chasda, that as they were sitting together, one passed by them,

“and said to them, “peace be to you kings”, **ykl m wkyl [aml ç**, “peace be to you kings”: they said to him, from whence does it appear to thee, that the Rabbins are called kings? He replied to them, from what is written, “by me kings reign”, etc. They said to him, from whence hast thou it, that we are to double or repeat peace, or salutation to kings? He answered them, that R. Judah said, that Rab said from hence, (⁻¹³²¹⁸⁻1 Chronicles 12:18). “Then the spirit came upon Amasai”, etc.”

This title began but to be in use in the time of our Lord, or a very little while before: none of the prophets had it, nor Ezra the Scribe, nor the men of the great synagogue, nor Simeon the Just, the last of them; nor Antigonus, a man of Socho, a disciple of his: and it is observed by the Jews themselves ^{f1242}, that

“the five couple are never called by the name of Rabban, nor by the name of Rabbi, only by their own name.”

By whom are meant, Joseph ben Joezer, and Joseph ben Jochanan; Joshua ben Perachia, said to be the master of Jesus of Nazareth, and Nittai the Arbelite; Judah ben Tabai, and Simeon ben Shetach; Shemaiah and Abtalion; Hillell and Shammai. The sons, or disciples of the two last, first took these titles. Rabban Simeon, the son of Hillell, thought by some to be the same Simeon that had Christ in his arms, is ^{f1243} said to be the first that was called by this name; and it is also observed by them ^{f1244}, that Rabban was a name of greater honour than Rabbi, or Rab, and that Rabbi was more honourable than Rab; and to be called by a man's own name, was more honourable than any of them. The Karaite Jews make much the same complaint, and give much the same account of the pride and vanity of the Rabbinical doctors, as Christ here does; for so one of them says ^{f1245};

“The Karaites do not use to act according to the custom of the wise men among the Rabbans, to make to themselves gods of silver, and guides of gold, with this view, **br arqhl**, “to be called Rab”; and also to gather wealth and food to fulness, etc.”

Ver. 8. *But be not ye called Rabbi*, etc.] Do not be ambitious of any such title, fond of it, or affect it, or be elated with it, should it be given you; nor look upon yourselves as men of power and authority over others; as having the dominion over men's faith, a power to make laws for others, impose them in a magisterial way, and bind and loose men's consciences at pleasure, as these men do:

for one is your master, even Christ; meaning himself, the true Messiah, the head of the church, King of saints, and Lord of all; who had all power in heaven and in earth, to make laws, appoint ordinances, and oblige men to receive his doctrines, and obey his commands: the word “Christ”, is left out in the Vulgate Latin, the Syriac, Persic, and Ethiopic versions; but is in the Arabic version, and Munster's Hebrew Gospel, and in all the ancient Greek copies Beza consulted, excepting two: no other indeed can be meant; he is the great Rabbi, and doctor, that is to be hearkened to, and the master we are all to obey:

and all ye are brethren; not merely as the descendants of Adam, but as being in a spiritual relation, the children of God, and disciples of Christ, and so have no superiority one over another: this may regard the disciples, both as believers and Christians, partakers of the same grace, and standing in the same relation to God, Christ, and one another, and having an equal

right to the same privileges: and as apostles and ministers, one as such, no, not Peter, having no pre-eminence over the other, having the same commission, doctrine, and authority, one as the other.

Ver. 9. *And call no man your father upon the earth*, etc.] Not but that children may, and should call their natural parents, fathers; and such who have been instrumental in the conversion of souls, may be rightly called by them their spiritual fathers; as servants and scholars also, may call those that are over them, and instruct them, their masters: our Lord does not mean, by any of these expressions, to set aside all names and titles, of natural and civil distinction among men, but only to reject all such names and titles, as are used to signify an authoritative power over men's consciences, in matters of faith and obedience; in which, God and Christ are only to be attended to. Christ's sense is, that he would have his disciples not fond of any titles of honour at all; and much less assume an authority over men, as if they were to depend on them, as the founders of the Christian religion, the authors of its doctrines and ordinances; and to take that honour to themselves, which did not belong to them; nor even choose to be called by such names, as would lead people to entertain too high an opinion of them, and take off of their dependence on God the Father, and himself, as these titles the Scribes and Pharisees loved to be called by, did: and who were called not only by the name of Rabbi, but Abba, "Father", also: hence we read of Abba Saul, or "Father" Saul^{f1246}; Abba Jose ben Jochanan, a man of Jerusalem^{f1247}, Abba Chanan^{f1248}, Abba Chelphetha, a man of the village of Hananiah^{f1249}; Abba Gorion^{f1250}, and others; and this name was *ybr wmk dwbk ʾwql*, "a name of honour, even as Rabbi"^{f1251}, and of great authority: the wise men are said to be *l kh twba*, "the fathers of all"^{f1252}, to whom all gave heed, and upon whom all depended, as so many oracles. There is a whole treatise in their Misna, called Pirke Abot, which contains some of the oracles, and peculiar sayings of these "fathers", the Misnic doctors, and which are preferred to the writings of Moses, and the prophets. In this sense, and upon this score, our Lord inveighs against them, and cautions his disciples against giving or taking all such titles, in such sense. "For one is your Father, which is in heaven"; who is so, both by creation and adoption, and is possessed of all paternal authority; and is to be honoured and obeyed by all; from whom all wisdom and knowledge is derived, and who has the care and government of all in heaven and in earth.

Ver. 10. *Neither be ye called masters*, etc.] Or guides and leaders; not but that, the ministers of the word are in a sense such; it is their business to lead and direct souls to Christ, to guide their feet in the way of peace, and to go before them, as examples to them, in word, in conversation, faith, and purity; but then they are to guide them according to the word of God, and not their own dictates; and teach them to observe the rules, and obey the ordinances of Christ, and not what are of their own inventing and prescribing; and to enforce the authority of their great Lord and Master, and not their own; and direct men to a dependence on Christ, as head of the church, who is the one Lord, as his faith is one, and his baptism one also: “for one is your master, even Christ”; which is said before, in (~~4238~~ Matthew 23:8) but being a matter of so much importance to the honour of Christ, and men being so apt to set up for masters themselves, in opposition to him, or in conjunction with him, or above him, it was necessary to repeat it; for in an authoritative sense he is the one, and only master of the assemblies.

Ver. 11. *But he that is greatest among you*, etc.] Either who really is so, having more grace, and greater gifts bestowed upon him, than others; which doubtless was the case of some of the disciples, or who desired to be the greatest, was ambitious of, and affected a superiority over others, and to be in the highest post and place, as it is certain some of them did. This was what they were often contending about among themselves, who should be greatest: and Christ here seems to have regard to that vain spirit, which appeared among them; and his view is, to check and restrain it: “shall be your servant”; or “let him be your servant”. Service is the way to honour; he that would be most esteemed ought to do the most work; and the man that has the most grace, and the greatest gifts, ought to employ them for the use and benefit of others; (see Gill on “~~4117~~ Matthew 20:27”).

Ver. 12. *And whosoever shall exalt himself*, etc.] Above his fellow Christians, or fellow ministers, by entertaining too high an opinion of himself, by boasting of his gifts, as preferable to others, and as if he had not received them; by assuming, or eagerly coveting titles of honour among men, or by affecting honour that do not belong to him, or, abusing what he has: “shall be abased”; or humbled by God, or men, or both; such shall lose the honour they have, and come greatly short of what they are ambitious of; they shall fall into disgrace with men, and are abominable in the sight of God: “and he that shall humble himself”; by entertaining low thoughts, and a mean opinion of himself, behaving modestly among men; not being elated

with his gifts, but acknowledging that they are owing to the grace and goodness of God; and using them in an humble manner, for, the advantage of others; not coveting honour from men, nor lifted up with what is conferred on him: “shall be exalted”; by God, or men, or both; if not in this world, yet in the world to come: and indeed, generally speaking, such modest, humble, persons, are most esteemed among men; and God gives more grace unto them, and will at last give them glory. This is a saying, often used by our Lord on different accounts, both with respect to his disciples, for their instruction, and with regard to the scribes and Pharisees, for their mortification; (see ^{<B41>}Luke 14:11, 18:14). It seems to be a proverbial expression, and much in use among the Jews: it is said in so many words in the Talmud ^{f1253}, as here;

“whosoever shall humble himself, the holy blessed God shall exalt him; and whosoever shall exalt himself, the holy blessed God shall humble him.”

