

By neglecting to keep our tongues, we render our counsels useless to all those persons with whom we are more immediately connected. What good can a man expect to do, in this respect, who is perpetually involving himself in trouble, by unguarded words? Should he attempt such a thing, he would not be able to succeed. His children, servants, and acquaintance, get no good from his conversation, but are often involved in his troubles. But he who keeps his tongue, will be heard when he gives counsel; and his caution and circumspection in conversation, will be admired and imitated. How pleasant, how delightful, is such a state! How afflictive, how distressing, is the reverse!

When the tongue is not kept, God is offended, and his displeasure proves a source of great trouble. He is angry when we speak amiss; he frowns upon us; nor does he frown in vain. Who can bear his anger? If we bring ourselves into trouble by offending man, how much more must we do so, when we offend God? But we avoid this trouble by keeping the door of our lips. Heaven, then, looks down with approbation, and the soul is at rest; for he who has power over his tongue, is able to bridle the whole body, and, in Scripture, is called a perfect man. "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." James iii. 2.

But the troubles arising from sinful words in the present world, bear no proportion to those which may fall upon us in a future state. Here we may enjoy many blessings of Divine Providence, while we set our mouth against the heavens. Psalm lxxv. 9. Our slandering, lying, and filthy conversation, may seem to be unnoticed by our heavenly Judge; but the day is at hand, when the records, in which all our words are entered, will be opened and read; and then by our words we shall be justified, or by our words we shall be condemned. If we have not kept our tongues, we shall be overwhelmed with sorrow in that awful day: Nor will our sorrow end with that day: For the righteous Judge will "cast" us "into utter darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matt. viii. 12.

Let us now enter upon the duty of self-examination. What has been our conversation in days and months which are past? What is our conversation now? And what do we intend it to be in days which are to come? If it have been sinful, let us repent; implore mercy through Jesus Christ; and sin no more. If it have been pure and holy, let us give the glory to God, and still continue to speak as in his sight. On this important subject, may we individually offer up the prayer of David: "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer." Psalm xix. 14. Amen.

JEWISH SECTS MENTIONED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

THE SCRIBES AND LAWYERS.

There is in the Gospels frequent mention of a set of men called SCRIBES and LAWYERS, who are often joined with the chief priests, elders, and Pharisees. They seem to have been men of learning, and on that account to have had great deference paid to them; (Matt. ii. 4. vii. 29) but, strictly speaking, they did not form any distinct sect.

THE SCRIBES generally belonged to the sect of the Pharisees, in whose traditions and explanations of the law they were profoundly skilled; and on the Sabbath days, "they sat in Moses' seat," and instructed the people. Originally, they had their name from their employment, which at first was transcribing the law; but in progress of time, they exalted themselves into the public ministry, and became teachers of it, authoritatively determining what doctrines were or were not contained in the Scriptures, and teaching the common people in what sense to understand the law and the prophets. In short, they were the oracles which were consulted in all difficult points of doctrine and duty.

LAWYERS (teachers of the law) and scribes appear to be synonymous terms, importing one and the same order of men; as St. Matthew (xxii. 35) calls him a lawyer whom St. Mark (xii. 26) terms one of the scribes. Dr. Macknight conjectures the scribes to have been the pub-

lic expounders of the law, and that the lawyers studied it in private; perhaps, as Dr. Lardner conjectures, they taught in the schools.

THE SAMARITANS.

THE Samaritans, mentioned in the New Testament, are generally considered as a sect of the Jews; their origin and history have already been related, together with their antipathy to the Jews. Their principal residence is at Sichem or Shechem, now called *Napolose*, or *Nablous*, where they have one synagogue. In 1823, there were between twenty and thirty houses, and about sixty males paid the capitation tax to the Mohammedan government. They celebrated divine service every Saturday. Formerly, they went four times a year, in solemn procession, to the old synagogue on Mount Gerizim: and on these occasions they ascended before sun-rise, and read the law till noon; but of late years they have not been allowed to do this.

The Samaritans have one school in Napolose, where their language is taught. The head of this sect is stated to reside at Paris. The Samaritans at Napolose are in possession of a very ancient manuscript Pentateuch, which they assert to be nearly 3,500 years old; but they reject the vowel points, as a rabbinical invention. In order to complete our notice of this sect, we have subjoined their confession of faith, sent, in the sixteenth century, by Eleazar, their high priest, to the illustrious critic Scaliger, who had applied to them for that purpose; together with a few additional particulars from the Baron de Sacy's Memoir on the Samaritans, and the Rev. W. Jowett's Christian Researches in Syria.

1. The Samaritans observe the Sabbath with all the exactness required in Exodus; for not one of them goes out of the place where he is on the Sabbath day, except to the synagogue, where they read the law, and sing the praises of God. They do not lie that night with their wives, and neither kindle nor order fire to be kindled: whereas the Jews transgress the Sabbath in all these points; for they go out of town, have fire made, lie with their wives, and even do not wash themselves after it.

