believe. Hence that people, loſing sight of the yoke under which they and the whole human race were brought by the fall of Adam, miſtaking the ſenſe of the bleſſing promiſed to all nations through the seed of Abraham, and devoting their whole attention to the moſt magnificent deſcriptions of the Meſſiah’s kingdom, expected in him a prince who ſhould conquer the Romans, and eſtabliſh on earth a univerſal monarchy, of which Jeruſalem was to be the metro­polis.

As our Saviour came for a very different purpoſe, the first object of his miſſion was to rectify the notions of his erring countrymen, in order to fit them for the deliverance which they were to obtain through him. Accordingly, when he entered upon his office as a preacher of righteouſness, he embraced every opportunity of inveighing with be­coming firmneſs againſt the false doctrines taught as tradi­tions of the elders ; and by his knowledge of the ſecrets of all hearts, he expoſed the vile hypocriſy of thoſe who made a gain of godlineſs. The Jews had been led, by their ſeparation from the rest of the world, to consider themſelves as the peculiar favourites of Jehovah ; and the conſequence was, that, contrary to the ſpirit of their own law, and the explicit doctrines of ſome of their prophets, they looked upon all other nations with abhorrence, as upon people physically impure. Theſe prejudices the bleſſed Jesus la­boured to eradicate. Having deſired a lawyer, by whom he was tempted, to read that part of the law of Moſes which commanded the Israelites to love their neighbours as them­ſelves, he compelled him, by means of a parabolical account of a compaſſionate Samaritan, to acknowledge, that under the denomination of neighbour the divine lawgiver had com­prehended all mankind as the objects *of* love @@\*. The im­portance in which Moſes held the ritual law, and to which, as the means of preſerving its votaries from the contagion of idolatry, it was juſtly intitled, had led the Jews to conſider every ceremony of it as of intrinsic value and perpepetual obligation : but Jesus brought to their recollection God’s declared preference of mercy to ſacrifice ; ſhewed them that the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mer­cy, and faith, claimed their regard in the first place, and its ceremonial obſervances only in the ſecond ; and taught them, in conformity with the predictions of their own pro­phets @@\*, that the hour was about to come when the wor­ſhip of God ſhould not be confined to Jeruſalem, but that true worshippers ſhould everywhere worſhip the Father in ſpirit and in truth. @@\*”

It being the deſign of Chriſt’s coming into the world to break down the middle wall of partition between the Jews and Gentiles, and to introduce a new dispenſation of religion which ſhould unite all mankind as brethren in the worſhip of the true God, and fit them for the enjoyment of heaven ; he did not content himſelf with merely reſtoring the moral part of the Moſaic law to its primitive purity, diſencumbered of the corrupt gloſſes of the Scribes and Pharisees, but added to it many refined and ſpiritual precepts, which, till they were taught by him, had never occurred either to Jew or Gentile. The Hebrew lawgiver had prohibited murder under the penalty of death ; but Chriſt extended the prohibi­tion to cauſeleſs anger, and to contemptuous treatment of our brethren, commanding his followers, as they valued their everlaſting ſalvation, to forgive their enemies, and to love all mankind. Adultery was forbidden by the law of Moſes as a crime of the deepeſt dye ; but Jeſus said to his diſciples, “ that whoſoever looketh on a woman to luſt after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart,” and is of courſe liable to the Divine vengeance. The *lex talionis* was in force among the Jews, ſo that the man who had de­prived his neighbour of an eye or a tooth, was to ſuffer the loſs of an eye of a tooth himſelf ; but this mode of puniſh­ment, which inflicted *blemish* for *blemish,* though ſuited to the hardneſs of Jewiſh hearts, being inconſiſtent with the mild spirit of Chriſtianity, was aboliſhed by our blessed Lord, who ſeverely prohibited the indulgence of revenge, and commanded his followers to love even their enemies. Perjury has in every civilized nation been juſtly conſidered as a crime of the higheſt atrocity, and the Moſaic law doom­ed the false witneſs to bear the puniſhment, whatever it might be, which he intended by ſwearing falſely to bring upon his brother ; but the Author of the Chriſtian religion forbade not only falſe ſwearing, but ſwearing at all, except on ſolemn occaſions, and when an oath ſhould be required by legal authority. See Oath.

By thus reſtoring the law to its original purity, and in many cases extending its ſenſe, the bleſſed Jeſus executed the office of a Prophet to the loſt ſheep of the houſe of Iſrael ; but had he not been more than an ordinary prophet, he could not have abrogated the moſt trivial ceremony of it, nor even extended the ſenſe of any of its moral precepts ; for their great lawgiver had told them, that “the Lord their God would raise up unto them but one Prophet, like unto him, to whom they ſhould hearken@@\*.” That Prophet was by themſelves understood to be the Messiah, whom they ex­pected to tell them all things. It was neceſſary therefore that Jesus, as he taught ſome new doctrines, and plainly in­dicated that greater changes would ſoon be introduced, ſhould vindicate his claim to that exalted character which alone could authoriſe him to propose innovations. This he did in the ampleſt manner, by fulfilling prophecies and working mira­cles (ſee Miracle and Prophecy) ; ſo that the unpreju­diced part of the people readily acknowledged him to be of a truth “ that prophet which ſhould come into the world— the Son of God, and the King of Iſrael.” He did not, however, make any change in the national worſhip, or assume to himſelf the ſmalleſt civil authority. He had submitted to the rite of circumcision, and ſtrictly performed every duty, ceremonial as well as moral, which that cove­nant made incumbent upon other Jews ; thus fulfilling all righteouſneſs. Though the religion which he came to propagate was in many reſpects contrary to the ritual law, it could not be eſtabliſhed, or that law abrogated, but in con­ſequence of his death, which the ſyſtem of ſacrifices was ap­pointed to prefigure ; and as his kingdom, which was not of this world, could not commence till after his reſurrection, he yielded during the whole courſe of his life a cheerful obe­dience to the civil magiſtrate, and wrought a miracle to ob­tain money to pay the tribute that was exacted of him. Be­ing thus circumſtanced, he choſe from the loweſt and leaſt corrupted of the people certain followers, whom he treated with the moſt endearing familiarity for three years, and commiſſioned at his departure to promulgate such doctrines as, consiſtently with the order of the divine diſpenſations, he could not personally preach himſelf. With theſe men, during the courſe of his ministry on earth, he went about continually doing good, healing the sick, caſting out devils, raiſing the dead, reproving vice, preaching righteouſness, and inſtructing his countrymen, by the moſt perfect example which was ever exhibited in the world, of whatſoever things are true, or honeſt, or juſt, or pure, or lovely, or of good report. The Scribes and Phariſees, however, finding him not that conqueror whom they vainly expected, becoming envious of his reputation among the people, and being filled with rancour againſt him for detecting their hypocritical arts, delivered him up to the Roman governor, who, though convinced of his innocence, yielded to the popular cla­mour, and crucified him between two thieves, as an enemy to Cæsar.

@@@[m]\* St Luke x. 25-28.

@@@[m]\* Jeremiah xxxi. 31, &c.

@@@[m]\* John iv. 25-27.

@@@[m]\* Deut. xxviii. 15.