Ver. 13. *But woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites,* etc.] It seems from hence, that the Scribes and Pharisees had not left him, at least not all of them, notwithstanding the confusion they were thrown into; but were still about him, observing what he said to the people, and watching an opportunity to take every advantage against him; whom he addresses in a very awful manner, calling them “hypocrites”, as he truly might; for they were such, both to God and men: he had detected them already before the people, in several instances of hypocrisy; and gives sufficient reasons, in the following part of this chapter, to support the character, he gives of them, and his charge against them; denouncing a woe upon them in this world, and that which is to come, no less than eight times; expressing his abhorrence of their wickedness, his commiseration of their case, and their certain destruction: “for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men”: not eternal life and happiness, the entrance into which can neither be opened nor shut by men: those whom God determines to bring thither, shall have an entrance abundantly ministered to them, in spite of the opposition of men and devils; though these men did all that in them lay, to hinder persons enjoying everlasting glory. But the Gospel dispensation is here meant, which opened by the ministry of John the Baptist, Christ and his disciples, and which the Scribes and Pharisees did all they could to shut; by discouraging the preaching of the Gospel, and the administration of ordinances, in which this dispensation lay; and prejudicing the minds of men against it, that they might not embrace the doctrines of it, nor submit

to its ordinances: they, by their office, ought to have opened and explained the Scriptures, the prophecies of the Old Testament relating to the Messiah, and led the people into a knowledge of the mysteries of his kingdom, and encouraged them to enter into this new state of things; which, according to the true intent of Scripture, was to take place, and now did: but instead of this, they shut up the Scriptures, took away the key of knowledge, and laid it aside; and darkened the Scriptures by their false glosses, and obliged the people to observe the traditions of the elders, and which they call *hrwtl gys*, “an hedge for the law”^{f1254}; to which Beza thinks, the allusion is here, and by which men were shut up, and kept from the true knowledge both of law and Gospel:

for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in: they neither believed in the Messiah themselves, nor embraced the doctrines relating to his person and office: have any of the Pharisees believed on him? No; they received him not, they rejected him, and also the counsel of God, against themselves, not being baptized with the baptism of John, the forerunner of Christ; nor would they suffer others, that were inclined to profess their faith in him, and be baptized, to do it; but discouraged them all they could, by their reproachful treatment of the person, miracles, and ministry of Christ, and by their threatenings and menaces, and by their excommunications of such as made a confession of him.

Ver. 14. *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites,* etc.] The same character is given as before, and the same woe denounced, and a fresh reason given of it:

for ye devour widows' houses; that is, the goods in the houses of such as were left with fatherless children, and but little to support them; who being left alone, and none to advise them, and being weak, and prone to superstition; these greedy dogs, as Isaiah calls them, who could never have enough, easily imposed upon them, wormed them out of all their substance, stripped them bare of the necessaries of life, prevailed on them to sell their houses and goods, and bestow them on them; or got their little estates into their hands, pretending to take care, and dispose of them for them, to their advantage:

and for a pretence make long prayers: as if they were very holy, good men; or pretended that the substance of these widows, which they got into

their hands, was for their long prayers for them; or they made long prayers for them in return for their substance. Maimonides^{f1255} says, that

“the ancient saints, or good men, used to stay an hour before prayer, and an hour after prayer, **h[ç hl ptb mkyramw** and “prolonged”, or “held an hour in prayer”:

and this being three times a day, nine hours every day, as is observed in the Talmud^{f1256}, were spent in this manner; and on this account they got the character of very devout and religious men, and hereby covered all their avarice, rapine, and oppression of the poor: but God will not be mocked;

therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation; both on account of their plundering and distressing the poor, the widows, and the fatherless; and also because of their hypocrisy in doing this under the cover of religion and holiness. Hence it appears, that there are degrees of punishment in hell, and that hypocrites, and all such who oppress the poor, under the mask of godliness, supposing gain to be that, will be partakers of the greatest degree of it. In Munster’s Hebrew Gospel it is called **Æwra j pçm**, “a long judgment”, or “damnation”, in allusion to their long prayers: and is the very reverse of what they expect on account of them: they say^{f1257}

“three things prolong a man’s days and years, **wtl ptb Æyramh**, “he that is long in his prayer””

is the first mentioned; and he that is long at his prayer, it is an excellency, they say; but instead of a long and happy life, he shall have a long damnation. This verse is left out in some copies, and in others it stands before the former; in which order it is read in the Syriac, Arabic, Persic, and Ethiopic versions.

Ver. 15. *Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites*, etc.] The same character, and woe, are still continued, and a new reason added, confirming the justness of them, in order to awaken and convince them, or, however, to caution the people against them:

for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; that is, to the Jewish religion, and their particular sect. There were two sorts of proselytes among them; one was called **bçwt rg**, “a proselyte of the gate”, one that might dwell in any of their towns, and cities, and who is thus described^{f1258},

“Who is a proselyte of the gate? whosoever takes upon him, before three neighbours, that he will not commit idolatry. R. Meir and the wise men say, whosoever takes upon him the seven precepts which the sons of Noah took upon them: others say, these do not come into the general rule of a proselyte of the gate: who is then a proselyte of the gate? this is a proselyte, that eats what dies of itself, but takes upon him to fulfil all the commandments said in the law, except that which forbids the eating of things that die of themselves.”

But the usual account of such an one is, who agrees to the seven precepts commanded the children of Noah ^{f1259}, which were these ^{f1260}; the first forbad idolatry, the second blasphemy, the third murder, the fourth uncleanness, the fifth theft, the sixth required judgment, or punishment on malefactors, the seventh forbad eating the member of any creature alive. The other proselyte was called **qdx rg**, “a proselyte of righteousness”; and he was one that submitted to circumcision ^{f1261}, and the rest of the ceremonies of the law; and was in all respects as an Israelite himself; and of this sort is the text to be understood. The Ethiopic version reads the words, “baptize one proselyte, and when he is baptized”; referring to a custom among the Jews, who baptized; or dipped their proselytes in water, as well as circumcised them; about which there are great disputes in their writings; some alleging, that the dipping of them was necessary to the making them proselytes; others affirming, that it was not:

“a proselyte that is circumcised, and not dipped, dipped, and not circumcised, the whole follows after, or depends on circumcision, says R. Eliezer.”

R. Joshua says, even dipping delays it; (i.e. the want of it, hinders a man from being a proselyte;) but R. Joshua ben Levi says, it should go according to the tradition of Bar Kaphra; for the tradition of Bar Kaphra is,

“that he that is circumcised, and not dipped, lo! he is right; for there is no proselyte but what is dipped, because of the pollutions that happen to him ^{f1262}.”

And elsewhere ^{f1263} this is debated in the following manner:

“a proselyte that is circumcised, and not dipped, R. Eliezer says, lo! this is a proselyte; for so we find concerning our fathers, that they

were circumcised, but not dipped. One that is dipped, and not circumcised, R. Joshua says, lo! this is a proselyte; for so we find concerning our mothers, that they were dipped, but not circumcised. The wise men say, one that is dipped, and not circumcised, or circumcised, and not dipped, is no proselyte, until he is both circumcised and dipped.”

So the dispute ended, and it became a settled point, that one should never be reckoned a proselyte, unless he was both circumcised and dipped. And after this it became customary to receive proselytes by circumcision, dipping, and sacrifice; and the manner was this^{f1264}:

“a stranger that comes to be made a proselyte at this time, they say unto him, what dost thou see, that thou comest to be made a proselyte? dost thou not know that the Israelites at this time are miserable, banished, drove about, and plundered, and chastisements come upon them? If he says, I know this, but it does not satisfy me, they receive him immediately, and make known some of the light commands, and some of the heavy commands to him; and they acquaint him with the business gleanings, the forgotten sheaf, the corner of the field left standing, and the poor’s tithes: they also inform him of the penalties of the commands, and say unto him, know thou, that before thou camest into this way, thou didst eat fat, and was not punished with cutting off; thou didst profane the sabbath, and was not punished with stoning? but now if thou eatest fat, thou wilt be punished with cutting off; and if thou profanest the sabbath, thou wilt be punished with stoning: and as they inform him of the penalties of the precepts, so they acquaint him with the giving of the rewards of them; saying to him, know thou that the world to come is not made but for the righteous; and the Israelites at this time cannot receive neither much good, nor much punishment? but they do not multiply words, nor critically inquire of him; if he receives these things, they immediately circumcise him; and if there remain in him obstructions, hindering circumcision, they circumcise him a second time; and when he is healed they immediately dip him; and two disciples of the wise men stand over him, and acquaint him with some of the light commands, and some of the heavy commands; then he dips, and comes up, and is as an Israelite in all respects: if a woman, the women set her in water up to her neck, and two disciples of the wise men stand by her

without, and inform her of some of the light commands, and some of the heavy commands.”

And, as Maimonides ^{f1265} adds, who gives a larger account of this matter,

“she sits in the water, and after that dips herself before them; and they turn away their faces, and go out, so that they do not see her, when she comes out of the water.”

From all which it appears, that this affair was moved after our Lord’s time; was not a settled point till a good while after; and is a custom that has obtained since the Jews were drove out of their own land; though they pretend to say it was an ancient practice of their fathers, of which they can give no sufficient proof; wherefore there could be no regard had to it in this text, and consequently the Ethiopic version of it is not a right one; nor can the dipping of proselytes by the Jews be what Christian baptism takes its rise from, or in any respect be modelled according to it, between which, in many things, there is a wide difference. Now the Jews were very diligent and industrious, which is meant by compassing of sea and land: they used all kinds of methods, ways and means, to gain such a point, and sometimes very wicked ones.

“Rabbenu Tam ^{f1266} allowed a daughter of Israel to change her religion, and a stranger to lie with her, that she might confirm it, when he became a proselyte.”

And this they were so exceeding fond of, not out of any regard to the glory of God, or the good of the souls of men; nor did they really love the proselytes: and it is often said by them ^{f1267}, that

“proselytes are hard or uneasy to Israel, as the itch or scab.”

The gloss says, because they were not expert in the commandments, and were the cause of punishment, and the Israelites were apt to imitate their works; but they coveted to make them, because hereby either they strengthened their own party, or filled their purses with their substance, or got applause and credit among the common people; for the making a proselyte was reckoned a very great action, and is ascribed to the patriarchs Abraham and Jacob, and made equal to creation ^{f1268}.