2. They hold the passover to be their first festival; they begin at sunset, by the sacrifice enjoined for that purpose in Exodus; but they sacrifice only on Mount Gerizim, where they read the law, and offer prayers to God, after which the priest dismisses the whole congregation with a blessing. [Of late years, however, having been prohibited from ascending Mount Gerizim by their oppressors the Turks, they offer the paschal sacrifice within their city, which they consider to be within the precincts of the sacred place.]

3. They celebrate for seven days together the feast of the harvest, but they do not agree with the Jews concerning the day when it ought to begin; for these reckon the next day after the solemnity of the passover; whereas the Samaritans reckon fifty days, beginning the next day after the Sabbath which happens in the week of the unleavened bread, and the next day after the seventh sabbath following, the feast of the harvest begins.

4. They observe the fast of expiation on the tenth of the seventh month; they employ the four and twenty hours of the day in prayers to God, and singing his praises, and fasting. All fast, except children at the breast, whereas the Jews except children under seven years of age.

5. On the fifteenth of the same month, they celebrate the feast of tabernacles.

6. They never defer circumcision beyond the eighth day, as it is commanded in Genesis; whereas the Jews defer it sometimes longer.

7. They are obliged to wash themselves in the morning, when they have lain with their wives, or have been sullied in the night by some uncleanness; and all vessels, that may become unclean, become defiled when they touch them before they have washed.

8. They take away the fat from sacrifices, and give the priests the shoulder, the jaws, and the belly.

9. They never marry their nieces, as the Jews do; and have but one wife, whereas the Jews may have many.

10. They believe in God, in Moses, and in Mount Gerizim. Whereas, say they, the Jews put their trust in others, we do nothing but what

is expressly commanded in the law by the Lord, who made use of the ministry of Moses; but the Jews swerve from what the Lord hath commanded in the law, to observe what their fathers and doctors have invented.

11. They receive the Torah, or Pentateuch, and hold it as their only sacred book; they reverence the books of Joshua and Judges, but do not account them sacred in the same manner as the Torah, considering Joshua not to have been a prophet, but only the disciple of a prophet, that is, of Moses.

12. They expect a prophet, whom they term Hattab; but, say they, "there is a great mystery in regard to Hattab, who is yet to come. We shall be happy when he comes."

When the Rev. Mr. Jowett, in November, 1823, interrogated the officiating Samaritan priest concerning their expectation of a Messiah, the latter replied that they were all in expectation of him; "that the Messiah would be a man, not the Son of God,—and that this (Napolose) was to be the place which he would make the metropolis of his kingdom; this was the place, of which the Lord had promised, he would place his name there." The report of the Samaritans worshipping a dove is groundless; nor is it true that they deny the resurrection of the dead, or the existence of angels. They admit, however, that they recite hymns and prayers that Jehovah would pardon the dead, and the priest purifies them by prayer.

The Samaritans have a catalogue of the succession of their high priests from Aaron to the present time. They believe themselves to be of the posterity of Joseph by Ephraim, and that all their high priests descended from Phinehas; whereas the Jews have not one of that family. They boast that they have preserved the Hebrew characters which God made use of to promulgate his law; while the Jews have a way of writing from Ezra, which is cursed for ever. And, indeed, instead of looking upon Ezra as the restorer of the law, they curse him as an impostor, who has laid aside their old characters to use new ones in their room, and authorised several books that were written to support the posterity of David.

Several attempts have been made to convert these Samaritans; but they have been oppressed instead of being made Christians, and they are reduced to a small number rather by misery than by the multitude of those who have been converted. Nay, they seem more stubbornly wedded to their sect than the Jews, though these adhere rigorously to the law of Moses. At least Nicen, who lived after the twelfth century, when setting down the formalities used at the reception of heretics, observes, that if a Jew had a mind to be converted, in order to avoid punishment or the payment of what he owed, he was to purify himself, and satisfy his creditors, before he was admitted. But the Samaritans were not received before they had been instructed two years, and were required to fast ten or fifteen days before they professed the Christian religion, to attend at morning and evening prayers, and to learn some psalms; others were not used with so much rigour. The term of two years which was enjoined to the Samaritan proselytes, is an argument that they were suspected; and the reason why they were so was, that they had often deceived the Christians by their pretended conversion.

Jorra, a seaport of Palestine, on the Mediterranean, called also Japha, and now universally Jaffa, owes all the circumstances of its celebrity, as the principal port of Judæa, to its situation with regard to Jerusalem. "As a station for vessels, its harbour is one of the worst in the Mediterranean: ships generally anchor about a mile from the town, to avoid the shoals and rocks of the place. In ancient times, it was the only place resorted to as a seaport in all Judæa. Hither Solomon ordered the materials for the temple to be brought from Mount Libanus, previous to their conveyance by land to Jerusalem."

It is a place of very great antiquity; and it appears from the Acts of the Apostles, (chaps. ix. x. xi.) that the Gospel was received here soon after Christ's ascension. Here also St. Peter restored Dorcas to life, (Acts ix. 40.) and from this place it was that the prophet Jonah, many centuries before, had embarked for Nineveh. (Jonah i. 3.)