

And, then, a conscience in hell! It sleeps not there, it bears no false witness there; there, with a voice of thunder, it will be the accuser, and, with its scorpion-lash, the relentless tormentor, of the guilty for ever. "Their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." In conclusion, "take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." L.

SCRIPTURE ILLUSTRATIONS.

"His head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel."—Matthew xiv. 11.

Similar instances of unfeeling barbarity are to be met with in history. Mark Anthony caused the heads of those he had proscribed to be brought to him while he was at table, and entertained his eyes a long time with that sad spectacle. Cicero's head, being one of those that were brought to him, he ordered it to be put on the very pulpit where Cicero made speeches against him. Jerome informs us, that when the head of the Baptist was presented to Herodias, she indulged herself in the barbarous diversion of pricking his tongue with a needle, as Fulvia did Tully's.—*Burder.*

HINDOO WEDDING.—Mr. Ward has given the following description of a Hindoo wedding, which furnishes a striking parallel to the parable of the wedding feast in the Gospel:—"At a marriage, the procession of which I saw some years ago, the bridegroom came from a distance, and the bride lived at Serampore, to which place the bridegroom was to come by water. After waiting two or three hours, at length, near midnight, it was announced, as if in the very words of Scripture, behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him. All the persons employed, now lighted their lamps, and ran with them in their hands to fill up their stations in the procession; some of them had lost their lights, and were unprepared, but it was then too late to seek them, and the cavalcade moved forward to the house of the bride, at which place the company entered a large and splendidly illuminated area, before the house, covered with an awning, where a great multitude of friends, dressed in their best apparel, were seated upon mats. The bridegroom was carried in the arms of a friend, and placed on a superb seat in the midst of the company, where he sat a short time, and then went into the house, the door of which was immediately shut, and guarded by Sepoys. I and others expostulated with the door-keepers, but in vain." Never was I so struck with our Lord's beautiful parable, as at this moment:—"And the door was shut!"

JERICHO, a celebrated city in the tribe of Benjamin, of which frequent mention is made in the New Testament. It was the first city taken from the Canaanites by Joshua, who rased it to the ground, and denounced a severe curse on the person who should rebuild it. (Josh. vi. 20. 26. Heb. xi. 30.) This curse was literally fulfilled, in the days of Ahab, upon Hiel the Bethelite, by whom the city was rebuilt. (1 Kings xvi. 34.) After this event it was ennobled by the schools of the prophets, which were established there (2 Kings ii. 5.); and near it was a large but unwholesome spring, the waters of which rendered the soil unfruitful, until they were cured by the prophet Elisha (2 Kings ii. 21.); and from that time they have become exceedingly wholesome and fertilising. In the time of our Saviour, Jericho yielded only to Jerusalem, for its size and the magnificence of its buildings: it is situated in a bottom, in that vast plain which was named the *great plain* (which marks the propriety of the expression *going down from Jerusalem*, Luke x. 30.); and is 150 furlongs, about nineteen miles, distant from the capital of Judæa. Jericho was one of the cities appropriated for the residence of the priests and Levites, 12,000 of whom dwelt there; and as the way thither from Jerusalem was rocky and desert, it was, as it still is, greatly infested with thieves. A country more favourable for the attacks of banditti, and caves better adapted for concealment, than those presented on this road, can scarcely be imagined. This circumstance marks the admirable propriety with which our Lord made it the scene of his beautiful parable of the good Samaritan, (Luke x. 30. 37.) Jericho is, at present, a wretched mud-built village.

ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.

CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION.

ALTHOUGH the Jewish Temple-service and sacrificial institution, were not finally abolished until the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans; and though the synagogue worship has, from that time to the present, been kept up by the Jews, in their state of dispersion throughout the world: the Mosaic dispensation and the Jewish church-state, may be considered as having terminated with the expiration of the seventy weeks of Daniel's prophecy, when "Messiah should be cut off, but not for himself," (Dan. ix.) and when the Lord Jesus Christ, in fulfilment of that prophecy, actually became the sacrifice for our sins, and made reconciliation for iniquity," by dying on the cross, "the just for the unjust." Then was laid the foundation of the sublime structure of Christianity—then had the church and kingdom of Christ, as a new dispensation, its beginning. It is worthy of remark, too, that the manifestation of the Son of God, and the advent of his kingdom, took place at a period of the world, when the Gentile nations, if they had reached the highest pitch of intellectual refinement, they were also as deeply sunk in corruption, crimes and idolatries; and when the Jewish nation and church generally, had fallen into a state of ignorance, luxury and profaneness, which, while it exposed them to the displeasure of the Almighty, rendered his merciful interposition necessary, by sending forth a divine Teacher and Deliverer, in the person of the promised Messiah. Then, "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, and that we might receive the adoption of sons."