“Says R. Eliezer, in the name of R. Jose ben Zimra, if all that come into the world were gathered together to create even one fly, they

would not be able to put breath into it: but you will object what he saith, “the souls they made in Haran”, (^{<4115>}Genesis 12:5), but these are the proselytes whom Abraham proselyted; but why does he say “made”, and not proselyted? to teach thee, that whoever brings near a stranger, and proselytes him, “is as if he created him”. You will say Abraham made proselytes, but not Sarah: the text is, “the souls which they made in Haran”: which he made is not written, but which they made: Abraham proselyted the men, and Sarah proselyted the women.”

And a little after,

“Jacob made proselytes, as it is written, (^{<0132>}Genesis 35:2) “Jacob said unto his household”,”

And in imitation of these they might be fond of making proselytes, but no further than their own interest was some way or other concerned:

and when he is made, ye make him two fold more the child of hell than yourselves; for to their former errors in heathenism, some of which they might still retain, they added new ones, they received from them, equally as bad, and were but more and more deserving of hell, and even more than their masters; and besides, were trained up by them in the most bitter prejudices against Christ, and his Gospel; and many of them proved more violent persecutors of the followers of Christ, than the original Jews themselves: (see ^{<4455>}Acts 15:5 14:2,19) Our Lord here seems to oppose a common notion and saying of their’s ^{f1269}, that when “one was made a proselyte, he became entirely like a new born babe;” but so far from being like one in innocence and harmlessness, that he became a child of hell, filled with wrath and malice, and fitted for destruction; and so opposes another notion of their’s, that hellfire has no power over their disciples, nor even over the transgressors of Israel ^{f1270}: but they will find it, by experience, that neither their descent from Abraham, nor their learning, nor their religion, will save them from the devouring flames, which their sins have made them so deserving of, and so are *μνhyg ynb*, “children of hell” ^{f1271}; a Talmudic phrase; the meaning of which they understood well enough, and which was applicable to them, and more so to their proselytes; and that as owing to them, which was an aggravation of their own guilt and condemnation.

Ver. 16. *Woe unto you, you blind guides,* etc.] Meaning the same persons, the Scribes and Pharisees, as before, though not named, who pretended to

be “guides of the blind”, (~~f1219~~ Romans 2:19) but were them selves blind, and so very unfit to be guides of others; they were as they were born, ignorant of divine things, of God in Christ, of the true Messiah, of the true meaning of the Scriptures, of the spirituality of the law, and of the Gospel of Christ; and the way of salvation by him; and their minds were blinded by the God of this world, and with a greedy, and insatiable covetousness after the things of it, of which Christ here gives an instance:

which say, whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; meaning either that it was no sin to use such an oath, or it was not binding upon a man: he might choose whether he would abide by what he swore by the temple he would do; and thus they ignorantly, and wickedly encouraged vain swearing and perjury. It was usual with them to swear by the temple: take an instance or two.

“Says R. Jochanan ^{f1272}, *al kyh*, “by the temple”, it is in our hands; but what shall I do?”

The gloss upon it is;

“it is an oath by the temple of God, that it is in our power to reveal the illegitimacy of the families of the land of Israel.”

“Says R. Zechariah ben Hakatzab ^{f1273}, *hzh ^w[mh*, “by this habitation” (meaning the temple), her hand was not removed from my hand from the time the Gentiles entered into Jerusalem, to the time they went out.”

Jarchi and Bartenora’s note on it is, this is an oath. Again,

“says R. Simeon ben Gamaliel ^{f1274}, *hzh ^w[mh*, “by this habitation”; I will not rest this night until they (doves) are sold for pence apiece.”

The gloss on it is, “he swore by the sanctuary.”

But whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is guilty; or is bound, or is a debtor, to make good his oath; he cannot be excused, but must be obliged to fulfil it; or if he does not, he is guilty of perjury. This is to be understood not of the gold that covered any part of the temple; nor of the golden vessels in it; but of the gold, or money, or gifts which were offered for the service of the temple: and the sense is, that whosoever

swore by “Korban”, and that this, or that should be as “Korban”, he should not go back from it; he was obliged to give it. This showed the covetous disposition of these men, who made nothing of oaths that were sworn by the temple; but those that were made by the “Korban”, or the gifts of it, were binding, because their interest was in it; it was for their gain.

Ver. 17. *Ye fools, and blind*, etc.] That argue after so ridiculous a manner, that make use of such thin sophistry, that everybody may see through it; who must be stupid and sottish to the last degree, and their minds foolishly blinded with avarice; as to please and satisfy themselves: with so poor a distinction; that would by no means serve them, but make against them:

for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?

The temple, to be sure: for that was the seat of the divine majesty; built for him to dwell in, and in which he took up his residence; and was dedicated to his service, and in it was divine worship performed unto him. The temple was sanctified by the presence of God in it; and the gold sanctified by the temple, being devoted to the service of it: whatever holiness it had, it had it from the temple, and therefore the temple must be greater than that; and consequently it must be most extravagantly ridiculous and foolish in them, to make oaths by the gold of the temple, and gifts dedicated to its service, and on that score sanctified by it, more binding and sacred than such as were by the temple itself.

Ver. 18. *And whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing*, etc.] These are again the words or sayings of the scribes and Pharisees, and express their sentiments and practice: it was usual with them to swear by the altar; and this was reckoned either no sin at all, or such an oath was not accounted binding on a man; he might break, or keep it as he thought fit: of this kind of swearing, we have the following instances. One said to another

^{f1275},

“swear to me that thou wilt not discover me, and he swore to him; by what did he swear? says R. Jose bar Chanina, *y mynph j bzmb*, “by the innermost altar”.”

Again, it is said of Zedekiah ^{f1276},

“that he (Nebuchadnezzar) made him to swear; by what did he make him to swear? says R. Jose, by the covenant he made him to swear; Rabbi says *j bzmb*, “by the altar” he made him to swear.”

And elsewhere ^{f1277} it is said of him,

““and he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who made him swear by God”, (^{<4813>}2 Chronicles 36:13). By what did he make him swear? says R. Jose bar Chanina, “by the horns of the innermost altar” he made him swear.”

But whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty: of perjury, if he does not make good his oath; he is bound to perform it, it is obligatory; whatever he swore should be a gift for the altar, he was indispensably obliged to bring it; for whatever he swore by “Korban”, or the gift, could never be put to any other use.

Ver. 19. *Ye fools, and blind,* etc.] This is very justly repeated, since this is no less an instance of their folly, blindness, and stupidity. In three copies of Beza’s the word “fools” is not; nor is it in the Vulgate Latin, nor in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel; but the Syriac, Arabic, Persic, and Ethiopic versions have it:

for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? The gift, or offering, before it was devoted to sacred use, and brought, and laid upon the altar, was common, had no ceremonial sanctity in it, and might be put to any use; but when it was brought, and laid upon the altar, it became holy; for, according to the law, whatever touched the altar, and indeed all, or any of the vessels of the sanctuary, was holy, (^{<12387>}Exodus 29:37 30:29). Christ speaks the sense of the law, and their own traditions, and in their own language, and argues from the same to the confutation of them: **çdqm j bzmj**, “the altar”, they say ^{f1278}, “sanctifies” that which is fit for it; that is, that which is proper to be offered up upon it:

“as the altar sanctifies that which is fit for it, so the ascent unto it sanctifies; and as the altar, and the ascent, sanctify what is fit for them, so the vessels sanctify; the vessels for liquids sanctify the liquids, and the dry measures sanctify the dry; the vessels for liquids do not sanctify the dry, nor the dry measures sanctify the liquids; the holy vessels, which are bored, (or broken,) when they do the service they used to do, when whole, sanctify, if not, they do not sanctify; nor does anything sanctify but in the sanctuary.”

Now, since this is a clear case, that the altar sanctifies the gift, and not the gift the altar, our Lord’s question is, which is the greater? A man that has

the least share of common sense will easily see, that the altar must be the greater: wherefore these scribes and Pharisees must be wretchedly stupid to give out, that an oath made by the altar was not binding, when one that was made by the gift, or *Korban*, was binding; seeing the gift, or offering, received its sanctity from the altar: hence, of the two, an oath made by the altar should be more sacred and obligatory than one made by the gift.

Ver. 20. *Whosoever therefore shall swear by the altar*, etc.] Not that Christ allowed of swearing by the altar, or by the temple, or by heaven, or by any creature, animate or inanimate; for such swearing is elsewhere disapproved of by him, and forbid, but if a man did swear by the altar, he ought to know, and consider that he not only

sweareth by it, but by all the gifts, and offerings that are brought, and laid upon it,

and by all things thereon; whatever gifts and sacrifices are offered upon it; which, by being put there, become holy, as the altar itself: so that he that swears by the altar, swears also by the gifts of the altar; and consequently, according to their own traditions, such oaths must be binding.

Ver. 21. *And whoso shall swear by the temple*, etc.] As we have before seen they used to do, and as appears from what the poet says^{f1279}: Ecce negas, jurasque mihi per templa tonantis Non credo: jura, verpe, per Anchialum.

In which he intimates, that if the Jew swore by the temple, he would not believe him; as well he might not, since such an oath was accounted nothing; but bids him swear by Anchialus, that is, by *hwl a yj*, “Chi Eloah”, or *^wyl [yj*, “Chi Alon”, or “Elion, the living God”, or *μl w[h yh*, “Chi Haolam, he that lives for ever”^{f1280}; and suggests, that he should then believe him. Now our Lord, though he did not allow of such swearing, yet justly argues, that he that sweareth by the temple, not only “sweareth by it”, which could not be a witness of what was sworn; but he must be interpreted to swear by the inhabitant of it, and by him that dwelleth in it; that is, God, for whom it was built, to whom it was dedicated; where he was worshipped, and where he vouchsafed to reside; taking up his dwelling between the cherubim upon the mercy seat, in the most holy place; from whence he communed with men, and gave tokens of his presence; and who only could be the proper witness of the truth, or falsehood, of what was

swore; and therefore an oath, by the temple, ought to be looked upon as if made by God himself, and so to be sacred and binding.

Ver. 22. *And he that shall swear by heaven*, etc.] As the Jews were wont to do in common, but did not look upon such an oath as obligatory on them; (See Gill on “^{f1054}Matthew 5:34”), though such an one

swaureth by the throne of God; for heaven is God’s throne, where he sits, and, in an eminent manner, displays the glory of his majesty:

and by him that sitteth thereon, by God himself. Thus swearing by anything that has any relation to God, is implicitly swearing by him; and therefore ought to be considered as binding, as if he was expressed in it; since an appeal cannot be made to things inanimate, nor indeed to any creature, but to God, the searcher of hearts.

Ver. 23. *Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites*, etc.] Christ returns to the former epithets he had very rightly given to these men, and very pertinently repeats them here; and which are confirmed by the instances of their conduct and practice here alleged, which abundantly show their hypocrisy and deceit; since they were very strict in observing some outward things, which gave them credit with the people, and especially the priests and Levites, some little trifling ceremonies and traditions of their elders, whilst they neglected internal religion, and those things which were of the greatest moment and importance:

for ye take tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin; which ought not commanded by the law, they were obliged to by the traditions of the elders. Mint is an herb well known, and has its name in the Greek from its sweet smell; on account of which the Jews used to spread it on the floors of their synagogues ^{f1281}. This was one of the herbs that was subject to the law of the seventh year ^{f1282}, and is mentioned with those which were to be tithed ^{f1283}. The Ethiopic version, instead of mint reads “hyssop”; and which also was an herb that was obliged to be tithed ^{f1284}. “Anise” is a seed also well known, and which the Jews call **tbç**, and of which they often observe, that it is subject to tithing, both seed, herb, flowers, or stalks ^{f1285}; instead of this Munster’s Hebrew Gospel has **µgyp**, “rue”; and which, in the Misna ^{f1286}, is mentioned along with mint, as it is by (^{<2114>}Luke 11:42) and said to be one of the things the Pharisees gave tithe of; though in their oral law it is reckoned among the things that are free from tithe ^{f1287}; and therefore this must be a sort of work of supererogation to give tithe of that, which they

were not obliged to. “Cummin” is a sort of anise; its seed is much like fennel seed, and which pigeons are very fond of: mention is made of it in (²³³⁸Isaiah 28:25,27) and is reckoned with figs, dates, carobes, or Egyptian figs, and rice, which were obliged to be tithed ^{f1288}, and was what was also bound to the offering of the first fruits to the priest ^{f1289}. Christ mentions these particular herbs and seeds, as a specimen of what they paid tithes of. In Luke, it is added, “and all manner of herbs”: for, according to the traditions of the elders, they were in general subject to tithes: and it is a common saying or maxim of the Jews, that the tithing of corn is from the law, but *ἡ τῆς βοτάνης τῆς τιμῆς*, “the tithing of herbs is from the Rabbins” ^{f1290}: it is a constitution of their’s, and not of Moses:

and have omitted the weightier matters of the law. The distinction of the commandments of the law into lighter and heavier, or weightier, to which Christ here refers, is frequent with the Jews. When one comes to be made a proselyte, they acquaint him with some of *τῶν ἡπιωτέρων*, “the light commands”, and some of *τῶν βαρύτερων*, “the heavy”, or “weighty commands” ^{f1291}. So again, they paraphrase the words in (²³³⁸Isaiah 33:18) “where is the scribe?” he that numbers all the letters in the law. “Where is the receiver?” who weighs the “light” things, *ἡ τῆς ἡπιωτέρας*, and “heavy”, or “weighty things in the law” ^{f1292}. Again ^{f1293},

“in the words of the law there are some things “light”, and some things “heavy”, or “weighty”:

but those weighty things they omitted, and regarded those that were light; yea, that had no foundation in the law at all: and no wonder, since, in the place last cited, they say ^{f1294}, that

“the words of the Scribes are all of them “weighty” and that the sayings of the elders are more “weighty” than the words of the prophets.”

The things our Lord refers to, and instances in, are as follow;

judgment, mercy, and faith. “Judgment” may mean the administration of justice in courts of judicature; the putting in execution good judgments, righteous laws and statutes; protecting and relieving the injured and oppressed, and doing that which is right and equitable between man and man: but, on the contrary, these men devoured widows’ houses, and oppressed the poor and fatherless. “Mercy” includes all acts of compassion

to the distressed, relieving the necessitous, distributing to their wants, and showing all kindness and beneficence to the poor and needy; which the scribes and Pharisees very little practised, being a set of cruel, hard hearted, and covetous persons. “Faith” may not only design faithfulness in a man’s keeping his word and promise, and fidelity to a trust reposed in him; but also faith in God, as the God of providence, and as the God of grace and mercy; believing in his word and promises, and worshipping him, which the law requires; and the rather this seems to be intended, because Luke, instead of “faith”, puts “the love of God”, which faith includes, and works by, and is the end of the commandment, arising from faith unfeigned: so that Christ instances in the weightier matters of both tables of the law, which these men neglected, and the latter, as well as the former; not believing the revelation of the Gospel, nor the Messiah, who was promised, and prophesied of by God, in the writings of the Old Testament:

these ought ye to have done: more especially, and in the first place, as being of the greatest use and importance:

and not to leave the other undone; meaning either the lighter matters, and lesser commands of the law; or even their tithes of herbs: if they thought themselves obliged to them, Christ would not dispute the matter with them; if they thought fit to observe them, they might, so long as they did not interfere with, and take them off from things of greater moment. But alas! these men preferred the rituals of the ceremonial law, and the traditions of the elders, above the duties of the moral law; and reckoned that the latter were nothing, if the former were wanting; for they ^{f1295} Say, that

“the words of the Scribes, are more lovely than the words of the law.”

And also ^{f1296}, that

“he that profanes the holy things, and despises the solemn feasts, and makes void the covenant of Abraham our father (circumcision), and behaves impudently towards the law (ceremonial), although the law and good works are in his hands, he has no part in the world to come.”

The Persic version renders the words thus; “these ought ye to do, and not them”; as if it was our Lord’s sense, that they ought to observe the weightier matters of the moral law, and not regard their tithing of herbs, and other traditions of, their fathers.

Ver. 24. *Ye blind guides*, etc.] As in (⁴²³⁶Matthew 23:16)

who strain at a gnat and swallow a camel: the Syriac and Persic versions read the words in the plural number, gnats and camels. The Jews had a law, which forbid them the eating of any creeping thing, (⁶¹⁴⁴Leviticus 11:41) and of this they were strictly observant, and would not be guilty of the breach of it for ever so much.

“One that eats a flea, or a gnat; they say ^{f1297} is *rmwm*, “an apostate”;

one that has changed his religion, and is no more to be reckoned as one of them. Hence they very carefully strained their liquors, lest they should transgress the above command, and incur the character of an apostate; and at least, the penalty of being beaten with forty stripes, save one; for,

“whoever eats a whole fly, or a whole gnat, whether alive or dead, was to be beaten on account of a creeping flying thing ^{f1298}.”

Among the accusations Haman is said to bring against them to Ahasuerus, and the instances he gives of their laws being different from the king’s, this one ^{f1299}; that

“if a fly falls into the cup of one of them, *whtwçw wqrwz*, “he strains it, and drinks it”; but if my lord the king should touch the cup of one of them, he would throw it to the ground, and would not drink of it.”

Maimonides says ^{f1300},

“He that strains wine, or vinegar, or strong liquor, and eats “Jabchushin” (a sort of small flies found in wine cellars ^{f1301}, on account of which they strained their wine), or gnats, or worms, which he hath strained off, is to be beaten on account of the creeping things of the water, or on account of the creeping flying things, and the creeping things of the water.”

Moreover, it is said ^{f1302},

“a man might not pour his strong liquors through a strainer, by the light (of a candle or lamp), lest he should separate and leave in the top of the strainer (some creeping thing), and it should fail again

into the cup, and he should transgress the law, in (^{<B14>}Leviticus 11:41).”

To this practice Christ alluded here; and so very strict and careful were they in this matter, that to strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel, became at length a proverb, to signify much solicitude about little things, and none about greater. These men would not, on any consideration, be guilty of such a crime, as not to pay the tithe of mint, anise, and cummin, and such like herbs and seeds; and yet made no conscience of doing justice, and showing mercy to men, or of exercising faith in God, or love to him. Just as many hypocrites, like them, make a great stir, and would appear very conscientious and scrupulous, about some little trifling things, and yet stick not, at other times, to commit the grossest enormities, and most scandalous sins in life.