The following beautiful and comprehensive historical sketch of the life and actions of the adorable Saviour, the Great Architect of, and "Head over all things to his Church," is from Mosheim, and is deserving of a place in this department of our work:—

Towards the conclusion of the reign of Herod the Great, the Son of God descended upon earth, and taking upon him the human nature, appeared to men under the sublime characters of an infallible teacher, an all-sufficient mediator, and a spiritual and immortal king. The place of his birth was Bethlehem, in the land of Palestine. The year in which it happened has not hitherto been fixed with certainty, notwithstanding the deep and laborious researches of the learned on that matter. There is nothing surprising in this, when we consider that the first Christians laboured under the same difficulties, and were divided in their opinions concerning the time of Christ's birth. That which appears most probable is, that it happened about a year and six months before the death of Herod, in the year of Rome 748 or 749. The uncertainty, however, of this point is of no sort of consequence. We know that the Sun of Righteousness has shone upon the world. And though we cannot fix the precise period in which he arose, this will not hinder us from enjoying the direction and influence of his vital and salutary beams.

2. Four inspired writers, who have transmitted to us an account of the life and actions of Jesus Christ, mention particularly his birth, his lineage, his family, and his parents; but they say very little concerning his infancy and his earlier youth. Not long after his birth, he was conducted by his parents into Egypt, that he might be there out of the reach of Herod's cruelty. When he was but twelve years old, he disputed, in the temple, with the most learned of the Jewish doctors, concerning the sublime truths of religion. And the rest of his life, until the thirtieth year of his age, was spent in the obscurity of a private condition, and consecrated to the duties of filial obedience. This is all that the wisdom of God hath permitted us to know, with certainty, of Christ, before he entered upon his public ministry; nor is the story of his having followed the trade of his adopted father, Joseph, built upon any sure foundation. There have been, indeed, several writers, who, either through the levity of a wanton imagination, or with a design to attract the admiration of the multitude, have invented a series of the most extravagant and ridiculous fables, in order to give an account of this obscure part of the Saviour's life.

3. Jesus began his public ministry in the thirtieth year of his age; and to render it more solemn and affecting to the Jews, a man, whose name was John, the son of a Jewish priest, a person of great gravity also, and much respected on account of the austere dignity of his life and manners, was commanded by God to proclaim to the people the coming of the Messiah, that had been promised to their fathers. This extraordinary man called himself the forerunner of the Messiah. Filled with a holy zeal and a divine fervour, he cried aloud to the Jewish nation, to depart from their transgressions, and to purify their hearts, that they might thus partake of the blessings which the Son of God was now come to offer to the world. The exhortations of this respectable messenger were not without effect; and those who, moved by his solemn admonitions, had formed the resolution of correcting their evil dispositions and amending their lives, were initiated into the kingdom of the Redeemer by the ceremony of immersion, or baptism. Christ himself, before he began his ministry, desired to be solemnly baptized by John in the waters of Jordan, that he might not, in any point, neglect to answer the demands of the Jewish law.

4. It is not necessary to enter here into a particular detail of the life and actions of Jesus Christ. All Christians must be perfectly well acquainted with them. They must know, that, during the space of three years, and amidst the deepest trials of affliction and distress, he instructed the Jewish nation in the will and counsels of the Most High, and omitted nothing, in the course of his ministry, that could contribute either to gain the multitude, or to charm the wise. Every one knows, that his life was a continued scene of the most perfect sanctity, and the purest and most active virtue; not only without spot, but also beyond the reach of suspicion. And it is also well known, that by miracles of the most stupendous kind, and not more stupendous than salutary and beneficent, he displayed to the universe the truth of that religion which he brought with him from above, and demonstrated the reality of his divine commission in the most illustrious manner.

5. As this divine religion was to be propagated to the utmost ends of the earth, it was necessary that Christ should choose a certain number of persons to accompany him constantly through the whole course of his ministry; that thus they might be faithful and respectable witnesses of the sanctity of his life, and the grandeur of his miracles, to the remotest nations; and also transmit to the latest posterity a genuine account of his sublime doctrines, and of the nature and end of the Gospel dispensation. Therefore, Jesus chose, out of the multitudes that attended his discourses, twelve persons, whom he separated from the rest by the name of Apostles. These men were illiterate, poor, and of mean extraction, and such alone were truly proper to answer the views of the divine Saviour. He avoided making use of the ministry of persons endowed with the advantages of fortune and birth, or enriched with the treasures of eloquence and learning, lest the fruits of this embassy, and the progress of the Gospel, should be attributed to human and natural causes. These apostles were sent but once to preach to the Jews during the life of Christ. He chose to keep them about his own person, that they might be thoroughly instructed in the affairs of his kingdom. That the multitude, however, might not be destitute of teachers to enlighten them with the knowledge of the truth, Christ appointed seventy disciples, to preach the glad tidings of life eternal throughout the whole province of Judæa.

6. The researches of the learned have been employed to find out the reason of Christ's fixing the number of the apostles to twelve, and that of the disciples to seventy, and various conjectures have been applied to the solution of this question. But since it is manifest, from the words of our Saviour himself, that he intended the number of the twelve apostles as an allusion to that of the tribes of Israel; it can scarcely be doubted, that he was willing to insinuate by this appointment, that he was the supreme lord and high priest of these twelve tribes, into which the Jewish nation was divided. And as the number of disciples answers evidently to that of the senators, of whom the council of the people, or the sanhedrim, was composed, there is a high degree of probability in the conjecture of those, who think that Christ, by the choice of the seventy, designed to admonish the Jews, that the authority of their sanhedrim