Ver. 25. *Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites,* etc.] Our Lord cannot be thought to bear too hard upon these men, nor does he continue this character of them, and denunciations of woe against them, without a reason:

for ye make clean the outside of the cup and platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. The allusion is to their traditions about washing their cups and pots, and brazen vessels; (see ^{<B14>}Mark 7:4) which they strictly observed. In their oral law is a whole tract, called “Mikvaot”, which gives rules about the places where they washed, the things to be washed, and the manner of washing them; about which they were very nice, pretending to much outward cleanness, but had no regard to inward purity. Christ’s sense is, that they took much pains, and were very careful, that the cup they drank out of, and the platter, or dish they ate out of, should be very clean; when at the same time, the food and drink that were within them, were got by oppression and rapine; by devouring widows’ houses, by making undue claims upon, and extorting unjust sums from the fatherless, the poor, and the needy; and were abused by them, to luxury and intemperance. In like manner the Jews themselves say of hypocrites ^{f1303},

“They make show of a pure and clean soul, but under it lies hid a leprosy: they are like to “vessels full of uncleanness”; they are outwardly washed with the water of fraud and craftiness; but whatsoever is within, in the midst of them, is unclean.”

The Vulgate Latin version of the text, instead of “excess”, reads “uncleanness”, and so does Munster’s Hebrew Gospel: many copies read “unrighteousness”. Excess is thought to be a sin the Pharisees were not guilty of, though they were of extortion, injustice, and uncleanness.

Ver. 26. *Thou blind Pharisee*, etc.] Well might Christ call such an one a blind Pharisee, who was so scrupulously careful to cleanse his cup and platter; and yet made no conscience of filling them with what was gotten in an unjust way, and so defiled himself and them:

cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also: get food and drink in an honest way, remove all extortion and oppression out of thine hands, and luxury and intemperance from thy table; and so shall the outward cleanness of thy cup and dish, be no reproach unto thee, or testimony against thee, of thine hypocrisy. So the great concern of all men should be, inward purity; that their hearts be purified by faith in the blood of Christ, and sprinkled from an evil conscience by the same; that principles of grace and holiness be formed in them by the Spirit of God; and then their outward lives and conversations being influenced thereby, will be honourable and agreeable to their professions. Otherwise, an external reformation, or an outward show of holiness, and bare pretensions to it, without internal grace, will never be of any avail in the sight of God.

Ver. 27. *Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites*, etc.] It is much these men could bear to hear themselves so often called by this name; and it shows great courage in our Lord, so freely to reprove them, and expose their wickedness, who were men of so much credit and influence with the people:

for ye are like unto whited sepulchres; or “covered with lime”, as the Syriac, Arabic, and Persic versions, render it. For the Jews used to mark their graves with white lime, that they might be known: that so priests, Nazarites, and travellers, might avoid them, and not be polluted with them. This appears from various passages in their writings:

“The vineyard of the fourth year, they marked with clods of earth, and an uncircumcised one with dust, *dysb twrbq l ɕw*, “and graves with chalk”, mixed (with water) and poured (on them ^{f1304}.)”

Of this marking of the graves, the reason of it, the time and manner of doing it, Maimonides^{f1305} gives us this account:

“Whoever finds a grave, or a dead carcass, or anything for the dead that defiles, by the tent he is obliged to put a mark upon it, that it may not be a stumbling to others; and on the intermediate days of a feast, they go out from the sanhedrim, to mark the graves. — With what do they mark? **hj mm dysb**, “with chalk infused” in water, and poured upon the unclean place: they do not put the mark upon the top of the unclean place, (or exactly in it,) but so that it may stand out here and there, at the sides of it, that what is pure may not be corrupted; and they do not put the mark far from the place of the uncleanness, that they may not waste the land of Israel; and they do not set marks on those that are manifest, for they are known to all; but upon those that are doubtful, as a field in which a grave is lost, and places that are open, and want a covering.”

Now because when the rains fell, these marks were washed away, hence on the first of Adar (February) when they used to repair the highways, they also marked the graves with white lime, that they might be seen and known, and avoided; and so on their intermediate feast days^{f1306}: the reason why they made use of chalk, or lime, and with these marked their graves, was because it looked white like bones^{f1307}; so that upon first sight, it might be thought and known what it was for, and that a grave was there: hence this phrase, “whited sepulchres”:

which indeed appear beautiful outward; especially at a distance, and when new marked:

but within are full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness; worms and rottenness, which arise from the putrefied carcasses, and are very nauseous and defiling.

Ver. 28. *Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous*, etc.] By making broad their phylacteries, enlarging the borders of their garments, praying long prayers, compassing sea and land to make one proselyte, paying tithes of all manner of herbs, and cleansing the outside of the cup and platter, and doing all their works, prayers, fastings, and alms deeds, to be seen of men. This is the accommodation of the above simile; by reason of these things they looked like whited sepulchres, outwardly beautiful: so these appeared outwardly righteous, they looked like righteous persons, and were not;

they were what Hagar, as the Jews say, charged her mistress with being; for so they interpret these words, “her mistress was despised in her eyes”, (~~Gen~~ Genesis 16:4) ^{f1308}.

“She said, this Sarah is not secretly, what she is openly; she appears **tqdx ayh wl yak**, “as if she was righteous” and she is not righteous.”

The same they say of ^{f1309} Leah. This was a misrepresentation; but the representation Christ gives of these men, is right; they were of that sort of the Pharisees, which they call **^y[wbxh**, “the dyed”, or “coloured” ones: it is said of Jannai the king, that he should say to those of his family ^{f1310};

“Do not be afraid of them that are Pharisees, (that are truly so,) nor of them that are not Pharisees; but of them that are, **^y[wbxh**, “dyed”, for they are like to Pharisees; for their works are as the works of Zimri, (adulterers, as these were,) and they expect the reward as Phinehas.”

The gloss upon it is,

“the Pharisees hated him, because he had slain many of their wise men, and was turned Sadducee; and when he was dying, his wife was afraid of them, lest they should take away the kingdom from her sons, and she desired him to seek their favour for her; but he said unto her, do not be afraid of the Pharisees, for they are “righteous”, and will not render evil to thee, nor to thy sons; for they have not sinned against them; nor of them that are not Pharisees, for they are their friends; but of “the dyed ones”: as if he had said, their appearance is not according to their nature, but they are dyed without, **urbk ukwt ^yaw**, “and their inside is not as their outside”: for their works are as the work of Zimri, for they are ungodly; and they expect the reward as Phinehas, saying to men, to honour them as Phinehas.”

But this outward show and appearance of righteousness, was only “unto men”, not unto God: they did not appear so to him, who is the searcher of hearts, and knows what is in man, and knew all the secret wickedness that was in them; for though they imposed upon, and deceived men, they could not deceive God; nor was their iniquity hid from Christ, who adds, “but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity”: and which was evident from

their ambition and vain glory, in desiring the uppermost rooms at feasts, the chief places in the synagogue, greetings in the markets, and titles of honour and grandeur; from their avarice and cruel oppression of the widows, and fatherless, under a pretence of long prayers; from their neglecting the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith, and practising extortion and excess: that saying of their's ^{f1311}, may be applied to themselves;

“every disciple of a wise man, *wrbk wkwt ʿyaç*, “whose inside is not as his outside”, is no disciple of a wise man.”

And it is expressly ascribed by some of their writers to one sort of the Pharisees, of whom they say ^{f1312},

“they are desirous to appear to men to be holy, but their inside is not as their outside;”

which is much the same Christ here says of them. What our Lord charges these men with, is owned by their own doctors; they say ^{f1313}, that

“the iniquity of those that were under the first temple, was open and manifest, but the iniquity of those that were under the second temple, was not open.”

But as the gloss says,

“the children of the second temple, *rtsb wyh µy[çr*, “were secretly wicked”.”

Ver. 29. *Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites*, etc.] This is the seventh and last time, in which these words are delivered in this exact form by our Lord, in this chapter; and expresses the certainty, both of their sin and punishment: and the instance annexed to it, no less discovers the hypocrisy of these persons, and supports the character given of them; as also furnishes out a sufficient reason, why a woe is denounced upon them;

because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous; meaning by the “prophets” and “righteous” men, the same persons, the prophets, who were righteous men; or else the prophets, and also other righteous men besides them. Rightly is the word “build”, used of tombs and sepulchres; the Jews have a canon, which runs thus ^{f1314};

“they do not dig graves nor sepulchres, on a feast day.”

The commentators^{f1315} on it say, that the graves are the holes which they dig in the earth, and the sepulchres are the buildings over the graves. In the Gemara it is asked^{f1316},

“what are the graves? and what are the sepulchres? says R. Judah, the graves are made by digging and the sepulchres or tombs **ynbb**, “by building”;

and these edifices which they built over the graves of some of their prophets, and righteous men, were very grand and beautiful. The Cippi Hebmici furnish us with many instances of this kind: in Hebron, in the land of Canaan, which is Kirjath Arba, is the cave of Machpelah; in which were buried the fathers of the world, Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Leah; and over it is a wonderful, **hanw**, “and beautiful” building and it is the building of David the king; and opposite the city, in the mountain, is a beautiful building, and there was buried Jesse, the father of David the king: in the way from Hebron to Jerusalem, is Chalchul, where Gad, David’s seer, was buried; and Tekoah, where Isaiah the prophet was buried, and over him a “beautiful” structure: at the Mount of Olives is a beautiful fabric, which they say is the sepulchre of Huldah, the prophetess; at the bottom of the mount is a very great cave, attributed to Haggai the prophet, and in the middle of it are many caves; near it, is the sepulchre of Zechariah the prophet, in a cave shut up, and over it is **han hpyk**, “a beautiful arch”, or vault of one stone: between Rama and Jerusalem are caves ascribed to Simeon the just, and the seventy (elders of the) sanhedrim: at Rama, Samuel was buried, also his father Elkanah, and Hannah his mother, and in a cave shut up, and over the cave buildings: at Cheres, which is Timnath Cheres, in Mount Ephraim, are buried Joshua the son of Nun, and Nun his father, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and over them are trees. At Avarta is the school of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the priest, and Eleazar is buried upon the mountain; and below the village, between the olive trees, Ithamar, and over him a large monument: at the barns is a temple of the Gentiles, with a vault and a cave, where they say are buried seventy elders. At Belata, a village about a sabbath day’s journey from Shechem, Joseph the righteous was buried: at Mount Carmel, is the cave of Elijah the prophet, and there was buried Elisha, the son of Shaphat the prophet: at Jordan was buried Iddo the prophet, and over it is a great elm tree, and it is in the form of a lion; and there was buried Shebuel, the son of Gershom, the son of Moses, over whom is a great oak

tree: at Geba, in Mount Lebanon, is buried Zephaniah the prophet, in the middle of a cave shut up. On a mountain, a sabbath day's journey from Zidon, Zebulun was buried, in a beautiful vault; at Cephah Noah, was buried Noah the just; and at Kadesh Nephtalim, Barak the son of Abinoam, and Deborah his wife, and Jael; and at Timnath, Shamgar the son of Auath, over whom are two marble pillars. At Cephah Cana, is buried Jonah, the son of Amittai, on the top of a mountain, in a temple of the Gentiles, in a "beautiful" vault: at Jakuk, was buried in the way, Habakkuk the prophet; and at the north of the village of Raam, was buried Obadiah the prophet: at Susan the palace, was buried Mordecai the Jew, and over him a beautiful stone statue; and on it written, this is the sepulchre of Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a man of Jemini; and near the river Hiddekel, Ezekiel the prophet was buried. In this account, many things may be observed, which confirm and illustrate the words of the text. And certain it is, that it was accounted very honourable and laudable in persons, to beautify the sepulchres of the patriarchs and prophets. Among the excellent characters given of Benaah, R. Jochanan's master, it is said^{f1317},

"that he was a very wise man, and a judge, and understood mysteries and parables; $\tau\rho[\mu\acute{\eta}\nu\chi\omega$, "and painted the cave" of Adam the first, and the cave of Abraham."

Though perhaps this is to be understood of him in a figurative sense, but yet must allude to a literal one: the sepulchres of the prophets, were especially very sacred:

"all sepulchres (they say^{f1318}) might be removed, but the sepulchres of a king, and the "sepulchres of a prophet"; they say unto him, were not the sepulchres of the sons of David removed? and the sepulchres of the sons of Huldah were in Jerusalem, and a man might not touch them, to remove them for ever. R. Akiba replied to them because of decency it was forgiven (or allowed) there, and from thence the uncleanness being channelled, went out to the brook Kidron."

Now our Lord must not be understood as blaming them for barely building the tombs of the prophets, and garnishing the sepulchres of the righteous, which they might have done without blame. But because they did all this, that they might be thought to be very innocent and holy men, and far from being guilty of the crimes their forefathers were; when they were of the very selfsame blood thirsty, persecuting spirit; and did, and would do the

same things to the prophets and apostles of the New Testament, their fathers had done to the prophets of the Old. They have a saying^{f1319}, that

“they do not erect monuments “for the righteous”; for their words are their memorial.”

But this can only mean, that there is no need of monuments for them; since their sayings are sufficient to keep up the memory of them. Hence Dr. Lightfoot thinks, that our Lord reproves them out of their own mouths, for despising the words of the prophets; imagining they performed piety enough, by bestowing cost in adorning their sepulchres; when they themselves own, their sayings are the best remembrances of them, and therefore ought to be regarded more than their tombs.

Ver. 30. *And say, if we had been in the days of our fathers*, etc.] Their ancestors and predecessors: signifying, that if they had lived in the times they did, or had been in the same post and office with them, they should have opposed, at least not consented to their measures:

we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets; would not have joined them in persecuting the prophets, and in shedding their blood, and putting them to death; but would have received them as the prophets of the Lord, have hearkened to their advice and message, and have honoured and obeyed them as such; and this they thought they sufficiently declared, by building and adorning their tombs.

Ver. 31. *Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves*, etc.] Or “against yourselves”, as the Syriac reads; for what they said was a plain acknowledgment, and a full confession, what their fathers had done, and whose offspring they were; and from whom better things were not to be expected; since they were their fathers’ own children, and of the same temper and disposition with them:

that ye are the children of them that killed the prophets. They plainly owned, that their fathers killed the prophets, and that they descended from them; though they meant not so much to reproach, their ancestors, as to give themselves a greater character; yet it did not with those, that knew them; not with our Lord: for as their own words testified against them, that they were a seed of evildoers; their practices showed them to be of the same spirit and principles with their progenitors.

Ver. 32. *Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.*] Of their sins; for there were bounds and limits set how far they should proceed, and no further; as yet they had not got to the end of their iniquity: their fathers had gone great lengths in sin, but their iniquity was not yet full, as is said of the Amorites, (⁴¹⁵¹⁶Genesis 15:16) these their sons were to fill it up. They had shed the blood of many of the prophets; and indeed there were none of them but they had persecuted and abused, in one shape or another: some they entreated shamefully, others they beat: some they stoned, and others they put to death with the sword, or otherwise; and now their children were about to fill the measure brimful, by crucifying the Son of God, which they were at this time meditating and contriving; and by persecuting and slaying his apostles, and so would bring upon them the vengeance of God. The Jews well enough understood these words, which were spoken to them in an ironical way, and expressing what they were about, and what they would hereafter do, and what would be the issue and consequence of it: they have a saying ^{f1320}, that

“the holy blessed God does not take vengeance on a man, *wtas al mttç d*], “until his measure is filled up”; according to (⁴⁸¹²Job 20:22).”

Which the Chaldee paraphrase renders,

“when his measure is filled up, then shall he take vengeance on him;”

and that this is Christ’s sense, appears from what follows.

Ver. 33. *Ye servants, ye generation of vipers,* etc.] The latter of these names, John the Baptist calls the Sadducees and Pharisees by, in (⁴¹⁸⁷Matthew 3:7) and Christ, in (⁴¹²³⁴Matthew 12:34) both express their craft and subtlety, their inward poison, and venomous nature; their fair outside, and specious pretences; their hypocrisy, malice, and wickedness; in which they were like to the old serpent, their father the devil, and to their ancestors, that murdered the prophets; nor could any good thing be expected, from such a viperous generation:

how can ye escape the damnation of hell? signifying, that it was impossible that they should; nor could they surely expect it themselves, who must be conscious to themselves of their wickedness, malice, and deceit. The Persic version reads it, “where can ye escape?” etc. and so Beza says it was read,

in one ancient copy of his; and the sense is, whither can ye flee? to whom, or what can you have recourse to, to screen you from the wrath to come? Rocks and mountains, caves and dens, will be of no service. The phrase, **μῆνυγ ἰ ῥ ἡνυδ**, “the judgment, or damnation of hell”, is a phrase often used in the Talmud ^{f1321}, and Midrashes ^{f1322} of the Jews; and intends future torment, and the everlasting vengeance and wrath of God, the unquenchable fire prepared for the devil and his angels, and which impenitent unbelieving sinners cannot escape.

Ver. 34. *Wherefore, behold I send unto you prophets*, etc.] To try them, whether they would show the respect to prophets, they pretended to have for them; by building and beautifying their sepulchres; by exclaiming against their forefathers for shedding their blood; and by declaring, that had they lived in their days, they would not have joined with them in it; and to make it appear, that these were all empty words, and specious pretences; and that they had the same malicious and bloody principles in them; and would be guilty of the same practices, and so fill up the measure of their fathers’ sins; and bring upon them the punishment of everlasting burnings hereafter, as well as ruin and destruction on their nation, city, and temple now. Christ here speaks, as, one having power and authority, to qualify and send forth men, under the several characters here mentioned, and of what he should do after his resurrection: for notwithstanding the people of the Jews would crucify him, and use him as they did, in a barbarous manner; yet after all this, he would send his ministers to them, to gather his elect out from among them, to render the rest inexcusable, and to show his longsuffering and patience. The persons designed by “prophets”, “wise men”, and “Scribes”, are his apostles: called “prophets”; because they were divinely inspired to write, and preach in his name; had the gift of foretelling future events, and of explaining with the greatest clearness and exactness, the prophecies of the Old Testament; showing their respect unto, and accomplishment in Christ: “wise men”; because they were made wise unto salvation, and capable of instructing others: they were filled with all spiritual and evangelical wisdom, and preached the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom: and Scribes; because they were well instructed in the kingdom of heaven, and had the true knowledge of the law, and could rightly interpret it, as well as make known the Gospel of the grace of God. Christ chooses to use these names and titles, because the Jews pretended to have great veneration for the ancient prophets, and these he should send, would not be a whit inferior to them, but in many things

exceed them; and they had great esteem for their wise men and Scribes, who would be vastly exceeded by these ministers of his, and yet would be used very badly by them:

and some of them ye shall kill; as Stephen, the first “martyr”, who was stoned to death by them; and James, the brother of John, whom Herod, to their good liking, killed with the sword; and the other James they threw headlong from off the pinnacle of the temple, and killed him with a fuller’s club^{f1323}.

And crucify; so Simeon, the son of Cleophas, was crucified at the instigation of the Jews, as Eusebius relates^{f1324}.

And some of them ye shall scourge in your synagogues; as John, Peter, and Paul:

and persecute them from city to city; as they did Paul and Barnabas, as the Acts of the Apostles testify.

Ver. 35. *That upon you may come all the righteous blood*, etc.] Or “the blood of all the righteous men”, as the Syriac: Arabic, Persic, and Ethiopic versions read; for there is no righteousness in blood, nor any conveyed by it: all men are of one blood, and that is tainted, they that are righteous, are not so naturally, nor by any righteousness of their own, but by the righteousness of Christ: and such were the persons here meant, whose blood being shed in the cause of righteousness, God would revenge; and the punishment for such a crime, and the vengeance of God for it, were to come upon the nation of the Jews by this means, through their crucifying of Christ, and killing, and persecuting his apostles; whereby they would make it manifest, that they approved of, and consented to, what others had done to all the righteous men, whose blood had been

shed upon the earth; whether in Judea, or elsewhere; and continued in the same wicked practices, or committed worse, and so justly incurred the wrath of God to the uttermost; which would quickly come upon them, when the measure of their fathers’ sin were filled up by them, from the beginning of time, to the present age: even

from the blood of righteous Abel: who was the first person in the world that was killed, and that for righteousness sake too, because his works were righteous, his person being so; not by his works, but through the righteousness and sacrifice of the Messiah, which were to be brought in; in

the faith of which he offered up his sacrifice, whereby he obtained a testimony from God, that he was righteous, having respect to his person in Christ, and so to his offering. This epithet of “righteous” seems to be what was commonly given him by the Jews: hence, with a peculiar emphasis, he is called, **qydxh l bh**, “Abel the righteous”^{f1325}; as he is also said to be **pygrhnl çar**, “the head of them that killed”^{f1326}; he being the first man that was slain; for which reason he is mentioned here by Christ; and also, because his blood cried for vengeance, and still continued to do, upon all such persons that should commit the like crime. It is an observation frequently made by the Jews, on those words in (⁽⁻⁰⁰¹⁰⁾Genesis 4:10) “the voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me”, that

“it is not said in the Hebrew text, the blood of thy brother, but the bloods of thy brother; his blood, and the blood of his seed^{f1327}; and that from hence may be learned, that the blood of his children, and of his children’s children, and of all his offspring, to the end of all generations, that should proceed from him, all stood and cried before the Lord^{f1328}.”

The Jerusalem Targum paraphrases the words in this remarkable manner;

“the price of the bloods of “the multitude of the righteous”, that shall spring from Abel thy brother.”

And Onkelos thus,

“the voice of the blood of the seed that shall rise from thy brother, etc.”

unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Learned men are very much divided about this person, who he was. Some think our Lord speaks prophetically of Zechariah, the son of Baruch; who, as Josephus says^{f1329}, was slain in the middle of the temple, just before the siege of Jerusalem; and who was, as he also relates, a rich man, of an illustrious family, a hater of wickedness, and a friend to liberty: and because, as Abel was the first man that was slain, and this man being killed in the temple, at the close of the Jewish state; and because the words may be rendered, “whom ye shall have slain”, therefore he is thought to be intended: but there are several things that do not agree with him, besides its being a narration of a fact, as past, according to the usual rendering of the word: for this Zacharias was the

son of Baruch, and not Barachias, which are two different names; he was killed in the middle of the temple, not between the temple and the altar; nor does he appear to be a man of such great character, as to be distinguished in this manner; and besides, his death was what the Jews did not consent to in general, and therefore could not be charged with it; he was acquitted by the sanhedrim of the charge of treachery laid against him, and was assassinated by two zealots. Others have thought that Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, is meant, who is supposed to be murdered by the Jews very lately; and it being a recent action, is mentioned by our Lord: the reason of it is a tradition, which several ancient writers ^{f1330} speak of, and is pretended to be this; that there was a place, in the temple appropriated to virgins, and that Mary, the mother of our Lord, after his birth, came and took her place here, as a virgin, when the Jews, knowing her to have a child, objected to it; but Zechariah, who was acquainted with the mystery of the incarnation, ordered her to keep her place, upon which the Jews slew him upon the spot: but this tradition is not to be depended on; nor does it appear that there ever was any such particular place in the temple assigned to virgins; nor that the father of this Zacharias was Barachias; or that the son was slain by the Jews, and in this place. Others have been of opinion, that Zechariah the prophet is designed; and indeed, he is said to be the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, (~~300~~ Zechariah 1:1) and the Jewish Targumist speaks of a Zechariah, the son of Iddo, as slain by the Jews in the temple. His words are these ^{f1331};

“as ye slew Zechariah, the son of Iddo, the high priest, and faithful prophet, in the house of the sanctuary of the Lord, on the day of atonement; because he reproved you, that ye might not do that evil which is before the Lord.”

And him the Jews make to be the same with Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah, in (~~200~~ Isaiah 8:2) and read Berechiah ^{f1332}: but the Targumist seems to confound Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, with him; for the prophet Zechariah was not an high priest, Joshua was high priest in his time; nor does it appear from any writings, that he was killed by the Jews; nor is it probable that they would be guilty of such a crime, just upon their return from captivity; and besides, he could not be slain in such a place, because the temple, and altar, were not yet built: it remains, that it must be Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada the priest, who was slain in the court of the house of the Lord, (~~100~~ 2 Chronicles 24:20-22) who, as Abel was the first, he is the last of the righteous men whose death is related in the Scriptures,

and for whose blood vengeance was required, as for Abel's. He was slain in the court of the house of the Lord; and so the Ethiopic version here renders it, in the midst of the holy house. It is often said by the Jewish writer ^{f1333}, that

“R. Joden (sometimes it is R. Jonathan) asked R. Acha, whether they slew Zechariah, in the court of the Israelites, or in the court of the women? he answered him, neither in the court of the Israelites, nor in the court of the women, but in the court of the priests.”

And elsewhere they say ^{f1334}, that they

“slew a priest and a prophet in the sanctuary; this is Zechariah the son of Jehoiada.”

Now it should be observed, that the temple, or sanctuary, is sometimes put for the whole sacred building, with all its courts and appurtenances; and sometimes, as in this text, for that part of it that was covered, between which, and the altar of burnt offerings, in the court of the priests, which must he here meant, and not the altar of incense, in the most holy place, was a space of twenty two cubits ^{f1335}, frequently called, in Jewish writings, the space between the porch and the altar; that is, the porch which led into the temple, and the brazen altar in the court of the priests, which was open to the air, and is the very spot here intended. Now this was a very sacred place, and is mentioned as an aggravation of the sin of the Jews, that they should enter where none but priests might; nor these neither that had any defect in them; and defile it also by shedding innocent blood.

“The court of the Israelites is holier than the court of the women; because those that wanted atonement might not enter there; and a defiled person that entered there, was obliged to be cut off: the court of the priests was holier than that, because the Israelites might not enter there, but in the time of their necessities, for laying on of hands for atonement, for killing and waving: the place between the porch and the altar was holier than that; for such that had any blemishes, or were bareheaded, or had their garments rent, might not enter ^{f1336}.”

Hence they say ^{f1337}, that

“the Israelites committed seven transgressions on that day: they slew a priest, and a prophet, and a judge; and they shed innocent

blood, and they blasphemed God, and defiled the court, and it was a sabbath day, and the day of atonement.”

The chief objections to its being this Zechariah are, that the names do agree; the one being the son of Jehoiada, the other the son of Barachias; and the killing of him was eight hundred years before this time; when it might have been thought our Lord would have instanced in a later action: and this he speaks of, he ascribes to the men of that generation: to which may be replied, that as to the difference of names, the father of this Zechariah might have two names, which is no unusual thing; besides, these two names signify much the same thing; Jehoiada signifies praise the Lord, and Barachias bless the Lord; just as Eliakim and Jehoiakim, are names of the same person, and signify the same thing, (~~1~~ 2 Chronicles 36:4).

Moreover, Jerom tells us, that in the Hebrew copy of this Gospel used by the Nazarenes, he found the name Jehoiada instead of Barachias: and as to the action being done so long ago, what has been suggested already may be an answer to it, that it was the last on record in the writings of the Old Testament; and that his blood, as Abel's, is said to require vengeance: and Christ might the rather pitch upon this action, because it was committed on a very great and worthy man, and in the holy place, and by the body of the people, at the command of their king, and with their full approbation, and consent: and therefore, though this was not done by the individual persons in being in Christ's time, yet by the same people; and so they are said to slay him, and his blood is required of them: and their horrible destruction was a punishment for that load of national guilt, which had been for many hundreds of years contracting, and heaping upon them.

Ver. 36. *Verily I say unto you*, etc.] An usual form of introducing something of moment to raise attention to it, and to ascertain the truth of it:

all these things shall come upon this generation; all the things which Christ had foretold should come to pass in the present age; as that the apostles and ministers of the word he should send to them, some of them they would kill and crucify, and others they would scourge in their synagogues, or persecute from place to place; and all the horrible murders and bloodshed in any age, committed by that people, would be placed to the account of the men of that generation; and the guilt of them imputed to them, and the punishment due unto them be inflicted on them. And which came to pass, and had its full accomplishment about forty years after this,

in the utter destruction of Jerusalem, and the whole nation; so that many now living were personally involved in that temporal ruin, as well as escaped not the damnation of hell, (~~4133~~ Matthew 23:33).

Ver. 37. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem*, etc.] The metropolis of Judea, the seat of the kings of Judah, yea, the city of the great king; the place of divine worship, once the holy and faithful city, the joy of the whole earth; wherefore it was strange that the following things should be said of it. The word is repeated to show our Lord's affection and concern for that city, as well as to upbraid it with its name, dignity, and privileges; and designs not the building of the city, but the inhabitants of it; and these not all, but the rulers and governors of it, civil and ecclesiastical; especially the great sanhedrim, which were held in it, to whom best belong the descriptive characters of killing the prophets, and stoning them that were sent by God unto them; since it belonged to them to take cognizance of such who called themselves prophets, and to examine, and judge them, and, if false, to condemn them ^{f1338}; hence that saying of Christ, (~~4133~~ Luke 13:33) which goes before the same words, as here, "it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem": and who are manifestly distinguished from their "children": it being usual to call such as were the heads of the people, either in a civil or ecclesiastic sense, "fathers", and their subjects and disciples, "children": besides, our Lord's discourse throughout the whole context is directed to the Scribes and Pharisees, the ecclesiastic guides of the people, and to whom the civil governors paid a special regard.

Thou that killest the prophets; that is, with the sword, with which the prophets in Elijah's time were slain by the children of Israel, (~~1190~~ 1 Kings 19:10) and which was one of the capital punishments inflicted by the Jewish sanhedrim ^{f1339}; and also that which follows was another of them.

And stonest them which were sent unto thee; as particularly Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, before mentioned. The Jews themselves are obliged to own, that this character belongs to them: say ^{f1340} they,

"when the word of God shall come, who is his messenger, we will honour him. Says R. Saul, did not the prophets come, µννgrhw, "and we killed them", and shed their blood, and how shall we receive his word? or how shall we believe?"

And a celebrated writer of their's, on those words ^{f1341}, "but now murderers", has this note;

“they have killed Uriah, they have killed Zechariah.”

How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Christ here speaks as a man, and the minister of the circumcision, and expresses an human affection for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and an human wish, and will for their temporal good; which he very aptly signifies by the hen, which is a very affectionate creature to its young, and which it endeavours to screen from danger, by covering with its wings. So the “Shekinah” with the Jews is called, **אֲצֻדָּא אֶרְפָּא**, “the holy bird”^{f1342}; and that phrase, **יִנְקֻךְ תַּחַת כַּנְפֵי הַתְּשׁוּבָה**, “to betake one’s self, or to come to trust under the wings of the Shekinah”, is often used^{f1343} for to become a proselyte to the true religion, and worship of God, as Jethro, and Ruth the Moabitess did. An expression much like to this here is used by an apocryphal writer of 2 Esdras:

“I gathered you together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings: but now, what shall I do unto you? I will cast you out from my face.” (2 Esdras 1:30)

It seems to be a simile much in use with that people. Our Lord is to be understood not of his divine will, as God, to gather the people of the Jews internally, by his Spirit and grace, to himself; for all those whom Christ would gather, in this sense, were gathered, notwithstanding all the opposition made by the rulers of the people; but of his human affection and will, as a man, and a minister, to gather them to him externally, by, and under the ministry of his word, to hear him preach; so as that they might be brought to a conviction of, and an assent unto him as the Messiah; which, though it might fall short of faith in him, would have been sufficient to have preserved them from temporal ruin, threatened to their city and temple, in the following verse. Instances of the human affection, and will of Christ, may be observed in (~~Mark~~ Mark 10:21 ~~Luke~~ Luke 19:41 22:42) which will of his, though not contrary to the divine will, but subordinate to it, yet not always the same with it, nor always fulfilled: whereas his divine will, or his will as God, is, always fulfilled: “who hath resisted his will?” this cannot be hindered, and made void; he does whatsoever he pleases: and further, that this will of Christ to gather the Jews to himself, is to be understood of his human, and not divine will, is manifest from hence, that this will was in him, and expressed by him at certain several times, by intervals; and therefore he says, “how often would I have gathered”, etc. whereas the

divine will is one continued, invariable, and unchangeable will, is always the same, and never begins or ceases to be, and to which such an expression is inapplicable; and therefore these words do not contradict the absolute and sovereign will of God, in the distinguishing acts of it, respecting the choice of some persons, and the leaving of others. And it is to be observed, that the persons whom Christ would have gathered, are not represented as being unwilling to be gathered; but their rulers were not willing that they should, and be made proselytes to him, and come under his wings. It is not said, “how often would I have gathered you, and you would not!” nor, “I would have gathered Jerusalem, and she would not”; nor, “I would have gathered thy children, and they would not”; but, “how often would I have gathered thy children, and ye would not!” Which observation alone is sufficient to destroy the argument founded on this passage in favour of free will. Had Christ expressed his desire to have gathered the heads of the people to him, the members of the Jewish sanhedrim, the civil and ecclesiastical rulers of the Jews: or had he signified how much he wished, and earnestly sought after, and attempted to gather Jerusalem, the children, the inhabitants of it in common, and neither of them would not; it would have carried some appearance of the doctrine of free will, and have seemed to have countenanced it, and have imputed the non-gathering of them to their own will: though had it been said, “they would not”, instead of, “ye would not”, it would only have furnished out a most sad instance of the perverseness of the will of man, which often opposes his temporal, as well as his spiritual good; and would rather show it to be a slave to that which is evil, than free to that which is good; and would be a proof of this, not in a single person only, but in a body of men. The opposition and resistance to the will of Christ were not made by the people, but by their governors. The common people seemed inclined to attend his ministry, as appears from the vast crowds, which, at different times and places, followed him; but the chief priests, and rulers, did all they could to hinder the collection of them to him, and their belief in him as the Messiah; by traducing his character, miracles, and doctrines, and by menacing the people with curses, and excommunications, making a law, that whoever confessed him should be turned out of the synagogue. So that the plain meaning of the text is the same with that of (~~4233~~ Matthew 23:13) and consequently is no proof of men’s resisting the operations of the Spirit and grace of God; but only shows what obstructions and discouragements were thrown in the way of attendance on the external ministry of the word. In order to set aside, and overthrow the doctrine of grace, in election, and

particular redemption, and effectual calling, it should be proved that Christ, as God, would have gathered, not Jerusalem, and the inhabitants of it only, but all mankind, even such as are not eventually saved, and that in a spiritual, saving way and manner, to himself; of which there is not the least intimation in this text: and in order to establish the resistibility of the grace of God, by the perverse will of man, so as to become of no effect; it should be shown that Christ would have savingly converted persons, and they would not be converted; and that he bestowed the same grace upon them, he does bestow on others, who are converted: whereas the sum of this passage lies in these few words, that Christ, as man, out of a compassionate regard for the people of the Jews, to whom, he was sent as the minister of the circumcision, would have gathered them together under his ministry, and have instructed them in the knowledge of himself, as the Messiah; which if they had only notionally received, would have secured them, as chickens under the hen, from impending judgments, which afterwards fell upon them; but their governors, and not they, would not; that is, would not suffer them to receive him, and embrace him as the Messiah. So that from the whole it appears, that this passage of Scripture, so much talked of by the Arminians, and so often cited by them, has nothing to do with the controversy about the doctrines of election and reprobation, particular redemption, efficacious grace in conversion, and the power of man's free will. This observation alone is sufficient to destroy the argument founded on this passage, in favour of free will.

Ver. 38. *Behold your house is left unto you desolate.*] Signifying that the city in which they dwelt, where they had their ceiled houses, and stately palaces, would, in a little time, within the space of forty years, be destroyed, and become a desert; and the temple, formerly the house of God, but now only their's, and in which they trusted, would be abandoned by God, he would grant his presence no more in it; and the Messiah, the proprietor of it, and who was now in it, would then take his leave of it, and never more return to it; and that also should share the same fate as the city, and at the same time. Our Lord seems to have in view those passages in (~~2117~~ Jeremiah 12:7 22:5) and which the Jewish ^{f1344} writers understood of the temple. The author of the apocryphal the second book of Esdras has much such an expression as this: "Thus saith the Almighty Lord, Your house is desolate, I will cast you out as the wind doth stubble." (2 Esdras 1:33)

Ver. 39. *For I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth,* etc.] Meaning in a very little time after the passover, from the time of his crucifixion and death; otherwise they saw him many times after this, as in the palace of the high priest, in Pilate's judgment hall, and on the cross; but not after his resurrection. This shows the reason of their house being desolate, and in what sense it should be so, and immediately became so; namely, by being then directly, and ever after, destitute of his presence: and though they might afterwards seek for, and expect the Messiah in it, yet they would never be able to see him, nor throughout their long captivity: till ye shall say, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; that is, until the time comes, that the fulness of the Gentiles shall be brought in, and all Israel shall be saved, the Jews shall be converted, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; when they shall readily and cheerfully say these words to Christ, who will then appear in his glory; which they were now displeased at in the multitude that followed him, and the children in the temple. Though some think this is said by way of threatening, since the rest that is spoken to them by Christ is of that sort, and regards the men of that generation; and is given as a reason of their house being left desolate: and the sense is, that they should never see him with joy and pleasure; since, though they would be obliged to confess that he was Lord and Christ, they would never say the above words to him in faith, and holy reverence of him. The Cambridge exemplar of Beza's, and the Persic versions, read, "in the name of God."